

# A Case Study on Handcrafted Industry Supply Chain Operations in Assam's Cachar District

Deebyajyoti Dey<sup>1</sup>, Dr. D Ghosh<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, Assam University, School of Management Studies, Assam University, Silchar

<sup>2</sup>Professor, School of Management Studies, Assam University, Silchar

## Abstract:

In the era of 21<sup>st</sup> century all business operations are focusing on global market competition. Digitalize Operations and supply chain management are the main drivers of globalization. Supply chain management is the major propeller to lead country's economic growth, better the supply chain better will be the global business operation. The southern part of Assam comprises of 3 districts, though southern part of Assam and neighbouring states are abundant in bamboo cultivation but still Handicraft business is not able to compete with global business operations. In some places of the livelihood depends on Handicraft business but due to lack of proper Supply Chain Management not penetrating into global market The Sital Pati making business is one of the oldest indigenous handicrafts of Southern part of Assam but still behind the screen. The current study will focus on Sital Pati making business operation and Supply Chain Operations of indigenous handicraft business in the Cachar District of Assam.

**Keywords:** Globalisation. Supply Chain Operations, Trade Policy, and Eco-friendly.

## I. Introduction

Shital Pati, a traditional cool mat used in North Eastern side of India are made using "MURTA" plants. The plant is also known as Pati Doi in Assamese and Murta, Mostak, and Pati betpatipata and paitara in West Bengal. Historically, Murtas were only found in the swamps of Bangladesh and neighbouring area. Farmers and weavers of India used to travel to Bangladesh by crossing river from Karimganj side and buy them. But the supply chain was too complex and the price was too high, that's why traditionally Shital Pati was considered a luxury item and people would compare it with social status.

Cultivators and weavers in India realised the cost and operation was too complex, and decided to plant Murtas in swamp areas of Kaliganj and Katakhal. In Barak Valley, Assam, Kaliganj and Katakhal are very famous for Sital Pati. Making of 'Shital Pati' is a family business in this remote part of the Northeast and the only means of livelihood for many landless families from these two villages. Almost all family members are involved in this small industry. Kaliganj also has its own cultivation and market which is very popular for trading in mats.



The Murta plant is the main material for weaving chital Pati. In addition, people make other items such as baskets, wall hangings, binder covers, bags, pen stands and various other novelties. These mats are closely related to everyday needs as well as the culture and traditions of the region. Shital Pati is considered auspicious when it comes to rituals and religious purposes in Barak Valley.

Making Shital Pati is a very complicated process and involves several steps. The women of the family are usually the weavers. The male members collect the raw material and make strips from the outer part of the stem. Tapes from the pith part are used as connecting material. These split strips are processed and woven into mats. Almost all members of the artisan's family are involved in this pati making process. The most challenging part is the preparation of fine cane slices suitable for Pati weaving. First of all, the strips are washed with soda. After washing, these cane slices are sun-dried. These are then divided longitudinally into equal halves using a Dao (Billhook). These divided halves are again divided into four equally long and wide pieces, and the soft inner part of the slices is chopped with a chopping tool. This process is known as planning. Another operation is known as sizing, in which all pieces of wood chips are sized to the same width along their entire length. Pati weaving is generally done in a checked pattern with slight variations. The coloring of the leaves is done by traditional methods. The Murtas are cultivated locally by the farmers, during the interview it was found that the demand for pati in general are decreasing at a fast pace, locals are shifting to other works but they still continue their family tradition by weaving wherever they get the time. Women especially work during the morning and later return to their household work.



A typical shital pati takes around 8-10 days in making, the farmers then take the product and sell it to the local wholesaler. The most exquisite shital pati costs around Rs. 25000, and it takes around 2 months complete.

## II. Literature Review

**Supply Chain Management:** A Supply Chain is a chain of parties, who are directly or indirectly involved in the movement of goods from products to end users. It is not only concerned with manufacturer and consumers but also includes Transporters, Warehouse & Retailers. Every manufacturer maintains supply chain system which includes all functions involved in receiving and fulfilling a customer need.

It can be said that to be a sequence of process and flows that take place within and between different stages and combine to fill a customer need for a product. These are two different views for a process involved in Supply Chain Management. Supply Chain encompasses by 5E's namely Emergence, Execute, Exchange, Emporium & Encash.

A Study of Jyoti Narzary during 2013, examines the marketing challenges and opportunities facing the handicrafts and textiles sector, and also highlighted the various drawbacks such as Information on the market is not readily available, Lack of knowledge regarding product features among customers, Handloom marketing and advertising, Insufficient logistics management.

Narendra N. Dalei, Anshuman Gupta, Paradip Dash during 2015, depicted how cotton is managed along the supply chain in Odisha and to identify the factors that influence small and marginal farmers' ability to produce and provide cotton to the market.

Dr. Satish Ch. Pant and Dr. Mukesh Pandey, during 2015, studied makes an effort to investigate the current supply chain scenario of the woollen handicraft industry in Uttarakhand's hill districts and also highlighted number of supply chain problems and restrictions.

D. G. K. Dissanayake<sup>1</sup>, Srimala Perera and Thushari Wanniarachchi during 2017, This study identifies a business strategy that could effectively support the creation of jobs and stable household income for the rural community. We emphasise in our conclusion that the three pillars of sustainability—social, economic, and environmental—can all be addressed through the use of a fair trade and ecologically

responsible manufacturing process. Results of the study encourage manufacturers to review and redesign current fashion production systems, especially when waste and labour issues are impeding sustainability. Rickey Rani Boruah and Dr. Satvinder Kaur during 2015, study highlighted that the federal and state governments have developed numerous programmes to improve the economy by offering incentives in the form of grants and loans to provide training in new designs, the modernisation of looms, etc. and also focus on the operational practises of a few handloom weaving units of Assam. Biman Dutta during 2019, study was conducted on the handloom industry in the Dhemaji districts of Assam, taking into account one household as one production unit in an effort to observe the inputs using patterns and factors that contribute to output. There are two different types of looms in the research region, including throw shuttle and fly shuttle looms, which are both key production inputs for yarn. Alin Borah Bortamuly and Kishor Goswami during 2014, examines the factors that influence how technology is adopted in the handloom sector of Assam. The basic data is analysed using a binary logistic regression model because the dependent factor (technology adoption) is binary. Results demonstrate that industry owners' annual income and level of education are key factors in the adoption of modern technologies. Umme Hani and Prof. Amarendra Kumar Das during 2018, highlighted how traditional motifs and design might be preserved using digital technologies. In this work, the idea of using computer-aided design as a tool for renovating those themes was examined. Umme Hani and Utpal Barua during 2015, investigated the many measures used by tourism to promote the crafts.comprehend the benefits that the craftspeople receive from it.Find the gaps in this industry and provide results that can point designers or other connected specialists in the right direction for additional work on improvement and an attempt to comprehend the level of contentment of the craft producers. Samira Patra and Dr. Sanjeeb Kumar Dey during 2015, highlighted the profitability situation of the chosen Odisha handloom items and conduct a comparative analysis of profits amongst the chosen Odisha handloom products and also recommendations for enhancing the profitability of Odisha's handloom weavers. Biman Maity, Tarun Kumar Das,Victor Sarkar,Kshouni Das, Ankur Adhikary , Kausik Pradhan and Bablu Ganguly during 2020, highlighted the Rural Shital Pati Weaver's Opportunities and Challenges for Sustainable Livelihood.

### III. Need of the Study

Handicraft Business especially in today's business scenario is facing with a lot a challenges. It lacks the promotional strategies and government support. With the lack of formal market knowledge and training, the weavers of southern part of Assam are exploited with unfair prices. The weavers are also lacking in supply chain, with their products being sold in less in local markets, whereas the middlemen are profiting from them. Thus, the study intends to shed some light into the challenges faced by weavers in Supply chain management of handicraft business.

### IV. Objective of the Study

The main objective of the study is to:

1. To Study about the indigenous craft of the region.
2. To know about the scenario of Supply Chain Management of Handicraft business.

### V. Research Methodology

The study is Exploratory in nature. The study was conducted in two villages namely Kaliganj, Katakhal

district of Karimganj and Cachar respectively. Randomly 25 no. of respondent who are engaged in shital pati making entrepreneurship are selected as respondents. Data were collected using a semi-structured interview plan through face-to-face interview and Focused Group Discussion (FGD) method to obtain primary and secondary information related to the study.

## VI. Limitations of the Study

The current study is based on some face to face interviews with only weavers of two selected villages.

The report has special emphasis on Pati making entrepreneurship.

## VII. Findings and Discussion Training

During the course of the study it was found that the craftsmanship of the weavers are not trained rather it was passed down from generations. Because they learned the technique of pati weaving from their parents, grandfather and neighbors. Today all sectors are witnessing micro financing but this sector is still behind as there is no external funding available.

### Income

During the study, it was found that the quality, size and type of the pati defined the price of the product. The weavers make the shital pati in different sizes i.e. 3 x 6 feet, 7 x 7 feet and 4 x 8 feet. The price of normal shital pati ranges from Rs. 650/- to Rs. 1050/-. Shital pati size of 7 x 7 feet is considered as standard size and has more demand in the market compared to other mat size. A 7 x 7 feet pati is priced at Rs. 750/- and it takes 14 hours to make a mat at a weaver or manufacturer. While the price of a 4 x 8 feet is Rs. 600.

### Supply Chain and Marketing

The marketing channel for handcraft goods, particularly in Shital pati, is lacking behind. Since there are no proper markets, the industry is witnessing decline. Farmers now plant murtas in their own farm lands or in the neighbouring swamps. A murta plant grows within 6-8 weeks and then the farmers collect the strips and strip them into fine strips. All patis are made using the same murtas, but the quality differs in the processing. Lal pati and other patis are made by sun-dried murta strips. But shital pati is made by boiling the sun dried murtas, till the murtas are rid of the greenish colour. Farmer boil the murtas for about 3 hours and again dries the strips in the sun, all these process takes around 7-8 days. Murtas are the main raw materials for the pati making entrepreneurship, after completing all operational processing of pati, the finished product are sold by the weavers in a local market in a weekly market day to sell the product to the wholesaler. After that wholesalers sells the product to the customers or end users directly. On the other hand the weavers directly sells to the customer by performing door-to-door visits.

### Constraints

When weaving cool mats or shital pati, rural weavers face with a number of obstacles. The met weavers are still practising this activity manually. There is no modern technology, developed. At present, inferior technology is affecting their production both in quality and quantity in competitiveness market.

## VIII. Conclusion

It was discovered that the pati making industry is degrading at a fast pace, with no government oversight

or incentive, people are leaving this industry. Moreover, there is not a established market for the patis and so the farmers do not get the fair price. Since it is economical, sustainable, environmentally viable, and pollution-free, government needs to severely focus on this entrepreneurship's development and popularization. In contrast, today's emerging plastic materials were seriously polluting our environment. The craftsmanship of the weavers of kaliganj is un- matchable, the women are so experienced in weaving patis. Popularization and reduced at the price of plastic in the market giving threat to the Shital Pati weaver in the handicraft industry. The development of entrepreneurial skills, proper institutional financing support, and the application of contemporary technology in the sector would all contribute to the long-term expansion of entrepreneurship.

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