



## Potential of Bihar Handicrafts (Threats and Opportunities) With Context to Patna

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### Abstract

The handicraft sector of Bihar, particularly in Patna, represents a rich blend of cultural heritage, skilled artistry, and economic potential. This research explores the opportunities and threats faced by Bihar's traditional crafts—including Madhubani painting, Sikki craft, Bhagalpuri silk, Sujni embroidery, Tikuli art, bamboo craft, and stone craft. Primary data were collected from 101 consumers in Patna through a structured Google Form survey and from 20 artisans across various craft clusters through structured questionnaires. Secondary data were reviewed through academic literature, government reports, journals, and published studies. The study reveals strong consumer appreciation for Bihar handicrafts, high cultural value perception, and a widespread desire for greater promotion and visibility. However, artisans face significant challenges including high raw material costs, middlemen exploitation, seasonal demand fluctuations, lack of training, poor online presence, and limited direct market access. The findings indicate substantial opportunities through digital platforms, government schemes, craft tourism, organised haats, and skill-based interventions. The research concludes that Patna holds immense potential to become a central hub for Bihar's handicraft revival, provided systemic challenges are addressed through policy support, direct marketing channels, skill training, and consumer awareness initiatives.

**Keywords:** Bamboo craft; Bhagalpuri silk; Bihar handicrafts; Craft tourism; Madhubani painting; Middlemen; Sikki craft; Sujni embroidery; Tikuli art

### 1. Introduction

India's handicraft tradition is globally admired for its extraordinary diversity, cultural depth, and artistic excellence. Bihar contributes significantly to this heritage with crafts such as Madhubani painting—recognised under the Geographical Indication (GI) tag—Sikki craft, Sujni embroidery, Bhagalpuri silk weaving, stone carving, Tikuli art, and bamboo craft. These crafts not only represent centuries-old artistic traditions but also sustain thousands of artisan families across the state (Ministry of Textiles, 2021). Patna, as the economic, cultural, and commercial capital of Bihar, provides a crucial marketplace for handicraft consumption and distribution. With increasing urbanisation, a growing middle class, rising disposable incomes, and digital adoption, Patna

presents immense opportunities for the handicraft sector both locally and globally. The presence of Shilpgram and government emporiums further positions Patna as a natural hub for Bihar's craft ecosystem. Despite this potential, artisans continue to face debilitating systemic challenges: limited market access, inconsistent income, absence of modern marketing channels, dominance of middlemen, and inadequate skilling support. Consumer surveys simultaneously indicate strong cultural attachment and genuine willingness to support handmade products, revealing a significant supply-demand gap (Jagatramka et al., 2022). This paper analyses opportunities and threats from the perspectives of both consumers and artisans, using Patna as the focal

point. A mixed-methods approach combines primary quantitative data from 101 consumer respondents and 20 artisans with an extensive secondary literature review to produce an integrated, data-driven assessment of the sector's current state and future potential.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Handicrafts as a Cultural and Economic Asset

The Indian handicraft sector serves as a lifeline of the rural economy and a key instrument for women's empowerment. Of approximately 3.1 million handicraft workers in India, around 87.4% reside in rural areas and 81% are women (Handicraft Sector in India, 2023). Handicraft exports reached approximately USD 4.3 billion in 2021–22, with the United States accounting for 38% of total demand. Bihar's crafts—particularly Madhubani painting and Bhagalpuri silk—carry significant export potential (Sharma, 2019).

### 2.2. Problems Faced by Artisans

Research on loom weavers in Bhagalpur found that scarcity of raw materials (Garrett Mean Score: 54.12), high commission charges by middlemen (52.17), and frequent price fluctuations (49.05) are the most severe constraints (Bhagalpur Weavers Study, 2022). Artisans also suffer from lack of design innovation, absence of branding support, insufficient government scheme penetration, and exploitation by intermediaries (Khan & Verma, 2020).

### 2.3. Impact of Organized Interventions

The Jeevika programme in Madhubani demonstrated the transformative power of collective interventions: total monthly sales of participating craftswomen surged from Rs. 18,900 to Rs. 1,46,100 after joining Producer Groups, while average savings increased more than tenfold (Crafting Change, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic severely disrupted the sector—a study of Shilpgram artisans in Patna found 85% faced raw material procurement issues, 85% had no access to micro-finance, and 70% reported reduced income during lockdown (Jagatramka et al., 2022).

### 2.4. Consumer Behavior and Digital Opportunity

Urban consumers value handicrafts for authenticity, cultural connection, uniqueness, and aesthetic appeal,

though pricing and accessibility remain barriers (Gupta, 2018). Bihar's e-commerce potential is constrained by digital literacy gaps—only 24.6% of Bihar's population possesses basic ICT skills (E-commerce in Bihar, 2023)—yet consumer awareness of the utilitarian and sustainable aspects of handicrafts significantly increases demand (Indian Handicrafts: A Sustainable Future, 2022).

### 2.5. Tourism as a Demand Catalyst

Bihar's tourist arrivals grew from 19.37 million in 2011 to 35.08 million in 2019. Tourism creates direct employment in the souvenir and handicrafts industries and serves as a key demand driver for craft products (Role and Relevance of Tourism in Bihar, 2022). Craft tourism represents an underexploited opportunity to connect artisans with high-spending domestic and international visitors.

### 2.6. Gaps in Literature

Existing research lacks studies that: (a) focus specifically on Patna as a handicraft consumption market; (b) directly compare consumer expectations with artisan realities using matched primary data; and (c) provide an integrated threat-opportunity framework for the Bihar handicraft sector. This study addresses all three gaps.

## 3. Objectives of The Study

- To analyze consumer awareness, craft recognition, and purchase behavior toward Bihar handicrafts in Patna.
- To understand artisans' income patterns, key challenges, and marketing gaps.
- To compare consumer expectations with artisan realities through gap analysis.
- To identify key threats and opportunities for Bihar's handicraft sector.
- To suggest evidence-based policy and business recommendations.

## 4. Data and Methodology

### 4.1. Research Design

This study adopts a mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative survey data with qualitative interpretive analysis. The dual-perspective approach—surveying both consumers and artisans—enables a comprehensive assessment of the handicraft ecosystem.

### 4.2. Primary Data

Consumer data were collected from 101 respondents across Patna through a structured Google Form questionnaire (November 2025), using convenience sampling. The questionnaire captured demographics, craft recognition, purchase behavior, Likert-scale perception statements (1–5), and open-ended suggestions. Artisan data were collected from 20 artisans across Patna’s craft clusters (Danapur, Phulwari, Kankarbagh, Raja Bazar, Boring Road, Patna Sahib) through structured face-to-face questionnaires (December 2025), using purposive sampling to ensure multi-craft representation [1-5].

### 4.3. Secondary Data

Secondary data were drawn from peer-reviewed journals, government reports (Ministry of Textiles, Bihar Industries Department), the Handloom Census of India, EPCH reports, and prior academic studies on Bihar’s artisan economy, tourism, and e-commerce.

### 4.4. Analytical Tools

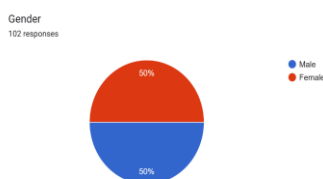
Analysis employed Likert scale mean scoring, frequency distribution, and comparative gap analysis. Problem severity was assessed on a 1–5 scale (1 = not a problem, 5 = very severe). Consumer perceptions were quantified by percentage agreement (Agree + Strongly Agree) and mean Likert scores.

## 5. Results and Discussion

### 5.1. Consumer Analysis

#### 5.1.1. Sample Profile

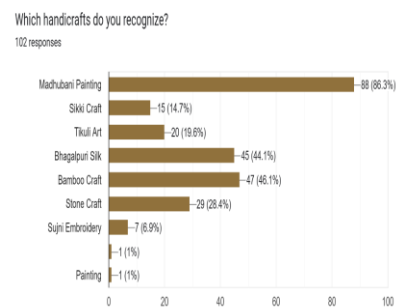
A total of 101 valid consumer responses were collected. The sample comprised 50.5% male and 49.5% female respondents—a near-perfectly balanced gender distribution shown in Figure 1. The age profile was dominated by the 18–25 cohort (64.4%), followed by Below 18 (15.8%), 26–35 (8.9%), 36–50 (5.9%), and 51+ (5.0%). Respondents were drawn from across Patna’s localities including Patna City, Danapur, Kankarbagh, Boring Road, Patna Sahib, and Phulwari, ensuring geographic representativeness.



**Figure 1 Gender distribution of consumer respondents (n = 101)**

#### 5.1.2. Awareness and Craft Recognition

Awareness of Bihar handicrafts was remarkably high: 98.0% of respondents confirmed awareness with only 2 (2.0%) reporting unawareness [6-10]. Madhubani Painting emerged as the most widely recognised craft (86.3%), followed by Bamboo Craft (46.1%), Bhagalpuri Silk (44.1%), Stone Craft (28.4%), Tikuli Art (19.6%), Sikki Craft (14.7%), and Sujni Embroidery (6.9%), indicating targeted promotional need for lesser-known crafts shown in Figure 2.



**Figure 2 Handicraft recognition among consumers (n = 102)**

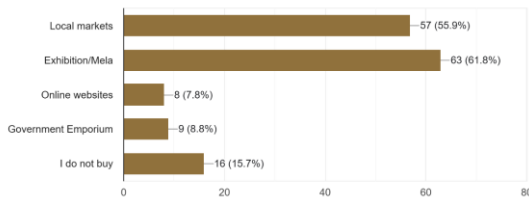
#### 5.1.3. Purchase Behavior

Approximately 74.5% of surveyed consumers had previously purchased a Bihar handicraft. Exhibition/Mela was the most popular channel (61.8%), followed by local markets (55.9%). Online websites were used by only 7.8% of respondents and Government Emporiums by 8.8%, confirming that physical, event-driven retail dominates while online penetration remains critically low shown in figure 3 and 4.



**Figure 3 Consumer handicraft purchase behavior (n = 102)**

Where do you usually buy handicrafts from?  
102 responses



**Figure 4 Preferred purchasing channels for Bihar handicrafts (n = 102)**

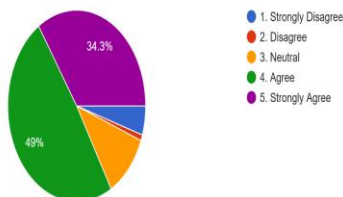
### 5.1.4. Consumer Perception (Likert Scale Analysis)

Respondents evaluated seven perception statements on a five-point Likert scale [11-15]. Results reveal strong positive sentiment, particularly regarding cultural value, promotion need, and online availability explained in Table 1 and Figure 5-12.

**Table 1 Consumer Perception – Likert Scale Results (n = 101)**

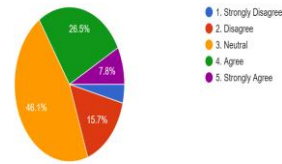
Statement	Mean	Agree+SA
Bihar handicrafts are culturally valuable	4.06	83.2%
Should be promoted more in Patna	4.30	88.1%
Online availability should increase	4.12	79.2%
Handicrafts are good gift items	4.20	82.2%
Quality is satisfactory	3.78	61.4%
Prefer over machine-made products	3.53	49.5%
Handicrafts are overpriced	3.10	36.6%

Bihar handicrafts are culturally valuable.  
102 responses



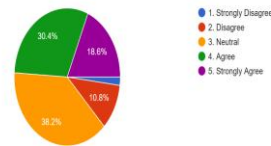
**Figure 5 Culturally valuable (n = 102)**

Handicrafts are overpriced.  
102 responses



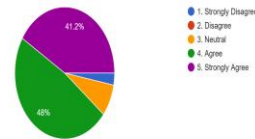
**Figure 6 Handicrafts are overpriced (n = 102)**

I prefer handicrafts over machine-made products.  
102 responses



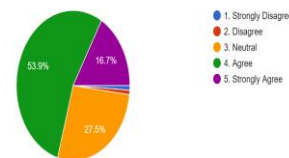
**Figure 7 Prefer handicrafts over machine-made (n = 102)**

Bihar handicrafts should be promoted more in Patna.  
102 responses



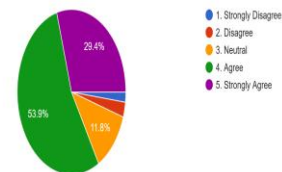
**Figure 8 Should be promoted more in Patna (n = 102)**

Quality of Bihar handicrafts is satisfactory.  
102 responses

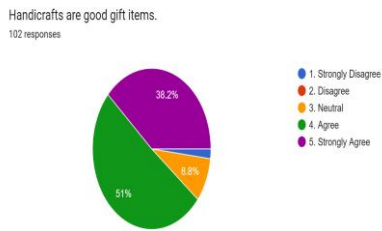


**Figure 9 Quality is satisfactory (n = 102)**

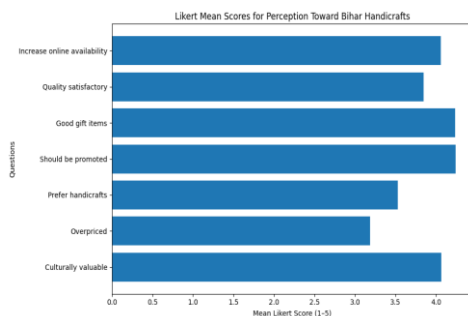
Online availability of handicrafts should increase.  
102 responses



**Figure 10 Online availability should increase (n = 102)**



**Figure 11 Handicrafts are good gift items (n = 102)**



**Figure 12 Likert mean scores – consumer perception toward Bihar handicrafts**

The highest agreement was recorded for promotion needs (88.1%, mean 4.30) and cultural value (83.2%, mean 4.06). The relatively lower preference over machine-made products (49.5%) indicates that while emotional affinity is strong, functional competition from mass-produced goods remains real. Approximately one-third found handicrafts overpriced, highlighting the need for better value communication.

### 5.1.5. Key Consumer Suggestions

Recurring themes from open-ended responses included: a permanent craft market in Patna modelled on Delhi Haat; handicraft education in schools and colleges; expanded social media promotion; pop-up stalls in malls; reduced middlemen in the supply chain; and increased government-sponsored exhibitions.

## 5.2. Artisan Analysis

### 5.2.1. Profile and Craft Types

Twenty artisans were surveyed, representing Bamboo Craft (35%), Madhubani Painting (30%), Bhagalpuri Silk (15%), Sujni Embroidery (10%), Sikki Craft (5%), and other crafts (5%). 75% were full-time practitioners; the remainder combined

handicrafts with farming or other employment. Artisans were drawn from Phulwari, Danapur, Raja Bazar, Kankarbagh, Ashiyana, Boring Road, and Patna Sahib.

### 5.2.2. Income Distribution

The income profile reveals deeply precarious livelihoods. A striking 55% of surveyed artisans earn less than Rs. 5,000 per month, with only 10% earning above Rs. 20,000. This is consistent with national literature on artisan income volatility shown in Table 2.

**Table 2 Artisan Monthly Income Distribution (n = 20)**

Income Bracket	No.	%
Rs. 0 – 5,000	11	55%
Rs. 5,001 – 10,000	4	20%
Rs. 10,001 – 20,000	3	15%
Above Rs. 20,000	2	10%

### 5.2.3. Key Challenges

Artisans rated problem severity on a 1–5 Likert scale. Raw material cost (4.35) and middlemen profit extraction (4.10) are the most acute problems. Finance access (3.80) and tool/machine gaps (3.85) also scored high, while workspace issues were least severe (2.80) shown in Table 3.

**Table 3 Artisan Problem Severity – Mean Scores (1–5)**

Problem Dimension	Mean (1–5)
Raw material cost	4.35
Middlemen take excessive profit	4.10
Direct sales can increase income	4.05
Tool / machine gap	3.85
Finance / capital access	3.80
Training / skill upgradation	3.10
Workspace problems	2.80

### 5.2.4. Digital Readiness

45% of artisans expressed interest in selling online “with help”; 30% already conducted small-scale sales via WhatsApp or Instagram; 15% lacked smartphones entirely; and only 10% distrusted online platforms. With targeted digital literacy training, the majority of artisans can be transitioned to digital

channels.

### 5.2.5. Craft Bazaar Potential

50% of artisans believed a permanent organized craft bazaar in Patna would increase their income “a lot”; 40% expected it to “increase a bit”. This overwhelming positive sentiment, combined with evidence from Delhi Haat and Hyderabad Haat, makes establishing a dedicated craft market one of the most impactful single interventions available.

### 5.3. Gap Analysis: Consumer Expectations vs. Artisan Realities

The gap analysis synthesizes both survey perspectives to identify structural mismatches in the handicraft ecosystem. Consumer enthusiasm is consistently high, yet artisan-side constraints systematically prevent that demand from being met shown in Table 4.

**Table 4 Gap Analysis: Consumer Expectations vs. Artisan Realities**

Dimension	Consumer Expectation	Artisan Reality	Gap
Availability	More permanent outlets	Limited to haats & exhibitions	High
Online Presence	E-commerce access (79.2%)	Most untrained / unequipped	Very High
Promotion	Better marketing (88.1%)	No marketing support or budget	Very High
Pricing	Overpriced (36.6%)	Raw materials expensive (4.35/5)	High
Quality	Durability & consistency	Tools & materials uneven	Medium
Design	Contemporary styles	Lack innovation training	Medium

## 6. Threats and Opportunities Framework

### 6.1.Key Threats

- High and unstable input costs (mean severity 4.35/5) directly compress artisan margins. Raw Material Volatility:
- Intermediaries capture a disproportionate share of the retail price (4.10/5), leaving insufficient returns for artisans. Middlemen Exploitation:
- Only 49.5% of consumers prefer handicrafts over machine-made alternatives. Machine-Made Competition:
- 15% of artisans lack smartphones; digital literacy is critically low. Digital Divide:
- Irregular order flow creates income volatility that discourages full-time craft engagement. Seasonal Demand:
- Insufficient intergenerational knowledge transfer risks gradual erosion of traditional craft skills. Skill Erosion:

### 6.2. Key Opportunities

- 90% of artisans expect income growth from an organized market; consumer demand for physical outlets is strong. Permanent Craft Bazaar:
- 79.2% of consumers demand online access; most artisans are willing to sell online with support. Digital Commerce:
- Bihar’s GI-tagged crafts provide a competitive differentiator; stronger branding can justify premium pricing. GI Tag and Branding:
- PM Vishwakarma Yojana and state-level initiatives offer financial and infrastructure support awaiting wider artisan penetration. Government Schemes:
- Bihar’s Buddhist, Jain, and Gandhi circuits attract millions of visitors; integrating craft tourism creates reliable high-value demand. Craft Tourism:
- Consumer voices strongly advocate incorporating handicraft education into school and college curricula. Educational Integration:
- The Jeevika model demonstrates the transformative potential of Producer Groups



for craft artisans. SHG and Cooperative Scaling:

### Conclusion

Bihar's handicrafts represent a sector of immense cultural significance and untapped economic potential, particularly in Patna where consumer awareness is near-universal (98%), appreciation is strong (83.2% find handicrafts culturally valuable), and purchase intent is high (74.5%). Yet artisans remain trapped in a cycle of low income—a stark 55% earn below Rs. 5,000 per month—middlemen dependency, raw material price volatility, and marketing isolation. The fundamental challenge is not one of demand but of structural supply-side failures preventing artisans from reaching consumers at fair prices. The gap is most acute in online presence, organised marketing infrastructure, and promotional investment. The opportunities are equally clear: a permanent craft bazaar, digital commerce enablement, GI-tag branding, tourism integration, and SHG strengthening represent a coherent intervention portfolio that, if implemented collectively, could transform Patna into a major hub for Bihar's handicraft economy. In short: consumers want to buy, and artisans want to sell — but the system connecting them is broken. Fixing that bridge is the defining policy imperative for Bihar's handicraft sector. The opportunities decisively outweigh the threats, provided the structural gaps are systematically addressed.

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