

Assessing Motivational Catalysts Driving Weavers Toward Commercial Weaving In The Indian Handloom Industry

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Abstract:

The Indian Handloom industry is the second largest employment provider sector after agriculture. It is an essential part of India's rural economy and cultural legacy. The handloom industry mainly depends on the self-reliance of weavers to maintain commercial production. The study focuses to determine the main factors that inspire weavers to start their commercial weaving practices. A mixed-method approach was used. Secondary data was collected from Google Scholar, Jstor and Ebsco database published between 2021 to 2024 and primary data was gathered from 300 weavers via structured questionnaires. A Chi-square test was used to determine the relationship between demographic variables and related factors. The ranking method was used to analyses the primary data to determine the highly influential factors. The results show that the most important factors influencing commercial engagement are passion for weaving, family tradition and economic necessity. Gender was found to be an insignificant influencing factor, but age, education, weaving experience and monthly income were found to be significant factors. The study attempts to provide important insights for policymakers and stakeholders to design targeted interventions enhancing weavers support and ensuring sustainable growth of the industry.

Keywords: Commercial Weaving; Distribution Channel; Handloom Industry; Socio-Economic Factors

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I. Introduction

The handloom industry represents one of India's oldest traditional sectors, reflecting the country's cultural diversity and artistic heritage. Handloom weaving is a vital component of rural livelihoods, offering non-farm employment and contributing to socio-economic development. Despite its importance, the industry faces challenges like technological stagnation, low market penetration, competition from mechanized textiles, and declining interest among younger generations (Basu, 2024; Mishra et al., 2022). The factors that motivate individual to enter the commercial weaving industry varies from one to another (Das & Palta, 2024). By identifying the most prominent motivational drivers, the research aims to support policymakers, NGOs and industry stakeholders in designing interventions to enhance weaver engagement and sector sustainability. The study investigates the factors influencing handloom weavers to start commercial weaving practices and examines how demographic variables shape these motivations.

II. Review Of Literature

The handloom sector is an integral part of India's cultural and economic identity, offering communities the opportunity to earn livelihood. The crucial Handloom sector continues to face challenges that affect the weavers' life as well as the sustainability of their art (Ahmed & Sheereen, 2022). Handloom weavers usually face resource scarcity, inadequate technology and poor access to modern market avenues that adversely affect their productivity and business growth (Faruque & Guha, 2023). Government measures and schemes like subsidies, trainings and marketing support programs have limited effect in absence of effective implementation and knowledge (Khanduri & Datta, 2021).

Economic necessity is another driver for weavers to engage in commercial practices, outweighing cultural and passion-based motives, especially in regions where handloom weaving is a critical source of livelihood (Rao, 2022). Socio-cultural factors play a crucial role in conserving the art of weaving transmitted through household and local communities. Personal interest in weaving is identified as a driving force leading to their dedicated efforts towards the preservation of the skill. Social and cultural factors affect weavers' ability and willingness to practice commercial activity (Yadav et al., 2023). The increasing importance of market access both local and global, as weavers seek to commercialize their craft effectively. Limited exposure to organized retail, e-commerce platforms and trade networks constrains income opportunities and reduces the sector's

competitiveness relative to mass-produced textile alternatives (Basu, 2024; Acharya, 2021). Technological and skill-based interventions are increasingly recognized as critical for enhancing efficiency and sustaining weavers' engagement in commercial practices. Access to skill training programs and digital marketing tools has been shown to improve production efficiency, product quality and market outreach (Jothi & Bharathy, 2021; Rai, 2022).

Support schemes designed and aimed to provide financial assistance and facilitate market linkages, require improved awareness among weavers to achieve their intended impact (Basu, 2024). Faruque & Guha (2023) emphasized the need for integrated approaches that combine economic incentives, technical training and market facilitation to address the multifaceted challenges facing handloom weavers and to foster sustainable growth in the sector. The review of literature underscores the decision of weavers to engage in commercial weaving is influenced by a complex interplay of economic, socio-cultural, skill-based and market-related factors.

Table 1: Influential factor of Weavers'

S. No.	Factor
1	Economic necessity
2	Family tradition
3	Passion for weaving
4	Access to markets
5	Government support schemes
6	Cultural attachment
7	Social recognition
8	Skill training opportunities
9	Availability of raw materials
10	Technological assistance

Source: Review of Literature

Research Gap:

Review of literature reveals that prior studies largely focus on challenges, socio-economic conditions and policy interventions without systematically quantifying the relative importance of motivational factors. Moreover, research specific to Assam wherein the highest production of handloom is carried out is scanty. This study attempts to fill the gap by gathering primary data from 300 weavers and examine the influence of demographic characteristics on motivational factors.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To identify the factors influencing handloom weavers to start their weaving practices;
2. To rank and analyse the association between factors and their demographic characteristics.

III. Material And Methods

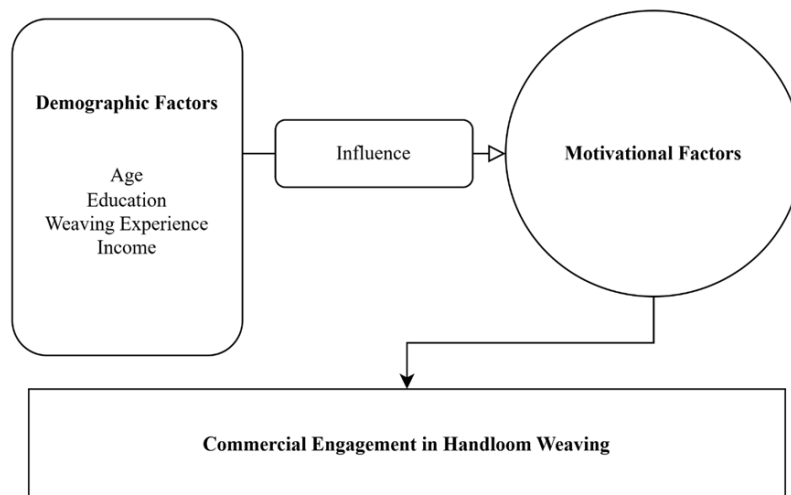
Research Design: A mixed-method approach was adopted, integrating primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected through a structured questionnaires from 300 handloom weavers in Golaghat district of Assam. Secondary data were sourced from Google Scholar, Jstor and Ebsco database published between 2021 to 2024.

Sampling: A purposive sampling technique was adopted to collect data from individual weavers, SHG members and cooperative-affiliated weavers. The study collected data from October 2024 to February 2025.

Data Collection Instrument: The questionnaire included demographic variables (age, gender, education, weaving experience, monthly income) and ten motivational factors for ranking: economic necessity, family tradition, passion for weaving, access to markets, government support schemes, cultural attachment, social recognition, skill training, availability of raw materials and technological assistance.

Analytical Tools: Ranking Method: Factors were ranked using the Rank Sum method; lower scores indicate higher importance and Chi-Square Test was used to examine associations between demographic variables and the three most prominent factors (economic necessity, family tradition, passion for weaving).

Figure 1: Research Framework



Source: Developed by researchers

IV. Result And Discussion

Table 2: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	18–30 years	90	30
	31–45 years	135	45
	46–60 years	75	25
Gender	Male	48	16
	Female	252	84
Education	Primary	90	30
	Secondary	150	50
	Higher Secondary & above	60	20
Weaving Experience	<5 years	60	20
	6–15 years	150	50
	>15 years	90	30
Monthly Income (in Rs)	5,000–10,000	180	60
	10,001–15,000	105	35
	>15,000	15	5

Source: Compiled by researchers from Primary Data

The demographic profile of the 300 respondents indicates that most weavers are in the 31–45 years age group (45%), with a majority being female (84%). Half of the respondents have secondary education (50%), while 20% have higher secondary and above. Weaving experience is concentrated between 6–15 years (50%), and most respondents earn between ₹5,000–10,000 per month (60%). This profile suggests that the commercial weaving workforce is predominantly middle-aged, moderately educated, and primarily female, with substantial experience but modest income levels, providing important context for analyzing factors influencing their engagement in commercial weaving.

Table 3: Rank and Rank Score of the Factors

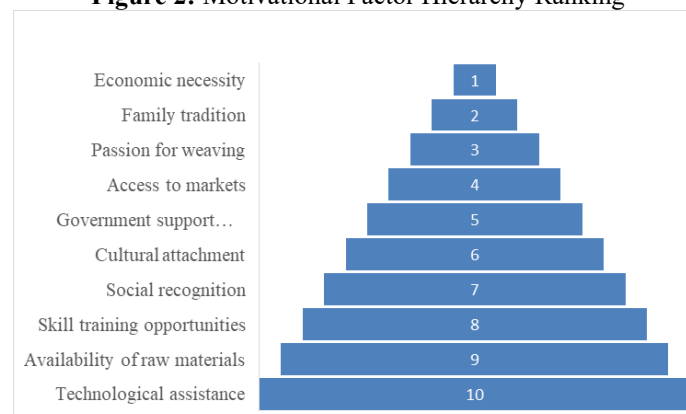
Factor	Rank Score	Rank
Economic necessity	540	1
Family tradition	810	2
Passion for weaving	960	3
Access to markets	1050	4
Government support schemes	1200	5
Cultural attachment	1320	6
Social recognition	1440	7
Skill training opportunities	1530	8
Availability of raw materials	1650	9
Technological assistance	1800	10

Source: Compiled by researchers from Primary Data

The ranking analysis reveals that economic necessity is the most significant factor influencing weavers to engage in commercial weaving, as indicated by the lowest rank score of 540. This is followed by family

tradition (810) and passion for weaving (960), highlighting the role of both socio-cultural and personal drivers. Factors such as access to markets (1050) and government support schemes (1200) occupy the mid-range ranks, suggesting that external incentives and opportunities also play a role, though less critical than intrinsic and economic considerations. Cultural attachment (1320) and social recognition (1440) are moderately influential, while skill training opportunities (1530), availability of raw materials (1650) and technological assistance (1800) rank lowest, indicating that these practical and infrastructural supports are considered less critical by the weavers when initiating commercial weaving. Overall, the results underscore that financial necessity and personal or family-driven factors are the primary drivers for weavers entering commercial practices in the handloom industry.

Figure 2: Motivational Factor Hierarchy Ranking



Source: Developed by researchers based on results

Based on the ranking analysis, it is evident that economic necessity, family tradition and passion for weaving are the most influential factors driving weavers to start commercial practices. However, the relative importance of these factors may vary across different demographic groups, such as age, education, income and weaving experience. This variation suggests a potential relationship between demographic characteristics and the factors influencing weavers' engagement. The study hence formulates the hypothesis to empirically test whether demographic variables are significantly associated with these key factors:

H₀: No significant association exists between demographic variables and the factors influencing weavers to start commercial weaving.

H₁: A significant association exists between demographic variables and the factors influencing weavers to start commercial weaving.

The relationship was tested using the Chi-square test of significance at the 95% confidence level using Jamovi software v2.3.28

Table 4: Chi-Square Test Results

Demographic Variable	Factor	χ^2 Value	df	p-value	Significance
Age	Economic necessity	6.85	2	0.033	Significant
Age	Family tradition	8.42	2	0.015	Significant
Age	Passion for weaving	7.10	2	0.029	Significant
Gender	Economic necessity	0.85	1	0.356	Not Significant
Gender	Family tradition	1.23	1	0.267	Not Significant
Gender	Passion for weaving	1.02	1	0.312	Not Significant
Education	Economic necessity	9.45	2	0.009	Significant
Education	Family tradition	7.88	2	0.019	Significant
Education	Passion for weaving	8.11	2	0.017	Significant
Weaving Experience	Economic necessity	11.32	2	0.003	Significant
Weaving Experience	Family tradition	10.85	2	0.004	Significant
Weaving Experience	Passion for weaving	12.01	2	0.002	Significant
Monthly Income	Economic necessity	7.45	2	0.024	Significant
Monthly Income	Family tradition	6.90	2	0.032	Significant
Monthly Income	Passion for weaving	7.12	2	0.028	Significant

Source: Compiled by researcher using Jamovi v2.3.28

The Chi-square analysis indicates that age, education, weaving experience and monthly income have a significant association with all three top factors. Economic necessity, family tradition and passion for weaving indicating that these demographic characteristics influences weavers and prioritize their reasons for engaging in

commercial weaving. Gender shows no significant association with any of the three factors, implying that male and female weavers exhibit similar priorities regarding these drivers. The results suggest that older, more educated, experienced and higher-income weavers tend to place greater importance on economic necessity and passion for weaving, highlighting the role of socio-economic and experiential factors in shaping commercial engagement within the handloom industry.

V. Findings

The study revealed key insights into the factors driving their entry into commercial weaving. The ranking analysis indicated that economic necessity is the most influential factor, followed by family tradition and passion for weaving, highlighting the interplay of financial and socio-cultural drivers. Factors such as access to markets and government support schemes were moderately important, while skill training, raw material availability and technological assistance were considered less critical.

The Chi-square analysis demonstrated significant associations between demographic variables of age, education, weaving experience and monthly income. The results suggests that the characteristics influence weavers' priority for engaging in commercial weaving. Gender did not show a significant effect, indicating similar priorities among male and female weavers. The findings underscore that older, more educated and experienced weavers with higher income levels tend to emphasize economic necessity and passion for weaving more strongly. The results highlight the importance of both intrinsic and extrinsic factors in shaping weavers' commercial engagement in the handloom sector.

VI. Conclusion

The study underscores the decision to start commercial weaving among handloom weavers is primarily driven by economic necessity, family tradition, and personal passion. Demographic characteristics, particularly age, education, experience and income significantly influence the priorities, while gender does not. The findings emphasize the need for policymakers and industry stakeholders to consider the socio-economic and experiential factors when designing interventions aimed at supporting weavers. Enhancing market access, providing targeted financial and technical support and promoting awareness about government schemes can strengthen the participation of weavers in commercial handloom practices and continuity in contributing to the sustainability and growth of the handloom industry.

VII. Scope For Future Research

Future studies can be conducted to explore:

1. The longitudinal effects of government policies and training programs on weavers' income, productivity and sustainability.
2. The impact of digital platforms, e-commerce, and technological interventions on weavers' commercial success.
3. Region-specific comparative analyses across multiple handloom clusters in India to identify localized challenges and opportunities.

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