

RESEARCH ARTICLE

EXPLORING THE ROLE OF SELF-HELP GROUPS PROMOTING CULTURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN HIMACHAL PRADESH

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Abstract: This research paper examines the “Role of Self-help groups in Promotion of Cultural Enterprises and their development in Himachal Pradesh.” This paper has been focused on three districts of Himachal namely Kullu, Shimla and Kangra, to see the extent of SHGs in promotion of cultural entrepreneurship in this Hilly State. The population of the study includes different SHGs that are remaining active in the cultural fields and 300 SHGs have been chosen for the analysis. A structured questionnaire was administered for the collection of data from various SHGs. The opinions gathered were subjected to descriptive analysis to check if there was any conformity in the role that were being played by SHGs in promotion of cultural entrepreneurship. The research investigates into three primary areas that are handloom, handicraft, and cuisine. These areas are some of the multi-layered aspects of the region’s culture and they form the core of study focusing on entrepreneur. Thus, it can be stated that SHGs have played a significant role in promoting cultural entrepreneurship in Himachal Pradesh. The conclusion shows that they continue to make functioning the preservation of arts and crafts, improvement of local culinary culture and promotion of cultural products. It was revealed that SHGs not only add to the financial development of the members but also play a part in Social and Economic development of the community. NGOs, Local Communities and Government agencies also provide support promoting their Cultural Products through organizing various trade fairs and other activities. All these efforts contribute to improvement of market appeal of cultural products and therefore promote cultural entrepreneurship sustainability.

Keywords: *Self-Help Group, Cultural Entrepreneurship, Himachal Pradesh, cultural entrepreneurship sustainability, Cultural Product.*

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INTRODUCTION

Himachal Pradesh as a culturally rich state of western Himalayan of India which is famous for its diverse culture in terms of arts and crafts, folk tales, music, dance, and festivals (Shivani, 2022). Handloom and handicraft are another aspect of Himachal Pradesh’s traditional art and craft which gives a flea of its culturally diverse face (Sharma, 2008).

This rich textured cultural embroidery provides a great potential to implement viable business models that will helpful in the growth of economies but at the same time

stand-in and uphold Culture. Self-Help Groups are the bodies which are working at grassroot level for preservation of traditional Culture by making some useful products. Self Help Groups mainly known as SHGs are the small groups with people in community level are formed to solve the common financial and social problems and give mutual help for development. They have been effective for upliftment of the society for various developmental activities.

These groups aim not only improved the financial conditions but also must improve

the social status of the people (Sundaram, 2012). Being a self-help group, SHGs have helped the artisans to market their skills and the craftsmanship of the products to a larger market. These groups also provide financial support but in addition they provide skill development and training which in turn boosts the spirit of the growing entrepreneurship of local artisans. Moreover, they have made it possible to avail resources and markets that were out of reach for such artisans and as a result, empowered economical.

One such approach is the promotion of cultural entrepreneurship, which leverages the region's unique cultural assets to drive economic growth and sustainability. Central to this shift are Self-Help Groups (SHGs), which have emerged as pivotal instruments in economic and social development at the grassroots level. It is one of the financial tools which is used to empower the women Gangadhar et al. (2017).

These groups provided support by producing numerous feasible products in crores during the COVID-19 (Sharma and Sharma, 2022). Cultural entrepreneurship is a growing phenomenon and is performing its role to maintain and sustain cultural heritage and tradition of the place additionally it has a vision to play its role for the economic development of the region too. This paper aims to analyse the complex link between SHGs and cultural enterprise in the setting of Himachal Pradesh, India.

Due to SHGs give those common relations the ideal way of living to those who have no proper way to sustain for living and hence makes them to feel economically secure. Overview: Self Help Groups (SHGs) and their role in cultural entrepreneurial development in Himachal Pradesh is another research area that forms a discipline of bottom-up approach to both; economic and cultural upliftment of the region. Basically, they are spread across the western rising of Himalayas; all these organizations' main functions of these organizations are centrality, financial cooperation among members of their own group and developing the code of mutual responsibility among all.

Over the time, these groups have expanded their role to include various developmental activities, one of which is the promotion of

Cultural Entrepreneurship. Self Help Groups (SHGs) and other local groups highlight the idea and concept of Cultural Entrepreneurship with the important role to provide platform and opportunity to enhance their ideas and promote their cultural values through various artistic skills. Thus, Cultural Entrepreneurship gives worth to the new, innovative, and artistic ideas that not only give rise to cultural aspects but also promote a country's cultural values and heritage and connected with new policy agenda for facilitating a knowledge based creative economy with a purpose to make its economic growth as well (Nevena, 2020).

SHGs play a pivotal role in the marketing and promotion of cultural products. These groups, with the assistance of several NGOs and other communities, display the products in different events. While the events are important in yielding sales, they also play a vital role in creating brand awareness and customer satisfaction.

Most a time SHGs have linkages or tie-ups with Local and State Governments for partnering support to get more visibility in larger exhibitions / trade fairs/ cultural festivals etc. This exposure is the key to breaking into new ground and creating a reputation that can contribute towards the growth of the business. In addition, SHGs undertake promotion such as setting up websites and pages on social media sites to spread their work across the globe hence offering consumers product which is in tandem with the traditional cultural products but packaged to meet modern market demand.

However, several challenges impede the prospect of cultural entrepreneurship by SHGs. The first challenge therefore relates to financial limitations in this context, because credit and funding is still a major issue. Unfortunately, SHGs serve as channels for saving and borrowing collectively; the available funds are usually small compared to the requirements of large-scaled promotion of cultural business. Besides, there is poor development of facilities including trans-portion and communication networks that hamper the distribution and marketing of cultural commodities.

The last issue relates to the scarcity of professionals with sufficient training in

entrepreneurship on one hand, and adequate skills to manage cultural products on the other hand. Since many SHGs depend on the production of cultural products, they lack the necessary professionalism when it comes to operating in today's complex business environment in relation to commercialization of such products. Alas, socio cultural barriers such as gender biases and traditions may hinder the groups, which then means that fewer individuals with entrepreneurial abilities can be targeted by SHGs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Padmavathi et. al. (2020) also focused on the factors affecting women to join SHGs and the benefit occurs from the membership through observation and data collected from Corporation Tamil Nadu Corporation for Development of Women. They pointed out that currently Women's Web sites based on Self-help organisations have come up and are being supported by many women which has assisted many of them to become financially independent. The SHGs which are formed with a greater number of members are more effective because they get more bank loans and, they can deposit more money. They also revealed that membership with SHG entails a provision of social concern and obligation making the members becomes more responsible, spirited, and empowered economically.

Varsha et. al. (2019) conducted empirical research with the help of 351 respondents, concentrating on the role of self-help groups, capability development strategies, and felt individual stress, to get factual insights into the empowerment of women. According to the study, women's emancipation in India results from two different SHG members' surface-level and deep-level traits. Women may be empowered through a variety of capacity-building strategies, including governance training, technologically based employment assistance, promotion, and societal justice and harmony. The association between deep-level SHG qualities and women's empowerment is moderated by perceived individual stress.

Jayanti (2019) investigates the critical significance of entrepreneurship in promoting economic development. The study focusses on how entrepreneurship helps to create jobs, raise national income, promote rural development, and drive industrial expansion.

It focusses on government efforts such as Startup India, which attempt to promote private sector development and innovation. Using secondary data from books, journals, websites, and newspapers, the research assesses the efficacy of various activities in encouraging entrepreneurship in India.

Kani & Helan (2019) explore in their study on various dimensions of entrepreneurship by self-help groups related to opportunities and Challenges. Both primary and secondary data was used in which 500 respondents were selected through convenience sampling and secondary data was collected from various magazine. Various statistical techniques like percentage, chi-square test was used and it is revealed that there were various challenges faced by self-help groups but marketing challenges is one of the most challengeable.

Selvakumar et. al. (2015) conducted a study in Krishnagiri district, Tamil Nadu, examined the impact of SHGs using data collected through primary and secondary sources. Employing a multistage random sampling method, the research utilized tools such as Garrett ranking to understand motivations for joining SHGs and factor analysis to explore relationships among observed variables. The findings revealed that SHGs play a transformative role in challenging societal norms, fostering self-reliance, and improving the economic and social status of women, thus contributing significantly to their overall empowerment.

According to (Government of India, 2016) about culture, Self-Help Groups are known to have played a crucial role identifying arts, hand-made products as well as cultural practices. For example, to support handloom weaving in India the government has created concept of self-help groups; which not only have revived the traditional handloom weaving sector still has maintained the diverse tradition of India and at the same time successfully provides the weavers better means of livelihood.

Austin et. al. (2006) explore the concept of Social Entrepreneurship, according to researcher social entrepreneurship is among the major areas that have received support from these groups with its members working towards effecting change in society besides making profits.

Chatterjee and Datta (2020) emphasise that state support, financial access, and marketing possibilities are critical for the success of micro-enterprises, which are frequently the focus of SHGs. By supporting microcredit and financial literacy, SHGs enable members to start and run enterprises, encouraging an entrepreneurial culture in their communities. This financial empowerment is important because it empowers people to utilise their cultural assets and local knowledge in business initiatives. Furthermore, SHGs help to create a favourable socio-cultural climate that promotes entrepreneurship.

Dutta (2016) carried out a study on women entrepreneurship in Assam and stress that; women entrepreneurship is not a new phenomenon but relatively a growing venture. Generation of self-employment: Women especially in rural areas have engaged in self-employment activities specially through Self Help Groups (SHGs) where they are involved in micro enterprises like handloom weaving, piggeries, poultry, dairy farming, and handicrafts. Even then, the level of growth is rather low mainly because of some factors such as; lack of finances/ capital, marketing concerns, and limitations posed by society. Undermine the perceptions that women have lesser controlling factors in entrepreneurship and found practical reasons to begin entrepreneurship among 200 SHG members. The results emphasize that government initiatives for women entrepreneurs' growth and sustenance remain critical.

Minimol (2020) conducted a research study on women entrepreneurship in coastal Kerala and highlights the significant role of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in development entrepreneurial competencies among women micro-entrepreneurs. Examined cognitive entrepreneurial competencies of SHG members and non-members through field data and focus group interactions. Discriminant analysis was employed to determine if SHG membership status predicts entrepreneurial competency. The study revealed that membership in SHGs serves as a strong predictor of enhanced entrepreneurial skills among women. This suggests that SHGs play a pivotal role in promoting sustainable entrepreneurial competencies, emphasizing their importance

in empowering women entrepreneurs and driving their success in micro-enterprises.

Rani et. al. (2012) taken research carried out on dimensions and perceptions of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in Jakhal block, fatehabad district-Haryana to find out about development of entrepreneurial culture among the members. Sources of primary data were collected from 100 respondents across seven different villages – the units of analysis and secondary data confirmed that SHGs' efficacy was rather limited due to conservative family values and low literacy rates.

Findings showed that SHG participation led to varying levels of income improvement: Family income increase was reported as follows, 94% of members enjoyed the benefit and only 6% benefited with more than ₹ 20,000 per annum income benefits, 55% of the members benefited with income up to ₹ 20,000/-; 26% up to ₹10,000/-; 13% of the members did not get any income benefits from the employer. These findings reveal the difficulties associated with the targeted goals of the government policies promoted and implemented through SHGs.

Kumar & Aithal (2024) justified highlights of social and economic aspect of total woman empowerment among SHGs women in Kottayam District Kerala through primary data collected using structured questionnaires and through secondary sources like financial statement & literature. Ordinal regression, Spearman correlation test, Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests formed statistical methods used for analysis. The findings of the study showed that social empowerment (SE) and economic (EE) are significant predictors of total empowerment (TE); SE, EE and TE coefficients were also positively and strongly correlated. The conclusions underline a need to consider social and economic spheres to bring the empowering of women in all the aspects.

Significance of the Study

Himachal Pradesh is one the state has its traditional values, cultural heritage. Self-Help Groups are the major running tool in Himachal Pradesh through which people earn money and become self-empowered. In Himachal Pradesh, where culture and tradition hold vast significance, SHGs mainly act as catalysts for preserving, promoting,

and economically benefiting from the state's rich cultural heritage. Through their collective efforts, SHGs contribute to the sustainable growth of cultural entrepreneurship while empowering local communities and artisans.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To explore the influence of Self-Help Groups in promotion of Cultural Entrepreneurship in Himachal Pradesh.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In Initial step raw data was collected from DRDA from all District Headquarter of Himachal Pradesh and it is found that there were near about 1300 Self-Help Groups working in Cultural Entrepreneurship. These SHGs have worked actively in Preserving and Promotion of rich Culture in the form of Handloom, Handicraft and Cuisine.

For the research study, mainly three District namely Kullu, Shimla, and Kangra have been selected based on highest number of

Culturally based Self-Help Groups and 300 sample size has been selected for the research study. For the sampling process, Multistage sampling method has been used for structured and representative selection of the Respondent. For this purpose, highest number based culturally SHGs have chosen from various Blocks from each district. Data has been collected from various Blocks from each selected District in Questionnaire form.

The questionnaire was designed to gather insights about the activities, challenges, and influence of the Self-Help Groups in the Promotion of the Cultural Entrepreneurship. For analysis, Descriptive Statistics is used to assess the influence of self-help groups (SHGs) in the promotion of Cultural Entrepreneurship in Himachal Pradesh. This method allows us to summarize and interpret the data collected from the questionnaires effectively.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Self-help group's registration year

Registration year of SHGs			
Year	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
2002	1	.3	.3
2004	1	.3	.7
2007	2	.7	1.3
2008	1	.3	1.7
2009	1	.3	2.0
2012	3	1.0	3.0
2013	7	2.3	5.3
2014	16	5.3	10.7
2015	5	1.7	12.3
2016	6	2.0	14.3
2017	6	2.0	16.3
2018	27	9.0	25.3
2019	29	9.7	35.0
2020	49	16.3	51.3
2021	81	27.0	78.3
2022	53	17.7	96.0
2023	12	4.0	100.0
Total	300	100.0	

Source: Output generated from SPSS software

The Table above highlights the annual registration of Cultural Products-based Self-Help Groups (SHGs). It reveals a modest start from 2002 to 2013, with only a few SHGs in operation each year. However, a remarkable surge in growth is evident from

2018 onwards, culminating in 2021, which saw a peak in the establishment of these groups, reaching a total of 81. This significant increase underscores the growing impact and popularity of Cultural Products-based SHGs.

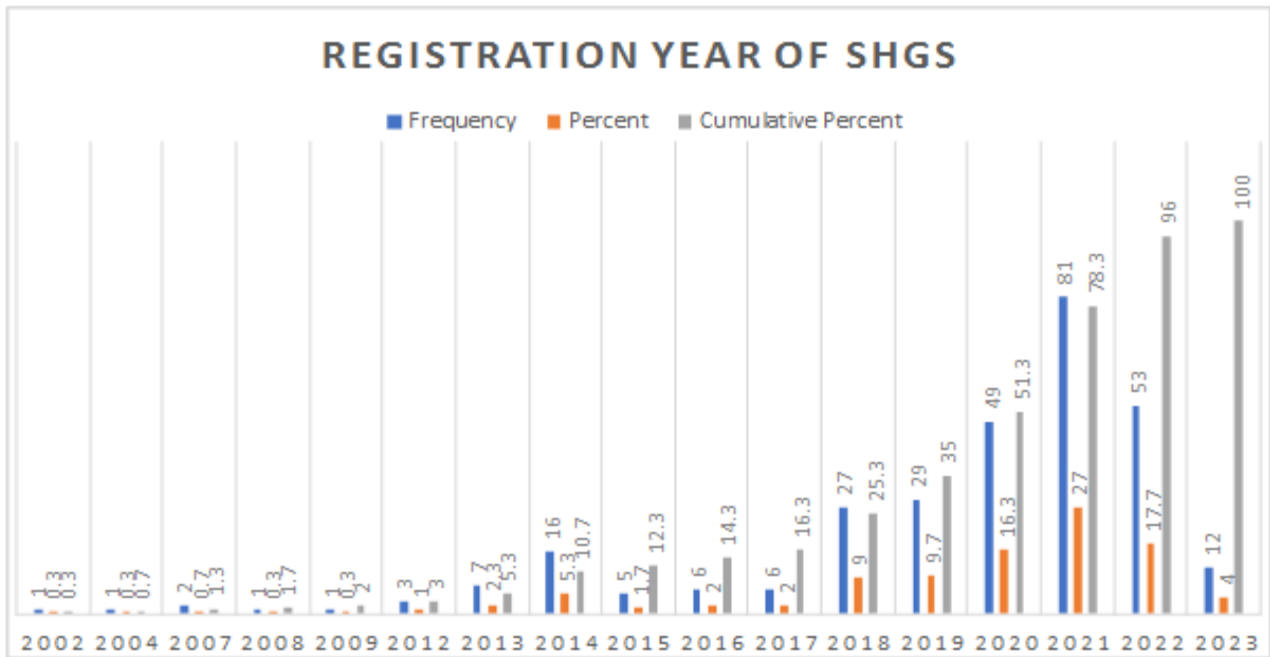


Figure 1: Year-wise registration of Self-Help Groups

Source: Output generated from SPSS software

Table 2: Gender of president of self-help groups

Gender			
Gender	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Female	300	100.0	100.0

Source: Output generated from SPSS software

The data from the Table indicates that all Entrepreneurship are entirely led by female Self-Help Groups involved in Cultural entrepreneurs.

Table 3: Age of Presidents

Age			
Age	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
18-25	2	.7	.7
26-35	89	29.7	30.3
36-45	166	55.3	85.7
46-55	38	12.7	98.3
56 >	5	1.7	100.0
Total	300	100.0	

Source: Output generated from SPSS software

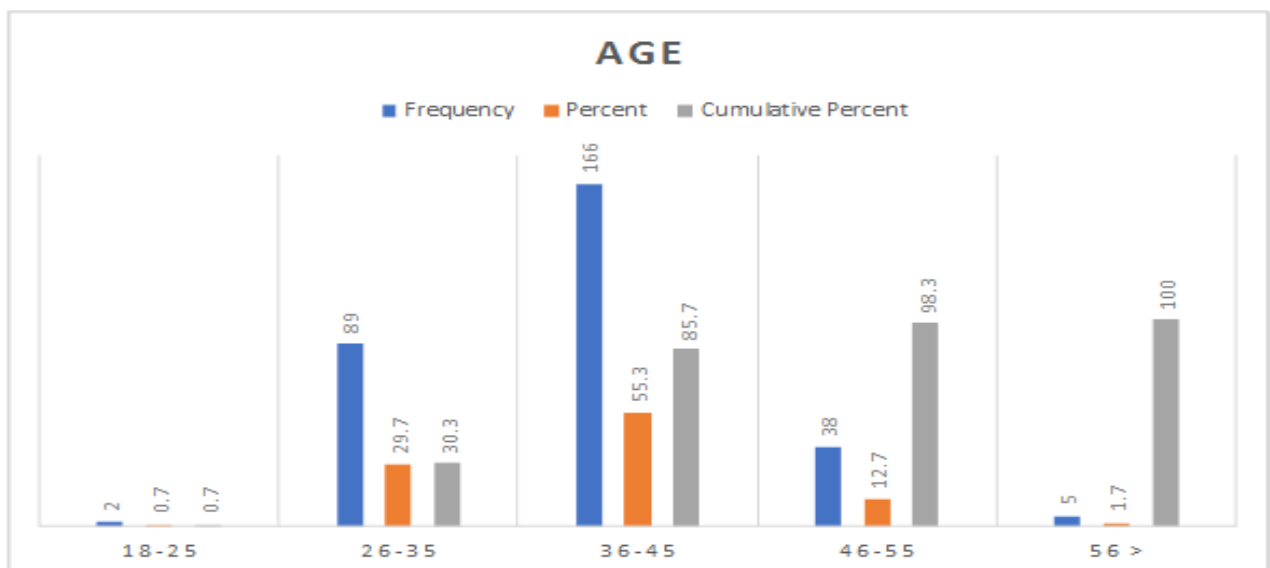


Figure 2: Age-wise distribution of Self-help groups

Source: Output generated from SPSS software

The Table 3 categorizes the ages of Presidents of Self-Help Groups into five distinct ranges: 18-25, 26-35, 36-45, 46-55, and 56+.

It reveals that Presidents in the 26-35 and 36-45 age brackets are notably more active and engaged in managing and operating Self-Help Groups.

Table 4: Education of presidents of self-help groups

Education			
Particular	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Below High School	59	19.7	19.7
High School	121	40.3	60.0
Intermediate/Diploma	78	26.0	86.0
Bachelor Degree	29	9.7	95.7
PG Degree and above	13	4.3	100.0
Total	300	100.0	

Source: Output generated from SPSS software

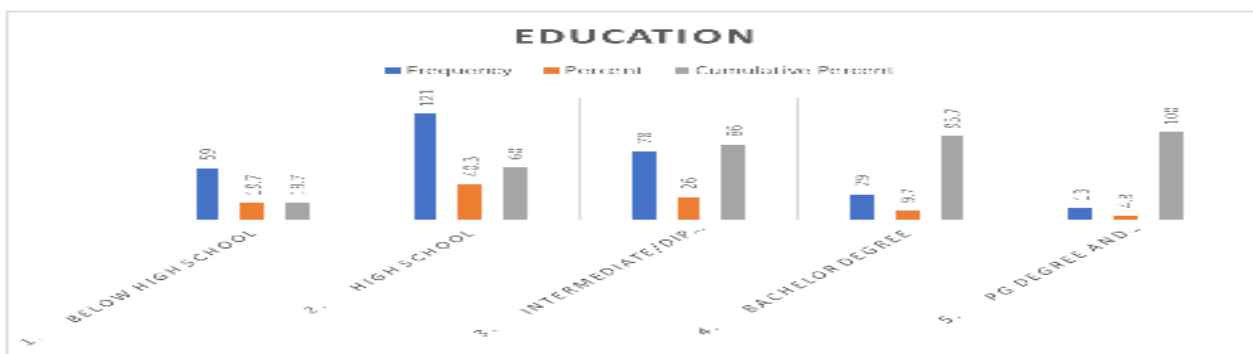


Figure 3: Education-wise distribution President of Self-Help Group

Source: Output generated from SPSS software

The Table 4 reveals a diverse range of educational qualifications among the Presidents of Self-Help Groups. Notably, 121 Presidents hold a high school diploma, while 59 have qualifications below this level. Additionally, 78 Presidents possess an

intermediate or diploma degree, 29 have a bachelor's degree, and 13 have attained postgraduate or higher qualifications. This distribution highlights the varied educational backgrounds contributing to the leadership within these groups.

Table 5: Area of production

Type of Cultural Entrepreneurship			
Product	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Handloom	63	21.0	21.0
Handicraft	153	51.0	72.0
Cuisine	84	28.0	100.0
Total	300	100.0	

Source: Output generated from SPSS software

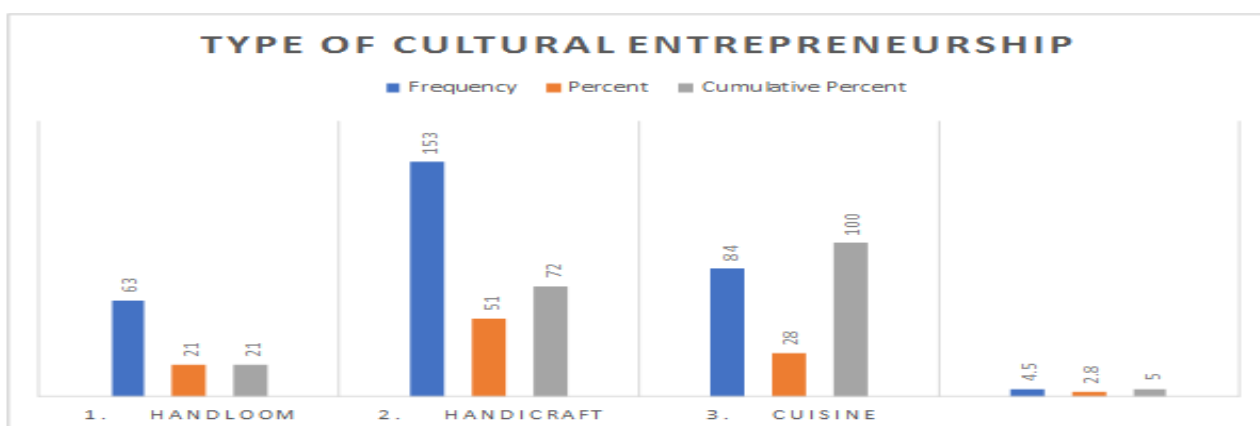


Figure 4: Cultural Product-wise distribution of Self-Help Groups

Source: Output generated from SPSS software

The Table 5 highlights the distribution of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) across different sectors. It shows that 63 SHGs are dedicated to the Handloom Sector, while 84 focus on the Cuisine Sector. However, the most substantial concentration is in the

Handicraft Sector, with a remarkable 153 SHGs actively engaged. This data underscores the significant role that Handicraft plays within the network of Self-Help Groups.

Table 6: Financial profit of SHGs

Particular	Financial Profit		
	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	299	99.7	99.7
No	1	.3	100.0
Total	300	100.0	

Source: Output generated from SPSS software

The Table reveals a compelling success story among the 300 Self-Help Groups, with an impressive 299 of them turning a profit. This near-universal profitability is a strong

indicator of the positive impact of selling Cultural Products, demonstrating how these SHGs have achieved self-sufficiency and economic stability through their endeavours.

Table 7: Major decision taken by

Who took Major Decisions			
Particular	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
President	15	5.0	5.0
All Members	285	95.0	100.0
Total	300	100.0	

Source: Output generated from SPSS software

The Table 7 reveals that out of 300 Self-Help Groups, a notable 285 make decisions collectively, reflecting a strong spirit of collaboration among all members. In contrast, only 15 groups rely on decisions

made solely by their Presidents. This widespread emphasis on collective decision-making highlights the democratic approach embraced by the majority of these SHGs.

Table 8: Promotion and selling of cultural products

How Promote and Sell its Product			
Particular	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Local Market/Fairs	231	77.0	77.0
Retail Shops and Corporate Outlet	1	.3	77.3
Exhibition and Trade Fairs	5	1.7	79.0
Direct Sales	2	.7	79.7
Government Initiatives	61	20.3	100.0
Total	300	100.0	

Source: Output generated from SPSS software

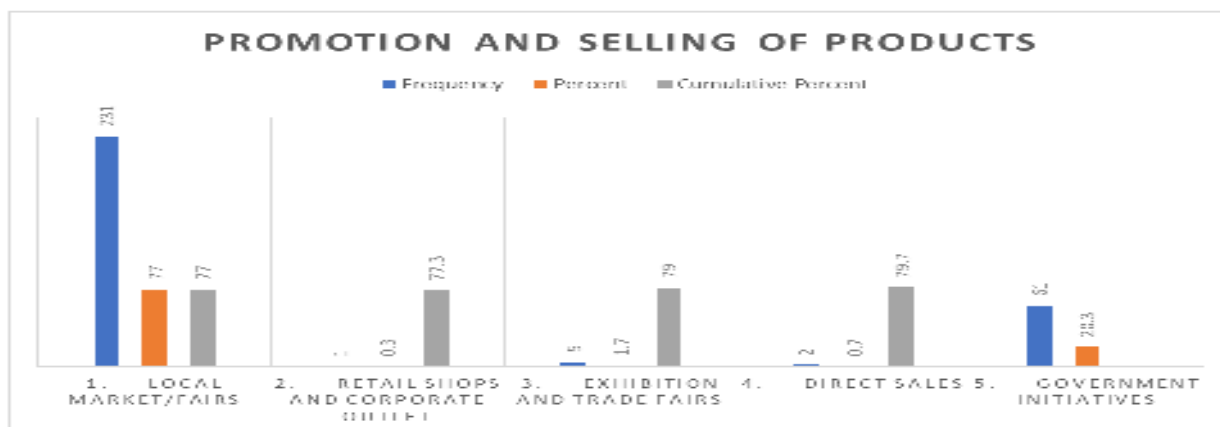


Figure 5: Promotion and selling of cultural products

Source: Output generated from SPSS software

Self-Help Groups employ five key channels to promote and sell their products, each contributing significantly to their success. According to the Table 8, the Local Market/Fair stands out as the most popular channel, with 231 out of 300 SHGs relying on

it for their sales and promotion efforts. Following closely, 61 SHGs leverage Government initiatives to reach their customers. This distribution highlights the crucial role that these channels play in the effective marketing of Cultural Products.

Table 9: Impact of promotional efforts

Impact of promotional efforts			
Particular	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
Limited Impact	113	37.7	37.7
Neutral	154	51.3	89.0
Positive	28	9.3	98.3
Very Positive	5	1.7	100.0
Total	300	100.0	

Source: Output generated from SPSS software

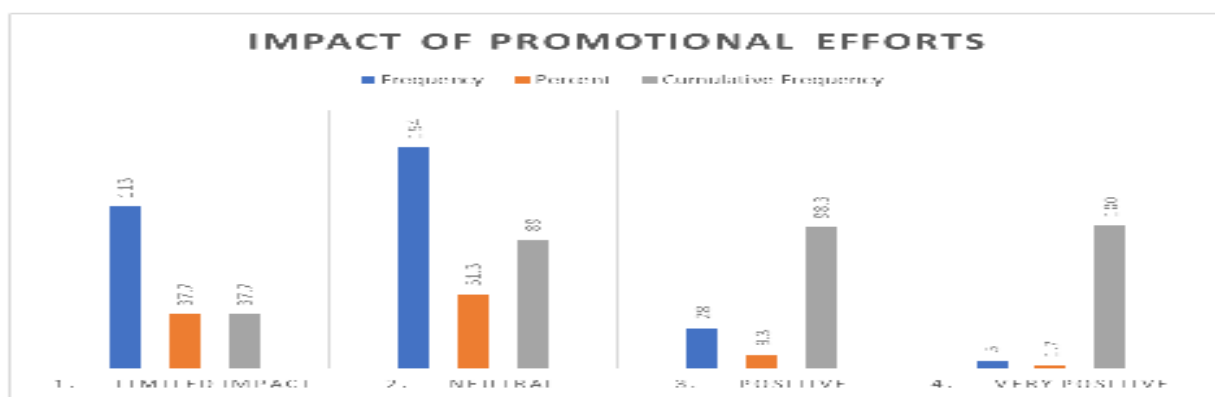


Figure 6: Impact of promotional efforts

Source: Output generated from SPSS software

The diverse promotional channels used by Self-Help Groups yield varied perceptions of their effectiveness. According to the table no. 09, 154 Presidents view the impact of these promotional efforts as neutral, while 113 perceive it as having a limited effect. In

contrast, 28 Presidents recognize a positive impact, and just 5 Presidents believe the promotional efforts have a very positive effect. This range of feedback illustrates the differing levels of success experienced by SHGs in their promotional activities.

Table 10: Collaboration of SHGs with NGOs and development agencies

Collaboration with NGO's and Development Agencies			
Particular	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	287	95.7	95.7
No	13	4.3	100.0
Total	300	100.0	

Source: Output generated from SPSS software

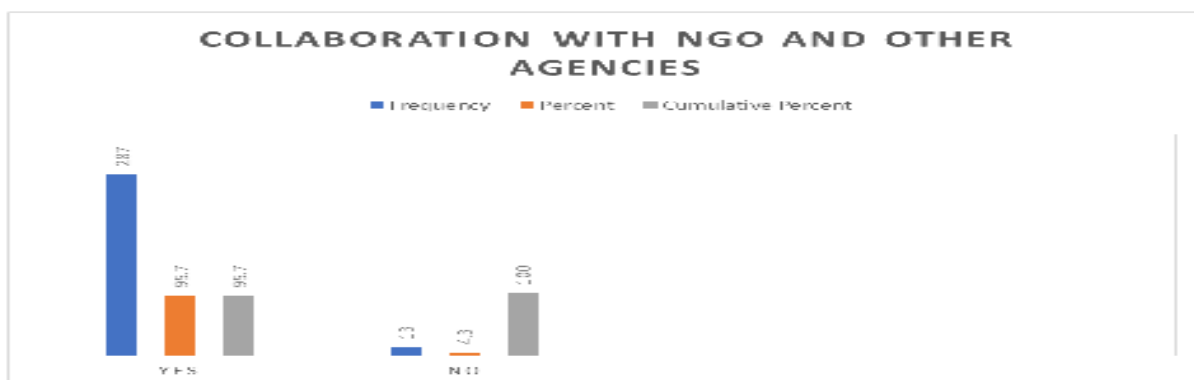


Figure 7: Collaboration with NGOs and other agencies

From the Table 10, it is observed that almost all the Self-help groups collaborate with various NGOs and development agencies in

their area for the promotion and selling their products. These organizations help them to provide a platform for showcase their cultural products.

Table 11: Additional channel or strategies

Particular	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Social Media Marketing	293	97.7	97.7
Packaging and Branding	3	1.0	98.7
Partnership with local Business	2	.7	99.3
Export Opportunities	1	.3	99.7
Digital Payment System	1	.3	100.0
Total	300	100.0	

Source: Output generated from SPSS software

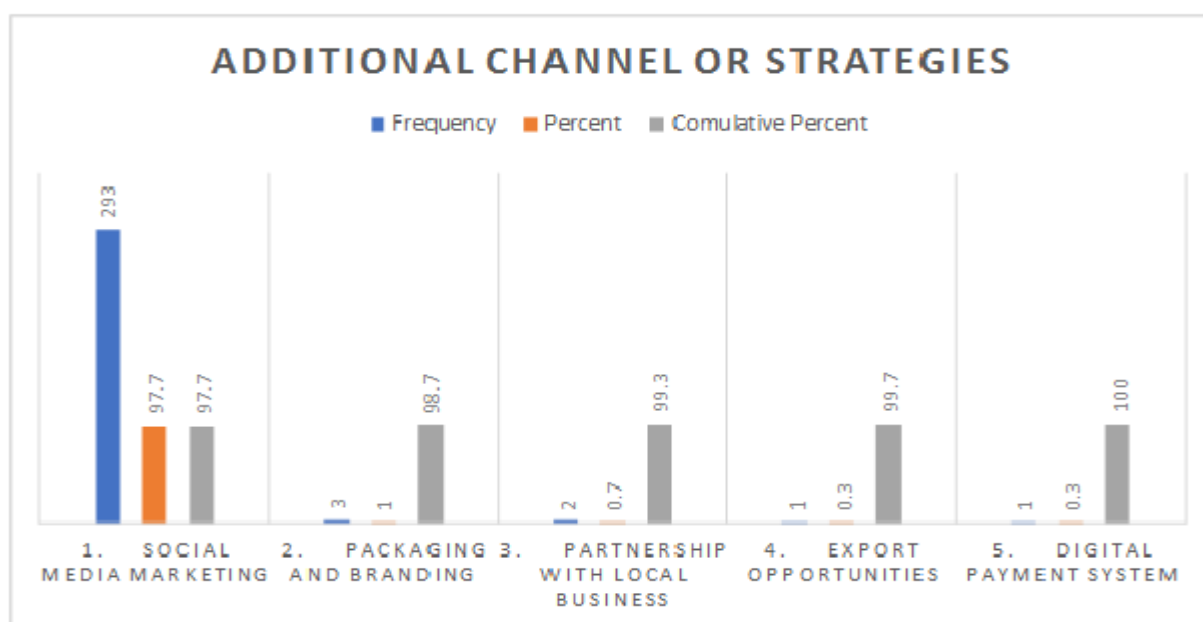


Figure 8: Additional channel or strategy for promotion

Source: Output generated from SPSS software

The Table 11 highlights that Social Media Marketing has emerged as a prominent additional channel for Self-Help Groups to promote and sell their Cultural Products. This modern approach is increasingly favoured by SHGs, showcasing its growing importance in reaching and engaging with the market effectively.

CONCLUSION

Self-Help Groups play an important role in promotion of Cultural Entrepreneurship in Himachal Pradesh. The study provides the understanding of interdependence between self-help group and cultural entrepreneurship at Himachal Pradesh. SHGs have emerged as dynamic agents of change, preserving and promoting the state's rich cultural heritage while nurturing economic growth. Mainly self-Help groups are working in three category products like Handloom, Handicraft and Cuisine. From

last some decades it is observed the rapid growth in formation of new self-help group linked with Cultural Products. By focusing on traditional sectors, SHGs effectively contribute to preserving cultural heritage while driving economic progress. NGOs and Government agencies are also helpful for the promotion and selling the cultural products by organizing various trade fares. Over recent decades, there has been a noticeable surge in the formation of new SHGs dedicated to cultural products.

This growth is supported by NGOs and government agencies, which play a crucial role in promoting and selling these cultural items through various trade fairs and events. Additionally, SHGs leverage social media platforms to enhance visibility and sales of their products, broadening their market reach. Self-Help Groups are also used various

social networking platform for promoting and selling their products promoting their products on social networking flat form. By selling and promotion of the cultural products Self-Help Groups earn profit also cultural entrepreneurship is one of the ways for socio economic development of the self-help groups in Himachal Pradesh.

The findings of this study are helpful for policymakers, development agencies, and entrepreneurs seeking to connect the potential of cultural entrepreneurship in preserving and promoting cultural diversity and nurturing economic development in Himachal Pradesh. The findings suggest that supporting and expanding SHG initiatives can lead to significant benefits for both local communities and the preservation of regional culture.

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