

# E-Commerce in Silk industry of Assam: Its impact in Developing Handloom Sector of Bodoland Territorial Areas District, Assam

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*Abstract: Now a days where all the business sectors adopting modern technology and evolution and expanding their business world wide, on the other hand the silk industry of Assam which is now centered in Sualkuchi known as the Asia's largest silk village faced some serious problems although there is a huge potentiality in this sector, but the artisans of this silk village of Sulakuchi have fallen on bad days and unable to face competition from modern technology with the fast growing modern weaving techniques having revolutionized the industry in other centres where silk production had flourished, the produce of Sualkuchi depending on age-old and traditional method of weaving started to see its downfall and the impact of this clearly shown in BTAD area, the weaver of this area follow the same problem due to lack of exposure, awareness and knowledge over changing technologies ,methods and requirement and more of that the handloom sector of this area faced some serious threat from the product of power loom sector. The weaver of this area is unable to compete with the power loom sectors. So the proposed research is carrying to bring awareness among the weavers inclined in this sector , various prospects of this sector, the various govt. policies, to linkup all the people of this sector with textile industry of the world through E-Commerce and aware them about the various scope of E-Commerce and its importance to survive and compete with other business sectors.*

Introduction: Electronic commerce, commonly known as E-commerce refers to the buying and selling of Product or services over electronic systems such as the Internet and other computer network. However, the term may refer to more than just buying and selling products online [7]. E-commerce, or electronic commerce, is a way to conduct minor and major business transactions online instead of going into a store. For major manufacturing businesses, it helps them to purchase materials that they will need to make goods or provide services at sometimes lower costs. It also includes the entire online process of developing, marketing, selling, delivering, servicing and paying for products and services. The amount of trade conducted electronically has grown extraordinarily with widespread Internet usage. E-commerce comprises core business process of buying, selling goods, services, and

information over the internet. Ecommerce is getting more and more attention from entrepreneur and consumers, both local and international. Electronic commerce is sharing business information, maintaining business relationships and conducting business transactions by means of telecommunications networks.

The study: The benefits of e-commerce can be seen to affect three major stakeholders: organisations, consumers and society [3].

Benefits of E-Commerce to organizations:

1) The business has now become a borderless market place including national and international markets. By becoming e-commerce enabled, businesses now have access to people all around the world.

2) The paper-based information has decreased because the cost of creating, processing, distributing, storing data reduced and retrieving data very easily without spending time.

3) E-commerce has revolutionised the way consumers buy good and services. The pull-type processing allows for products and services to be customised to the customer's requirements.

4) Enables reduced inventories and overheads by facilitating 'pull'-type supply chain management – this is based on collecting the customer order and then delivering through JIT (just-in-time) manufacturing. This is particularly beneficial for companies in the high technology sector, where stocks of components held could quickly become obsolete within months.

5) The Internet is much cheaper than value added networks (VANs) which were based on leasing telephone lines for the sole use of the organisation and its authorised partners. It is also cheaper to send a fax or e-mail via the Internet than direct dialling.

6) Digitisation of products and processes. Particularly in the case of software and music/video products, this can be downloaded or e-mailed directly to customers via the Internet in digital or electronic format.

7) Businesses can be contacted by or contact customers or suppliers at any time.

Benefits of E-Commerce to consumers:

1) E-Commerce enables customers to buying products online or conduct other transactions 24hours a day, from almost any location. For example, checking account balances, making payments and other information.

2) E-commerce facilitates the customers to choose various product from various companies web sites not only have a whole range of products that they can choose from and customise, but also an international selection of suppliers.

3) Customers can shop from anywhere around the world and conduct comparisons either directly by visiting different sites or by visiting a single site where prices are aggregated from a number of providers and compared.

4) This can range from the immediate delivery of digitised or electronic goods such as software or audio-visual files by downloading via the Internet to the on-line tracking of the progress of packages being delivered by mail or courier.

Benefits of E-Commerce to society:

1) Enables more flexible working practices, which enhances the quality of life for a whole host of people in society, enabling them to work from home. Not only is this more convenient and provides happier and less stressful working environments, it also potentially reduces environmental pollution as fewer people have to travel to work regularly.

2) Enables people living in all the nook and corner of the world to enjoy and access products, services, information with other people which otherwise would not be so easily available to them.

**Limitation of E-Commerce:** There was much hype surrounding the Internet and E-Commerce over the last few years of the twentieth century. Much of it promoted the Internet and E-Commerce as the panacea for all ills, which raises the question, are there any limitations of E-Commerce and the Internet? Suggest that for all the benefits there are limitations to E-Commerce. These again will be dealt with according to the three major stakeholders – organisations, consumers and society [3].

Limitations of E-Commerce to organizations:

1) Lack of sufficient system security, reliability, standards and communication protocols. There are numerous reports of websites and databases being hacked into and security holes in software. There are some lacks and need to improve when one use

E-Commerce regularly, So, the customer need to be sincere when use E-Commerce and think hundred times before give any sort of personal information. The companies that use E-Commerce for their business purpose improve reliability and given more priority on security.

2) Rapidly evolving and changing technology, so there is always a feeling of trying to 'catch up' and not be left behind.

3) Under pressure to innovate and develop, business models to exploit the new opportunities which sometimes lead to strategies detrimental to the organisation. The ease with which business models can be copied and emulated over the Internet increase that pressure and curtail longer-term competitive advantage.

4) Facing increased competition from both national and international competitor so often leads to price wars and subsequent unsustainable losses for the organisation.

5) Problems with compatibility of older and 'newer' technology. There are problems where older business systems cannot communicate with web based and Internet infrastructures, leading to some organisations running almost two independent systems where data cannot be shared. This often leads to having to invest in new systems or an infrastructure, which bridges the different systems. In both cases this is both financially costly as well as disruptive to the efficient running of organisations.

Limitations of E-Commerce to consumers:

1) A basic technical knowledge is required of both computing equipment and navigation of the Internet and the World Wide Web.

2) Cost of access to the Internet, whether dial-up or broadband tariffs.

3) Cost of computing equipment. Not just the initial cost of buying equipment but making sure that the technology is updated regularly to be compatible with the changing requirement of the Internet, websites and applications.

4) Lack of security and privacy of personal data. There is no real control of data that is collected over the Web or Internet. Data protection laws are not universal and so websites hosted in different countries may or may not have laws which protect privacy of personal data.

5) A lack of trust because they are interacting with faceless computers.

Limitations of E-Commerce to society:

1) Breakdown in human interaction. As people become more used to interacting electronically there could be an erosion of personal and social skills which might eventually be detrimental to the world we live in where people are more comfortable interacting with a screen than face to face.

2) There is a potential danger that there will be an increase in the social divide between technical haves and have-nots – so people who do not have technical skills become unable to secure better-paid jobs and could form an underclass with potentially dangerous implications for social stability.

3) The old computers, keyboards, monitors, speakers and other hardware or software have wasted as new technology comes regularly in the over changing market

Assam silk industry:

Asam silk denotes the three major types of indigenous wild silk produced in Assam- Golden Muga, White Pat and Warm Silk. The Assam silk industry is now centered in Sualkuchi, is a labour intensive industry [18]. Sualkuchi bears the millennial heritage of handloom culture since long past. Asia's largest silk village is Sualkuchi and 95% of its population concerning to silk industry for earning. According to one current survey everyday 17,000 weavers are engaged simultaneously in their loom for the silk ware. Of these about 50,000 people are employed directly or indirectly in the silk village.

It is noted that from 1960 to 2002 during these 42 years the increasing rate of handloom in Sualkuchi per year is about 4%. It is quite positive. The weaver can earn money from Rs.3, 000/ to Rs.5, 000/. The living style of the weaver, who are engaged in handlooms as employee are not so high but they the capacity to earn high.

Once known for weaving magic, the artisans of the silk town of Sualkuchi in Assam have fallen on bad days unable to face competition from modern technology. With the fast-growing modern weaving techniques having revolutionized the industry in other centres where silk production had flourished, the produce of the Sualkuchi town, depending on age-old and traditional methods of weaving, started to see its downfall.

Considering the potential of the industry, the authorities of Kamrup district in Assam decided to set up a fashion technology institute in collaboration with the North Eastern Council (NEC) and National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT), Kolkata.

The Sualkuchi Institute of Fashion Technology (SIFT) is providing a common platform for fashion and design education, research and training.

Weavers here have hardly been successful in finding a market for the products. According to officials, resistance to using modern technology was the main reason behind the decline. Despite demands for silk attires in the European market, the weavers failed to meet the growing demand due to technological stagnation and lack of interest to introduce innovations [22]

Handloom is the most important cottage industries of Assam. It plays an important role in the socio-economic life of Assamese people particularly in rural areas of Assam. The Govt. of Assam is paying more importance for the upliftment of socio-economic status of the female by launching various schemes relating to handloom and textile through the Department Handloom and Textile, Assam is created by Govt. of Assam in the year 1983.

The directorate of H & T department of Assam has been working since 1983. Since then the department has been undertaking various schemes for the upliftment and development of handloom sector of Assam. This department has been extending significant helps to handloom weavers by assisting them in different ways. As a result of this, a sound infrastructure has been built in the state for both qualitative and quantitative production of handloom garments. In order to develop this sector and to help the weavers, the Government of Assam has been implementing a number of result oriented programmes.

Some of such major programmes are mentioned below:

- i) Yarn supply.
- ii) Production of cloth in handloom sector to obtain a reasonable consumer prices.
- iii) Marketing assistance to the weavers and to the cooperative societies engaging in this sector.
- iv) Welfare schemes which also contribute to productivity in the handloom sector.
- v) Imparting training and education to the weavers and different personnel of the handloom sector.
- vi) Preservation of traditional handloom culture by encouraging all concerned parties in this sector in different ways
- vii) Enforcement of Handloom reservation Act.

The Directorate exercises control over various organizations such as Assam Apex Weavers and Cooperative Federation (ARTFED), Apex Level Power looms Cooperative Federation (APCOFED), Assam Government Marketing Cooperation Ltd. (AGMC) and Assam Khadi and Village Industrial Board (AKVIB) [15].

Handloom sector of BTAD area:

The handloom sector of BTAD is confined in four districts viz. Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baska and Udalguri. The handloom sector of this area is not growing and developing compare to other states. The BTAD area is a predominating majority of Bodo although there are several caste and community lived. BTAD area is a high potential area especially for production of Eri, Muga etc. The BTAD indigenous items like Dakhana, Aranai, Gamoca etc. have been facing serious threat from the product of the powerloom. In BTAD, there is no such handloom industry established yet but there are some private weaving centres in BTAD. Only the women are engaged with this sector. They weave only the traditional dresses following the traditional design and concept. There is a huge scope and enormous opportunity in this sector, but they are not really aware the scope and the opportunity of this sector, and the various project and scheme that Government have which facilitated the local weaver to improve their socio-economic status and the livelihood.

**Analysis:** Kokrajhar is the heart of BTAD, So, the analysis is confined in Kokrajhar District only.

Existing Registered Handloom Unit under different Institutions at Kokrajhar

1. Registered under Small Scale Industry/District Industry & Commercial Centre	23 Nos
2. Registered under Directorate of Handloom, BTC	114 Nos.
3. Registered under District Rural Development Agency	131 Nos.
4. Registered under the Titaguri Block Handloom Unit	79 Nos.
5. Registered under the Dotma Block Handloom Unit	81 Nos.
6. Registered under the Kachugaon Block Handloom Unit	69 Nos.
7. Registered under the Hatidura Block Handloom Unit	69 Nos.
8. Registered under the Co-operative Society Handloom Unit	23 Nos.
9. Non-Register Individual Weaving Unit Kokrajhar	55 Nos.

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Total = 644 Nos

## Kokrajhar District handlooms random mapping/survey

Name of the Place	Number of looms
<b>TITAGURI BLOCK</b>	
Balajan	95
Bashbari II	112
Holtugaon	93
Bhatarmari	128
Tengapara	102
Choraikhola	124
<b>DOTMA BLOCK</b>	
Serfanguri	76
Dotma	84
Fakiragram	59
Gossainichina	33
<b>KACHUGAON BLOCK</b>	
Kachugaon	03
Shialmari	05
Bajugaon	06
Gambaribil	02
<b>GOSSAIGAON S.D.BLOCK</b>	
Bhowraguri	36
Tulsibil	39
West Gossaigaon	38
East Gossaigaon	35
Total: 1,070	

After analyzing and discuss with the weavers of various weaving centre , it is almost clear that the weavers and the indigenous items faced some serious threat and the reason behind this threat is the lack of proper information, proper marketing facility, obsolete technology, unawareness about the product among the customers, unable to compete with the powerloom product etc. the researcher observe that the most of the weaving centers deteriorate because of unorganized management and marketing facility. it is already mentioned that there is huge potentiality among the weavers and huge demand of the

handloom product in domestic as well as foreign market but lack of proper marketing information deprived this handloom sector of BTAD area.

#### Need and Scope of the study:

Bodoland Territorial Areas District (BTAD) comprising four district namely Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baska and Udalguri. The weavers of this area are following traditional methods of production and design due to lack of exposure, awareness and knowledge over changing technologies, methods and the requirements. Specially Bodo women weaving Dakhna, Gamoca, Aranai etc. for their own use. But now a day they take it as a business, but the BTAD govt. did not give so much attention in this sector. The BTAD govt. organized handloom event or Expo time to time in various places which are not enough to develop their socio economic status, they need a particular market where they can sell their items and earn what they deserve. They are not aware about the various marketing facilities of this sector. Many researchers before this says about the scope and also challenges faced in this sector in various places. There is no such research conduct in this sector in BTAD area. So, researcher just try to introduced and applying E-commerce in this sector which helps the indigent weaver of this area to improve their livelihood and also helps them to expand their traditional business worldwide. E-Commerce is one place where the weaver can sell their indigenous items, taking order of items on line, no need of a middleman and they can do their business directly. The young generation of this area does not give so much interest in this sector. So, researcher just hopes that introducing of E-Commerce make this business profitable and more and more youth pay their attention.

#### Summary and Conclusion:

In this era of technology where all the business sector have flourished by using E-Commerce , on the other hand the handloom sector of BTAD still not aware about the E-Commerce. Now days where the entire business sector has given priority on E-Commerce because E-Commerce help them for expanding their business all over the world. E-Commerce or Electric Commerce where buyers met sellers and all the operation perform online just we need a computer and internet connection. The weavers of BTAD area are only concentrating to produce their indigenous garments. As mentioned earlier that there is huge demand of the handloom items in the foreign markets, but the weavers of this area are not able to enter in this market without E-Commerce. The BTAD Govt. only conduct handloom

Expo and events in various place time to time but this is not enough in today's competitive market. So, the proposed research is carrying to aware the weavers of this area about the various scope of E-Commerce and its uses connect their business with the textile industry world wide and the various Govt. policies that help to upliftment the weaver of this sector.

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