



SUSTAINABILITY REPORT ON VARANASI WOODEN LAQUERWARE & TOYS



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Introduction

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1.1 Study Background

Varanasi, one of the oldest living cities in the world, is known for its rich cultural heritage and diverse artistic traditions. Among these, the tradition of crafting wooden toys stands out for its intricate craftsmanship and historical significance. These toys epitomize a tradition meticulously preserved through generations, reflecting both artistic excellence and cultural heritage. Crafted from locally sourced, premium-quality wood, these toys are skillfully shaped and refined by adept artisans. Intricate detailing and fine finishes are achieved through traditional hand-carving techniques combined with the application of lacquer, a hallmark feature that imparts a distinctive glossy appearance. The lacquer, derived from natural sources, ensures the sustainability and eco-friendliness of the production process.

Designs of Varanasi lacquered, and wooden toys draw inspiration from local folklore, mythology, and day to day life, encapsulating the essence of the region's cultural narratives. Common motifs include animals, birds, and mythological figures, each rendered in vibrant colors and intricate patterns. They are categorized into two-dimensional and three-dimensional forms based on their hand-carving techniques. The production of these toys often incorporates thematic elements. Traditionally themed toys, such as bullock carts, camel carts, horse carts, farming scenes,

fishing scenes, trains, cars, and bands of soldiers playing musical instruments, depict various aspects of daily life. Additionally, some toys are inspired by religious themes and include idols of deities, among others. Modern iterations of these toys, including kitchen and dining sets, cricket sets, and other play sets, reflect contemporary designs and themes, catering to evolving consumer preferences. These toys transcend Hindu traditions and culture, embracing a wide array of cultural and religious influences. For instance, there are toys depicting animals and birds like peacocks, tigers attacking an elephant and rider, cows with calves, and fishes. A significant advantage of Varanasi wooden toys is that the colors used are safe and non-toxic, making them suitable and safe for children, even if they place the toys in their mouths. This safety feature has contributed to their high demand globally.

The recognition of Varanasi wooden lacquerware and toys as a GI product underscores their cultural and economic significance. This designation not only aids in preserving the traditional craft but also enhances the socio-economic welfare of the artisans by protecting their intellectual property rights and providing enhanced market opportunities. Their GI status ensures the safeguarding of this heritage, allowing the timeless craftsmanship of Varanasi's artisans to continue thriving and captivating future generations.



1.2 Objective

The purpose of this case study was to conduct a comprehensive sustainability survey of the wooden toy industry in Varanasi. It included historical evolution, cultural significance, and current business practices of this traditional craft. It seeks to investigate present-day practices of craftsmen, including the processes involved in toy making, business models employed, and socio-economic conditions of those in the industry.

The study analyzed the sustainability of the wooden toy industry concerning environmental impact, economic viability, and social implications, including sources of raw materials, production techniques, market demand, and the livelihood of artisans. Additionally, it aims to identify challenges such as competition from modern toys, market access, and economic pressures, while exploring potential opportunities for enhancing the industry's sustainability and growth. Finally, the case study provides recommendations for preserving and promoting the wooden toy industry sustainably, ensuring the continued relevance of this traditional craft. By achieving these objectives, the case study intends to present a detailed and insightful analysis of the wooden toy industry in Varanasi, contributing to the broader discourse on sustainable artisanal practices and heritage preservation.

1.3 Scope

Varanasi, a historic city located in the heart of North India's Ganges Valley, holds a distinguished place in the state of Uttar Pradesh. Varanasi is also known as Kashi or Banaras, with the name "Kashi" derived from the word "Kas", meaning "to shine". The city evolved into a prominent commercial and industrial hub, renowned for its silk and muslin textiles, ivory crafts, sculptures, and wooden toys. The city's vibrant bazaars display a rich array of handicrafts, textiles, and artifacts, reflecting the exceptional craftsmanship of its local artisans.

The case study on the sustainability of GI-tagged Varanasi wooden toys aims to explore their historical and cultural significance, assess economic benefits for local artisans, and evaluate environmental sustainability practices in material sourcing and production. It includes analyzing market dynamics, consumer awareness, and competition, while identifying challenges and opportunities for growth and innovation. The study will also evaluate the effectiveness of the regulatory framework and provide policy recommendations, along with assessing the social and cultural impacts on the community, ensuring the preservation of traditional skills and promoting the craft through festivals and cultural events.

Methodologically, the study will employ qualitative and quantitative research methods, including in-depth interviews, surveys, ethnographic fieldwork, and market trend analysis. Expected outcomes include a comprehensive report with actionable insights, best practices, and recommendations for artisans, policymakers, and stakeholders to enhance sustainability and marketability. The case study aims to increase consumer awareness, support artisans, and ensure the long-term sustainability of Varanasi wooden toys, contributing to the preservation of this cultural heritage.

All collected data has been meticulously compiled and presented in this survey report to provide a clear and comprehensive overview of the wooden toy industry in Varanasi.



GI Product Description 2

2.1 The Toys

Varanasi wooden lacquerware and toys are distinguished by their exceptional craftsmanship and vibrant aesthetics, meriting their designation as a GI product, registered in 2015. Varanasi wooden toys, with their intricate craftsmanship, cultural depth, and environmental friendliness, continue to be a cherished part of India's handicraft heritage, representing the timeless artistic traditions of Varanasi.

Application Number: 457

Geographical Indication: Varanasi Wooden Lacquerware & Toys

Status: Registered

Applicant Name:

(1) Balaji Handicrafts Cooperative Society Limited and

(2) Khilauna Udyog Sahkari Samiti Limited

Date of Filing: 31st October 2013

Class: 27

Goods: Handicraft

Geographical Area: Uttar Pradesh

Priority Country: India

No. of Authorized Users: 117

Geographical Region:

Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh

India [25°19' 08" N 83°00' 46" E]

2.2 Historical Context

The history of Indian toys is a rich tapestry that spans more than 5000 years, reflecting the diverse cultural, social, and technological evolution of the Indian subcontinent. Toys in India have not only served as playthings but have also been instrumental in imparting cultural values, historical narratives, and traditional craftsmanship across generations.

The origins of wooden toy making in Varanasi can be traced to the early Aryan settlements (Vedic period, 1500-500 BCE) in the middle Ganges Valley. With the passage of time, the wooden toy industry in Varanasi continued to thrive, supported by the patronage of local rulers

and the affluent community. The craftsmanship was passed down through generations, with each generation adding its unique touch to the designs and techniques.

2.3 Cultural Significance

Varanasi wooden toys hold profound cultural significance rooted in the rich heritage of Varanasi, one of the oldest continually inhabited cities in the world. The tradition of crafting wooden toys represents a foundational aspect of Varanasi's cultural heritage, embodying centuries-old customs and the distinctive craftsmanship inherent to this dynamic city. This ancient art form not only highlights the creativity and expertise of local artisans but also underscores the profound cultural richness woven into Varanasi's historical fabric.

Passed down through successive generations, the tradition of wooden toy making in Varanasi reflects a deep-seated respect for both artisanal skill and cultural continuity within the local community. Each toy, adorned with intricately carved figures and vibrant hand-painted designs, serves as a testament to the city's cultural identity, offering insights into its illustrious past and enduring legacy of craftsmanship.

2.4 Uniqueness and Geographical Linkage

Varanasi wooden toys are distinguished by their classification into two-dimensional and three-dimensional forms, crafted through precise and intricate hand-carving techniques. Artisans demonstrate exceptional skill in capturing intricate details that reflect a diverse array of themes, blending everyday scenes and spiritual motifs. Traditional subjects such as bullock carts, camel carts, and agricultural settings offer glimpses into rural life, while depictions of revered Hindu deities underscore religious devotion and cultural significance.

Beyond religious imagery, these toys portray scenes from daily life, encompassing activities such as fishing, transportation by trains and cars, and musical performances by bands. Each toy serves as a conduit for preserving oral traditions and communal identities across generations, encapsulating cultural narratives integral to Varanasi's heritage.

Artisans in Varanasi employ locally sourced woods renowned for their durability and suitability for intricate carving. Originally, Koraiya wood was favored for its softness

and ease of shaping, enabling fine finishing of the toys. Today, woods like Gulhar, Sagwan, and Kaima sourced from Varanasi are predominantly used, ensuring authenticity and sustainability in craftsmanship. One of the most unique features of these toys is that they are made without any joint, making them safe for children.

Following carving, these toys undergo a meticulous process involving lacquering and hand-painting with natural dyes. This method not only enhances their aesthetic appeal but also provides protective layers that ensure long-lasting durability and resilience against wear. The use of safe, non-toxic colors further enhances their appeal, contributing to their high demand in global markets, especially among discerning parents concerned about toy safety.





Sustainability Aspect 3

Varanasi wooden toys exemplify sustainability through their eco-friendly materials, traditional and low-impact production techniques, and the socio-economic empowerment of local artisans. These aspects not only help in preserving cultural heritage but also contribute to a more sustainable and environmentally conscious marketplace.

3.1 Economic Sustainability

Over three thousand families are engaged in the craft of Varanasi wooden toys, generating an annual revenue exceeding Rs. 20 Crore. Across neighborhoods such as Kashmiranji, Kojwa, Badagaon, Harahua, Luxa, and Daranagar in Varanasi, this traditional art has been diligently practiced for generations. Skilled artisans, often hailing from rural backgrounds, have inherited and refined their craftsmanship through familial lineage. These artisans depend on toy-making as a primary livelihood, underscoring the economic sustainability that sustains not only their households but also broader community economies. The demand for Varanasi wooden toys contributes significantly to local economic vitality by fostering employment opportunities across various stages of production—from wood selection and intricate carving to meticulous lacquering and hand-painting. This

collective effort nurtures a thriving cottage industry, stimulating economic activity within the artisanal sector.

Furthermore, the designation of Varanasi wooden toys as GI products enhances their marketability and authenticity. This prestigious recognition safeguards the toys' traditional production methods and maintains stringent quality standards, bolstering consumer trust and enhancing competitiveness in domestic and international markets. Thus, Varanasi wooden toys not only serve as cultural ambassadors but also as vital catalysts for sustainable economic growth and community prosperity in the region.

3.2 Environmental Sustainability

In an era dominated by mass-produced plastic toys, the craftsmen of Varanasi who specialize in wooden toys distinguish themselves through a steadfast commitment to sustainability and eco-friendliness. These artisans prioritize the use of natural materials and uphold traditional production methods, thereby minimizing environmental impact and advocating for responsible consumption practices.

Wooden toys crafted in Varanasi are celebrated not only for their aesthetic appeal and cultural significance but also for



their inherent ecological benefits. Unlike plastic counterparts, Varanasi's wooden toys are biodegradable, offering a sustainable alternative that aligns with contemporary environmental concerns. By employing locally sourced woods such as Gulhar, Sagwan, and Kaima—chosen for their durability and ease of shaping—artisans ensure that their craft remains rooted in sustainable practices. Furthermore, the production of Varanasi wooden toys adheres to principles of safety and health. These toys are free from harmful chemicals, making them safe for children to handle and play with, while also reducing environmental pollution associated with plastic manufacturing and disposal. The artisans' dedication to using natural dyes and lacquers in their finishing processes not only enhances the toys' visual appeal but also underscores their commitment to eco-friendly practices.

3.3 Social Sustainability

The social sustainability of Varanasi wooden toys is intricately woven into the cultural tapestry and community dynamics of the region. These toys are steeped in cultural symbolism and artistic traditions passed down through generations, with artisans playing a pivotal role in their preservation and propagation using time-honored techniques and motifs. Varanasi wooden toys serve as tangible connections to the city's historical narratives, portraying

scenes from daily life, religious iconography, and local folklore. This preservation effort fosters a profound sense of pride and communal identity among local residents, reinforcing their cultural heritage and collective memory.

The transmission of artisanal skills—from carving and painting to lacquering—ensures the continuity of traditional craftsmanship, nurturing social cohesion within artisan communities. Embracing sustainable practices, Varanasi's toy-making industry sets a precedent for responsible production within the broader artisanal craft sector. This commitment not only enhances the toys' appeal in the marketplace but also underscores the community's dedication to environmental stewardship.

Varanasi's renown as a cultural and spiritual hub draws visitors from across the globe, with Varanasi wooden toys serving as cherished souvenirs that enrich cultural tourism experiences. Their availability enhances cross-cultural understanding and creates economic opportunities for local artisans, further strengthening the socio-economic fabric of the region. In essence, Varanasi wooden toys not only embody cultural heritage but also contribute actively to social sustainability, promoting community resilience, cultural pride, and sustainable development practices.



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Case Study Analysis

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4.1 Case Study Selection

The purpose of this case study was to conduct a comprehensive sustainability survey of the wooden toy industry in Varanasi. By examining the historical evolution, cultural significance, and current business practices of this traditional craft, the study aims to:

- **Document Historical and Cultural Context:**

Explore the rich history and cultural heritage of wooden toy making in Varanasi, highlighting its significance in the context of the city's broader historical and economic landscape.

- **Assess Current Practices:**

Investigate the present-day practices of craftsmen, including the processes involved in toy making, the business models employed, and the socio-economic conditions of those involved in the industry.

- **Evaluate Sustainability:**

Analyze the sustainability of the wooden toy industry in terms of environmental impact, economic viability, and social implications. This includes examining the sources of raw materials, production techniques, market demand, and the livelihood of artisans.

- **Identify Challenges and Opportunities:**

Identify the challenges faced by the wooden toy industry in Varanasi, such as competition from modern toys, access to markets, and economic pressures. Additionally, explore potential opportunities for enhancing the sustainability and growth of the industry.

- **Provide Recommendations:**

Offer recommendations for preserving and promoting the wooden toy industry in a sustainable manner, ensuring that this

traditional craft continues to thrive while maintaining its cultural and economic relevance.

By achieving these objectives, the case study aims to present a detailed and insightful analysis of the wooden toy industry in Varanasi, contributing to the broader discourse on sustainable artisanal practices and heritage preservation.

4.2 Detailed Case Study Description

The case study has been undertaken in three broad phases:

The initial phase of the study concentrated on secondary sources of data and literature. In order to comprehend the evolution and expansion of toy manufacturing in the country, information and literature from the past decade were collected from a range of published and unpublished sources. The published data concerning the Indian toys industry primarily originated from diverse research and market study websites, including governmental sources. We have also evaluated the documents and evidence submitted before the Geographical Indications Authority of India for GI registration.



The second phase of the survey involved conducting an extensive field study using structured questionnaires distributed among 119 randomly selected wooden toy manufacturers and associated artisans residing in the Kashmiri Ganj and Khojwa neighborhoods of Varanasi. This field survey utilized meticulously designed questionnaires tailored for the Traditional Wooden Toy Industry to comprehensively document all relevant details.

The third phase of the survey featured a one-day GI Chaupal convened in Varanasi on July 30, 2023, funded by Patentwire, an IP Attorneys firm located in New Delhi, bringing together key stakeholders including artists, craftsmen, shopkeepers, exporters, and others. RIPA's named "Chaupal Pe Charcha," event served as an awareness and interactive session where stakeholders gathered to discuss various challenges facing the traditional wooden toy industry. The outcomes and insights from the Chaupal have been incorporated as an integral part of this report.





Findings 5

5.1 Raw Material for Toys

Varanasi wooden toys have a longstanding reputation. Following the prohibition of ivory, Varanasi artisans transitioned to crafting wood. Many of these craftsmen trace their lineage to royal court ivory carvers. Historical accounts suggest that toys associated with Lord Rama originated from Kashi. The toys are crafted from a distinctive type of wood. Traditional wooden toy production predominantly occurs at a cottage industry scale, with most artisans operating independently and informally (Kumar et al., 1996a).

While many craftsmen continue to utilize basic hand tools, an increasing number are adopting power tools such as fretsaws, lathes, circular saws, jigsaws, and spray-painting equipment. Craftsmen typically prefer wood that is soft to moderately firm, possesses a smooth surface, and is easily moldable into desired shapes; however, the choice of wood depends largely on available supplies.

Initially, Koraiya wood was predominantly used for manufacturing toys in Varanasi due to its softness and ease of shaping, which allowed for fine finishing of the toys. However, the availability of Koraiya wood became constrained after the government imposed a ban on koraiya-tree cutting in 1983. Subsequently, Varanasi toy makers turned to Sheesham and Eucalyptus wood as alternatives. These woods, although harder and more challenging to carve, became the primary materials used for toy production.

Approximately 3000 artisans are employed across small-scale manufacturing units in Varanasi. Typically, toy components are crafted in one location and assembled in another. Artisans encompass a variety of

roles, including freelancers and those employed within registered toy-making establishments. Daily wages for artisans range from Rs. 250 to Rs. 400, depending on their expertise, experience, and the hours worked per day. Despite their craftsmanship, artisan wages often fall short of meeting family needs, particularly in households reliant on a sole breadwinner.

5.2 Process of Making Toys

The artisans procure logs of wood in bulk and store them in suitable locations. Once the dimensions of the toy are determined, a wood block is cut from the log. Each piece undergoes a gradual heating process to remove moisture completely. Following thorough cleaning, the surface is meticulously sanded to achieve smoothness. The design of the toy is then traced onto the material to create an outline. After filing to refine the shape, the item is chiseled according to the design specifications. Typically, toys are carved from a single piece of wood, although some designs may incorporate separate sections that are later assembled.

Once carved, the toy undergoes a process of distemper dipping. After drying, a uniform coat of white paint is applied. To achieve a glossy finish, the toy receives two coats of non-toxic colored lacquer followed by a final finishing coat. Fine detailing is accomplished using a brush made from squirrel tail hair. When painting multiple toys with identical designs, a batch is painted uniformly with pre-prepared colors. Each subsequent color is applied only after the previous one has dried sufficiently. Although variations in color combinations may exist, a sample toy serves as a reference for maintaining consistency within the batch.

Lacquering is executed on a lathe, where dry lac is applied to the woodenware. As the lathe rotates, the friction-generated heat softens the lac, enabling the color to adhere to the wood's surface. This process produces lacquerware toys characterized by their vibrant colors and meticulous craftsmanship, showcasing the artisans' proficiency with various coloring techniques, including acrylic paints.

5.3 Survey Findings

Legacy and Ethnicity

1. Who started this work in your family? Were your ancestors also involved in this work?

Our survey revealed that 99% of families have been engaged in toy making for more than four to five generations. All respondents indicated that their ancestors were involved in the toy-making business. However, precise lineage data could not be obtained due to a lack of documentation.

2. How many families are in this industry currently in Banaras? 10-15/15-50/50 and more. How many were there 20 years ago?

The survey indicates that approximately 500 families are currently engaged in the toy-making business in Varanasi. Among these, 400 families are involved in machine-based toy carving, with only 40-50 individuals recognized as highly skilled craftsmen. Additionally, 20-25 families specialize in making wooden religious idols, another 20-25 families focus solely on painting toys, and only 4-5 families possess decorative carving skills (Nakkashi), as many artisans with these skills have migrated to other cities in search of work.

It is important to note that 20 years ago, over 750 families were actively involved in the toy-making craft. Over time, many families abandoned their ancestral legacy in pursuit of better living conditions and higher family income.



Craft and Market Access

1. What kind of toys do you make?

Varanasi wooden toys are crafted in a wide array of forms and themes, encompassing rich traditions, religious motifs, and mythological characters. These themes reflect the cultural heritage and artistic diversity of Varanasi, each design imbued with intricate details and symbolic significance. Artisans skillfully bring to life traditional stories, religious iconography, and mythical tales through their craftsmanship, creating toys that not only serve as playthings but also hold cultural and spiritual value. This diverse range of themes not only showcases the artisans' creativity and craftsmanship but also preserves and celebrates Varanasi's cultural narratives for generations to come. Some of the examples are as follows:

- o Sighora
- o Dibiya
- o Décor items
- o Russian doll
- o Makha Dhani
- o Rickshaw
- o Lattu
- o Baja
- o Truck
- o Bus
- o Doll
- o Namak Dani
- o Cake Plate
- o Chudi Goli

2. Where do you sell these toys? Only in Banaras or outside Banaras also? Can you please specify your area of reach?

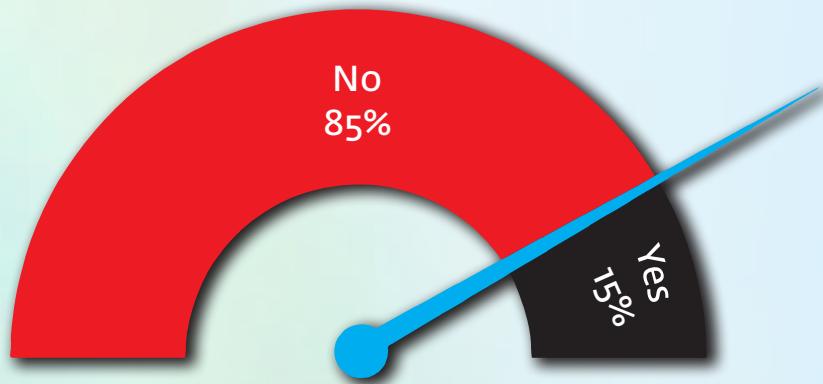
Our survey findings indicate that 49% of toy sales occur within the local areas of Varanasi, while only 30% of sales take place outside the city. Additionally, 40% of artisans are not directly involved in the sale of toys; they contribute solely to the production process. The limited access to larger markets is primarily attributed to financial and logistical constraints, coupled with intense competition from foreign toys. These challenges hinder the ability of local artisans to expand their reach and increase their market share beyond Varanasi.



3. Do you also sell at govt trade fairs, functions, workshops etc.?

The representation of Varanasi toy makers at government trade fairs, functions, and workshops is limited to a mere 15% of the artisans, leaving a significant 85% unable to sell their products at these events. This disparity in representation arises from multiple factors. Firstly, there is a pervasive lack of awareness among artisans about these opportunities, largely due to inadequate dissemination of information. Many artisans remain uninformed about the application processes and the benefits of participating in such events. Secondly, the limited capacity of government-organized events restricts the number of participants that can be accommodated. This scarcity of space and resources results in a significant portion of artisans being excluded.

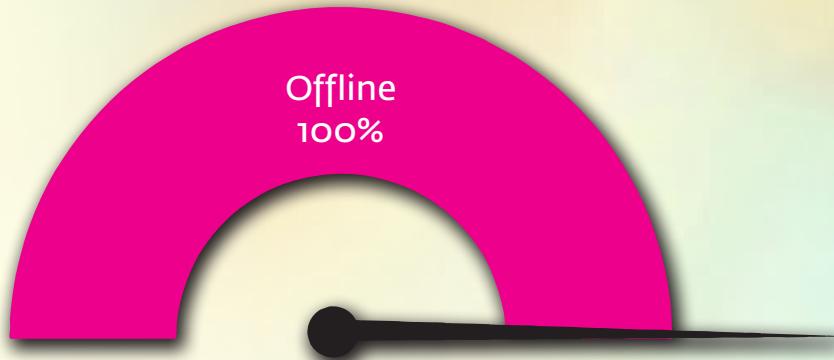
Additionally, there is a marked preference for established artisans over newer or lesser-known ones. This bias in selection criteria perpetuates the underrepresentation of many talented but less recognized artisans. Financial constraints also play a crucial role; the costs associated with participation, including travel, accommodation, and setting up stalls, are prohibitive for many artisans, preventing them from even considering participation. Connectivity and outreach issues further compound the problem, as artisans from remote or rural areas struggle with inadequate transportation and limited communication facilities, making it difficult for them to engage with event organizers and participate in these fairs. Consequently, the combination of these factors results in a significant underrepresentation of Varanasi toy makers at government trade fairs and related events.



4. How do you receive orders? (Online/Offline)

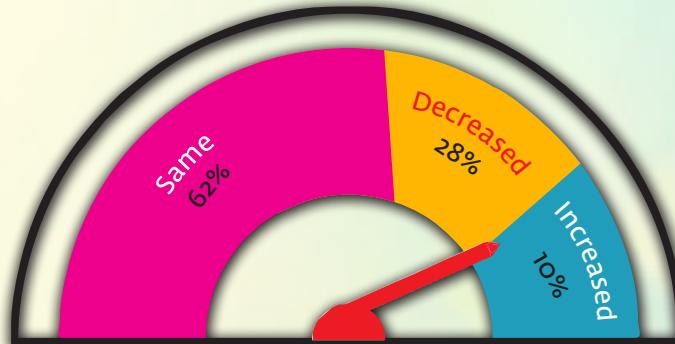
All orders received by the artisans are currently processed through offline channels. The majority of these orders are business-to-business (B2B), followed by business-to-consumer (B2C) sales. This reliance on offline transactions is largely due to a lack of awareness and infrastructural support for online sales of toys and wooden products. Many artisans are not familiar with e-commerce platforms and the benefits they offer in terms of reaching a wider customer base. Additionally, they lack the necessary technological infrastructure, such as reliable internet access, digital payment systems, and online marketing skills, which are crucial for setting up and maintaining an online

sales presence. As a result, the artisans are unable to tap into the growing online market, limiting their sales potential and market reach. Enhancing their digital literacy and providing the required infrastructural support could significantly expand their business opportunities and overall market visibility.



5. What was the demand and supply 10 years ago? Has the current demand changed in comparison to 10 years back? (Current Trend)

A significant 62% of artisans reported that there has been no notable increase in the demand and supply of Varanasi toys. Additionally, 28% of artisans indicated that there has been a considerable decrease in both demand and supply. Several factors influence the demand and supply chain of these toys. One of the primary challenges is the intense competition from foreign toys, which often dominate the market due to their lower prices and widespread availability. Furthermore, awareness among buyers about the unique value and craftsmanship of Varanasi toys is limited, affecting their purchasing decisions. Another critical factor is the availability of a skilled workforce, which becomes particularly important in cases of sudden increases in demand. Without a sufficient number of artisans to meet high demand, the supply chain becomes strained. Addressing these issues by enhancing marketing efforts, increasing buyer awareness, and ensuring a stable and skilled workforce could help improve the demand and supply dynamics of Varanasi toys.



6. What used to be the cost of making, selling cost, and profit margin 10 years back?

Over the past decade, the cost of producing Varanasi toys has significantly risen, while

there has been a noticeable decrease of around 50-60% in both selling prices and profit margins. This decline can be largely attributed to several factors affecting the industry. Firstly, there is a scarcity of raw materials, particularly the traditional Koraiya wood used in crafting wooden toys, leading artisans to opt for more expensive alternatives such as eucalyptus. This substitution not only increases production costs but also affects the authenticity and quality of the finished products.

Additionally, artisans face challenges such as high electricity charges, which further inflate operational expenses. These overhead costs contribute to the squeeze on profit margins. Moreover, there is a selective demand among consumers, with certain types of toys enjoying greater popularity than others. This selective demand influences pricing strategies and market competitiveness, making it difficult for artisans to maintain profitable margins across their product range.

Addressing these challenges would require initiatives aimed at securing a sustainable supply of affordable raw materials, optimizing energy costs through efficient practices, and diversifying product offerings to meet evolving consumer preferences. By addressing these factors, the Varanasi toy industry could potentially stabilize production costs and restore healthier profit margins, ensuring the sustainability of this traditional craft.

Awareness

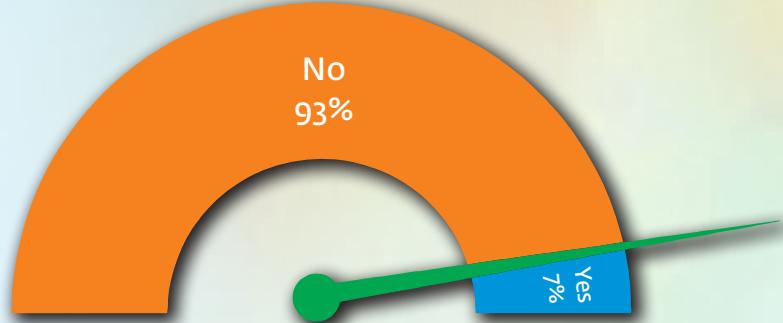
1. Are you aware of any govt. schemes for handicrafts industry and artisans? Yes/ No

The survey findings reveal a significant deficiency in awareness concerning government schemes intended for the handicrafts industry. An overwhelming 93% of respondents reported lacking any knowledge about the various schemes and supports offered by the government. This lack of awareness can be attributed to several critical factors. Firstly, ineffective communication channels fail to adequately disseminate information about these schemes to artisans, thereby preventing them from accessing valuable resources and opportunities. Additionally, a widespread lack of digital literacy among artisans hampers their ability to navigate online platforms where information about government initiatives may be available.

Furthermore, local bodies and artisan cooperatives, which could play a crucial role in informing and assisting artisans, often have limited involvement or effectiveness in this regard. The complexity of information surrounding these schemes poses another challenge, making it difficult for artisans, many of whom may have low literacy levels, to understand eligibility criteria and application processes. Moreover, historical experiences of inefficiency or corruption within government programs may contribute to a general lack of trust among artisans, further dissuading them from seeking out or believing in the benefits of these schemes.

Addressing these barriers requires concerted efforts to improve communication strategies, enhance digital literacy among artisans, strengthen the role of local bodies in

advocacy and support, simplify information about government schemes, and build trust through transparent and efficient implementation. By addressing these challenges, policymakers can better ensure that government support reaches those who need it most within the handicrafts industry, fostering sustainable growth and empowerment among artisans.



1. Are you aware of Geographical Indications?

The survey uncovered a striking lack of awareness among artisans regarding Geographical Indication (GI) registration in India. Merely 12% of artisans reported being aware that their products could potentially qualify for a "Registered GI" status. Conversely, a substantial 88% of artisans had not heard of the term "GI" and were completely unaware of the significance that such recognition could hold for their craft. The findings underscore a pressing need for improved education and outreach efforts to empower artisans with knowledge about GI registration and its potential benefits, thereby fostering greater appreciation and sustainability of India's rich handicraft traditions.



2. Are you aware of GI logo of India?

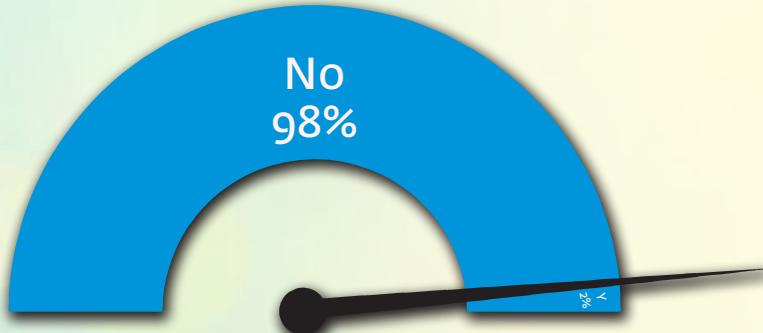
It was notable from our survey that 20% of artisans who participated were familiar with the GI logo, yet only 12% had knowledge of what "GI" specifically entails. This disparity highlights a nuanced understanding among artisans: while some recognize the visual symbol associated with Geographical Indication (GI), a smaller proportion comprehend the broader concept and legal framework behind it. The GI logo serves as a visual identifier that signifies a product's geographical origin and unique qualities, offering protection

against unauthorized imitation and ensuring consumers can trust in the product's authenticity. However, the low awareness of the term "GI" itself suggests a need for targeted educational initiatives to deepen artisans' understanding of this intellectual property tool and its potential benefits for preserving and promoting their traditional crafts. Increasing awareness and comprehension of GI among artisans could empower them to leverage this form of recognition to enhance market competitiveness and safeguard their cultural heritage.



3. Are you using GI logo on your packaging?

It is striking to note that a mere 2% of artisans actively incorporate the Geographical Indication (GI) logo on their packaging, whereas the remaining 98% sell Varanasi wooden toys without acknowledging the GI tag. This low adoption of the GI logo can be primarily attributed to a pervasive lack of awareness among artisans regarding the significance of Varanasi toy heritage and the potential advantages of using the GI logo on their products. The GI logo serves as a mark of authenticity and quality, indicating the unique geographical origin and traditional craftsmanship associated with Varanasi toys. By prominently displaying the GI logo on packaging, artisans not only enhance consumer trust and recognition but also protect their products from unauthorized imitation and bolster market competitiveness. Bridging this awareness gap through targeted educational campaigns and support programs could empower more artisans to leverage the GI tag effectively, thereby preserving and promoting Varanasi's rich cultural heritage in the global marketplace.



4. Are you a member of your community/association/NGO?

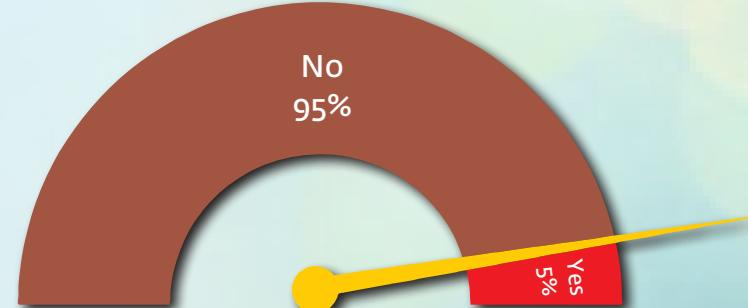
It is evident that only 10% of artisans are actively involved with their local community

organizations, associations, or NGOs that work towards the betterment of the Varanasi toy-making community. The majority of artisans appear hesitant to participate in these associations due to several reasons. There is a concern among artisans about competitive pricing within the group, fearing that collaboration might undermine their individual pricing strategies or market positioning. Moreover, local political dynamics and internal conflicts within these associations sometimes deter artisans from joining, as they prefer to avoid potential conflicts or biases that could affect their business operations. Additionally, some artisans may simply prefer working independently rather than as part of a collective effort, reflecting a preference for autonomy in decision-making and business management. Overcoming these barriers requires fostering a supportive and transparent environment within community associations, addressing concerns about competition and politics, and emphasizing the collective benefits of collaboration, such as advocacy, shared resources, and skill enhancement programs. This approach could encourage more artisans to engage actively in community initiatives aimed at advancing the Varanasi toy-making industry as a whole.



5. Are you aware of registered users under GI act?

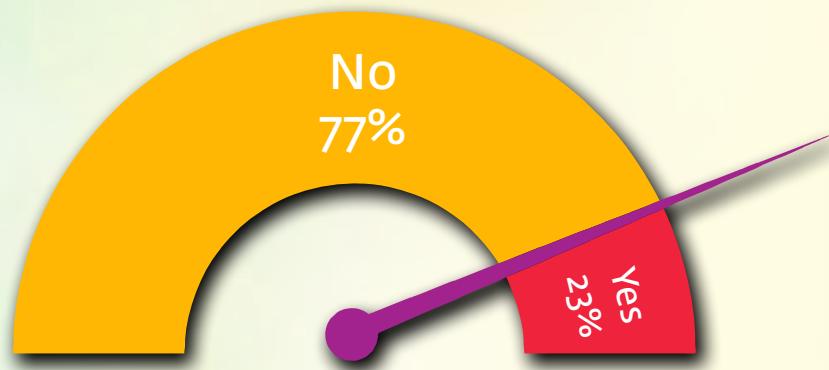
The survey revealed that a mere 5% of artisans were aware of the provision for "Registered Users" under the GI Act. This lack of awareness about such critical information can have detrimental effects on their products and livelihoods. Without understanding the benefits and protections offered by being a registered user under the GI Act, artisans inadvertently compromise the authenticity and quality of their crafts. This results in diluted product standards, reduced market appeal, and ultimately, lower income generation. Additionally, the financial constraints faced by many artisans further exacerbate these challenges, as they lack the resources and knowledge to navigate the legal frameworks that could protect and enhance the value of their traditional crafts. Increasing awareness about the provisions and advantages of GI registration is essential to empower artisans, preserve cultural heritage, and foster sustainable economic development within the Varanasi toy-making community.





6. Do you have an artisan card?

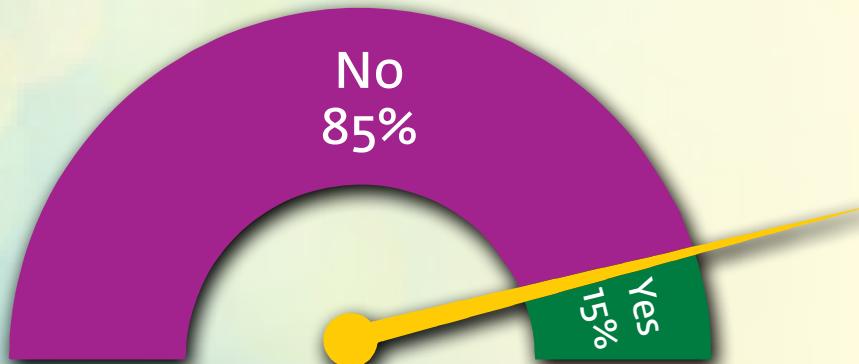
Only 23% of the respondents possessed artisan cards, indicating a relatively low number of artisans formally recognized and registered under artisan identification programs. This card serves as a crucial form of official recognition, providing artisans with various benefits such as access to government schemes, subsidies, and market opportunities. The low percentage highlights a potential gap in the formalization and support of artisans within the sector, as many may operate informally without the benefits and protections that come with official recognition. Encouraging more artisans to obtain artisan cards could improve their visibility, enhance their access to support systems, and contribute to the overall development and sustainability of the artisanal community in Varanasi and beyond.



Socio-Economic

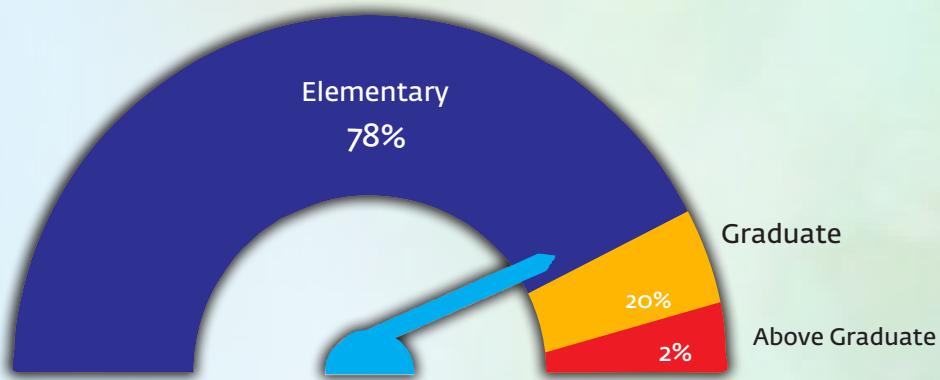
1. How many women/men are there? Do they also work in making handicrafts?

The artisan community is predominantly male, comprising 85% of the total artisans surveyed, while females constitute 15%. The division of labor within this demographic shows that females primarily contribute to soft skills, such as painting and polishing, which are essential for giving the toys a final, polished appearance. In contrast, males are predominantly involved in the intricate tasks of wood carving and decorative skills required for crafting the toys themselves. This gender-based division of labor reflects traditional roles and expertise within the Varanasi toy-making industry, where each gender plays distinct yet complementary roles in the production process. Efforts to support gender equality and inclusivity in artisanal activities could potentially broaden opportunities for female artisans and contribute to more diverse skill development within the community.



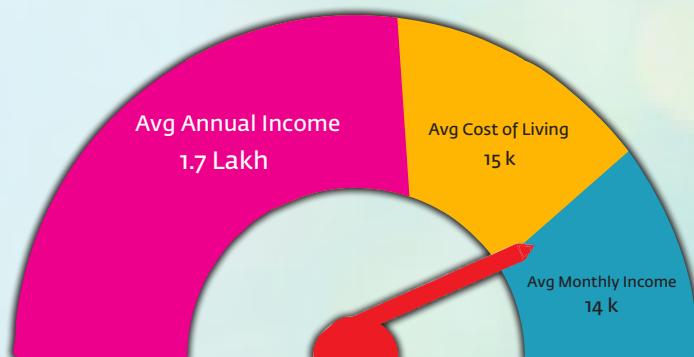
2.What is the educational background of all members?

The educational background of artisans surveyed reveals a diverse distribution: 78% have received education up to the elementary level, indicating a foundational level of literacy and numeracy among the majority. A notable 20% have pursued higher education, holding bachelor's degrees such as B.A. or B.Com. This segment represents artisans with a broader academic foundation, potentially bringing additional skills and perspectives to their craft. In contrast, a modest 2% of artisans have advanced their education to master's degree level or above, demonstrating a smaller but significant group with extensive academic qualifications.



3. What is their average cost of living, average monthly income and annual income?

In Varanasi, artisans face a challenging economic reality: while the average cost of living hovers around INR 15,000 per month, our survey reveals that artisans earn an average monthly income of only INR 14,000, translating to an annual income of approximately INR 1,70,000. This income disparity underscores the financial strain experienced by artisans, who struggle to meet their families' daily needs and maintain a decent standard of living. The gap between their income and the cost of living highlights the economic vulnerabilities within the artisan community, where limited earnings from their craft make it exceedingly difficult to cover basic expenses such as food, housing, education, and healthcare. Addressing these challenges requires targeted interventions to improve income opportunities, enhance market access, and provide financial literacy and support programs aimed at bolstering the economic resilience of Varanasi's artisanal workforce.



4. Do they have bank accounts, debit/credit cards? Yes/No If yes, how many?

All the artisans (100%) have bank accounts.

5. How do you receive payment? (whether online or cash)

98% of transactions are in cash, while only 2% are online.

6. How do you manage taxes and GST?

Only 4% artisans are able to manage their taxes, while others are only paying indirect taxes.

Expectations

1. What are your needs and expectations?

Majorly, artisans have following expectations from the govt. and stakeholders to support their sustainability:

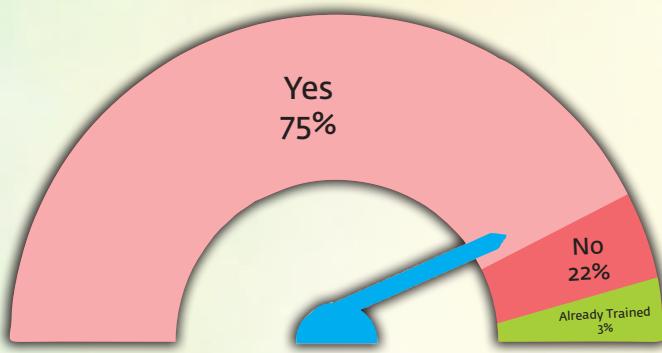
1. Raw Material availability
2. Income should improve
3. Healthcare Accessibility (Mohalla Clinics, Smooth Ayushman Card Process)
4. Quality education for children
5. Vocational trainings
6. Govt. schemes for socio-economic upliftment and handicraft sector
7. Subsidiary in electricity
8. Availability of raw materials at subsidized rate
9. Large market access (Outside locality, to other states and international stage)
10. NGOs for awareness programs
11. Infrastructure for trainings and toy industry
12. Additional source of income for supporting family requirements

2. Do you feel some type of training like how to sell online/ePortal etc. will help you?

A significant majority of artisans, totaling 75%, expressed a strong desire for sales training to enhance their skills in effectively marketing and selling their products. This reflects a recognized gap among artisans in Varanasi, who acknowledge the importance of

acquiring the necessary expertise to expand their market reach and improve their sales performance. Conversely, 22% of artisans did not perceive a need for sales training, suggesting varying levels of confidence or awareness about the potential benefits of such training.

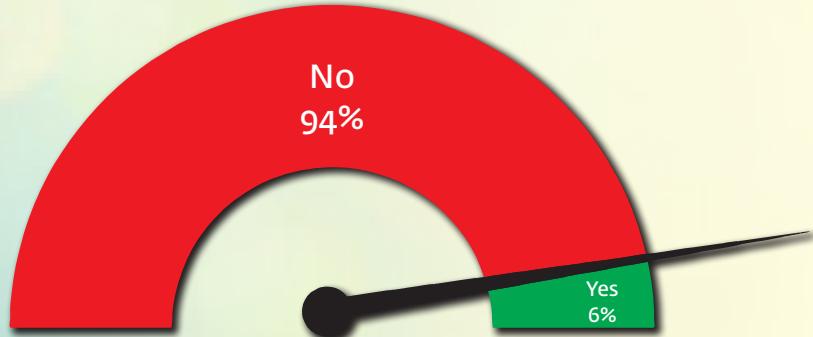
Interestingly, a small percentage of artisans, specifically 3%, have already received training and are actively leveraging their skills to successfully sell their toys in the market. This minority demonstrates the positive impact that targeted sales training can have in equipping artisans with the knowledge and strategies needed to navigate competitive markets and attract customers. Addressing the demand for sales training through tailored programs could empower more artisans to enhance their business acumen, strengthen their market competitiveness, and ultimately improve their livelihoods within the Varanasi toy-making community.



3. Is your next generation interested in making these toys?

It is concerning to note that just 6% of the younger generation show interest in continuing the legacy of toy making, with the remaining 94% considering alternative professions for improved quality of life. This stark statistic underscores the precarious future of Varanasi wooden toys as a traditional craft, signaling a potential risk of its gradual decline.

Preserving this cultural heritage is crucial not only for its historical significance but also for sustaining livelihoods and fostering community identity. Supporting initiatives aimed at revitalizing interest among the younger generation, such as educational programs, apprenticeships, and economic incentives, becomes imperative for ensuring the long-term sustainability of Varanasi's wooden toy industry. By investing in these efforts, stakeholders can help safeguard this endangered craft, preserving its legacy for future generations and contributing to the cultural richness of the region.



Sustainability Score

The situation in Varanasi, where traditional wooden toy makers are compelled to pull real rickshaws instead of crafting their distinctive rickshaw toys, underscores a pressing and heartbreakingly issue. This shift from artistry to manual labor highlights the severe impact of resource scarcity and a lack of awareness about Geographical Indication (GI) products.

potential benefits of GI registration. Addressing this issue requires immediate and comprehensive action. Awareness campaigns are crucial to educate local artisans on the significance of GI registration and its benefits. Workshops, seminars, and partnerships with local NGOs and government bodies can play a pivotal role in this educational effort. Moreover, providing artisans with the necessary resources, such as quality raw materials, tools, and financial assistance through government subsidies, grants, or microfinance options, is essential.

Economic check

- Daily wages very low
- Huge demand not resulting into better revenue
Major reason: No change in retail price since 10 years
- Cost of production has increased multifold.
- GI Tag is not supporting as documented
- 94% artisans do not wish to continue the legacy
- Avg Monthly income USD 160

High

Social check

- NGOs & Govt support reaching to chosen ones
- Trade participations are very less
- Registered users are less
- Artisan card is not available for all
- Many internal conflicts due to limited resources
- Only 7% are aware about Govt. schemes

LOW

High

Many artisans now pull the rickshaw for livelihood instead of making the rickshaw toy

Environmental check

The cheapest wood has been banned
Huge scarcity of traditional raw materials
Next generation doesn't wish to continue the traditional way
No subsidy or economical support available for artisans
Quality being compromised due to lack of resources
No leader has been identified/designated for this Art group

Others

- Struggling on cost, revenue, & profit margins
- The toys are unable to have proper market reach
- The localities are not fit for tourist visits
- The families are leaving the legacy
- The cluster is not identified, basic facilities are not reaching them
- No common facility available for them

The current reality is bleak. These skilled craftsmen, once creators of unique wooden toys, are now forced into the grueling task of pulling rickshaws to make ends meet. This not only deprives them of their livelihood but also threatens to erase a rich cultural tradition. The lack of access to quality raw materials, proper tools, and financial support has pushed them into this dire situation, exacerbated by insufficient knowledge about the

By taking the suggested steps, there is hope to rejuvenate the traditional wooden toy industry in Varanasi. Ensuring that artisans can sustain themselves financially through their craft not only preserves their livelihood but also safeguards a valuable cultural heritage.



Challenges

The traditional craft of making wooden toys in Varanasi is facing a range of issues including:

Shortage of Raw Materials: Many artisans lament the inconsistent availability and procurement challenges associated with raw materials such as wood and paints. The ban on Koraiya wood continues to pose a significant setback for them.

Power Interruptions and Exorbitant Electricity Costs: The frequent and unpredicted interruptions in power supply significantly hamper productivity, especially since the lathe turning process relies heavily on electricity. In some areas, power outages lasting 4-5 hours compel artisans to extend their working hours to meet production targets. Furthermore, the steep electricity tariffs impose a financial strain on them.

Inadequate Lighting and Ventilation: Many workshops suffer from poor ventilation and inadequate lighting, which significantly hampers productivity. These conditions are compounded by a lack of basic facilities such as washrooms, lockers, and staff lounges in small units. The absence of proper lighting discourages women from pursuing these occupations.

Hygiene Concerns: The lack of regular floor cleaning in industrial facilities results in artisans working amidst accumulated sawdust. Additionally, artisans working with wood often lack appropriate safety gear, while recycled

wood fragments are stacked and used for burning.

Artisan Attrition: A major factor contributing to the decline in toy making is the high turnover rate among artisans. Poor compensation, working conditions, and job insecurity prompt artisans to seek better-paying opportunities elsewhere. Younger artisans are reluctant to enter the craft due to low wages and substandard working conditions.

Skill Development Challenges: There is no standardized training duration or procedure for artisans, leading to productivity disruptions when artisans leave. This inconsistency impacts skill retention and development within the industry.

Lack of Awareness: Artisans are often uninformed about government schemes and policies that could support them. Limited education further impedes their ability to comprehend and utilize benefits such as health cards.

Limited Market Access: Skilled artisans, particularly those with limited formal education, struggle to market their toys effectively. They face challenges in leveraging online commerce platforms and lack resources to establish shops in high-traffic areas.

Competition from Cheaper Foreign Toys: The market is flooded with inexpensive toys imported mainly from China, posing a challenge to locally made wooden toys which are relatively more expensive due to their material composition.

Lack of Innovation and Design:

Traditional designs of wooden toys may struggle to appeal to modern consumers who favor innovative and trendy products. There is a pressing need for continual innovation and adaptation of designs to meet evolving consumer preferences.

Changing Consumer Preferences:

Shifting lifestyles and preferences, particularly in urban areas, have led to increased demand for modern electronic toys, presenting a challenge to the enduring appeal of traditional wooden toys.

Decline in Skilled Artisans: The craft of wooden toy making relies on specialized skills and knowledge passed down through generations. However, there is a diminishing number of skilled artisans due to an aging workforce, lack of interest among younger generations, and a shift towards alternative

occupations.

Competition from Mass-Produced Toys:

Varanasi's wooden toys face stiff competition from mass-produced plastic toys available in a wide range of varieties at lower prices, making it difficult for traditional artisans to compete in terms of affordability and variety.

Infrastructure and Technological Constraints:

Limited access to modern machinery for mass production and online sales platforms hinders the scalability and competitiveness of Varanasi's wooden toy industry.

Environmental Considerations:

Unsustainable practices in wooden toy production can contribute to deforestation and environmental degradation. There is a growing emphasis on adopting eco-friendly practices and materials, necessitating adjustments in traditional production methods to align with global environmental standards.





Recommendations & Suggestions

6

1. Focus on GI and Handicraft Toys: It is imperative to concentrate efforts on GI and handicraft toys to revive and preserve the rich legacy and traditional values of India.

2. Revival of Extinct Toys: Many toys from rural and remote areas have become extinct. Efforts must be made to identify and reintegrate these toys into the mainstream market.

3. Enhancing GI Awareness and Scheme Accessibility: Awareness of GI and government schemes must be extended to the farthest reaches, ensuring all artisans benefit.

4. Market Access and Product Enhancement: Appropriate measures should be taken to improve market access and enhance the quality and appeal of these handicraft toys.

5. Census of Active Artisans: A comprehensive census of all active artisans in each toy cluster must be conducted.

6. Promotion of Registered Users and GI Filing: Encouragement of GI registration and promotion of registered artisans should be pursued at both State and Central levels.

7. Provision of Rotational Stalls: Artisans should be provided with rotational stalls at major public places such as airports, railway stations, petrol pumps, and other prominent locations throughout India.

8. Free Access to Public Selling Venues: Registered artisans should be granted free access to public venues for selling their toys.

9. Publication of Documentaries and Reports: Documentaries and government reports on each toy should be published and widely advertised.

10. Establishment of Common Facility Centers: Common facility centers and additional clusters should be strategically established.

11. Recognition and Awards: Awards and recognition should be distributed among many artisans to avoid repetitive accolades to the same individuals.

12. Prime Time Media Coverage: The stories and struggles of artisans should be featured prominently in both print and electronic media.

13. Industry Reports and Surveys: Regular industry reports and surveys must be conducted to ensure the sustainability of the handicraft toy industry.

14. Participation in Fairs and Events: Real efforts should be made to ensure artisan participation in fairs, exhibitions, and cultural events.

15. Educational Support: Education on local and global business practices, packaging, and e-commerce should be provided with the assistance of NGOs and the government.

16. Community Awareness Programs: Programs to raise awareness about website promotion, association functions, access to government schemes, and logistics should be implemented.

17. Encouraging CSR and ESG Compliance: Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) compliance should be encouraged in these sectors.

18. Night Fairs and GI Weeks: Night fairs and specific GI weeks should be organized in every district, city, and metro area.

19. Integration with Festivals: Indian festivals should be linked with specific GI products at the government level.

20. Cultural Promotions and Competitions: GI fairs, cultural shows, village gatherings (chaupal), and competitions should be promoted.

21. IP and GI Education: IP and GI-based education should be incorporated into school and college curricula.

22. Establishment of Heritage Cities: The government should announce the establishment of GI Heritage and Toys Heritage Cities.

23. Promotional Events at Airports and Stations: Airports and railway stations can organize themed weeks throughout the year to promote India's traditional values.

24. Announcements of Cultural Values: Flight and railway announcements could include information about the GI and traditional values of the city, promoting awareness and appreciation of Indian culture, tradition, and artisans.

25. Establish GI Museums and Exhibits: Create museums and exhibits dedicated to showcasing GI and handicraft toys, highlighting their historical significance, cultural importance, and artistic craftsmanship.

26. Digital Catalogs and Online Marketplaces: Develop comprehensive digital catalogs and e-commerce platforms that feature GI and handicraft toys, providing artisans with wider market access and consumers with convenient purchasing options.

27. Collaborations with Designers and Artists: Facilitate collaborations between

traditional artisans and contemporary designers to innovate and create new designs that appeal to modern markets while preserving traditional techniques.

28. Training Programs and Workshops: Implement regular training programs and workshops for artisans to enhance their skills in areas such as product design, quality control, marketing, and digital literacy.

29. International Trade Fairs and Expos: Promote participation in international trade fairs and expos to showcase Indian GI and handicraft toys on a global stage, increasing their visibility and export potential.

30. Incentives for Young Artisans: Provide incentives such as scholarships, grants, and mentorship programs to encourage the younger generation to take up and continue traditional crafts.

31. Eco-Friendly and Sustainable Practices: Encourage the use of eco-friendly materials and sustainable practices in the production of GI and handicraft toys to appeal to environmentally conscious consumers.

32. Integration with Tourism: Integrate the promotion of GI and handicraft toys with tourism initiatives, offering tourists the opportunity to visit artisan workshops, participate in crafting sessions, and purchase authentic souvenirs.

33. Community-Based Organizations: Strengthen community-based organizations that support artisans, providing them with resources, training, and platforms to collectively market their products.

34. Government-Backed Certifications: Develop government-backed certification programs to ensure the authenticity and quality of GI and handicraft toys, instilling consumer confidence.

35. Annual Awards and Recognitions:

Establish annual awards and recognitions at national and state levels to honor outstanding artisans and innovative products in the GI and handicraft toy sector.

36. Public-Private Partnerships: Encourage public-private partnerships to invest in the infrastructure and resources needed to support and promote the GI and handicraft toy industry.

37. Artisan Exchange Programs:

Implement artisan exchange programs that allow craftsmen to learn from each other, share techniques, and gain exposure to different markets and practices.

38. Local and Regional Branding: Develop strong local and regional branding initiatives that emphasize the unique cultural heritage and craftsmanship of GI and handicraft toys from different areas.

39. Educational Curriculum Integration:

Integrate information about GI and handicraft toys into the educational curriculum at various levels to foster appreciation and awareness from a young age.

40. Enhanced Packaging and Presentation: Invest in improved packaging and presentation techniques that highlight the cultural significance and craftsmanship of GI and handicraft toys.

41. Mobile Sales Units: Deploy mobile sales units that travel to different regions, fairs, and festivals to sell GI and handicraft toys, making them accessible to a broader audience.

42. Corporate Gifting Programs: Promote the use of GI and handicraft toys in corporate gifting programs to increase their visibility and demand in the business sector.

43. Crowd funding and Sponsorships:

Utilize crowd funding platforms and seek sponsorships to fund specific projects aimed at reviving and promoting traditional crafts.

44. Cultural Exchange Initiatives:

Organize cultural exchange initiatives that bring international artisans and Indian craftsmen together to share knowledge and experiences.

45. Government and NGO Collaborations:

Strengthen collaborations between government bodies and NGOs to provide comprehensive support and resources to artisans.

46. Consumer Awareness Campaigns:

Launch consumer awareness campaigns to educate the public about the cultural and economic importance of supporting GI and handicraft toys.

47. Research and Development: Invest in research and development to explore new markets, materials, and techniques that can enhance the viability and appeal of GI and handicraft toys.

48. Tax Incentives and Subsidies: Offer tax incentives and subsidies to artisans and businesses involved in the production and promotion of GI and handicraft toys.

49. Health and Safety Standards:

Implement health and safety standards to ensure the well-being of artisans and the safety of the products they create.

50. Long-Term Strategic Planning:

Develop long-term strategic plans that outline clear goals, objectives, and action steps for the sustainable development and promotion of GI and handicraft toys.

Conclusion

7



The case study on GI-tagged Varanasi wooden toys highlights the positive impact of Geographical Indication (GI) status in preserving cultural heritage and promoting economic sustainability. However, to overcome current challenges and further enhance the viability of this traditional craft, several strategic improvements are necessary.

Expanding Market Reach

Leveraging digital platforms and participating in global trade fairs can significantly expand market access for Varanasi wooden toys. Developing comprehensive marketing strategies that emphasize the cultural and environmental value of these handcrafted products will help raise consumer awareness and demand. Collaborations with e-commerce platforms and utilizing social media marketing can also play a pivotal role in reaching a broader audience.

ECONOMIC

- Craftsmanship running through familial lineage
- Primary livelihood for the community
- Huge demand serving local economic vitality
- Various stages, hence multiple artisans in making the toys
- GI tag enhanced the marketability & authenticity

ENVIRONMENTAL

- Products & process Completely Eco-friendly
- Artisans prioritize the use of natural materials
- Practicing traditional methods
- Biodegradable
- Free from chemical and toxic materials
- Part of Circular Economy

SOCIAL

- NGOs & Govt support
- Professional associations
- Portraying scenes from daily life, religious iconography, and local folklore
- Profound sense of pride and communal identity

OTHERS

- Sets a precedent for responsible production
- Cultural and spiritual hub draws visitors from across the globe
- Enrich cultural and eco tourism experiences
- Transmission of artisanal skills—from carving and painting to lacquering.



Enhancing Sustainability

To ensure a sustainable supply of quality wood, it is crucial to implement robust sustainable forestry practices and certifications. Encouraging the use of alternative eco-friendly materials and investing in innovative production techniques can further minimize environmental impact and enhance the sustainability of the toys.

Policy Support and Artisan Empowerment

Implementing supportive policies and programs that provide financial aid, training, and infrastructure support to artisans is essential. Government initiatives, along with partnerships with NGOs and the private sector, can create a robust support system for artisans. Establishing cooperatives or artisan clusters can facilitate collective bargaining, reduce costs, and improve market access.

Innovation and Modernization

Encouraging innovation in design while maintaining traditional craftsmanship can cater to contemporary consumer preferences. Introducing modern tools and techniques where appropriate can enhance productivity and quality. Additionally, continuous training and skill development programs for artisans can ensure they stay updated with market trends and technological advancements.

Strengthening GI Implementation

To fully leverage the GI status, it is important to strengthen the regulatory framework and ensure strict enforcement against counterfeit products. Providing artisans with the knowledge and resources to understand and utilize their GI rights effectively can protect their products from imitation and unfair

competition.

By implementing these strategies, stakeholders can address the current challenges faced by the Varanasi wooden toy industry and ensure its long-term sustainability and growth. Through collaborative efforts, Varanasi wooden toys can achieve greater market recognition, preserve cultural heritage, and provide a sustainable livelihood for local artisans. Further, by building on these strengths and implementing the recommended strategies, stakeholders can ensure the long-term sustainability and global recognition of this unique and valuable craft.



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Lastly, we express our profound appreciation to the artisans for their participation and willingness to share their experiences and insights. Their contributions were essential to gathering the data required for this report.

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Appendices

- <https://kashi.gov.in/craft/woodcraft-and-lacquerware>
<https://varanasi.nic.in/district-produce/varanasi-wooden-lacquerware-toys/>
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