

Odisha Handicrafts: Preserving Heritage and Overcoming Challenges for a Sustainable Future

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Abstract:

Odisha's handicrafts are renowned both nationally and internationally for their beauty, elegance, and intricate designs. The artisans of Odisha are celebrated for their exceptional craftsmanship, mastery of design, and remarkable sense of color. In a predominantly agricultural society, these artisans play a crucial role, contributing to the self-sufficiency of village communities. The handicraft sector not only provides employment to a large number of people in rural and semi-urban areas but also generates significant foreign exchange while preserving the region's cultural heritage.

However, the sector faces numerous challenges, such as being largely unorganized, with additional issues including lack of education, limited access to capital, insufficient exposure to new technologies, lack of market intelligence, and a weak institutional framework. This article aims to identify the challenges artisans encounter in marketing their handicrafts, addressing the overall problems they face. It also explores the contemporary challenges and the potential of the handicraft sector in Odisha, proposing interventions to make the industry more market-oriented and sustainable in the future.

Key Words: Problems, Challenges, Artisans, Handicraft, Rural marketing, Traditional handicrafts.

Introduction:

Odisha has earned a distinguished reputation in the field of handicrafts, where talented artisans transform simple materials into stunning works of art. Their exceptional skills are showcased in the creation of exquisite household items, reflecting the unique topography and natural blessings of the region. Odisha's handicrafts are celebrated both nationally and internationally for their beauty, elegance, and intricate designs. This sector plays a vital role in the state's economy, providing direct or indirect employment to over one lakh people.

The artisans, with their deft hands, turn every piece they touch into something remarkable. The term "handicrafts" covers a broad spectrum of artifacts, typically produced within the informal sector. This sector is characterized by its reliance on locally available resources and skills, family ownership, small-scale operations, labor-intensive processes, and traditional technologies. Skills are often passed down outside the formal education system, and the market

for these products remains largely unregulated and competitive. Artisanal products are crafted either entirely by hand or with the aid of hand tools or mechanical means, with the artisan's manual contribution being the most significant component of the final product.

Review of Literature:

Artisans in the handicraft industry lack recognition, market access, and exposure to new technologies, resulting in low profits and limited opportunities. Socio-economic conditions, marketing challenges, and the use of ancient production technologies further hinder the growth and sustainability of artisans Dalal, Bhattacharya, Chattopadhyay (2023), Crafts embody the history and heritage of their country of origin and can play an essential role in the country's socioeconomic development by providing significant job opportunities for the rural population. This article investigates the significant challenges that artisan entrepreneurs face when creating, communicating and selling handcrafted goods to potential customers in emerging economies.

Bhat and Yadav (2016), The Handicrafts Sector plays a significant & prominent role in the country's economy. It provides employment to a vast segment of craft persons in rural, and semi urban areas. It generates substantial foreign exchange for the country while preserving its cultural heritage. Handicrafts are hugely important in terms of economic development. They provide ample opportunities for employment even with low capital investments and thus become a prominent medium for foreign earnings. India is one of the important suppliers of handicrafts to the world market and has shown its importance since years. Handicrafts do not mean to rely only on the handwork, innovation, and technology can also be collaborated with the mind frame of the artisans for further enhancement in this sector.

Mohapatra et al. (2001) This research paper finds out different problems associated with craftsmen engaged in producing handicrafts in the state of Odisha, India. Odisha has a distinguished craft heritage. The craftsmanship of the arts and crafts embodies a tradition, which lives in the creative imagination of the artists of the state.

Sanyal and et al. (2010) performed study on the Leather Industry in India by using the Constant Market Share (CMS) Analysis, found the change in export from (1991-2006) and conveys that the leather export has been seen decreasing due the change in demand in the world, change and market competitiveness.

Sharma (2014) study that as handicrafts sector plays a significant role in the economy of the Sikkim state. It provides employment to a vast segment of craft persons in rural and semi urban areas and generates plenty income. The handicraft sector had suffered due to poor infrastructure, transport facilities, low capital and poor exposure to new technologies, absence of market intelligence and a poor institutional framework. However handicraft has great growth

potential in the changing scenario with its basic strength being the abundant and cheap manpower.

Bharti (2005) express that the satisfactory performance in the marketing of handicraft could be possible with the interest of both the central and the state government to boost up the export of the handicraft articles and the qualitative performance of the artisans.

Shah & Patel (2015) in their paper ‘E-commerce and Rural Handicraft Artisans’, have focused on various opportunities of e-marketing available to handicraft artisans, as today is the age of mobile and technology. Evaluating the data of internet users in the country as well as in the world; and the mobile internet users in urban and rural India, the authors have tried to show an ample of opportunities open to these artists, if proper awareness and efficient system is developed in this sector. Besides, researchers suggested the E-commerce as one of the most promising channels in the marketing scenario today for selling handicrafts.

Craft Buck Team (2020) expressed that Crafts play a very important role in representing the culture and traditions of any country or region. Crafts are an important means of preserving the rich art of our traditions, heritage, and culture, traditional skills and talents that are associated with people’s lifestyle and history. The Indian artisan industry is a highly labor-intensive, artisanal, and decentralized industry. The industry is spread throughout the country, mainly in rural and urban areas. Most of the manufacturing units are located in rural and small towns, and there is enormous market potential in all Indian cities and abroad. The artisanal industry is an important source of income for rural communities that employ more than six million artisans, including large numbers of women and people belonging to the weakest sectors of society.

Ahmed (1980) in his book entitled “Problems and Management of Small Scale and Cottage Industries” and Bharati (2005) express that the satisfactory performance in marketing of handicrafts could be possible due to the special interest taken by central as well as State Government to boost up the export of handicraft article and the qualitative performance of the artisans. Papola (1984) in his book “Rural industrialization” and Das (1980) had made an extensive study on 14 Categories of rural industries. Most rural industries especially traditional in nature have a limited capacity to generate even the subsistence income to the members engaged in it. Setty (1963) and Mohapatra (1991) make a comparative study between small scale and household industries in his book entitled “Small Scale and household industries in a developing country”. Setty is of the opinion that those units which are the sole and full- time occupation of entrepreneurs yield better income. For this reason, small scale industries can yield more income than household industries.

A project work was undertaken by Indian Census (1981) to study the different aspects of bellmetal industries. It discusses the present status of the industry, the various problems it faces all around and the reasons for its gradual decay. The report reveals that during the last two

decades the craft men witnessed disintegration and has to survive against new rivals. Rao (1978) in his book “Marketing of Handicrafts” has elaborated about marketing of handicrafts in which he has also highlighted about activities of artisans.

Mohapatra (1987) also discussed these activities as the living needs of artisans. Mohapatra (2005), Santanu (1995) and Samal (1994) has done her research work in “Applique craft tradition and craftsmen of Odisha and change” look to their appliqué works. Bharati (2005) in an article” Eastern India Handicrafts: A Preliminary Survey” published in Floklone a journal gorgeous. Gill (1980) explained about artisan history, the artisan socio- economic condition and their problem areas in handicraft sector.

Garg & Walia (2019) discussed that the challenges of the handicraft industry by delineating the difficulties faced by the artisans involved in handicraft sector through urban haats and attempts to understand Indian handicrafts from an ethnic and urban perspective. It was found hands-on labour work, lack of skill; licensing and other regulations along with the standard supply chain have a significant effect on decisions associated with participation in haats.

From the available literature, the problems that artisan community in Odisha face are largely classified into timely payment of their wages, availability of raw materials, regular orders for different arte facts, need for financial assistance in form of loans and ability to market the handicraft products. This forms the context for study for the present research.

Shah & Patel (2017) Despite of various government and non-government efforts, the reality is not satisfactory. The handicraft artisans suffer a lot due to being unorganized, lack of education, low capital, poor exposure to new technologies, absence of market intelligence and a poor institutional framework. Artisans continue to confront an array of challenges. The spectre of low wages, limited market access, and difficulty in securing loans haunts their every step. The pandemic dealt a devastating blow to their already precarious livelihoods.

From the available literature, the problems that artisan community in Odisha faces are largely for marketing their handicrafts. This forms the context for study for the present research. . If proper measures are not taken to help the artisans and provide support to them, then the beautiful art will have to face extinction.

Objective of the study:

The main objective of this research is to know the status of artisans in relation to Indian Handicrafts Industry and to find out the problems and prospects to suggest some value-added interventions to create competitiveness in the market.

Research Methodology:

The present study is both descriptive and explorative in nature. A structured questionnaire has designed keeping in mind the objectives of the study with a 5-point rating scale (5-strongly agree, 4-agree, 3-neutral, 2-disagree and 1-strongly disagree). Simple random probability sampling technique has been used for the purpose of data collection. 565 sample artisans are considered for the study to collect the data in such a way that it covers the entire traits of problems and prospects of artisans Puri district.

Graphical representation of the analyzed data has also been done. Hypotheses framed have been tested using various tools like Structural Equation Model (SEM) and Chi-Square test. Further, Mean, SD, Multiple Regression, ANOVA, t-test is analyzed to interpret the research to get the conclusions and findings. And lastly required recommendations have been made.

Problems and Challenges (PC) faced by Handicraft Sector

Table-1:

Item Statistics Problems and Challenges (PC) faced by Handicraft Sector (N= 565)

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha item wise	Cronbach's Alpha (combined)	N of Items
PC1	4.423	0.145	0.866	0.817	10
PC2	4.358	0.170	0.863		
PC3	1.465	0.167	0.853		
PC4	4.781	0.413	0.852		
PC5	4.821	0.351	0.839		
PC6	4.418	0.267	0.895		
PC7	4.370	0.143	0.825		
PC8	4.558	0.151	0.839		
PC9	4.255	0.362	0.824		
PC10	4.639	0.327	0.890		

Source: developed from the survey data

PC1: Decreasing demand due to change in the taste & interest of people; **PC2:** Handicraft is losing its original form due to changes in lifestyle and culture; **PC3:** Competition with latest machine-made products of large industries; **PC4:** Problems of quality and durability due to handmade; **PC5:** Less gain as compared to hard work; **PC6:** Middlemen earn huge profit; **PC7:** New generation is not interested in handicrafts; **PC8:** Lack of infrastructural facilities; **PC9:** Improper implementation of government schemes/programmes; **PC10:** Heavy irregularities in employment.

The above Table shows the reliability statistics (Cronbach’s Alpha) and descriptive statistics of ‘Problems and Challenges faced by Handicraft Sector’ of SMEs of coir artisans. The combined Cronbach’s Alpha as well as individual items value is coming more than 0.8 which reveals that the items used in the questionnaire for the measurement of Problems and Challenges faced by Handicraft Sector are internally homogenous and consistent. Therefore, all the variables of the factor ‘Problems and Challenges faced by Handicraft Sector’ are significant and contributing to the study.

All the variables/ statements related to problems and challenges is coming more than 4 except the statement ‘PC3: *Competition with latest machine-made products of large industries* (4.465)’. this statement is not agreed by the artisans. Out of the ten constitute variables, the variable PC5: *Less gain as compared to hard work* (4.821) and PC10: *Heavy irregularities in employment* (4.639), the mean value is coming high means artisans are more positive to these two statements.

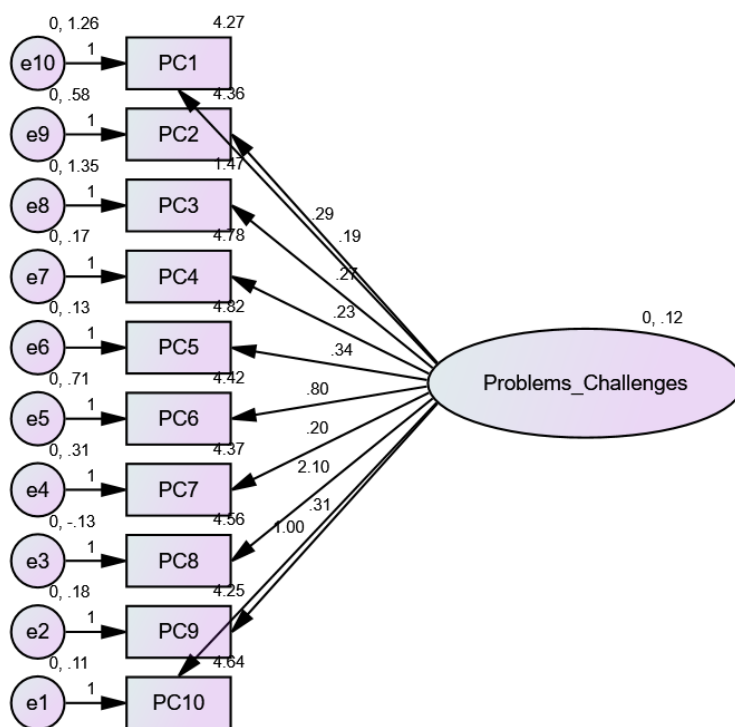


Fig.-1: SEM of Problems and Challenges faced by Handicraft Sector

Table-2:

SEM results of Problems and Challenges faced by Handicraft Sector

Particulars	CFI	RMSEA	GFI	NFI
Chi-square = 23.32	0.977	0.078	0.979	0.970
Degrees of freedom = 28		RFI		
Probability level = 0.000		0.976		

Source: developed from the survey data

CFI: Comparative fit index, **RMSEA:** Root Mean Square Error of Approximation, **NFI:** Normed fit index, **GFI:** Goodness – of-fit, **RFI:** Relative fit index

The SEM of **Problems and Challenges faced by Handicraft Sector** of coir artisans are well fitted. The fit of the model was examined and verified, that each indicator loaded significantly with its intended construct. In the model, Chi-square = 23.32, df = 28, $p < 0.001$, CFI=0.977, GFI=0.978, NFI= 0.970, RFI = 0.976, RMSEA= 0.078, provided a good fit to the data (Browne and Cudek, 1993; Hu and Bentler, 1999). Each item loaded significantly with its intended construct, as the significant value of $p < 0.01$ (0.000).

Table-3:
Path analysis and coefficient of Problems and Challenges faced by Handicraft Sector
(N= 565)

Particulars	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P Label
PC10 <--- Problems Challenges	1.000			
PC9 <--- Problems Challenges	0.310	0.043	7.146	***
PC8 <--- Problems Challenges	2.097	0.135	15.562	***
PC7 <--- Problems Challenges	0.199	0.054	3.660	***
PC6 <--- Problems Challenges	0.802	0.090	8.949	***
PC5 <--- Problems Challenges	0.339	0.039	8.766	***
PC4 <--- Problems Challenges	0.231	0.041	5.673	***
PC3 <--- Problems Challenges	0.273	0.112	2.425	***
PC2 <--- Problems Challenges	0.194	0.074	2.630	***
PC1 <--- Problems Challenges	0.286	0.109	2.633	***

Source: developed from the survey data

All the p value/ label of the variables related Problems and Challenges faced by Handicraft Sector of coir artisans in Puri district through path analysis was coming significant at 1 per cent level (***). The assessment of the model fit is revealed by the goodness of fit indexes such as GFI, CFI and RMSEA

In the above table of regression coefficient (estimate) is derived by SEM through maximum likelihood estimates. The path analysis reveals that – regression weights of the above model is structurally fitted well. All the supporting variables of other supporting activities are statistically significant and contributing to the SEM. Out of the ten independent variables of *Problems and Challenges faced by Handicraft*, the variable '**PC8: Lack of infrastructural facilities; PC9: Improper implementation of government schemes/programmes (2.097)** and **PC10: Heavy irregularities in employment (1.000)** contribute maximum towards problems and challenges faced by coir artisans.

Handicaps in development:

There are many reasons for low productivity, low performance of handicrafts industry, out of which major reasons could be as follows;

- Unorganised production base
- Limited market opportunities
- Lack of modernization efforts
- Lack of proper guidance and encouragement
- Limited credit facilities
- High production cost
- Stiff competition from outside
- Lack of exposure and poor work environment

Specific challenges under each category were identified through interviews, field visits and detailed data analysis. In different functional areas such as production, marketing, finance, design and development and training, attempt was made to compile possible interventions as suggested by the government's Directorate of Handicrafts and Cottage Industries in their various reports and also by the artisans. The compilation is presented in the following

Table-4:

Interventions suggested in various Government Reports and also by Artisans in different Functional Areas:

	Report of Directorate of Handicrafts & Cottage Industries 2003	Report of Directorate of Handicrafts & Cottage Industries (2004-2009) (Action Plan)	According to Artisans (Based on Survey of artisans by Dr. M. Dash)
Production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide infrastructure support for improvement of quality and productivity. • To ensure participation of all members involved production. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Craftwise documentation of existing tools and analysis for the scope of further advancement and applications. • Demonstration cum learning Workshop. • Organizing exposure visits. • Strengthening/creation of common Facility Centres. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put the right price for each item. • Time period for delivering the product should be in time. • Artisans should make the product in such a way everybody will attract towards it. • Govt. should open shops for raw materials. • Should be scientific quality control for some crafts.
Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To organize design 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skill upgradation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different and various

	Report of Directorate of Handicrafts & Cottage Industries 2003	Report of Directorate of Handicrafts & Cottage Industries (2004-2009) (Action Plan)	According to Artisans (Based on Survey of artisans by Dr. M. Dash)
	<p>assistance programme.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To conduct demonstration programmes for the improved tools and equipments. • To organize Design and Technical Development Workshop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizing Training for Master Craftsmen and Institutional Training. • Design Development • Test marketing of the product • Documentation and Dissemination of Design 	<p>new product and design should be introduced.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design registration should be done. • Govt. should setup strong rule and heavy penalties to copy of the design.
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To set up craft schools and training centre sat different places. • To organize training camps. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizing sensitization/ Awareness Camp. • Adequate training to artisans for sustained self-employment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Govt. should arrange workshop for maser crafts person for design development and Make new product.
Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide direct marketing facility throughout the year and eliminate the middle agencies. • To ensure effective participation of all members. • To ensure effective participation of all members in marketing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizing marketing events. • Participation in Trade Fair/ Exhibitions. • Developing business linkage with govt. marketing agencies. • Developing increase number of market complex • Involvement of private and corporate house for market promotion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Govt. should take necessary action regarding the marketing problem. • To open website sand through advertisement. • Marketing should be properly organized. • Regular exhibition should be organized.
Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To increase the capital base of handicrafts. • Financial 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrangement of finance for S.H.Cs for production and marketing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loan should be provided to the artisan in time. • Loan at low interest rate

	Report of Directorate of Handicrafts & Cottage Industries 2003	Report of Directorate of Handicrafts & Cottage Industries (2004-2009) (Action Plan)	According to Artisans (Based on Survey of artisans by Dr. M. Dash)
	assistance for export promotion activities. • To provide financial assistance to old craft.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linking to banks for credit. • Introduction of artisan credit card. 	should be provided. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide capital to modernize the craft. • Daily wages of the artisan should be fixed by the government. • Sales tax should be exempted by the government on some items. • Should provide old age pension to craftsmen.

Source: compiled by the author

Conclusion:

For effective implementation of interventions, a well-structured organization and a thorough understanding of the challenges faced by cluster units are essential, along with a clear framework outlining the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders. To enhance the operational efficiency and competitiveness of these cluster units, a Self-Help Group (SHG) approach, comprising unit holders and artisans, is proposed. This model allows stakeholders to share technical expertise, design skills, and limited resources within the cluster, fostering cooperation and leading to sustainable development.

It is crucial for like-minded institutions to collaborate in providing strategic direction and developing action plans that address systems, procedures, and standards related to design, market access, technology, innovation, and quality of life. By integrating product design, technology, and marketing into the craft's development and repositioning process, the sector can be revitalized. Additionally, young Indian artists are learning to adapt new techniques and materials, blending them with their rich cultural heritage to meet the demands of a changing world.

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