

Sustainable entrepreneurship in North-east India- Creating a 'Blue Ocean'

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Abstract - The North Eastern states of India has always been called as the land of the rising sun but still it has remained untouched by economic growth unlike the mainstream parts of India. The North East is sharing international boundaries with China, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Myanmar. But the people have not yet developed the confidence to grow and establish themselves as entrepreneurs and nourish the resources towards sustainability. The land does have the potential natural resources to be transformed into a niche market. The paper tries to bring the marketing theory of "Blue Ocean" i.e., simultaneous pursuit of differentiation and low cost to create a new market and create new demand. The paper focuses on how the North East entrepreneurs have and can nurture their natural resources and lead their way towards Sustainable Entrepreneurship through creating such "Blue Ocean". The paper will also try to suggest ways to move the entrepreneurs towards innovative practices based on the data collected through primary and secondary sources. The existing entrepreneurs and their ventures will give us insight into how they adapted to the environment and created sustainable market. It will surely bring contribution towards the discipline and help potential individuals engage in Sustainable Entrepreneurship practices

Index Terms - Sustainable Entrepreneurship, ventures, niche market, 'Blue Ocean'

1. INTRODUCTION

The North East India is a land full of immense resources and is a gem in itself. It is bloomed with handicrafts, agriculture and handloom etc. Though there is much more to add as it could thrive to bring economic stability. It has the potential to render a progressive economy in the region. Slow but steadily, the North-East is growing as entrepreneurial hub as more entrepreneurs are coming up in the future. Entrepreneurs are properly utilizing the opportunity of the Government and also from the nature abundantly. When we talk about entrepreneurship it means that the person is always busy in search of something new and tries to exploits idea into gainful opportunities. The sustainable entrepreneurship discovers, create and exploit entrepreneurial activities which helps in generating social and environmental gains to the society. This paper tries to find out the entrepreneurs who are achieving success by using ecofriendly materials and generating their

products into the market.

Few entrepreneurs of North-East India are trying to create niche market to lead the market by themselves. Entrepreneurs are promoting their products which is specified to a particular segment and leads to creation of "Blue Ocean". The paper tries to focus on the entrepreneurial ventures that has successfully adopted the marketing theory of "Blue Ocean" strategy and created a niche market from themselves. "Blue Oceans" are basically the industries or product and services that are not in existence today-the unknown market space. The "Blue Oceans" are vast, deep and powerful in terms of opportunity and growth when composed properly but are unexplored and untainted by competition. The entrepreneurs can create new demand and space for themselves in the market rather than fighting for the existing shrinking profits.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

- This paper presents a preliminary literature review in strategy research. Its purpose is to identify a research theme and related issues in the existing literature for future research avenue. From this literature review it is found that, blue ocean strategy is identified as one of the recent research themes that worth further studies. Though various questions are drawn while doing the research to identify and quantify the competing factors in the strategy canvas with an analytical and quantitative approach to enhance the validity of the existing literature. "Alex, George, Peter 2011"ⁱ
- Paper focuses and introduces the blue ocean strategy, then, provides the positive effects of using it. Applied Research is used and the method of doing is description and analysis. It is found that blue ocean strategy forcing the company to destroy bloody compete of Red Ocean with creating an uncompetitive market force. Researcher concluded that the entry of thinking of the blue ocean in strategic management of business and different organizations in Iran, can provide favorable conditions for growth and development of national and industrial of Islamic Republic of Iran. "Miri 2015".ⁱⁱ
- The study focuses on Kim and Mauborgne "Four Action Tool of Framework" tool of blue ocean strategy implemented by Indian Companies in the last two

decades by maximizing opportunities, minimizing risks, lowering the price and adding more value thereby carving a niche in the market. It is found that the companies of India are tying up with foreign collaborators and have targeted unexplored market's or even have managed to take a cherry from the cake by avoiding others. It is recommended that blue ocean strategy should be implemented in different industries and Indian industrial companies should break out of the accepted boundaries that define how they compete and go through innovative strategic planning. "Gwal(2016)"ⁱⁱⁱ.

- This paper presents the relationship between the Blue ocean Strategy and Innovation Performance. The paper discussed about the innovation performance of Malaysia and Variables of BOS. Hypotheses is prepared and quantitative study is used. From the study, it is confirmed that Blue Ocean Strategy is being implemented in Malaysia. It will be very interesting in future to investigate the relationships of Blue Ocean Strategy with innovation types of radical innovation and incremental innovation. "Shafiq (2017)".^{iv}

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- ✓ To trace out the successful entrepreneurs using sustainable resources in their ventures.
- ✓ To discuss the cases and highlight important insights from them.
- ✓ Evaluate the scenario about sustainable entrepreneurship in the public.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY:

Entrepreneurship tries to use Blue Ocean strategy when there is no competition or very less competition. This strategy helps entrepreneurs to operate and innovate new ideas where there is less competition and no pricing issue. Blue ocean strategy provides large number of opportunities for growth and development of an enterprise. So, we traced and studied about the successful entrepreneurs who are using Blue Ocean strategy to compete the market in North East Region. It helps in gaining profit to the entrepreneurs and also it helps in capturing new market demand. North East Region is on the phases for development of entrepreneurs and many new entrepreneurs are coming up for the benefit of society and the environment as well.

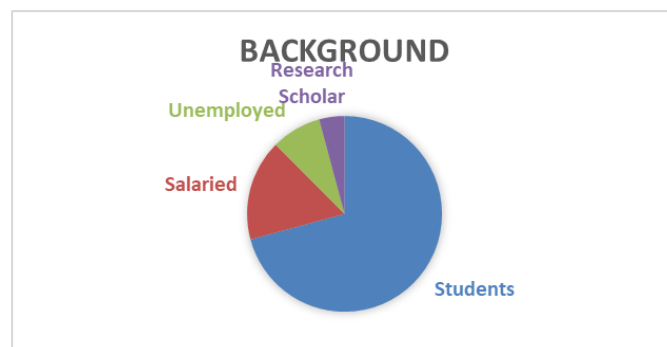
METHODOLOGY:

The study is descriptive and analytical in nature. The people within the age of 18-30 have been chosen for the survey. As they are the most desirable respondents to have touch with entrepreneurship. The study is conducted during the period of November 2019- January 2020. The sampling frame consists of 50 respondents from the chosen universe within the age group of 18-30 years. Convenience Sampling method was used in the study. Digital questionnaires in the form of Google forms were sent to the respondents deliberately through email and direct messaging. The amount of data collected in the study is processed and analyzed through diagrams and graphs.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:

A) Analysis and Interpretation of data collected through primary method

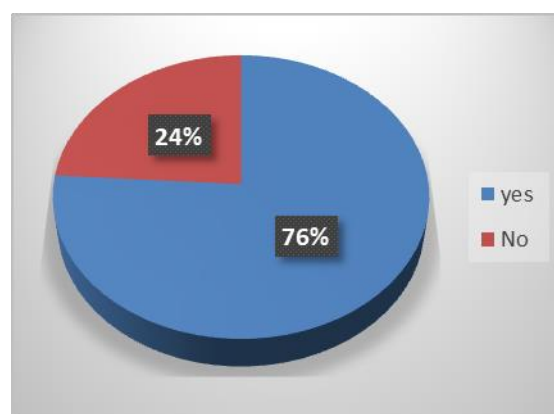
Figure I Background of the respondent:



Interpretation: It is seen that out of 50 respondents, many respondents are students i.e., from colleges and universities of North East States.

Figure II

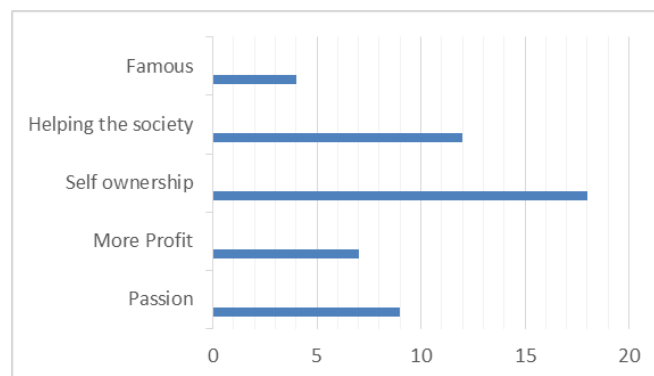
Opinion whether entrepreneurship as a viable option for employment:



Interpretation: All 50 Respondents are aware about the term entrepreneurship and no single respondent choose No.

Figure III

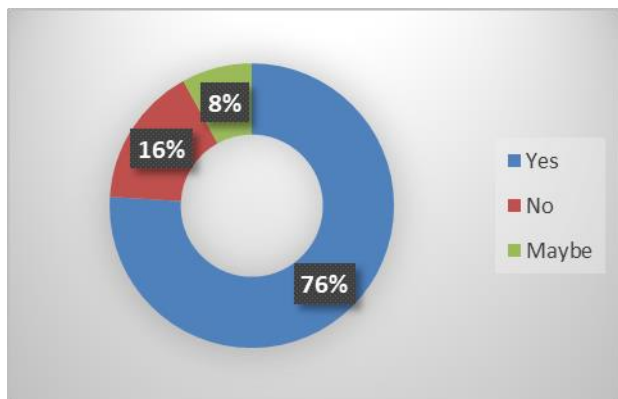
Factors influence to choose entrepreneurship as a career option:



Interpretation: 9 respondents want to choose entrepreneurship as a career option because of Passion. Similarly, 7 respondents choose to earn more profit, 18 respondents for self-ownership, for famous 4 respondents and 12 respondents to help the poor.

Figure IV

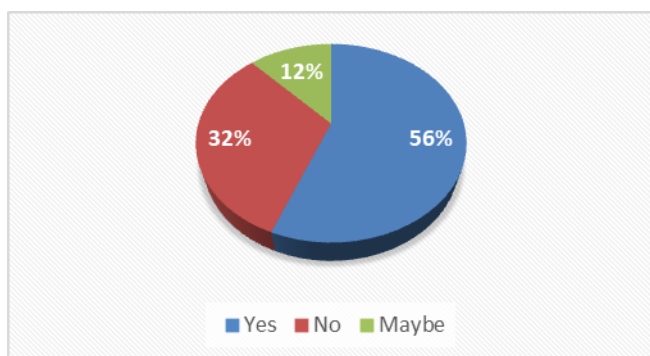
Idea about the meaning of sustainable entrepreneurship



Interpretation: 76% of the respondents i.e., 38 respondents are aware about sustainable entrepreneurship, 16% i.e., 8 respondents are totally not aware and 8% i.e., 4 respondents are not sure whether they know or not.

Figure V:

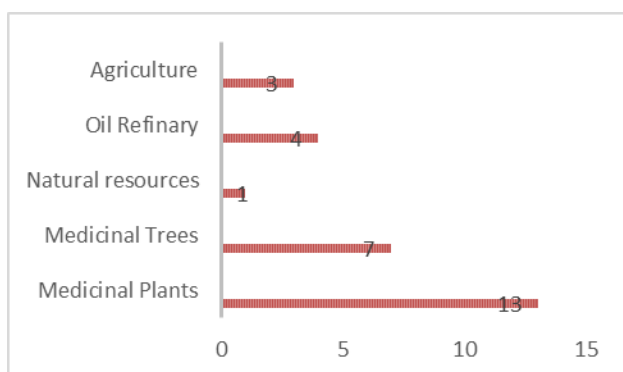
a) Have you seen any natural resources that can be tapped for entrepreneurial venture?



Interpretation: It was found that many of the respondents have seen natural resources in their region for creating an entrepreneurial venture. Few respondents have denied the fact, while some are not sure.

Figure V

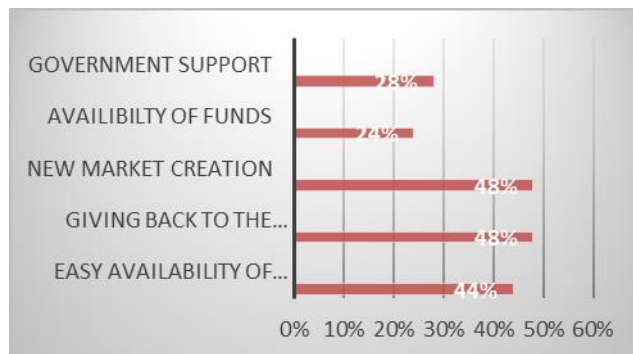
b) If yes, what type of resources can be tapped for entrepreneurial venture?



Interpretation: Among 28 respondents most of them seen medicinal plants and trees as a possible entrepreneurial venture.

Figure VI

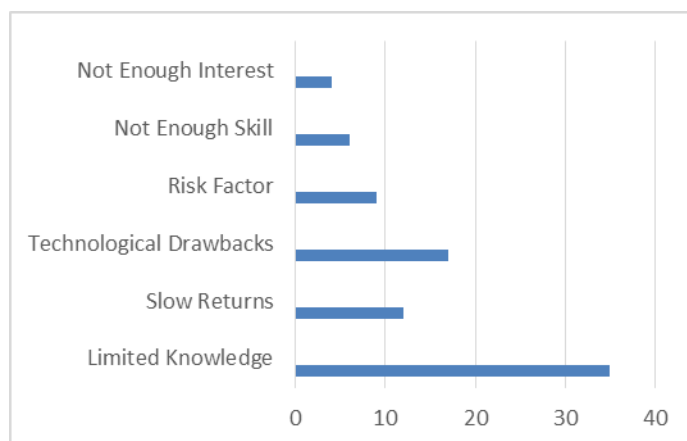
Factors advantageous for sustainable entrepreneurship



Interpretation: It is observed that 24 respondents among 50 respondents, have seen that creation of new market, giving back to the society and availability of raw materials are most advantageous factors for doing sustainable entrepreneurship.

Figure VII

Barriers in the field of sustainable entrepreneurship.



Interpretation: Almost 35 respondents have chosen limited knowledge as one of the most important barriers in the field of sustainable entrepreneurship.

B) Analysis of Data collected through secondary data:

Case I:

BRAHMAPUTRA FABLES- Dhruba Jyoti Borah (ASSAM)

It came about in 2017, the founder realized that the resources, talent and beauty of North East India were not getting the attention they deserved. It is a commerce platform; it enables people to choose from a range of authentic handicrafts carefully source from artisans in the region. They launched it in June 2017 with 30 artisans on board selling 100 products. The products were mainly brass and metal work along with silk apparels from sualkuchi. At present, it has 3000 artisans. They keep only 10-20 percent of the sales with the artisans and pocketing the rest. The company has generated Rs.25lakhs in revenue in just 18months, and has shipped its products within India. Brass & Bell metal products, silk textiles, designer jewelers or handicraft products are being marketed.

Case II:

DB Industries- Dhritiman Borah (ASSAM)

D B industries is the result of the innovative venture of Dhritiman Borah who left school after Class 12 and started bamboo furniture, kitchen and agricultural implements. Started with selling a number of bamboo items-furniture, partitions, wall hangings, flower pot, mats, crockery. It took 17 years for him to come with a product-i.e., BAMBOO WATER BOTTLE. Finally, he was able to develop organic bottles. First order came from UK, after showcasing at an international fair in Delhi. Each bottle takes about 5 hours to make it complete. The bottles are priced between Rs.250 to Rs.400. Dhritiman Borah is using social media as a driving factor to market its product. Almost every product is hand made. Every month nearly about 100-150 bamboo are needed. Currently, 1500 bottles are being produced in a month, but they have the capacity to produce 8000 bottles a month.

Case III:

Lambu-subu-Rita Tage (ARUNACHAL PRADESH)

An agricultural engineer, Rita Tage used the abundantly found Ziro's Kiwi Fruit into one of the finest wines in India. She is the managing director and chairperson of Lambu-Subu food and her company produced the country's first organic kiwi wine and was launched in October 2017. The product being named as Naara Aaba. Rita winery has a plant capacity of 4000 liters per batch.

This commercial venture has changed and touched the lives of many farmers, who were on the verge of giving up farming of Kiwi. The 2300 Sq. Ft of winery in Ziro and currently employs over 25 people formally and many other local farmers are engaged directly and indirectly.

Case IV:

Meira Foods-Shubhra Devi (MANIPUR)

It is a packed food company started in 2004. Started with a few Rs.100 but today, Meira food products are available in local shops across Manipur. Meira's product consists mainly of pickles, candies and salted dry fruit items. The techniques of the products is that all the products are prepared from indigenous fruits and vegetables in Manipur.

In the year 2004-05, the turnover was just Rs.3000. During 2005-06, it was Rs.1lakh, 2012-13 turnover was Rs. 75laks. But now it has crossed Rs. 1 crore.

Their mantra for growing is-whatever they earn, invest in the machinery, stocks and the trained dedicated staff.

Case V:

Jesmine Zeliang (NAGALAND)

It started with only 3 women weavers. Jesmine Zeliang is today an executive member of the Handicrafts and Carpet Sector Skill Council from the North East Region. She is the founder of Cane Concept established in 1993-manufacturing and exporting cane and bamboo products. She opened a high-end store Konyak, selling products from Nagaland located in Guwahati and Dibrugarh.

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The firm has now over 30 clusters of weavers spread across multiple villages in the state.

Case VI:

Romi Industries-Khumbonmayum Dhanachandra Singh (MANIPUR)

A successful entrepreneur who was a college dropout, who runs a manufacturing unit and generates jobs for others and launched the industry in 1996. He used waste clothes for making very creative design purse. Presently, he has a staff of almost 30 people with latest stitching machines. Now, the business has expanded and started manufacturing school bags, air bags, camera bags, rain coats, jackets, track suits, laptop bags and many other items. Even he is planning to export his products outside i.e., outside North East and Foreign Country.

Case VII:

Kara Fresh Foods-Phikarlin Wanshong or Kong Kara (SHILLONG)

An entrepreneur who specializes in food processing. Her work has been acknowledged by MSME. She was motivated from her family who praised for her tasty pickle. In 1998, she took the first step by attending a two-week training course. Products made by her enterprise include a large range of pickled foods-bamboo shoot, dried fish, mango, wild apple, chilly and various other locally available fruits. Now, the enterprise is expanding and started manufacturing juice from the locally available fruits like carambola, pineapple, cherry and many other. Hygiene is very important in her operations and she is very careful about the cleaning and drying. She is roughly operating 25%-30% profit margin. Her success in food processing has attracted online retailers and now sell many of her products online for diversification.

Case VIII:

Paper Waste Management-Crypsil Sangma (MEGHALAYA)

She is from West Garo Hills and started her journey from 2017-18. Crypsil basically cuts waste paper into pieces and makes traditional Garo attires and is helped mostly by her relatives and neighbors in her venture-which directly runs from her home. She showcases her products and collections in fashion shows and exhibition organized by her uncle. But after getting motivation and confidence from various exhibition, she used to travel various places and started showcasing her products. She got into entrepreneurship as in the past she always for hunt for Government Job but after seeing the vast opportunities she changed her mind.

Case IX:

Tura Local-Mathew M Sangma (TURA, MEGHALAYA)

Mathew, ventures-Hi Echo-Markets products made from sustainable use of selected natural resources under the brand TURA Local.

The firm is trading in Natural Products such as loofah, grass brooms, jute twine, clay powder, bamboo, and cane products.

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Mathew's firm also deals in Jackfruit, bamboo shoot, and other varieties of pickles besides banana and tapioca wafers.

Though, many difficulties and constraints are being faced but now the firm is in a good position and is earning profit. The firm generally transferred their products to wholesalers but planning to exporting their products within North East region, still exporting has products to few states is almost done.

Case X:

Deisa food Processing-Wanmon Tang (MEGHALAYA)

Wanmon is a partner of Laskein EFC and the proprietor of a small home-based enterprise. The enterprise produces candies from locally available fruits and vegetables like wild apple, gooseberry, jackfruit, ginger, pickles, jam, fruit wine, juice, turmeric, and chili flakes. Chief Minister of the state congratulate her by seeing the initiative she came up with that take locally produced goods and add value to it. And promised to take new schemes for the development of entrepreneurship which are sustainable for the economy.

Case XI:

TamBul-Arindom, Nidhi and Anirban (ASSAM)

Founded by Arindom, Nidhi and Anirban, 3 passionate social entrepreneurs started their operations. They flagged off their full-fledged production unit and initiated production of arecanut leaf plates and bowls in 2012. They received their first global recognition from SEED-Un and other international bodies. They raised their first round of investment from Upaya Venture and Rianta Capital in 2013. In 2014, they started working with Assam Government to spread this activity in 20 districts of the state. They exported their first International container of arecanut leaf plates to Europe in 2016.

They introduced state of the hydraulic machines to meet global quality and quantity standards. They have vision of creating employment of more than 50000 youths of North East India through Arecanut leaf plate manufacturing.

Case XII:

Noune Kro SHG- 15 women (NAGALAND)

It was formed in the year 2008 with 15 women. Started by working daily as wage laborers, selling new clothes, tea leaves and mushroom cultivation but later on they discussed and moved to fiber production industry.

In fiber Production Industry, banana pseudo stem and pineapple leaves which are generally disposed after harvesting the fruit are utilized for extraction of fiber and weaving of different handicraft products.

This new and innovative idea was introduced with the increasing need to conserve the environment, the importance of ecofriendly products made of banana and pineapple leaf fibers can be used for its durability and also in apparels and home furnishing.

Case XIII:

Farm Women's Food Security Group-Vihuli Zhimomi(NAGALAND)

The farmer interested to grow vegetables at her farm and decided not to use chemicals to increase the yield but instead of that she chooses organic methods.

She approached various government offices for construction of a vermicompost unit and was accepted under RKVY Scheme.

She started practicing vermicompost and applied the manure in her vegetables and sold in the nearest market with less money. She then disseminates the same and gradually recognized her coordination and hardship and formed FSG with other 10 women of her locality.

FSG group mainly concentrated on women farmers and encouraged them in backyard kitchen activities. Achipi FSG's main activity includes Vermi-Composting in each member's household.

Case XIV:

Vermi Compost-Rushma Rai (SIKKIM)

When Sikkim was struggling to become an organic state a few years back, a business idea stuck Rai. The idea was of selling organic manure.

The capital for her business came in through the CMSS, her own savings and a bank loan and set up a factory of organic vermicompost.

It is small with 11 people and the total cost of the project was Rs.15 lakhs. She took almost 6 months before selling and now planning to export outside the state.

Case XV:

Candles-Smita Rai (SIKKIM)

She is a budding woman entrepreneur among the other entrepreneurs in North East Region. She is engaged in making perfumed candles with the help of group of women. She thought of making candles when she heard about the Vasundhara Award, to create Regional platform for women entrepreneurs and accidentally she waded into the untried waters of candle making.

Then she asked for help and studied about the manufacturing process of making candles with the help of eco-friendly products which are easily available. Now, she is planning to make lighting candles.

Case XVI:

Home Décor-Chimi Ongmu (SIKKIM)

Chimi chooses to be an entrepreneur at a very young age and has already showing signs of blossoming early with their works being recognized far and wide. Chimi works with local artisans to make handicraft items for home décor. Chimi is based as a product designer by NIFT. She uses local resources, both in terms of raw materials and manpower as she believed that entrepreneurship is pro-nature and

environment-friendly. She hoped that she would improve the living standards of the artisans engaged in Sikkimese handicrafts.

FINDINGS:

- Most of the respondents are influenced to choose entrepreneurship as a career option because of small self-ownership as well as helping the society. The influence of the societal factor is somewhat prevalent while opting for entrepreneurship.
- Most of the respondents are aware about the concept of sustainable entrepreneurship but still there is a scope for further awareness.
- Most of the respondents have admitted to have seen natural resources to be tapped for entrepreneurial ventures. Even from the successful entrepreneurs it can be seen that each and every entrepreneur are using ecofriendly products and natural resources for their products.
- Medicinal plants be the most abundantly found resources that can be made use for entrepreneurship.
- The factors that are termed as advantageous for doing sustainable entrepreneurship is getting the chance to have a new market creation, giving something back to the society, easy availability of raw materials that can be advantageous for sustainable entrepreneurship.
- The respondents have chosen limited knowledge as the prime barrier for sustainable entrepreneurship and to move towards a new venture. Technological drawbacks being the second most important barrier and slow returns and risk factor respectively also adds to the limitation.
- From the various cases of entrepreneurial venture of North-East India, it can be inferred that every venture has taken up the resources abundantly found and gave it a new shape which nobody ever explored before.
- The ventures are getting good profit margins but it does take several years at a slow and steady rate.
- The authentic products could attract the eyes of government and foreign market with many of the ventures getting financial support from them as well as some of them exporting their products outside the region and even outside the country.
- Such ventures can easily attract capital and loans from the Government. Most of them have started their business through such loan itself.

SUGGESTION:

- Entrepreneurship being known to most of the people but the concept of sustainable entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship should be more emphasized through awareness.
- The existing ventures can start small branches and outlets in the region to encourage and aware the people and also it will create employment opportunity.
- The DICCC and MSME can take up responsibility to train and mentor budding entrepreneurs in creating a niche market with a niche product.
- The successful entrepreneurs in this field can mentor through blogs and writings. They can also start their

YouTubeChannels for motivating by giving tips and plans.

- Make use of social media and networking to reach out to more customers.
- Expos and trade fairs should be tapped to market their products.

CONCLUSION:

In the age of unemployment and less jobs being created there is a need to create your own market and earn livelihood and also provide jobs to others. There are a lot of examples who have succeeded in doing this. The use of efficient resources, techniques and processes helps in creating a sustainable environment where apart from earning a profit the venture is thinking of giving something back to the society in terms of jobs and sustainable products. Here the use of eco-friendly methods and products are very important. The North East India is full of such opportunities and those people will be very successful if they could find such resources and give them a good shape. These potentialities are ready to be tapped with some effort and help from the authorities. It will positively help the region and boost the economy of the country.

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