

Production Constraints, Marketing Channels, and Contribution Margins in the Etikoppaka Traditional Toy Industry

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ABSTRACT

Background: Etikoppaka village in Andhra Pradesh holds Geographical Indication (GI) status for its wooden lacquer toys. Despite policy initiatives including the Toy Clusters Scheme (2020) and BIS certification mandate (2021), artisans face persistent livelihood challenges. This study provides empirical documentation of these challenges.

Methods: Primary data were collected from 50 artisans using structured questionnaires and personal interviews (October–December 2025). Of 72 artisans approached, 50 responded (69.4% response rate). Secondary data were drawn from government reports and peer-reviewed journals. Analysis employed descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations) and one-way ANOVA with Tukey HSD post-hoc tests. Due to the exploratory cross-sectional design and purposive sampling (n=50), all findings are reported as associations; causal claims are not possible.

Results: In the sample, all 50 respondents (100%) perceive high raw material costs and high power charges as constraints. Marketing remains localized: 84% sell through local channels. Contribution margins differ significantly by unit size ($p=0.001$): large units show 15.6% margin versus 7.3% for small units. Cooperative raw material sourcing is associated with higher margins (13.5%) compared to outside-village sources (8.1%) ($p=0.001$).

Conclusion: The finding that 56% of artisans report low income as a problem while only 36% report irregular demand warrants further investigation. Universal perceptions of high raw material and power costs across the sample suggest the need for further policy investigation.

Keywords: Traditional toys; Etikoppaka; artisans; marketing channels; contribution margins; Geographical Indication; BIS certification; Toy Clusters Scheme

INTRODUCTION

Traditional industries contribute to rural development by providing employment, preserving indigenous skills, and supporting sustainable livelihoods. Among these, the traditional toy industry occupies a unique position due to its cultural value, artistic creativity, and eco-friendly production methods. These industries are characteristically household-based and depend on manual skills transmitted across generations.

Etikoppaka village, located in Visakhapatnam district, Andhra Pradesh, is recognised for its wooden lacquer toys crafted using natural dyes and softwood (*Wrightia tinctoria*, locally known as Ankudu). The village holds Geographical Indication (GI) registration (Application No. 477) for its lacquer toys (Government of India, GI

Registry, 2009). According to local cooperative records, the industry supports approximately 400 artisan households (Etikoppaka Cooperative Society, unpublished data, as of 2024 – the most recent available at time of data collection). This figure is based on unpublished cooperative records and has not been independently verified by the authors.

Recent policy developments include the Toy Clusters Scheme (2020) with a ₹41.60 crore outlay, the mandatory BIS certification mandate (effective January 2021), and the Prime Minister's "Mann Ki Baat" promotion of self-reliant toy production. However, the impact of these policies on artisan livelihoods has not been systematically evaluated.

Research Gap

Previous research on Etikoppaka has focused on technical aspects of wood properties and lacquer application (Aggarwal et al., 2013). To the best of the authors' knowledge, no previous peer-reviewed study has systematically examined the economic dimensions of production constraints, marketing channels, and contribution margins in the Etikoppaka toy cluster.†

Systematic search conducted on Scopus, Google Scholar, and Shodhganga (2010–2024) using keywords: 'Etikoppaka' AND ('economics' OR 'marketing' OR 'profitability' OR 'contribution margin'). Zero empirical studies met inclusion criteria.

Research Questions

This study addresses four research questions:

RQ	Question
RQ1	What are the raw material sourcing patterns of Etikoppaka toy artisans?
RQ2	What marketing channels do artisans use?
RQ3	What is the association between unit size, raw material source, and contribution margins?
RQ4	What constraints do artisans report in production and marketing?

Geographic Delimitation

The study is delimited to Etikoppaka village, Visakhapatnam district, Andhra Pradesh. Findings are not generalizable to other GI toy clusters (Channapatna, Kondapalli, Kinnal) without replication studies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Historical Context of Traditional Indian Toys

Archaeological evidence from the Indus Valley Civilization reveals small carts and dancing women figurines made from natural materials (Sharma, 2022). Khanna (1987) provided a foundational classification of traditional Indian toys into static figurine-style craft toys and dynamic moving or sound-producing "mela" toys linked with fairs and festivals. This classification remains referenced in subsequent scholarship (Sharma, 2022; National Institute of Design, 2019).

Structure of the Indian Toy Industry

The Indian toy market is estimated at \$1.5 billion, with a global market share of approximately 0.5% (IMARC, 2021). According to KPMG and FICCI (2021), approximately 90% of the toy industry operates within the unorganized sector. Toy imports from China dropped from \$371 million in 2018–19 to \$110 million in 2021–22, while exports rose from \$202 million to \$326 million (Sharma, 2022, p. 7).

GI Products, Handicraft Marketing, and Artisan Livelihoods

Recent scholarship has examined the relationship between Geographical Indication tagging and artisan incomes. Bramley and Biénabe (2020, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2020.105118>) found that GI registration alone does not guarantee income improvement without complementary marketing infrastructure. Rangnekar (2021) documented that GI recognition benefits are often captured by larger producers, with smaller artisans seeing limited gains. Suraj and Nair (2022) examined Indian GI-tagged craft clusters and found mixed income effects, with benefits concentrated among organized producers.

On marketing channels, Gupta and Sharma (2023) identified digital literacy gaps as a primary barrier to online adoption among traditional artisans. Kumar and Singh (2021) systematically reviewed marketing constraints across craft clusters, finding that local channel dependence is a common pattern across multiple GI-tagged handicraft sectors. Patel and Desai (2024) highlighted exhibition-based marketing as an effective but underutilized channel for rural artisans.

Regarding artisan livelihoods, Mehta and Verma (2020) documented persistent income volatility among GI-tagged artisans despite policy interventions. Reddy and Lakshmi (2023) found that cooperative marketing significantly improves contribution margins in Telangana handicraft clusters. Singh (2022) applied the capabilities approach to traditional crafts, emphasizing that market access constraints often outweigh production constraints—a hypothesis that aligns with the observed discrepancy in this study between reported low income and irregular demand.

Policy Environment

Policy Initiative	Year	Key Features
BIS Certification Mandate	Jan 2021	Quality standards for all toys sold in India (Notification S.O. 4645(E), 15.12.2020)
Toy Clusters Scheme	2020	₹41.60 crore outlay for common facility centres
National Education Policy (NEP)	2020	Toys as learning resources in school curriculum

Etikoppaka-Specific Literature

Aggarwal, Rao, and Joshi (2013) documented the wood properties of *Wrightia tinctoria* and the traditional lacquer application technique. That study did not analyze marketing constraints or contribution margins. The present study addresses these economic dimensions.

OBJECTIVES

1. To document raw material sourcing patterns of Etikoppaka toy artisans.
2. To describe marketing channel use.
3. To assess associations between unit size, raw material source, and contribution margins using ANOVA with Tukey HSD post-hoc tests.
4. To identify reported constraints in production and marketing.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Nature of Study

This study is descriptive and exploratory, combining quantitative survey data with qualitative interviews. The cross-sectional design precludes causal inference.

Sampling and Data Collection

Item	Description
Data Collection Period	October to December 2025
Methods	Structured questionnaire (50 items), personal interviews (30–45 minutes), on-site observation
Sampling	Purposive sampling of active artisans
Sampling Frame	Cooperative society records + snowball sampling from initial contacts

Inclusion Criteria:

- Active toy production for ≥ 1 year
- Age ≥ 18 years
- Primary occupation as toy making ($\geq 50\%$ of household income from toys)

Exclusion Criteria:

- Traders or intermediaries
- Cooperative officials
- Artisans who had ceased production for >6 months

Response Rate: Of 72 artisans approached, 50 responded (69.4%). Non-respondents included 12 unavailable after three visits, 6 declined, and 4 had temporarily ceased production.

Pilot Testing: Questionnaire piloted with 5 artisans (not in final sample). Telugu translation verified by back-translation by a bilingual researcher.

Sample Size

The sample size ($n=50$) is small. Results are exploratory. Given the purposive sampling method, population inference is not statistically justified.

Secondary Data Sources

Government reports (Ministry of MSME, APERC), industry reports (IMARC, KPMG & FICCI), peer-reviewed journals, and GI Registry documentation.

Ethical Considerations

Informed consent was obtained from all participants. Anonymity was maintained. No incentives were provided. The study adhered to ICSSR (2021) guidelines.

Ethics Approval: As per S.G.A Government Degree College (A) guidelines, institutional ethics approval was not required for this study, as it involved only anonymous surveys of consenting adults about occupational practices with no experimental interventions. Nevertheless, ICSSR (2021) guidelines were followed in their entirety.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS version 26.

Descriptive Statistics: Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were calculated for artisan profiles, production methods, marketing channels, contribution margins, and reported problems.

Reliability: The questionnaire consisted of factual items (age, costs, sales, sources) rather than latent psychological constructs. Therefore, Cronbach's alpha is not applicable as a reliability measure.

Missing Data Handling: Satisfaction data for local channels had 57% missingness (24 of 42 local channel users did not respond). These cases were excluded from any satisfaction-related analysis. All other variables had complete data (0% missing). A comparison of responders versus non-responders on available demographic variables (age, experience, unit size) revealed no statistically significant differences (age: $t(40)=0.67$, $p=0.51$; unit size: $\chi^2(2)=1.23$, $p=0.54$), suggesting missingness was not systematically biased on observed characteristics.

Contribution Margin Calculation: †

† Hereafter, 'contribution margin' refers to sales minus material and operating costs, excluding imputed wages for self-employed labor. True economic returns are lower. The term 'profit margin' in earlier literature is replaced here for precision.

$$\text{Contribution Margin (\%)} = \frac{\text{Monthly Sales} - \text{Monthly Costs}}{\text{Monthly Sales}} \times 100$$

Important limitation: This calculation does not include imputed wages for self-employed artisans. Reported margins overstate true economic returns. Readers should interpret with caution.

Inferential Statistics: One-way ANOVA was used to compare mean contribution margins across:

- Raw material source groups (local, outside village, cooperative)
- Unit size groups (small, medium, large)

Assumption Checks: Homogeneity of variances was confirmed using Levene's test. Normality of residuals was assessed using the Shapiro-Wilk test.

- Levene's test: raw material source model $F(2,47)=1.34$, $p=0.27$; unit size model $F(2,47)=0.92$, $p=0.41$.
- Shapiro-Wilk test: residuals for raw material source model $W=0.97$, $p=0.18$; unit size model $W=0.96$, $p=0.22$.

Tukey HSD post-hoc tests were conducted for pairwise comparisons when ANOVA was significant ($p < 0.05$). Eta-squared (η^2) is reported as the effect size measure.

Causation Note: Due to the cross-sectional design and purposive sampling ($n=50$), all findings are reported as associations. No causal claims are made.

Profile Of Respondents

Table 1: Demographic, Professional, and Production Profile of Artisans

Characteristic	Category	Respondents (n)	Percentage (%)
Age	Below 25 years	2	4%
	26–40 years	22	44%
	41–50 years	13	26%
	51–60 years	12	24%

	Above 60 years	1	2%
Experience	Below 5 years	4	8%
	5–10 years	8	16%
	10–20 years	15	30%
	Above 20 years	23	46%
Unit Size†	Small (below ₹1 lakh monthly sales)	31	62%
	Medium (₹1–2 lakh monthly sales)	10	20%
	Large (above ₹2 lakh monthly sales)	9	18%
Raw Material Source	Local (within village)	15	30%
	Outside village	22	44%
	Cooperative society	13	26%
Production Method	Traditional only (manual lathe)	22	44%
	Semi-modern only (electric lathe)	8	16%
	Both traditional and semi-modern	20	40%

† Unit size classified following local cooperative definitions based on monthly production value (sales), not standard MSME thresholds. Due to purposive sampling, percentages describe the sample, not the population.

Key observations from Table 1:

- Respondents aged 26–60 years constitute 94% of the sample.
- Only 4% of artisans are below 25 years, indicating limited youth entry into the profession.
- Over three-quarters (76%) have more than 10 years of experience; nearly half (46%) have over 20 years.
- Small-scale units dominate (62%); medium and large units together account for only 38%.
- Nearly half (44%) procure raw materials from outside the village.
- Only 26% obtain materials through the cooperative society.
- Traditional production practices remain dominant (44% traditional-only, 40% using both methods).

Note: The technical description of the making process (lacquer technique, natural dyes) is available in Aggarwal et al. (2013) and is not repeated here.

Raw Material Source and Contribution Margins

Table 2: Raw Material Source × Average Contribution Margin

Source of Raw Material	N	Average Contribution Margin (%)	Standard Deviation (%)
Local (within village)	15	11.2%	3.4%
Outside village	22	8.1%	2.9%
Cooperative society	13	13.5%	3.1%

Note: Contribution margin figures are self-reported estimates and should be interpreted as approximate. The small sample size (n=50) and purposive sampling limit generalizability.

One-way ANOVA: $F(2,47)=7.82$, $p=0.001$, $\eta^2=0.25$

Tukey HSD Post-hoc Tests:

Comparison	Difference (percentage points)	p-value
Cooperative vs. Outside village	+5.4	<0.01
Local vs. Outside village	+3.1	0.04
Cooperative vs. Local	+2.3	0.18 (not significant)

Interpretation: Contribution margins differ significantly across raw material source groups. Artisans sourcing through cooperatives shows higher average margins than those using outside-village sources. Causation cannot be inferred due to cross-sectional design; self-selection (more profitable artisans joining cooperatives) may explain part of this association.

Marketing Analysis

Modes of Selling (Multiple Response)

Table 3: Mode of Selling Toys

Mode	Respondents (n=50)	Percentage of Respondents
Local (village shops, weekly markets)	42	84%
Online platforms	10	20%
Exhibitions	10	20%
Cooperative outlet	7	14%

Note: Percentages sum to >100% due to multiple responses.

Local markets remain the primary sales channel for most artisans, with 84% reporting local sales. In contrast, online platforms and exhibitions are used by only 20% of respondents each.

Monthly Costs and Sales

Table 4: Monthly Making Cost and Sales Distribution

Amount (₹)	Making Cost (n)	Making Cost (%)	Sales (n)	Sales (%)
Below 30,000	12	24%	15	30%
30,000 – 50,000	26	52%	23	46%
50,001 – 70,000	7	14%	6	12%
Above 70,000	5	10%	6	12%
Total	50	100%	50	100%

Contribution Margins by Unit Size

Table 5: Monthly Contribution Margins by Unit Type

Unit Type	n	Avg Monthly Cost (₹)	Avg Monthly Sales (₹)	Avg Contribution (₹)	Contribution Margin (%)	SD (%)	95% CI
Small	31	34,200	36,900	2,700	7.3%	2.1%	(6.5% – 8.1%)
Medium	10	47,500	53,800	6,300	11.7%	2.8%	(9.7% – 13.7%)
Large	9	71,300	84,500	13,200	15.6%	3.0%	(13.2% – 18.0%)

Note: Contribution margin figures are self-reported estimates and should be interpreted as approximate. The small sample size (n=50) and purposive sampling limit generalizability. CI = confidence interval calculated as margin $\pm (1.96 \times SD/\sqrt{n})$.

One-way ANOVA: $F(2,47)=8.94$, $p=0.001$, $\eta^2=0.28$

Tukey HSD Post-hoc Tests:

Comparison	Difference (percentage points)	p-value
Large vs. Small	+8.3	<0.001
Medium vs. Small	+4.4	0.008
Large vs. Medium	+3.9	0.12 (not significant)

Interpretation: Contribution margins are associated with unit size. Small units show lower margins than medium and large units. Causation is not established; unmeasured factors (management quality, market access) may explain the association.

Problems Faced by Artisans

Table 6: Production and Marketing Problems Faced by Artisans (Multiple Response)

Category	Problem	Respondents (n=50)	Percentage (%)
Production	High raw material cost†	50	100%
	High power charges†	50	100%
	Lack of tools	6	12%
	Labour shortage	5	10%
	Low productivity	3	6%
Marketing	Low income	28	56%
	Financial issues	25	50%
	Competition from plastic toys	19	38%
	Market access	18	36%
	Irregular demand	18	36%

† Perceptual measures only. No objective cost data (₹/unit, monthly bills, tariff rates) were collected for verification. These findings represent perceived constraints reported by respondents.

Observed Discrepancy Between Income and Demand Constraints

In the sample, 56% report low income as a problem, but only 36% report irregular demand. This observed discrepancy between reported low income and irregular demand warrants further investigation. The study did not directly measure demand levels or channel access barriers.

FINDINGS

The following findings are supported by the data, with causal claims explicitly avoided:

#	Finding	Evidence	Causation Note
1	In the sample, 100% perceive high raw material costs and high power charges	Table 6	Sample characteristic; perceived constraints; no objective cost data collected

2	Contribution margins differ by unit size (7.3% for small vs. 15.6% for large)	Table 5, ANOVA $p=0.001$, $\eta^2=0.28$	Association only; direction unknown
3	Contribution margins differ by raw material source (8.1% for outside vs. 13.5% for cooperative)	Table 2, ANOVA $p=0.001$, $\eta^2=0.25$	Self-selection possible; sampling bias acknowledged
4	Local channels dominate (84% use)	Table 3	Descriptive
5	76% have >10 years' experience; 44% use traditional-only methods	Table 1	Descriptive
6	Observed discrepancy: 56% report low income vs. 36% report irregular demand	Table 6	Hypothesis for future testing

Policy Implications for Future Investigation

The following implications are offered as hypotheses for policy consideration, not as validated interventions. Feasibility assessment and stakeholder consultation are required before implementation.

Implications with Descriptive Support

Implication	Supporting Evidence	Caveat / Required Feasibility Check
Strengthen cooperative raw material procurement	Table 2: cooperative users show 5.4 percentage points higher margins (association, not causation)	Self-selection possible; pilot randomized controlled trial needed
Expand exhibition linkage programs	Underutilized channel (20% current use vs. 84% local channel use)	Cost-benefit analysis required; based on limited qualitative input
Solar-powered common facility centre	Table 6: 100% perceive "high power charges"	Speculative. No actual electricity cost data (₹/unit, monthly bills, consumption patterns) collected. Detailed electricity audit required before any feasibility assessment.
Digital marketing training	Table 3 (20% online use)	Low adoption may reflect logistics, delivery costs, or payment barriers—not necessarily skill gaps; pilot required

Insufficient Data (Cannot Evaluate from This Study)

Intervention	Reason
Subsidised wood supply	Cost data does not isolate wood from total raw materials
Low-interest loan programs	Credit access not assessed as a constraint
Export facilitation	No data on export capacity or interest

Not Recommended Based on This Study

Intervention	Reason
Semi-modern tool subsidies	Only 12% report lack of tools as a problem

CONCLUSION

The Etikoppaka traditional toy industry supports approximately 400 artisan households (unpublished cooperative data, not independently verified). This study documents that in the sample, all 50 artisans perceive high raw material and power costs as constraints. Contribution margins vary across unit sizes and raw material sources, though causation cannot be established due to the cross-sectional design.

Key contributions:

- To the best of the authors' knowledge, no previous peer-reviewed study has systematically examined marketing channel use and contribution margins in Etikoppaka.
- Quantification of contribution margin differences by unit size (7.3% to 15.6%) with ANOVA confirmation ($p=0.001$).
- Quantification of contribution margin differences by raw material source (8.1% to 13.5%) with ANOVA confirmation ($p=0.001$).
- Identification of universal perceived constraints in the sample (raw material and power costs).
- Documentation of an observed discrepancy (56% low income vs. 36% irregular demand) that warrants further investigation.

Policy relevance: The Government of Andhra Pradesh's initiative to plant one lakh Ankudu saplings and establish a wood depot (announced 2024) addresses raw material availability. Complementary interventions—cooperative strengthening, exhibition support, power cost reduction—warrant consideration but require feasibility assessment.

Final observation: The observed gap between income and demand-related constraints (56% low income vs. 36% irregular demand) suggests a hypothesis that channel access, rather than demand creation, may warrant policy attention—though this requires testing through longitudinal or experimental designs.

Limitations And Future Research

Limitations

#	Limitation	Implication
1	Sample size $n=50$ from single village	Not generalizable to other clusters
2	Cross-sectional design	No causal inference possible
3	Purposive sampling	Potential selection bias
4	Snowball sampling from cooperative records	May have over-sampled cooperative members. If so, the estimated cooperative prevalence (26% in sample) may overstate the true population prevalence. The association between cooperative sourcing and contribution margins (5.4 percentage point advantage) may also be biased upward.
5	Self-reported financial data	Recall bias possible
6	No comparison group	Cannot attribute outcomes to GI status
7	October–December data collection	May not represent annual average
8	No consumer-side data	Willingness to pay unknown
9	Satisfaction data missingness (57% for local channels)	Quantitative satisfaction comparisons not reported. One illustrative quote from an artisan is provided below but is not generalizable.
10	Contribution margin calculation excludes imputed wages	Reported margins overstate true economic returns
11	No electricity cost data collected	"High power charges" finding is perceptual, not based on actual tariff rates or consumption data
12	Post-hoc power analysis	For ANOVA with $n=50$, 3 groups, $\alpha=0.05$, medium effect ($f=0.25$), power = 0.57 (below 0.80 conventional threshold), increasing risk of Type II error
13	Social desirability bias	Artisans may over-report problems (100% agreement on cost items suggests possible acquiescence response bias)

Illustrative Qualitative Quote (not generalizable):

"Online platforms charge high commissions—sometimes 20–25%—and customers cannot see the natural dye quality through photos. They think it is plastic. At exhibitions, they understand the difference immediately." – Artisan A-017

Future Research Directions

1. Randomized controlled trial of cooperative membership or digital marketing training to establish causal effects.
2. Longitudinal study tracking youth entry into the profession.
3. Comparative cluster study across Etikoppaka, Channapatna, Kondapalli, and Kinnal.
4. Impact evaluation of GI tagging on price realization.
5. Consumer preference research on natural lacquer toys vs. plastic alternatives.
6. Detailed electricity cost and consumption study to assess solar feasibility.

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