



Ecommerce as a Tool for Promoting Tribal Handicrafts and Agro-Products in India

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Abstract:

E-commerce has transformed the market landscape for tribal artisans and farmers in India, providing access to broader national and international markets, increasing income potential, and promoting cultural heritage. This study examines the role of e-commerce in promoting tribal handicrafts and agro-products, analyzes government initiatives such as TRIFED's Tribes India e- Marketplace, and evaluates challenges including digital literacy, infrastructure, and cultural preservation. A mixed-method approach combining literature review and primary survey data was adopted. Results indicate that e-commerce significantly enhances income and visibility, though success depends on capacity-building, digital training, and strategic marketing.

Keywords: E-Commerce, Tribal Handicrafts, Agro-Products, Digital Marketing, Tribal Development

Introduction:

India's tribal population possesses rich cultural and agricultural knowledge, expressed through handicrafts, forest products, and agro-based goods. Traditionally, market access has been limited, reducing income opportunities and exposing artisans to exploitation by middlemen (Shah & Patel, 2016).

With the rise of e-commerce, tribal products can reach national and global audiences, enabling direct sales, better price realization, and recognition of cultural value. Government and private initiatives, such as TRIFED's Tribes India e-Marketplace and collaborations with Amazon and Flipkart, have further facilitated this digital transition (TRIFED, 2026; Economic Times, 2021).

This study investigates the opportunities, challenges, and socio-economic impact of e-commerce on tribal artisans and farmers in India.

Literature Review:

E-Commerce for Tribal Market Expansion:

E-commerce allows tribal artisans to list products online, access urban and global consumers, and engage in direct transactions (Pahuja & Brar, 2024). Vadivel et al. (2024) found that online channels in Jawadhu Hills increased both sales and household income.

Government and Private Initiatives:

TRIFED's e-Marketplace provides a structured platform for marketing handicrafts and agro-products (TRIFED, 2026). Public-private collaborations, like Amazon's *Karigar Mela*, have increased visibility and provided marketing training (Economic Times, 2021).

Consumer Behavior and Branding:

Consumer trust, authenticity, and storytelling are crucial for online success (Advances in Consumer Research, 2025). Applying the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) helps understand purchase behavior based

on perceived usefulness and ease of use (Yadav & Mahara, 2019).

Challenges:

Digital literacy gaps, poor internet connectivity, logistics limitations, and risks of cultural dilution constrain adoption (Times of India, 2025). Without training and institutional support, the benefits of e-commerce may not be fully realized.

Research Methodology:

Research Design

A mixed-method approach was used:

- Literature Review: Analysis of journals, government reports, and case studies.
- Primary Data: Survey of 100 tribal artisans and farmers across Tamil Nadu, Odisha, and Chhattisgarh using structured questionnaires.

Data Collection:

- Questionnaire Sections: Digital literacy, e-commerce adoption, income change, marketing challenges, consumer feedback.
- Sampling: Purposive sampling targeting artisans engaged in handicrafts and agro-products.
- Data Analysis
- Descriptive statistics for demographics and adoption rates.

Income Impact:

Income Change Post E-Commerce Adoption	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Increased by 25–50%	30	30%
Increased by 50–75%	20	20%

Income Change Post E-Commerce Adoption	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Increased by >75%	10	10%
No significant change	40	40%

Observation: 60% of respondents experienced some income improvement after using digital platforms.

- Cross-tabulation to assess income change with e-commerce adoption.
- SWOT analysis for identifying opportunities and challenges.

Results:

Demographics:

Variable	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male: 60 Female: 40	60% 40%
Age	18–30: 25 31–50: 50 51–65: 25	25% 50% 25%

E-Commerce Adoption:

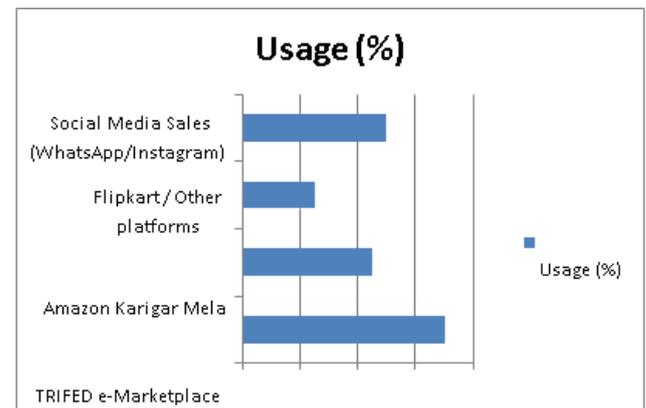
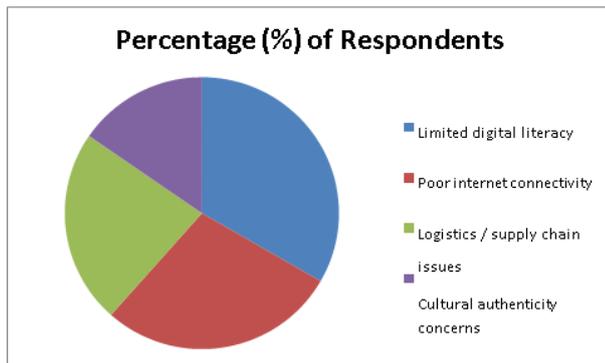


Figure 1: E-Commerce Platform Usage Among Tribal Artisans

Challenges Identified:**Discussion:**

E-commerce significantly improves market reach and income, consistent with findings from Votive et al. (2024) and Hanna et al. (2025). Platforms like TRIFED and Amazon provide marketing visibility and trust frameworks, but limitations in digital literacy, infrastructure, and logistics remain significant barriers.

Digital adoption also empowers women artisans and enhances socio-economic inclusion. Balancing commercialization with cultural preservation is critical to maintaining heritage while tapping into global markets. Strategic training programs and government support are essential for sustainable impact.

Conclusion:

E-commerce has the potential to transform tribal handicraft and agro-product markets in India. It enhances income, market access, and cultural recognition. Government initiatives and private collaborations are key enablers, but challenges remain in digital literacy, infrastructure, and cultural preservation. Capacity-building, marketing training, and infrastructure investment are vital to realize the full potential of e-commerce for tribal communities.

Recommendations:

Following are the recommendations of this study:

- **Capacity Building:** Training programs on digital literacy, product photography, and online sales management.
- **Infrastructure Development:** Improved internet connectivity and logistics support in tribal regions.
- **Branding and Storytelling:** Emphasize cultural authenticity through digital branding and social media campaigns.
- **Policy Support:** Government subsidies for shipping and participation in e-commerce platforms.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Track income, adoption, and cultural impacts periodically.

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