

## A Study on Consumer Behavior Towards The Products of Micro-Entrepreneurs And Micro Enterprises In Saras Mela, Bihar

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### Abstract

*This study explores consumer behavior patterns at the Saras Mela, a popular community fair organized every year by Bihar Rural Livelihood Promotion Society (JEEVIKA) at Gandhi Maidan, Patna. A total of 140 respondents participated in the study, providing valuable insights through questionnaire. The research aimed to study the factors that drive consumers to buy at Saras Mela and to seek suggestions from consumers for improvements by understanding the purchasing behavior, and examining visitor satisfaction with findings shedding light on influencing factors for purchases like quality, pricing, and the appeal of attractive and unique products. The data collected at the event highlights hygiene and cleanliness and sitting arrangements as one of the major concerns of visitors. These results can inform future mela organizers, event management teams, and organizing committee of more such fairs.*

**Keywords:** Micro-Entrepreneurs, Saras Mela, Micro Enterprise, Consumer Behavior

### 1. Introduction

Every year, in the month of December, the Ministry of Rural Development-assisted SARAS Fair is being organized to provide a platform for rural entrepreneurs to promote their products at a national level. 'BIHAR SARAS MELA' is organized by Bihar Rural Livelihood Promotion Society (JEEVIKA) at Gandhi Maidan, Patna. The State Rural Livelihood Mission invites Swarozgari (Paid stalls) which are associated with various self-employment activities to participate in the fair and showcase their products. SARAS Mela is an initiative by the Bihar Rural Livelihoods Promotion Society (JEEViKA) that aims toward bringing the rural SHGs on a single platform where they can showcase their skills, sell their products and build connections with potential market players at fair prices. The mela encompasses those self-help groups who have overcome significant obstacles to achieve economic independence. The organization trains them in different livelihood craftsmanship skills and gives them a platform to market their products. Their stalls are entirely free, and all their expenses, including their stay, is borne by JEEViKA.

The objective behind organizing this fair is:

- To provide a platform for local artisans where

they can showcase and sell their products.

- To empower rural women affiliated with SHGs.
- To promote rural livelihoods [1-3].

The event features a wide array of handloom products, including Kalamkari, leather lamp shades, and woodcraft from Andhra Pradesh; Mekhla chadar from Assam; Tasar silk from Odisha and Jharkhand; and Pashmina shawls from Jammu & Kashmir and Uttarakhand. Additionally, exquisite handicrafts such as Madhubani paintings and Sikki crafts from Bihar, bell metal products from Chhattisgarh, and Dokra art and jute handbags from West Bengal are showcased. Natural food items are a major attraction, offering pesticide-free spices, organic pulses, rice, honey, and pickles sourced from states like Kerala, Punjab, and Rajasthan. Few stalls are allotted to Banks also. The India Food Court, featuring various food stalls managed by SHGs, showcasing diverse cuisines from different states are showcased at the fair every year. This event underscores the potential of rural enterprises to drive economic and social change. Currently, Bihar is on the verge of making an entrepreneurial mark in the country. To make it possible, continuous and rigorous efforts are needed in order to motivate, market, and develop

entrepreneurs and their ventures. The rural or micro entrepreneurs have a vast impact on the growth and development of a society, and thus Saras mela is the most influential platform to conduct our survey. Our study was based on two aspects. Firstly, we wanted to understand the buying behavior of consumers who visited the Saras mela. And second, we wanted to take feedback from them in order to understand where the organizers are lagging behind, and what the areas that need continuous improvement are.

Based on the motivation, questions were formulated to find:

- Reasons/ Factors that leads customer to visit Saras Mela.
- Which category of products they are interested in?
- What are the improvement area according to them?

## **2. Literature Review**

Micro-entrepreneurs and micro-enterprises play a significant role in the global economy, particularly in developing states like Bihar. These small businesses contribute to employment generation, poverty alleviation, and local economic growth. Understanding consumer behavior towards the products of micro-entrepreneurs is critical for enhancing their market presence, establishing their market, and gaining competitive advantage. Research highlights that consumer perception of product quality significantly influences their purchasing decisions. For instance, (Kabecha, 1997) analyzed consumer judgments on informal sector products and noted a widespread perception that micro-enterprise products are inexpensive but may lack quality consistency. The study emphasized the need for innovative micro-entrepreneurs to address quality-related concerns to compete effectively in the market. In a similar vein, (J Austin-Breneman, 2017) conducted a field study on user preference behavior and highlighted that micro-entrepreneurs often design products with limited insights into consumer preferences. Aligning products with consumer needs and incorporating value-added features can significantly enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty. Moreover, (WC Lu, 2013) applied the Planned Behavior Theory to explore behavioral

aspects of female micro-entrepreneurs in Taiwan. The study found that consumer behavior towards micro-enterprise products is influenced by subjective norms, entrepreneurial intentions, and perceptions of product utility. Understanding these psychological factors can help micro-entrepreneurs better target and retain customers [4-7]. Several studies emphasize the role of financial literacy and entrepreneurial competency in shaping both consumer behavior and entrepreneurial success. (K Gupta, 2014) Examined financial literacy among micro-entrepreneurs in India and found that a lack of awareness regarding financial products and tools limits their ability to market goods effectively and gain consumer trust. Addressing financial education gaps can improve business performance and consumer confidence. Similarly, (NR Zainol, 2018) explored the impact of entrepreneurial competencies on the competitive advantage of women micro-entrepreneurs. The study showed that competency in areas such as innovation, relationship management, and market analysis positively influences product quality, thereby enhancing consumer satisfaction and loyalty. Behavioral aspects of women micro-entrepreneurs were particularly studied in-depth. (A Salim, 2017) Explored the self-efficacy and long-term orientation of women micro-entrepreneurs and their impact on consumer behavior. The research revealed that women entrepreneurs often build strong consumer relationships based on trust, which influences repeat purchases. Traits such as risk-taking, resilience, and customer-centric approaches were identified as key factors influencing consumer satisfaction and the sustainability of these micro-enterprises. The COVID-19 pandemic emerged as a critical factor influencing both entrepreneurial behavior and consumer preferences. (NF Fabeil, 2020) Highlighted the significant disruptions faced by micro-enterprises during the pandemic and analyzed consumer shifts towards affordable, locally produced goods. The study emphasized that micro-entrepreneurs' ability to adapt to consumer demands during crises strengthens business resilience and market retention. Post-pandemic challenges were further explored by (Boro, 2022), who identified the struggles faced by micro-entrepreneurs in meeting changing consumer needs.

The research highlighted the importance of enhancing digital literacy and adopting e-commerce platforms to reach broader consumer segments.

### 2.1. Research Gaps

The reviewed literature underscores several key themes, including the importance of product quality, financial literacy, innovation, and entrepreneurial competencies in influencing consumer behavior towards micro-enterprise products. Gender-specific studies highlight the role of women micro-entrepreneurs in building strong consumer relationships based on trust and value. However, gaps remain in understanding digital adoption among micro-enterprises and its impact on consumer behavior. The role of sustainability and eco-friendly products in shaping consumer preferences also requires further exploration. Future research should focus on leveraging digital tools and sustainable practices to enhance consumer engagement and business competitiveness.

### 3. Objective of The Study

The survey was conducted with the following objectives:

- To study the factors that drive consumers to buy at Saras Mela.
- To seek suggestions from consumers for improvements.

### 4. Methodology

We wanted a comprehensive understanding of what and why of the consumers buying behavior at Saras Mela, so that effective feedback can be taken for further research and building future marketing strategies. Thus, following methodologies was implemented:

#### 4.1. Type of data collected

- Primary data

#### 4.2. Research Method

- Qualitative research
- Data was collected using open-ended questions and conversational communication.

#### 4.3. Research Techniques used

- Questionnaire

### 5. Results and Discussion

#### 5.1. Results

We can derive the following factors influencing purchases at Saras Mela based on thematic analysis:

#### 5.1.1. The most popular categories of products are:

- **Décor and Home Utility Products:** Top preference with 71 mentions (combining slight variations in labeling).
- **Garments and Accessories:** Also highly preferred, with 50 mentions.
- **Food/ Eatables:** Mentioned 22 times.

#### 5.1.2. Common influencing factors for purchases include:

- **Quality:** Most cited (16 mentions combining variations).
- **Pricing and Quality:** Highlighted as a combined priority.
- **Attractive and Unique Products:** Aesthetic appeal influences decisions.

Regarding feedback, following feedback were given by the consumer for Saras Mela.

**Table 1 The Consumer for Saras Mela**

Themes	Description	Example Feedback
Hygiene and Cleanliness	Suggestions to improve the cleanliness of stalls and public areas	"Improve the cleanliness of the food stalls."
Product Variety	Requests for more diverse or unique products, especially from different states	"Bring more products from other states."
Event Organization	Feedback about stall arrangement, crowd control, or event facilities	"Stalls are too crowded; consider better layouts."
Pricing	Concerns Complaints or suggestions about pricing of goods	"Some products are overpriced for their quality."

#### 5.2. Discussion

The analysis of consumer feedback and influencing factors at Saras Mela highlights key product categories and purchase drivers. The most preferred product categories include Décor and Home Utility products (71 mentions), Garments and Accessories (50 mentions), and Food/Eatables (22 mentions). Common influencing factors for purchases are

quality, which was the most cited reason, followed by a combination of pricing and quality, and the appeal of attractive and unique products. Feedback from consumers emphasized areas for improvement, including hygiene and cleanliness of stalls, the need for greater product variety—especially from different states, better event organization to address crowd control and stall arrangements, and ensuring reasonable pricing to balance quality and cost. Table 1, Addressing these themes can enhance visitor satisfaction and the overall success of Saras Mela [8].

### Conclusion

The thematic analysis of feedback from visitors at Saras Mela reveals key areas for improvement and development. Hygiene and cleanliness emerged as a priority concern, especially for food-related stalls, indicating the need for better sanitation standards. Product variety was another significant area, with visitors seeking more diverse and unique offerings from different states. Concerns around pricing were evident, with requests for fair and competitive pricing to ensure accessibility. Additionally, improving event organization—such as stall arrangements and crowd control—would enhance the overall experience. Despite these areas for improvement, participants expressed positive sentiments regarding the platform's ability to showcase handmade and unique products, as well as promote local artisans. Addressing the identified themes will not only meet visitor expectations but also contribute to the long-term success and popularity of Saras Mela as a hub for cultural and entrepreneurial exchange.

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