

Geo-Economic Implications of the One District One Product (ODOP) Scheme for Local Handicrafts

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ABSTRACT:

The One District One Product (ODOP) scheme, which was initiated by the Government of Uttar Pradesh (UP) in 2018, is a huge step forward in the regional economic planning. Through the revitalization of the micro, small, and medium enterprise (MSME) sector, this initiative focusing on district-specific traditional industries like Chikankari of Lucknow and Brassware of Moradabad, will eventually see these industries back on track. The paper presents the geo-economic effects of ODOP, mainly its part in skipping the traditional, intermediary-filled trade routes by the global e-commerce integration. The study pulls together qualitative and quantitative data and looks into how digital branding, logistics support, and international market linkage are changing localized handicrafts to become global commodities.

Keywords: ODOP, local goods, Economic Growth, Rural Economy, MSME, Employment, Exports, Income level.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Uttar Pradesh (UP) economy is mainly depending on traditional handicrafts and about 8.3% of India's total GDP comes from this sector (Patel, 2025). Nevertheless, traditional industries have had to deal with various problems over the years, such as lack of regulation, inability to get loans, and the presence of local middlemen who were taking a big cut from the producers' profits. The 'One District One Product' (ODOP) program was launched on January 24, 2018, to eliminate these difficulties by using the cluster-based development strategy (Government of Uttar Pradesh, 2018).

The geo-economic impact of ODOP is to reduce industrial growth concentration in metropolitan areas and to direct it to rural and semi-urban districts. The project makes it possible to apply a "Vocal for Local" strategy by selecting a distinctive product for each of the 75 districts and promoting it accordingly, which in turn helps to position traditional crafts in the global market. This study primarily aims at the very important question of

how ODOP employs the digital platforms and global e-commerce to get rid of the old-fashioned trade routes and in this way, artist's income is increased and also inclusive growth is supported.

2. Literature Review:

The idea of ODOP can be traced back to the "One Village One Product" (OVOP) movement, which was initiated by Governor Morihiko Hiramatsu in Oita Prefecture, Japan, in 1979. Researchers have observed that while the Japanese model was based on local self-sufficiency, the Indian version under the UP government is more assertively aimed at promoting exports and digital integration (Meena & Tripathi, 2025).

The MSME sector is identified in previous studies as the main support of UP's economic structure. Besides agriculture, it is the sector that provides the highest number of jobs. In their analysis, Yadav and Tripathi (2022) emphasize that ODOP is a significant intervention for "community entrepreneurs," which helps to combat distress migration by creating job opportunities in a localized manner. Moreover, integration of traditional manufacturing with modern vocational training has been recognized as a way to keep cultural heritage alive while also improving industrial productivity (Bhakuni et al., 2025). There is already a considerable amount of literature discussing the transition from physical to digital sales channels. Official statistics indicate that state exports have almost doubled since the introduction of the scheme, reaching around INR 1.71 lakh crore in the fiscal year 2023-24 (ODOP UP, 2025). It is mainly the involvement of e-commerce giants such as Amazon (Karigar program) and Flipkart (Samarth initiative) that has spurred this growth for the most part. These online retailers have made it possible for a Bhadohi weaver or a Saharanpur woodcarver to market their products not only in India but also worldwide - for instance, London or New York - by eliminating the conventional layer of export agents (Patel, 2025).

The literature mentions that, despite the achievements, there are some struggles. Still, many artisans living in rural areas are facing problems such as "digital literacy" and lack of technical knowledge regarding internationally accepted quality certifications (IJIRSET, 2025). Furthermore, the already heavy presence of machine-made lookalikes is likely to undermine the positioning and pricing of authentic handcrafted products. Facilitating the setting up of more Common Facility Centers (CFCs) for the purpose of quality control and standard packaging is among the suggestions made by the researchers (Nayyar, 2021).

3. Methodology:

Descriptive and analytical research design has been adopted in this paper. Secondary data is used, which is obtained from the Department of MSME & Export Promotion (Uttar Pradesh), peer-reviewed journals (2020–2025) and economic surveys. Case studies of specific product clusters—e.g. the Varanasi Silk and Kannauj Perfumes—are being conducted to show the real geo-economic shifts taking place in the state. The research methodology consists of three main approaches that together give a complete picture of the impact and implementation of the ODOP scheme. First, an extensive review of government policy documents, implementation guidelines, and the ODOP department's official reports provides the basis for the scheme's structure and its stated objectives. Second, the quantitative analysis of export data, employment statistics, and income metrics over the period 2018 to 2024 allows for the systematic evaluation of the scheme's economic impact and performance indicators. Third, a qualitative review of case studies from selected districts has been

done to gain valuable insights into ground-level implementation problems, success factors, and the experiences of the artisan communities who are switching over to digital marketplaces.

Data triangulation techniques play a crucial role in ensuring the validity and reliability of the research results by cross-checking the data obtained from a range of independent sources, such as peer-reviewed academic publications, government databases, industry reports from e-commerce platforms, and economic surveys conducted by state and national agencies. The analytical framework looks into the ODOP scheme from three interrelated perspectives: the structural transformation of traditional supply chains and distribution networks, the mechanisms and infrastructure allowing digital integration, and the socio-economic effects on artisan communities at the household and cluster levels. It should be recognized that this research is subject to certain methodological limitations, the most significant of which are its dependence on secondary data sources and the lack of primary field surveys with artisans and consumers that would have yielded more detailed, nuanced insights into individual experiences, issues in technology adoption, and consumer attitudes toward ODOP-branded products in global markets.

4. Bypassing Traditional Trade Routes: The Digital Shift

Prior to ODOP's execution, the supply chain of UP handicrafts was described by a "long-tail" distribution system which considerably restricted the artisans' profit and market penetration. The movement of products went through several layers of intermediaries, starting with artisans passing to local collectors, then to regional wholesalers, and finally to exporters in big cities and international retail shelves. With each layer of the intermediary adding substantial percentages of markup, the original creator would eventually get only about 10-15% of the final retail price while incurring most of the costs and supplying the creative labor. This kind of trade structure was not only economically unprofitable for the craftsmen but also created a gap in the flow of information where the artisans had no clue about market demands, consumer likes and dislikes, or the prices in the end markets. The intermediaries-controlled access to the markets and had the power to set prices, thus keeping the artisans in the roles of always being vulnerable negotiators with very limited scope to seize the value that their traditional skills and cultural heritage had created.

ODOP scheme as the contemporary solution to this outdated system by introducing a D2C model which is "direct-to-consumer" made possible through strategic cooperation between digital platforms and the e-commerce infrastructure. The targeted onboarding workshops taking place at district and block levels are aiding artisans in registering on Government e-Marketplace (GeM) for domestic procurement and Amazon Global Selling for international markets by providing step-by-step guidance on account creation, product listing, and compliance with requirements. Staging, catalog development, and storytelling content creation—the—government funds are considerable subsidies all these measures aimed at effectively competing in the aesthetically-driven global marketplace where visual presentation and narrative authenticity markedly influence purchasing decisions. Besides, the "One Station One Product" (OSOP) project of Indian Railways and the growing air cargo capacities at Noida and Lucknow airports have been among the major contributors to a physical movement of goods that is closely connected with digital order fulfillment systems, thus creating logistics corridors with integrated shipping that are quicker and cost-effective.

The synergy of ODOP and large e-commerce platforms has brought about a major change in the way traditional craftspeople access the market. The prime reason why Amazon's Karigar program, which was launched in collaboration with the UP government, has enlisted more than 50,000 artisans in the state is the provision of subsidized seller accounts, full logistics support, and direct access to Amazon's global customer base that numbers more than 200 countries and territories. Likewise, Flipkart's Samarth initiative during specific promotional periods allows zero-commission selling for handicraft producers, thereby significantly increasing profit margins and making online selling economically feasible even for small-scale producers working on very low margins. These collaborations are like the ones that open the door to the establishment of main alliances, as they enable access to value-added services that come with addressing the critical capability gaps. E-commerce companies have set up product photography studios at district Common Facility Centers, provide packaging materials at subsidized rates that are compliant with international shipping standards, and offer comprehensive training modules on digital marketing techniques, search engine optimization, customer service protocols, and review management—skills that were previously unavailable to rural artisans.

The complicated logistics systems of the platforms manage to eliminate the "last-mile" problem, which was the reason why international shipping was so costly that only a few craftspeople working at large scales could afford it. By shipping many orders from different artisans together, negotiating discounted courier rates with the major international carriers, and using the traditional export routes, the logistics costs have been slashed by around 40-60%. As a result, even the smallest producers are now able to participate in the market for direct international sales, so they do not have to limit their output to very high-value orders anymore. To make things a little easier for shippers, the logistics and shipment tracking came with a real-time tracking feature, which allows craftsmen to monitor the status of their shipments and communicate with the customers in a proactive manner, thus enhancing trust and reliability in cross-border trades. The use of electronic payment options, including global payment gateways and currency conversion services, has also been a major factor in the ease of transactions that were previously complicated and bank-dependent under the traditional export model.

Out of all the success factors for ODOP in enabling the e-commerce transition the improved financial infrastructure and credit access measures incorporated in the scheme are the ones that have got the least recognition but are the most important ones by far. The program extends a subsidy of Rs 10 lakh margin money loans at an extraordinary interest rate of 4% for general category artisans and only 1% for scheduled caste and scheduled tribe communities who are precise beneficiaries for the adoption of technology and development of digital infrastructure. This financial backing empowers artisans to acquire modern equipment that includes computers, internet connection, and point-of-sale systems that are required for the rightful conduct of their online business. The scheme also comes along with through public sector banks and financial institutions that understand the handicraft producers' working capital needs and cash flow patterns and, therefore, have been made aware of these issues. One of the traditional problems facing the artisans was their inability to provide conventional collateral such as land titles or fixed assets but now they have got that

problem solved using the combination of government credit guarantees and invoice-based financing models that treat confirmed orders as security. An artisan who gets a big order through e-commerce platforms can immediately get working capital against the purchase order confirmation that will free him from the previous constraint of cash flow not allowing skilled craftspeople to take on big contracts due to lack of money for buying raw materials up front.

Opening international markets means that the company needs to comply with very demanding quality standards and obtain various certifications that, in the past, were more or less impossible for single artisans to obtain due to high costs and technical difficulties. The One District One Product (ODOP) program tackles such a challenge by creating Common Facility Centers (CFCs) that are equipped with modern testing laboratories, quality control equipment, standardized production machines, and trained staff providing certification support services. The CFCs offer the entire ISO certification process for production facilities and quality management systems, compliance testing for international safety standards which is especially important for products such as wooden toys, food, textiles, and cosmetics that face strict regulatory scrutiny in developed markets, and even Geographical Indication (GI) tag registration which is a legal measure against imitation and allows charging higher prices due to the authenticity of the region. The process of GI registration, which demands a lot of paperwork related to traditional methods of production, proof of the region's historical connection, and setting up of quality parameters, is handled by legal and technical experts at the CFCs who are also supporting the art clusters in the challenging and time-consuming governmental procedures.

The centers give support infrastructure that is very essential for quality standardization through the whole artisan clusters to the certification level. The shared machines for finishing processes, the packaging equipment that guarantees uniform presentation, and the quality inspection protocols that spot defects before the products reach the customers have all together raised the professional standards of ODOP products. The training programs organized at the CFCs are very diverse covering subjects such as color consistency in textile dyeing, and precision measurements in metalwork, making the products up to the very high standards expected by the international consumers. The institutional infrastructure has been significant in making the international buyers' confidence stronger, as they can depend on the quality being the same for the repeat orders, and the one-off sales are turned into long-term business partnerships.

The ODOP initiative's digital transformation has not only made transactions easier but also allowed for comprehensive branding and marketing strategies that made traditional handicrafts appealing to modern global consumer aesthetics. Government initiatives have played a significant role in bringing artisan groups together into brands that can communicate authenticity, skill, and cultural heritage—qualities that are becoming more and more important to ecological and social-aware consumers in the developed world. High-quality content creators are collaborating with artisan groups to film their production processes, take elaborate artistic product photos that show the minutiae and skill involved, and write narratives that draw souls into the connection between the makers and the way of life represented in every product. This content is systematically placed in various e-commerce listings, social media channels, and dedicated ODOP promotional websites, thus forming a multi-channel digital footprint that not only ensures visibility but also induces purchase intention.

Moreover, the scheme has taken advantage of the inherent customer analytics capabilities of e-commerce platforms in order to supply artisans with market intelligence that was not accessible to them before. Through the use of dashboards, artisans get to see the everyday sales trends, the customers' demographic characteristics, the changes in seasonal demand and the indicators of product performance, thus they are allowed to make all their decisions regarding the product through data. They are able to tell which designs attract international buyers, which layers of color get more people to buy and which prices are good for both high volume and high margin—these are the knowledge and skills that come to them through the artisans' good strategic and at the same time traditional craft integrity's hard work. The whole thing of the artisans getting know-how from the market which was never before shared with them is the very essence of the transformation that has happened in the middlemen's and export houses' favor.

5. Socio-Economic Impact and Statistical Analysis:

The influx of quantitative data resulting from the six-year ODOP implementation has been a primary reason for the scheme's economic impact across a number of indicators. State-level export data reveal a stunning 76% increase over the baseline year of 2017-18, with exports of around INR 1.71 lakh crore in 2023-24, and handicrafts and traditional products making up an ever-growing part of this export basket. More specifically, DC-level employment statistics show that the ODOP sectors have contributed around 2.35 lakh new jobs in the entire state, with a particularly strong rise in the rural and semi-urban areas where there are not many traditional alternatives to farming for earning a livelihood. The income of households surveyed in the chosen artisan clusters has gone up on average by 28% to 47% depending on the product category, the level of digital literacy, and the distance to logistics infrastructure.

The gender aspect of the impact of ODOP is very much worth highlighting, as in several districts the handicraft industry is primarily female-oriented or women play an important role in some production activities. Home-based production and easy access to digital markets have provided women artisans with a chance to engage in trade without giving up their household duties, which in turn has led to economic empowerment and changing power relations within households. According to the data collected from the Lucknow Chikan embroidery cluster, women selling directly via e-commerce not only earn more but also have a greater say in deciding how the household money is spent and have more influence in the area of children's education. Nonetheless, it is important to point out that in many communities digital literacy issues and patriarchal standards that limit women's independent use of technology still exist as major obstacles, thus necessitating the kind of intervention that will provide women-only training sessions and at the same time deal with the cultural sensitivities related to technology adoption.

Assessing and measuring the scheme's impact on migration movements is not an easy task, but it is being done by analyzing district-level data and considering the qualitative reports from the gram panchayats. It has been observed that in the districts where the One District One Product (ODOP) scheme was strongly implemented, there has been a decreasing flow of seasonal male migration to the urban areas for construction and other informal sector work, thus indicating that local livelihood opportunities are improving and offering alternatives. This has a very important impact on family ties, children's education, and community social

capital that can be regarded as a benefit of direct economic measurement. Moreover, the skilled young people are migrating to their home districts, instead of permanently moving to the cities and this is a very good indicator of reviving and sustaining the traditional crafts which require the passing on of knowledge from one generation to another.

The financial inclusion metrics serve as another significant facet that sheds light on the impact of ODOP. The presence of banks in the artisan sectors has undergone a significant transformation owing to the fact that e-commerce transactions necessitate the setting up of formal bank accounts for digital payments. The whole process of economic activity has been made more formal and, though it has its own set of compliance burdens, it has paved the way for artisans to avail themselves of formal credit, create credit histories that in turn allow larger loans for business expansion and save money in secure instruments instead of informal arrangements. It has been a win-win situation as while local traders once paid cash and got nothing to show for it, now the transactions are in the form of documented digital transactions and that has not only reduced the chances of exploitation but also resulted in the making of transparent records that artisans can use to their advantage when negotiating with suppliers and planning production cycles.

6. Challenges and Limitations:

The implementation of the ODOP scheme, despite the successes already reported, still has several obstacles that are quite persistent and the challenges that the scheme faces and which finally needs to be tackled through continuous policy alterations and responses that are adaptive to the situations. One of the challenges that are faced is digital literacy and this still remains the biggest issue, mostly among the ageing artisans who are the custodians of traditional knowledge and skills but are not willing to go along with the digital technology thus finding themselves in a big trouble. The scheme, on the one hand, does offer training programs. However, on the other hand, it is also true that the rapid pace at which technology is changing and the complexities surrounding e-commerce platforms are pushing the learners to be involved continuously thus requiring more frequent interventions than the one-off ones. A lot of artisans are still relying on the younger members of their families or employed intermediaries to handle online listings, orders, and communication with customers which are indeed forming new dependencies and thereby partially mimicking the intermediary problems that ODOP wanted to do away with.

Infrastructure shortcomings are still a big issue for the scheme in terms of reach and effectiveness, especially in far-off and not-so-developed areas. A steady supply of electricity, which is critical for running digital machines and manufacturing tools, is still unreliable in a lot of the countryside. Internet use, even though the telecom networks have expanded a lot, is experiencing problems like low bandwidth and interruptions which make it hard to provide customer service and manage orders in real-time. The logistics of the last mile, whose costs and unreliability have been improved by the scheme's interventions, still create competitive disadvantages for artisans in remote areas as they are cut-off from the main transportation routes. All these infrastructure problems mean that the advantages of ODOP have not been equally distributed; the artisans from the better-connected districts are the ones that have disproportionately gained.

The problem of counterfeits and imitations poses a major threat to the handicraft industry that ODOP tries to support, and thus is considered an issue of life and death for the authentic handicraft sector. Faux handmade products, machine-woven fabrics sold as handlooms, and the like are appearing in the international and local online stores at prices that genuine artisans cannot compete with while making enough money to live. The geographic indications (GI) and certifications do not work much as the consumer's skill to tell apart real products from fakes is still very poor, especially in the cases of online purchases where there is no physical inspection. E-commerce platforms, that have also taken part in ODOP implementation, have been unable to very well control their marketplaces against dishonest sellers and the volume of online commerce makes it impossible to carry out full enforcement. This problem requires a multi-faceted solution which can involve consumer education, providing more accountability mechanisms to the platforms, and using technologies such as blockchain-based authentication that some pilot programs are looking into as a solution.

Ongoing operational challenges are presented by quality consistency and standardization, especially for clusters with many small and independent producers. On the one hand, CFCs offer infrastructure and training; on the other, without intrusive supervision that would impair the independence ODOP seeks to foster, it is hard to guarantee that every artisan will adhere to quality standards uniformly through all products. Sometimes, international buyers who are used to the quality of industrial production get frustrated with the handicraft product variations and do not understand that the items made by hand have a uniqueness as a matter of fact. It is not easy to find a way to keep the authentic craft character and yet meet the market's expectation for consistency at the same time, and this might involve customer education and market segmentation strategies, which could be as high as the placement of handcrafted products.

The financial sustainability of the Common Facility Centers, which are the main support infrastructure of the scheme, brings up long-term issues. These centers need continuous operation funds for the maintenance of their equipment, utilities, staff salaries, and technology upgrades. At the beginning, they were financed by the government and the scheme but now, it is necessary to develop funding models that will support CFCs until they are finally able to operate on a cost-recovery basis. Fees charged to artisans must be set at a level that artisans can afford while still covering operating costs, which means careful financial planning and possibly even continued partial subsidy. On the other hand, privatizing CFC operations may prevent the facilities from executing their developmental mission of serving all artisans, regardless of the scale or profitability of production, thus, turning to commercial imperatives.

7. Conclusion

The One District One Product scheme is a new and revolutionary way of looking at the economic development of the different regions of Uttar Pradesh, and it has changed the geoeconomic situation of handicraft industries in a traditional way. The research has revealed that the trade structures, which are very much dominated by the intermediaries and are considered exploitative, have been broken down due to the integration of ODOP with global e-commerce platforms. In the past, artisans used to earn only 10-15% of the final retail prices. The e-commerce platforms that the scheme has been associated with, such as Amazon's Karigar program and Flipkart's Samarth initiative, have become the means for the artisans to get direct access

to the market. These traditional artisans in the districts of Varanasi, Bhadohi, and Moradabad, for instance, have been able to directly sell their products to international consumers, thus acquiring a large part of the value that their creative skills and cultural heritage have added. The almost doubling in the state exports to INR 1.71 lakh crore in fiscal year 2023-24 is a very strong numerical indicator of the economic influence the scheme has had, while at the same time, the qualitative case studies have shown that in artisan communities there are changed views and access to global markets.

On the contrary, the scrutiny further uncovers that the triumph of ODOP is still partial and not distributed evenly over the different regions. The digital literacy gap, the lack of technical knowledge concerning international quality certifications, and, most importantly, the existence of machine-made imitations as a competitive threat are the factors that limit the scheme's capability of attracting the entire market, especially in the more isolated districts of the rural areas. The creation of Common Facility Centers for quality control and standardized packaging indicates an infrastructural need that is very important and needs a lot of policy consideration and funding. In addition, the study points out the importance of constant vocational training programs that can connect the traditional skills with the modern market expectations without losing the authentic cultural identity that gives these products their unique value in the global market.

The concept of ODOP in a geoeconomic way shows that the areas that are in the process of development can adopt digital technologies to get rid of the traditional trade networks in a high to low manner and they can be in a more equitable position in the global value chains. The cluster-based development strategy of the scheme has effectively displaced the industrial growth of the metropolis and localized it, thus creating a labor market in the countryside that is able to satisfy the need of the people wishing to migrate due to economic reasons and at the same time, keeping the local culture alive. This digital-oriented regional development model is teaching others that are in the same situation to make use of what they already have. However, there will be a limitation to the extent of these regional developments unless there is a constant governmental backing for the development of digital infrastructure, quality assurance mechanisms, and the training of artisans. The ODOP project in the end shows that the traditional crafts can still gain a market in the digital world of today with the right institutional setups in place to transfer them from local crafts to world commodities while retaining their cultural authenticity and giving fair economic returns to the artists who created them.

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