

A Study on Market Challenges and Opportunities for Craft Artisans in Hatimara Village, Meghalaya

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Abstract

The bamboo craftsmanship in Hatimara village, Meghalaya, is a significant aspect of the local history and culture. This artisanal endeavor serves as a sustainable job source for the village's women. The craftsmen of Hatimara village produce an array of bamboo products, including baskets, mats, ornamental objects, and domestic goods. All these goods are handcrafted and environmentally safe. Despite considerable effort and expertise, they encounter significant challenges in delivering their manufactured products to major markets. A primary cause for this is the absence of adequate roads in the town, hindering the transportation of commodities to external cities. The town lacks both a warehouse for commodities storage and adequate transportation facilities. Additionally, these artists lack the requisite financial support to advance their work. Nonetheless, there exists substantial potential for advancement in this domain. The government is implementing beneficial measures for these craftspeople. Should the bamboo goods from Hatimara village obtain the "GI tag," their identity will be enhanced, and individuals will recognize that this distinctive product originates from this community. A GI tag signifies that an item is associated with a specific location and embodies its distinctiveness. Traditional crafts, such as bamboo, are inherently environmentally sustainable, as they need minimal energy, generate negligible waste, and rely on renewable resources (Das & Das, 2021). This endeavor transcends mere tradition and has the potential to improve the rural economy. This research aims to comprehend the challenges faced by craftsmen in Hatimara hamlet and identify avenues for their advancement. With appropriate assistance and guidance, this tradition can persist in the future and generate new employment opportunities for the village's inhabitants.

Keywords: Craft Artisans, sources of livelihoods, bamboo craft, market challenges

Introduction

Meghalaya is an exceptionally picturesque state in northeastern India. Individuals in this region have engaged in handcraft activities for numerous generations. Bamboo weaving, pottery, and handcrafted garments are prevalent in this region. This endeavor is not merely a tradition, but also a means of livelihood for numerous individuals. In the village of Hatimara, located in Meghalaya, residents continue to craft bamboo products using traditional methods. The women of this town exert much effort. They produce baskets, mats, domestic things, and ornamental objects. All these items are handcrafted and do not adversely affect the environment. This constitutes their primary occupation, from which they derive revenue. Nonetheless, despite their considerable expertise and diligence, they encounter numerous

challenges. The community lacks adequate roadways, preventing the transportation of commodities to the cities. The community lacks a warehouse, adequate transportation, and provisions for transporting commodities. Consequently, businesses encounter challenges in effectively marketing their products in the market, resulting in less income. The majority of craftspeople lack sufficient capital to grow their enterprises. When attempting to expand, they have challenges in securing loans from financial institutions and struggle to comprehend governmental programs. This explains why the majority of craftsmen state that they lack access to accurate information regarding governmental assistance or credit options (Shah & Patel, 2017).

Notwithstanding these challenges, numerous opportunities for advancement exist inside this sector. In recent years, the government has initiated numerous programs to promote artisans and their abilities. The National Handicraft Development Program (NHDP) seeks to enhance handicrafts distributed throughout villages. The Pradhan Mantri Vishwakarma Yojana (PM-VIKAS) offers comprehensive assistance to artists from inception to market delivery of their products. The Comprehensive Handicraft Cluster Development Scheme (CHCDS) assists artisan groups in enhancing their organizational structure and production systems through collaboration. Additionally, training initiatives such as 'Samarth Yojana' and programs like 'Silk Samagra' for the silk sector are operational, providing craftsmen with opportunities to acquire new skills, secure employment, and access larger markets (Ministry of Textiles, 2025). Currently, individuals choose to purchase products that are natural, handcrafted, and environmentally sustainable. Products crafted from bamboo fulfill all these criteria. Proper identification of these factors can lead to an increase in their demand. Obtaining the Geographical Indication Tag (GI Tag) for the products of Hatimara hamlet could be a beneficial initiative. This tag indicates that a product is associated with a certain location and possesses a distinct identity. This will inform individuals that this item pertains to the unique artistry of Hatimara village. This can augment their sales and enhance their brand recognition significantly. The Geographical Indication (GI) tag has the potential to improve the economic circumstances of the traditional craftspeople in Hatimara village; nevertheless, certain challenges must also be considered. The GI Act of India aims to safeguard cultural heritage and confer economic advantages to artisans; yet, its execution has certain deficiencies. Merely obtaining the GI tag does not enhance the product's popularity nor assist artisans in essential marketing and safeguarding against counterfeit items (Ghosh, Banerji, Samanta & Bhargava, 2024). Consequently, following the acquisition of the GI tag, it is imperative to uphold quality, safeguard against counterfeit items, and effectively promote the goods. Upon completion of these measures, artisans' income may rise, their work may get attention, and the village may achieve sustainable development.

Providing the villagers with accurate information regarding these projects would enable them to enhance their productivity. In the present era, as the demand for natural and eco-friendly items such as bamboo continues to rise, these initiatives can not only yield substantial cash for artisans but also bolster the local economy.

The government of Meghalaya (2019) recognized that artisans in the region encounter numerous challenges in their profession. In response, the government initiated a scheme to

honor and reward these artisans, aiming to enhance their morale and support the advancement of their work. A diligent individual performs even more effectively when accorded respect. Merely extending respect is insufficient; it is imperative that enough facilities are available in their villages. Craft centers should be established in the village to facilitate comfortable labor, and adequate roads and transportation must be provided to enable the transfer of their items to the market. When artists receive these resources, they will enhance their craftsmanship and increase their earnings. Consequently, it is essential that, in conjunction with governmental initiatives, programs be established to support craftspeople sustainably.

The Kisan Kalyan Foundation (2021) has underscored that contemporary craftspeople require advanced technology and information. With adequate instruction in design innovation and market demand comprehension, artisans can elevate their craft to a new echelon. This alteration can be particularly advantageous for emerging craftspeople. They can embrace innovative approaches by abandoning traditional practices. If they master online platforms and understand contemporary customer preferences, companies can expand their reach and enhance their revenue. If craftsmen comprehend how to align their work with market demand and public preference, their art may attain greater recognition. Upon acquiring this knowledge, the artisans will attain self-sufficiency, resulting in a more promising future.

The Ministry of Textiles of the Government of India (2023) initiated a scheme designed to offer financial assistance to artisans engaged in traditional manual crafts, including woodworking, metalworking, tailoring, embroidery, and shoemaking. The program also provides certification for their craftsmanship and supplies tools to facilitate their work. This initiative is nationwide, although craftsmen in rural areas of states such as Meghalaya might derive significant advantages from it. If the craftsmanship of all artists is commendable and comparable, then the market recognition of their products will rise.

The North Eastern Development Finance Corporation Limited (NEDFi) did a study in 2021 for the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region and developed a strategy to assist craftsmen. The proposal indicated that financial assistance, utilization of e-commerce platforms, and enhancement of retail spaces are essential to advance the artists' endeavors and to market their items. These recommendations can assist in addressing the challenges that artisans frequently encounter, including financial constraints and limited market access.

The problem statement

The craftsmen of Hatimara hamlet are industrious and possess a unique expertise inherited through centuries. They encounter numerous challenges that hinder their progress in employment. The primary issue is their lack of essential equipment for the task. They continue to utilize outdated tools and practices. They possess neither new machinery nor knowledge of contemporary designs or technologies. Consequently, their products are not manufactured to meet contemporary demands. It is imperative to remain abreast of contemporary trends; however, many artisans are marginalized due to insufficient resources. This explains their limited earning potential from their work.

These artists encounter significant challenges in marketing their wares. They fail to identify the appropriate market or clientele for their items. They promote their products exclusively in

the adjacent little markets, where they receive inadequate prices. They become reliant on intermediaries out of necessity. These intermediaries procure their products at low costs and retail them at elevated prices in urban areas or on digital marketplaces. This results in significant losses for the craftspeople, thereby leading to minimal profits. They lack the ability to engage directly with customers or market their products effectively. Currently, social media and the internet serve as significant platforms; nevertheless, many craftsmen lack the knowledge to utilize them effectively. They can enhance their productivity using mobile phones or the internet; but, they lack access to accurate information and training for effective utilization.

The government periodically implements various initiatives to assist artisans, including complimentary training, low-interest financing, and access to machinery. However, the majority of craftspeople in Hatimara village remain uninformed about these initiatives. They lack knowledge on how to utilize these programs, where to submit applications, and which documents are necessary. They are denied of this assistance due to insufficient information. Additionally, the hamlet lacks essential amenities, including adequate roads and transportation, which further impedes their productivity. Frequently, the commodities fail to arrive in the city punctually, and artisans encounter issues related to knowledge, resources, market access, and technology. With proper guidance, they can further their endeavors and operate more effectively within society.

Objective of the study

- To study in depth the difficulties faced by the artisans of Hatimara village in their daily lives.
- To know how much the artisans of Hatimara are aware of the various schemes and facilities run by the government and whether they are able to take advantage of them.
- To understand what are the specialties of the traditional handicraft products of Hatimara and how these products can be transported to the markets of big cities.
- To know what measures can be taken to improve the economic condition of the artisans and their standard of living.

Research Methodology

The main objective of this research was to understand the problems faced by the village artisans in their daily lives and about their experiences. To achieve the objectives, mixed research approach was adopted. The researcher used Survey, Personal Interview, and Field work to collect data. In this study, an attempt was made to take most of the data directly from the artisans, so that their real stories could be recorded. In addition, government reports, previous research papers and information related to government schemes were also read so that what the artisans said could be understood and confirmed from these documents. Thus, this research is an attempt to understand the lives of artisans by listening to their experiences carefully and giving them the opportunity to tell in their own words.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The information collected from the artisans of Hatimara village was analysed to understand their socio- economic lives. This included their family and social circumstances, the type of craft work they are engaged in, their level of education and income status.

Table no.1: Type of craft work practiced, N=40

Sl. No.	Craft Type	Frequency	Percentage%
1.	Bamboo weaving (household items)	18	45%
2.	Pottery (cooking pots, storage vessels)	7	17.5%
3.	Textiles/Handloom (Scarves, shawls, traditional wear)	9	22.5%
4.	Miscellaneous (wood craft, decorative items)	6	15%

Source: Field Work

Bamboo weaving is the most common occupation in Hatimara village (45%). It is very important for both culture and income here. People also do textile/loom work (22.5%). Pottery and other works have now reduced, which shows that people's tastes and way of working are changing.

Table no.2: Educational Status of Artisans by age group, N= 40

Sl. No.	Age group	Most Common Education Level	No. of Artisans	Remarks
1.	21-30 years	Secondary	8 (20%)	Younger artisans mostly studied up to HSLC level
2.	31-40 years	Higher Secondary	17(42.5%)	Largest group majority completed Higher Secondary
3.	41-50	Secondary	9 (22.5%)	Few with higher education, but HSLC is Still common.

4.	51 & Above	Illiterate/Primary	6 (15 %)	Older artisans mostly less educated, very few beyond primary
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Source: Field Work

This table shows that most artisans in the age group of 21 to 30 years have studied up to HSLC (Class 10). The number of artisans in the age group of 31–40 years is the highest and their education is also slightly better than the other age groups. On the other hand, most of the artisans above 51 years are illiterate or have studied only up to primary level.

Table no.3: Problems faced by the Artisans of Hatimara Village, N= 40

Sl. No.	Problems identified	Number of Artisans	Percentage %
1.	Lack of proper tools and raw materials	15	37.5%
2.	Poor road and transport facilities	10	25%
3.	Dependence on middlemen for selling goods	8	20%
4.	Lack of marketing knowledge/digital skills	5	12.5%
5.	Others (low demand, irregular work, etc)	2	5%

Source: Field Work

Most of the artisans (37.5%) said that they do not have good tools and raw materials, due to which they are not able to produce more goods. About 25% of the artisans said that road and transport facilities are not good in the village, due to which their goods are not able to reach the big market. About 20% of the artisans depend on middlemen, who buy goods from them at a low price and sell them at a higher price in the city. Apart from this, 12.5% of the artisans lack marketing and digital knowledge like mobile/internet, due to which they are not able to reach the customers directly. All these problems together reduce both their income and opportunities for growth.

Table no.4: Awareness of Government Schemes among Artisans, N= 40

Sl. No.	Awareness Level	Number of Artisans	Percentage%
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1.	Not aware of any schemes	22	55%
2.	Heard about schemes but unsure	10	25%
3.	Aware but not availing	5	12.5%
4.	Aware and availing benefits	3	7.5%

Source: Field Work

Most artisans (55%) are not aware of government schemes at all. About 25% of the artisans have heard about the schemes but do not know how to avail them. 12.5% are aware but not availing. Only 7.5% of the artisans are actually availing these schemes. This clearly shows that lack of information and access is the biggest barrier due to which artisans are not able to properly utilize the government assistance.

Table no.5: Economic Condition of the Artisans, N=40

Sl. No.	Monthly Income Range	Number of Artisans	Percentage%
1.	Below ₹3,000	6	15%
2.	₹3,000 -- ₹5,000	20	50%
3.	₹5,000 -- ₹7,000	10	25%
4.	Above ₹7,000	4	10%

Source: Field Work

Nearly half of the artisans (50%) earn between ₹3,000 and ₹5,000 per month, which is very low as per today's expenses. Only 10% of the artisans earn more than ₹7,000, while 15% survive on less than ₹3,000. This situation shows that most artisans are financially insecure. They have the skill, but their income is not enough to comfortably meet the family expenses. Due to this, they have to constantly struggle with financial problems.

The study revealed that most craftsmen in Hatimara Village belong to the indigenous Khasi and Garo populations, depending on craftwork as their primary or supplementary source of income. Household income was noted to be modest, averaging between ₹5,000 and ₹7,000 per month, with seasonal fluctuations affected by tourist activities and festival events. Craft production is predominantly a familial undertaking, with women playing a significant role in weaving and finalizing items, while men generally manage the acquisition of raw materials and sporadic marketing efforts. Artisans conveyed delight in preserving historic patterns and processes; yet, they acknowledged that the financial rewards do not correspond to the labor and time invested.

a. Market Challenges:

Artisans primarily sell their wares in local weekly marketplaces (haats) or to intermediary traders. Direct access to metropolitan marketplaces or e-commerce platforms is rare due to insufficient digital literacy, limited transit infrastructure, and a deficiency in collective bargaining power. Numerous artisans reported instances in which intermediaries purchased their products at significantly reduced prices and subsequently resold them at considerable markups, leading to little returns for the craftspeople.

b. Elevated Expenses and Inconsistent Availability of Raw Materials

Raw materials such as bamboo, cane, natural dyes, and threads are procured from adjacent forests or purchased from nearby towns. The costs of these inputs have markedly risen due to deforestation, shipping costs, and governmental limitations on forest products. This directly affects the craftsmen's profit margins, compelling them to decrease production or transition to inferior, less expensive materials—an action they fear may undermine the traditional appeal of their trade.

c. Insufficient Skill Development and Design Innovation

Although the craftspeople possess robust traditional skills, their exposure to contemporary commercial trends is restricted. Young consumers frequently choose modern designs or multipurpose products; yet, artisans rarely obtain training in design adaptation, packaging, or branding. Several younger participants expressed a desire to obtain digital marketing abilities but lacked formal assistance or resources.

d. Fluctuations in Seasonal Demand and Income Volatility

Craft sales are intricately associated with festivals, tourist seasons, or governmental displays. During off-peak months, craftsmen have income volatility, leading some to engage in agricultural work or migrate temporarily for wage labor.

Opportunities Recognized by Artisans

Notwithstanding these limitations, artists identified numerous emerging opportunities: The burgeoning eco-tourism in Meghalaya offers a lucrative niche market for genuine, environmentally sustainable handicrafts.

Government Initiatives: Awareness of initiatives like the North Eastern Handicrafts and Handlooms Development Corporation (NEHHDC) is increasing, however accessibility remains inconsistent. **Interest of Youth in Entrepreneurship:** Emerging craftsmen are keen to engage in digital commerce via platforms like Instagram and WhatsApp, contingent upon receiving adequate training.

Discussions and results

The study's findings indicate a significant gap between the traditional skills and creative potential of craftsmen in Hatimara village and their actual incorporation into wider market networks. Although these craftsmen exhibit exceptional craftsmanship grounded in indigenous knowledge and cultural legacy, their products do not achieve significant market

recognition or economic benefits. This disconnection highlights a systemic disparity between production capacity and market access, which directly affects their livelihood and quality of life.

A primary difficulty identified is the lack of critical infrastructural facilities in the area. The artisans frequently work from improvised or residential workshops devoid of electricity, adequate ventilation, and contemporary tools. This constraint dramatically impacts both the volume and caliber of manufacturing, leading to diminished market competitiveness. Moreover, the scarcity of high-quality raw materials forces artists to rely on substandard alternatives, so reduces the durability and visual attractiveness of their goods.

A significant obstacle is the deficiency of market intelligence and financial resources. The artists are predominantly oblivious to contemporary market trends, consumer inclinations, or pricing methodologies. Their engagement with intermediaries and middlemen frequently results in disadvantageous trade conditions, diminishing their profit margins. Restricted access to institutional credit or microfinance programs intensifies their reliance on informal borrowing sources, so further limiting their potential for innovation and growth.

Notwithstanding these challenges, the report underscores the possibility of governmental initiatives like Ateliers Meghalaya and Geographical Indication (GI) labeling as revolutionary prospects. These initiatives might be crucial in connecting traditional artists with the contemporary market. The Ateliers Meghalaya program empowers artisans by enhancing product quality and market reach through design interventions, training, and marketing channels that promote local crafts. Likewise, GI labeling not only verifies the authenticity of their products but also enhances value recognition and safeguards their traditional knowledge systems. The efficacy of these treatments mostly relies on effective communication, awareness, and accessibility among craftspeople. Presently, several artisans are oblivious to these initiatives owing to inadequate information distribution and insufficient institutional assistance. If these programs are effectively communicated, locally executed, and supplemented with training and financial inclusion initiatives, they could substantially rejuvenate the craft industry in Hatimara.

The findings suggest that the craftspeople of Hatimara have significant untapped potential, which is hindered by structural constraints rather than a deficiency in competence. An organized strategy that includes government agencies, NGOs, market specialists, and local panchayats can facilitate the creation of a sustainable and inclusive model for craft-based livelihoods. This method would enhance the economic status of craftsmen and aid in the preservation and promotion of Meghalaya's cultural heritage.

Conclusion

The craftsmen of Hatimara village struggle to identify appropriate markets for their wares. The village lacks adequate facilities, and the residents are unaware of where and how to market their products. The artisans receive minimal pay from their labor, which is scarcely sufficient to support their families. They require adequate instruments; nevertheless, their financial constraints prevent them from acquiring these resources. Furthermore, they are unaware of the initiatives the government is implementing on their behalf. The majority of

craftsmen reported that they were unfamiliar with initiatives such as Ateliers Meghalaya or GI labeling. This indicates that insufficient information is a significant issue. Nevertheless, the government has initiated several beneficial programs that can assist artisans. If well informed about these schemes and connected to them, individuals can market their wares in the larger marketplace. This will augment their income. This research elucidates the necessity of disseminating information regarding these schemes to artisans; only then can they effectively utilize their skills and achieve financial independence.

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