





# Trade of Handicraft Products through E-commerce in Bastar District of Chhattisgarh: Issues and Challenges

 Neelima Singh Thakur<sup>1\*</sup>  Sunil Kumar Kumeti<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, School of Studies in Economics, Pt. Ravishankar Shukla University, Raipur, India

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, School of Studies in Economics, Pt. Ravishankar Shukla University, Raipur, India

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\*Corresponding Author: [neelimasinghthakur24@gmail.com](mailto:neelimasinghthakur24@gmail.com)

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The handicrafts are an important source of income for rural areas. It employs more than six million artisans, including many women and members of socially disadvantaged groups. Today, craftsmanship contributes significantly to exports and job creation. The craft holds enormous potential as it is vital to both the millions of artisans already in the country and the growing number of newcomers entering the craft industry. Each handcrafted item has a story that tells the craftsman's inspiration or enthusiasm in making it. This study is based only on primary data collected from the artisans of Bastar districts of Chhattisgarh. The study attempted to determine the level of digitalization of handicrafts in Bastar district and the challenges faced by artisans in adopting modern technology and e-commerce for trade.

**Keywords:** *Handicraft, Artisans, E-commerce, Trading, Challenges, Digitalization.*



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

There was a time when traditional crafts flourished, but today they are threatened with extinction. So, what happened during that time? The main reason for the decline of traditional crafts is the rapid pace of industrialization and the emergence of advanced technologies. The craft sector is currently facing many challenges and may be at its worst. The average income of an artisan is still very low compared to other professions. Rising consumption and market trends are also impacting the industry in various ways. Artisans do not have access to research

tools, reports on market trends or complete knowledge of different tastes. Most artisans in their region face a shortage of quality raw materials. And because of their weak bargaining power, they have no choice but to buy raw materials at very high prices. Most artisans still use outdated technologies and centuries-old production methods, which not only increases production costs but also creates handmade products of average quality.

### 1.1. How digital change can restore lost identity of Handicraft Industry?

We are all aware of the power and effectiveness of digital tools. With the digital platform provided to the artisans, they can renovate the dilapidated state of traditional crafts without much effort. The rapid growth of e-commerce platforms has led to the development of a vast ecosystem of online marketplaces, consumer communities, entrepreneurial developers and crowd funding programs that can help artisans significantly transform the current state of craftsmanship. E-commerce platforms allow artisans to get closer to buyers and sellers. Digital tools allow local artisans to connect with a global audience to promote their business and restore lost recognition of the craft. Local artisans can use the digital platform to instill a sense of social responsibility in creating sustainable livelihoods among other artisans and patrons. The growing demand for authentic Indian handicrafts in the United States and European countries continues to attract investments in this sector.

## 2. Review of Literatures

**Taylor and Francis (2014)** Meeting the challenges of the handicraft industry in Africa: Evidence from Nairobi John Harris: The article presents findings related to productivity constraints observed in the cottage industry in Nairobi, Kenya. It aims to support NGOs, intergovernmental organizations and national governments in their efforts to support local handicraft industries in Africa and beyond. One hundred and two respondents were asked about their operations, cost structures, hiring practices, and other industry relationships. This article identifies a number of practical issues that hinder productivity and limit livelihoods, including problematic labor practices, adverse selection conditions, the context of protected information in small-scale production, and the industry's tendency to become hypercompetitive.

**Patel, Rajiv and Shah, Amisha (2017)** Problems and Challenges faced by handicraft artisans: The craft has enormous potential to provide employment opportunities to millions of artisans across the country as most artisans have an innate skill that can be converted into a profession. The women of Gujarat are very

successful in the art of needle and thread. They are usually used to carry out such work in the home. But today these products are in demand everywhere. They require a professional and market-driven approach. The government is trying to promote arts and crafts through various programs and policies. Despite various governmental and non-governmental efforts, the reality is not satisfactory. Craftsmen suffer greatly from a lack of organization, a lack of training, little capital, little access to new technologies, a lack of market knowledge and an inadequate institutional framework.

**Dash, Manjusmita and Mishra, Bidhu Bhusan (2021)** Problems of Handicraft Artisans: An Overview: It is a popular belief that Indian handicrafts are famous all over the world for centuries but the fact is very bitter and strange as there is no fame or recognition for the poor rural artisans living in some dark corners of the country and starves. For various reasons, this great cultural heritage is threatened by internal and external forces. This research presents various issues related to artisans involved in the production of handicrafts. The beauty and charm of the craftsmanship has always attracted many Indian and foreign tourists.

## 3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To analyze the level of digitalization in Handicraft Industry in Chhattisgarh.
- To study the challenges faced by Handicraft artisans for digitalization.

## 4. DATA SETS AND METHODOLOGY

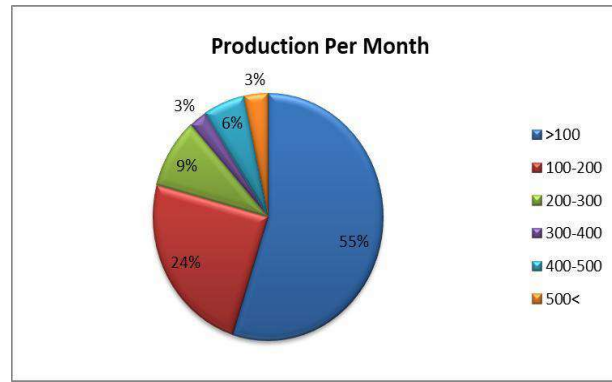
The article is based solely on primary data collected from artisans residing in Chhattisgarh. The sample size of the study is 120 handicraft artisans. The area selected for study is Bastar district of Chhattisgarh state. Bastar is a one of the most tribal dominated district of the state. Bastar has been chosen for the study because of the high number of handicraft artisans among all the districts of Chhattisgarh and Bastar is also famous worldwide for its handicrafts, tribal art and culture. Stratified random sampling method has used for the study where artisans from six different craft categories are surveyed. Questionnaires and schedules are used to collect data. Percentage analysis has been performed for findings, interpretation and results.

## 5. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

### 5.1. Production per month by Handicraft Artisans

**Table-1:** Production per month by Handicraft Artisans

Sr. No.	Production Per month	No. of Artisans
1.	>100	66
2.	100-200	29
3.	200-300	11
4.	300-400	3
5.	400-500	7
6.	500<	4



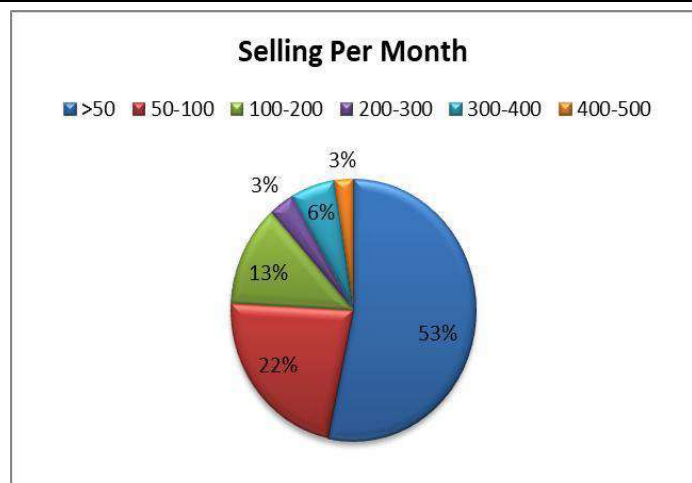
Source: (Based on individual survey)

Table No. 1 shows the number of products produced each month by artisans. The majority of artisans, 55% of those surveyed, are capable of producing less than 100 units of product per month. The reasons for their low output are many: low supply of raw materials, low demand, low workforce, etc. 24% of respondents said they produce 100 to 200 handmade products per month. Only 3% of people surveyed said they produce more than 500 handmade products per month.

### 5.2. Selling Per Month by Handicraft Artisans

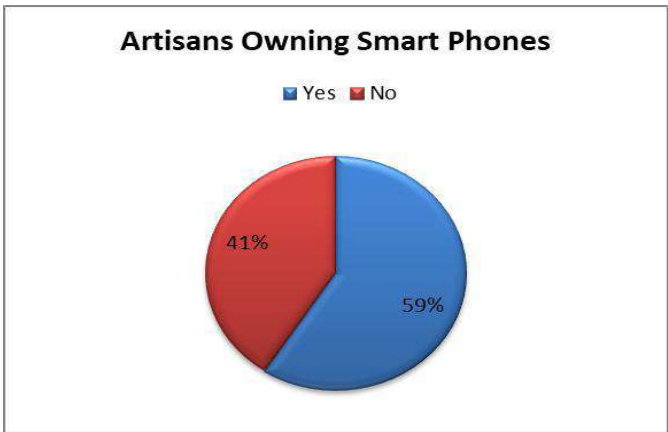
**Table-2:** Selling Per Month by Handicraft Artisans

Sr. No.	Selling Per month	No. of Artisans
1.	>50	64
2.	50-100	27
3.	100-200	15
4.	200-300	4
5.	300-400	7
6.	400-500	3



Source : (Based on individual survey)

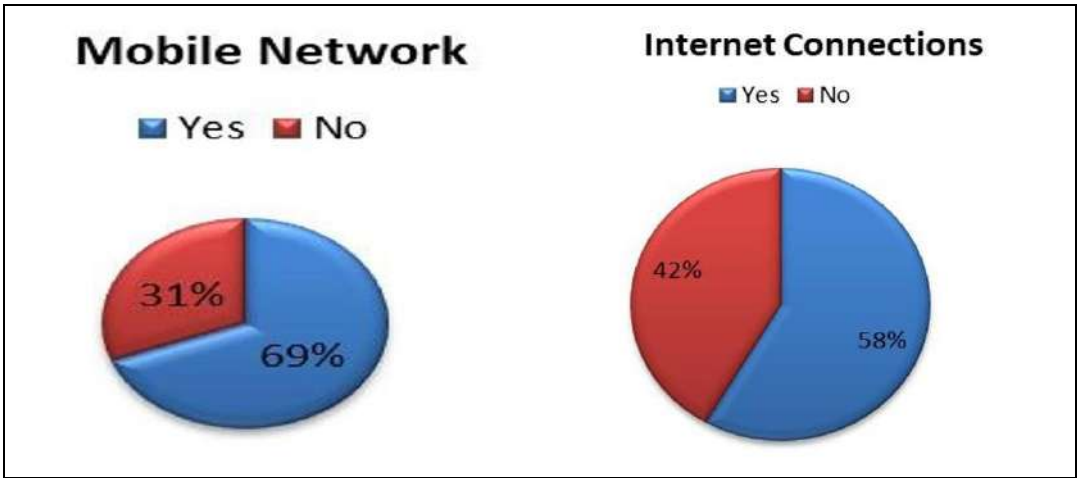
### 5.3. Percentage of Artisans Owning Smart Phones



**Fig-3:** Handicraft Artisans Owning Smart Phones

Figure 3 shows the percentage of artisans who own smartphones. Only 59% of total respondents own a smartphone and 41% of respondents do not have or use a smartphone.

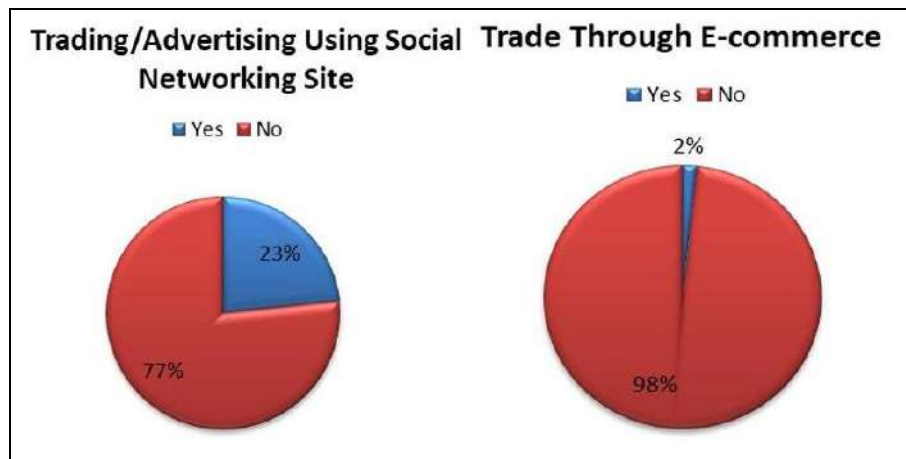
### 5.4. Availability of Mobile Network and Internet Connectivity in area surveyed



**Fig-4:** Availability of Mobile Network and Internet Connectivity

Figure 4 illustrates the availability of mobile networks and Internet connections in their area. 69% of artisans surveyed said their area had a mobile network, while 31% said their area did not have a mobile network. 58% of artisans surveyed said their area had an Internet connection and 42% said their area did not have an Internet connection.

### 5.5. Trading/Advertising Using Social Networking Site and Through E-commerce



**Fig-5:** Trading/Advertising Using Social Networking Site and Through E-commerce

Fig-5: depicts the commercial/promotional activities using social networking sites and e-commerce by artisans in Bastar district of Chhattisgarh state. 23% of respondents said they use social media to sell or advertise their products, while 77% of respondents said they do not use any social media sites to sell or advertise their products. Advertise your products. Only 2% of respondents trade via e-commerce platforms, while 98% of total respondents said they did not use e-commerce platforms for trade.

### 5.6. Challenges faced by Handicraft Artisans for digitalization

#### ➤ Low Educational Qualification

Handicraft persons in India are less educated and more literate. We have a large number of half-baked educated handicraft persons whose deficient skills only lower the level of efficiency/productivity. They are unable to cope up with the level of understanding of the programs as well as cope up with the technology technological advancements.

#### ➤ Mobile Network Connectivity

In order to expand business of handicraft industry we need auxiliaries to trade, especially network web. Although cellphone users are more in India but the services required to trade online is less. Good network connectivity remains unsatisfactory in deeper areas of sparsely populated villages.

#### ➤ Internet Connectivity

Remote areas suffered significant connectivity loss. Service providers are less interested in providing services here because it is not profitable. For a stronger online presence, it's imperative to address to the problem.

#### ➤ Unawareness

The producers of handicraft industry are unaware of the developments happening in the competitive market. They still lack in use of digitalization of the businesses happened in the past two decades. Further, they are also unaware of government policies that assist them about the e-commerce market and in making a life through their business.

#### ➤ Outdated Marketing/Trading Technique

The channel of marketing is indigenous; they still depend on purchasers/consumers to come by and shop through their physical stores. The middleman takes advantage of this system and makes huge profits.

#### ➤ Supply of Raw Materials

Producers of handicrafts requires particular raw materials which fits their final product. These are still not channelized by the government and policies need to be formed so that handicraft producers get good quality raw materials at cost effective price.



## 6. CONCLUSIONS

Current research shows that the level of digitalization is lagging in the handicraft industry of Chhattisgarh. Artisans are still very far from the modern world of globalization and digitalization. Data collected for the study shows that artisans lack education, many artisans have low education levels, which is the main reason why they are not aware of recent developments in the field of technology. Most of the artisans tribes and live in remote areas. The area they live in still lacks socio-economic development. This area lacks mobile network connectivity and adequate internet connectivity. The vicious cycle of poverty is also one of the main causes leading to the growth and development of artisans. Currently, only 2% of surveyed artisans trade via e-commerce, while 98% of respondents have not participated in e-commerce trading.

## 7. SUGGESTIONS

After reviewing all the data collected and analyzing the data, the study shows that there is a need to pay attention to the improvement of handicraft artisans. Since Handicraft industries provide employment to a large population, handicrafts are a source of livelihood for many people. There is a need to provide mobile networks and suitable Internet connectivity to areas where traditional crafts are still practiced and training should be provided to artisans about the digital world, the Internet and the e-commerce market, so they can globalize their products.

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