

RESEARCH ARTICLE

## REVITALIZING CULTURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN HIMACHAL PRADESH: SHGS INNOVATIONS, MARKET ADAPTATION, AND COLLABORATIVE GROWTH

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**Abstract:** Local economic development in Himachal Pradesh benefits from emerging entrepreneurial practices that use Self-Help Groups (SHG) as a key component. The region's local artisans and small-scale producers make up these grassroots organizations which work to protect their cultural heritage and simultaneously support rural livelihoods. SHGs need to adjust their operations toward changing market requirements while implementing contemporary marketing approaches to guarantee their prosperity and partnership with competing groups of artisans and SHGs. The study seeks to understand the ways that SHGs in Himachal Pradesh handle market adaptability challenges through analysis of collaboration initiatives and sustainability practices in addition to market adjustment approaches. The study adopts self-structured questionnaire that includes three districts, i.e., Kullu, Shimla and Kangra based on highest number of cultural product based SHGs in Himachal Pradesh to explain how SHGs adapt to market fluctuations and consumer taste and preferences and able to work under collaborative environment. The study found that SHGs organizations have successfully started adapting their operations to modern market demands yet they continue to encounter problems in technology adoption, promoting their goods on social media platforms, product development and sustainability practices. Social groups coordinate their activities to drive expansion but their partnerships stay restricted by organizational restrictions combined with inadequate infrastructure. Customer feedback represents a vital factor for SHGs because it helps them enhance both their products' quality and market appeal. SHGs must benefit from specialized assistance in capacity development combined with improved market connections and sustainable resource availability to succeed in current competitive business conditions. The policy should support strengthened SHG-government cooperation while delivering business practice education and encourage innovative approaches that preserve cultural heritage within the region.

**Keywords:** Cultural Entrepreneurship, Self-Help Groups, Cultural Heritage, Local Economy, Himachal Pradesh.

**JEL Classification:** G21, R11, O33, D83, L26

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## INTRODUCTION

Himachal Pradesh expresses its cultural heritage by means of traditional arts and various handcrafted products that exhibit its historical progress and its culturally unified population. Since the starting of time traditional farming-maintained dominance as the primary sustenance source for most people of Himachal Pradesh alongside handmade products and local crafts.

Multiple factors including technological advances alongside changing market preferences and worldwide economic dynamics have caused traditional industries to either slow down or disappear entirely (Dosi and Nelson, 2010). Rural families acquire economic potential through women empowerment and cultural entrepreneurship through the implementation of Self-Help Groups (Kandpal, 2022).

SHGs in Himachal Pradesh unite their assets through a shared understanding that enables collective work in economic activities focused on local handicrafts alongside woollen goods and handloom creations and various cuisine products (Sharma and Singh, 2019). The existing SHGs face problems because they lack access to adequate business knowledge and appropriate market relationships and contemporary business management expertise (Chakraborty *et al.*, 2022). Rapid market trends pose challenges to numerous SHGs when they attempt to sustain their market competitiveness (Dhiman and Rani, 2014; Shylendra, 2018; Bahera, 2024).

Through this paper researchers analyze the role of SHGs towards cultural entrepreneurship advancement in Himachal Pradesh using transformational market strategies and collective growth practices to sustain their production operations. This investigation studies how cultural heritage of local areas interacts with contemporary market needs to uncover factors that boost SHGs economic achievement and their regional economic benefits.

The significance of this research lies in its potential to contribute to the development of culturally-rooted, sustainable entrepreneurship in Himachal Pradesh (Sharma, Kumar and Nag, 2025). By identifying successful strategies and highlighting areas of improvement, this study aims to provide actionable insights for

policymakers, NGOs, and other stakeholders involved in promotion Cultural Entrepreneurship. Additionally, the findings can help local artisans and SHGs develop more effective business strategies that balance cultural preservation with modern market realities.

Therefore, the current study seeks to answer the following research questions related to functioning of Cultural product based SHGs in Himachal Pradesh. Where most of the SHGs are located- Rural or Urban? Are SHGs in Himachal Pradesh adapt to market changes, including changes in consumer taste and preferences? Are SHGs in Himachal Pradesh facing difficulties in adopting new technologies, especially after post COVID-19 pandemic ?

What is the educational qualification of SHGs representatives, and does it influence their entrepreneurial capabilities? Where do SHGs source their raw materials-are they locally procured or from ethical source or are they procuring environment friendly or recycled based materials? Lastly, do SHGs collaborate with other groups within the state, and to what extent does such collaboration contribute to their growth and sustainability?

The rest of the paper is structured as follow as: Section 1 explains the Introduction of the study; Section 2 follows the review of literature; Section 3 describes the research methodology used in the study; Section 4 reported the estimation results and final conclusion is reported in Section 5

## LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Negi (2024) rural development in the Indian Himalayan Region (IHR) encounters long-standing obstacles caused by demanding landscape features along with both environmental sensitiveness and economic disparity. The research merged evaluation of 46 central-level schemes from the Indian government dedicated to increasing rural incomes and environmental preservation and farmer well-being across IHR.

A wide range of state government-sponsored schemes address different sectors such as climate change mitigation together with

organic agriculture practices and programs for women empowerment. The study indicates that changes must happen to better recognize women's policy-making authority and optimize scientific technology use and develop strengthened institutional development and income promotion systems.

Usharani (2024) conducts research on textile handicraft sector challenges under modern globalization using government priorities as well as employment and income aspects and raw materials availability. The creation of various employment opportunities did not prevent the sector from diminishing as skilled workers sought urban employment.

The current government programs face implementation challenges because their target audience cannot access them effectively. The research indicates that strengthening bonds between government officials and beneficiaries would create a more effective program implementation through educational programs and research initiatives as well as camps. This breakthrough method targets current development threats and shortcomings within the entrepreneurial aspect of the sector.

A study conducted by Sharma and Sarkar (2024) reveals that high-altitude Himalayan artisans in Lahaul-Pangi experience environmental damage along with land degradation and minimal agricultural yield alongside deforestation. Handloom and handicrafts now play a major role as income generators since they benefit from both locally accessible wool resources and artisans' specialized abilities. A survey of 218 artisans in 09 panchayats enabled NIFT to understand regional needs before offering skill enhancement training to these artisans. The research reveals essential details about artisans' earnings along with educational backgrounds and their work involvement coupled with their marketing approaches and training progress as it explains the complete artisan market structure of the area.

The study by Mishra, Mishra, and Bhatt (2024) investigates SHGs contributions to sustainable tourism development in the industry. The acceptance of SHGs formed by people sharing common targets stems from their ability to enhance economic development as they protect both social development and environmental natural

resources. The research evaluates how SHGs affect tourism destinations through their projects which focus on economic advancement along with cultural preservation environmental protection and social development. The study presents a combination of case research and literature analysis to examine SHGs' sustainable tourism effects while analysing existing problems. Research findings provide essential data to official decision-makers and stakeholders who wish to develop local community-led approaches for increasing destination sustainability levels.

Zuhra (2022) conducted a study on Lakshadweep female collectives by investigating SHGs through their evaluation of Dweepasree. Researchers studied 120 socio-economic indicators of three island SHG participants to determine how social activities alongside training programs and innovation capabilities promote sustainable life projects. The main obstacles affecting SHGs stem from their struggle with high raw material costs as well as intense market rivalry. The research shows that social entrepreneurs provide positive effects to SHG management operations and suggests distinct entrepreneurial methods and strengthened business relationships with better infrastructure development. The study proves that well-functioning women collectives advance socio-economic growth through their entrepreneurial initiatives.

Bharti (2021) presents SHGs as collective solutions that empower women through economic development to transform into social and political entities. The SHGs system lets women unite their assets to gain expertise and form networks that boost both personal and community advancement. The success of SHGs depends on creating suitable established procedures and sound advance planning according to the research.

The author confirms that implementing best practices alongside stronger network relationships and enhanced NGO regional partnerships will help women achieve empowerment together with economic independence to solve their socio-economic challenges. This study indicates that sustainable empowerment and community development demand funding for education alongside training programs and technological improvements.

Mishra, Mishra and Bhatt (2024) research the ways in which SHGs advance tourism sector destination sustainability. SHGs consisting of people united by common

targets have earned praise because they promote economic sustainability together with environmental and social sustainability. The research examines how SHGs shape tourism destinations by investigating their effects on economic power training and cultural heritage maintenance and environmental preservation alongside social progress. The research presents findings on SHGs' sustainability impact on tourism through literature analysis as well as real-world examples while identifying their facing difficulties. Community-based initiatives provide essential knowledge points for authorities and stakeholders who want to boost destination sustainability through community-led programs.

Zuhra (2022) studies women collectives and social entrepreneurship in Lakshadweep Island through the analysis of SHGs as well as Dweepasree. The research investigates 120 SHGs member socio-economic characteristics in three islands through an analysis of their social participation and innovativeness in combination with training exposure for sustainable livelihood development. Research has recognized high raw material expenses together with market competition as major hurdles which impede the success of SHGs.

Social entrepreneurship creates positive effects on SHG performance according to research findings while improving location-based entrepreneurial strategies and marketing connections and developing better infrastructure. The study outcomes demonstrate the ability of female collectives to establish socio-economic growth through entrepreneurial activities.

Dhulipudi et al. (2024) investigate the entrepreneurial activities of 240 women in Konaseema, East Godavari, and Kakinada, focusing on 286 enterprises across 69 business types. The study reveals that common enterprises include coconut wholesale, cattle breeding, and provision shops. Income distribution analysis shows that one-third of women earned ₹50,000–1,00,000 annually, with only 0.70% earning over ₹5 lakh. The research emphasizes the pivotal role of women entrepreneurs in their

communities, highlighting their job satisfaction from financial independence and social empowerment. Challenges such as limited capital and market access are identified, with recommendations to enhance their entrepreneurial success.

Singh (2001) compared the pre and post SHGs situation on women SHGs in Uttar Pradesh. The study found positive impact on assets value and annual income between pre and post SHGs period. The average value of assets increased by 46% and annual income per household by 28%. Kumar, Wankhede and Gena (2015) examine how cooperatives promote small and marginal farmers in developing nation countries particularly India where agriculture stands as a primary growth engine for the economy. The research demonstrates how cooperatives including IFFCO and KRIBHCO together with AMUL contribute effectively to boost agricultural yields for farmers alongside increasing their financial outcomes.

The seven principles that guide cooperatives enable them to support community welfare through sustainable development strategies which include agroforestry implementations that strengthen ecological systems and rural economic conditions. The study demonstrates that agricultural cooperatives aid farmers to optimize their input use and maintain continuous employment while enhancing their total production output and earnings.

Studies in SHGs concentrate on their functions for rural empowerment coupled with poverty relief and social welfare support. Research results confirm that Indian SHGs play two fundamental roles through financial inclusion that reach women specifically and increase rural quality of life standards (Kabeer, 2005; Raghunandan & Kumari, 2017). Research about SHGs operating within cultural entrepreneurship remains insufficient. Economic prosperity for such groups depends on cultural entrepreneurship because it bridges traditional craft protection with entrepreneurial methods.

Further, Srinivasan (2010) and Thakur and Bhatnagar (2018) examined the difficulties craft-based communities encounter when adopting to current market conditions. The basic obstacles encountered by individuals stem from their restricted connections to technological resources alongside inadequate

promotional outlets and diminished understanding of customer's needs. Research supports the main factor of artisan

community success through collaboration because it enables joint marketing initiatives alongside resource sharing and innovation development (Bennett, 2012; Kumar & Rani, 2015). Eco-friendly material sourcing and environmentally friendly production approaches form the basis for sustainable development and long-term growth according to Rani & Gupta (2019). A specific analysis of cultural entrepreneurship in Himachal Pradesh becomes the core subject of this research since this region maintains strong cultural roots with its local communities. The research connects ancient craftsmanship methods to contemporary business management techniques to safeguard regional cultural traditions of the region.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is descriptive in nature since it covers the majority of our components and examines how cultural product based SHGs in Himachal Pradesh are adjusting to market shifts and fostering a collaborative environment for sustainable product development. The study used Multistage

sampling technique and selected three districts of Himachal Pradesh based on highest number of SHGs registration.

Thereafter, a self-structured questionnaire was prepared and distributed to 371 SHGs representatives, out of which 300 questionnaires were finally selected after carefully examination.

## RESULT

### Location of SHGs

Table 1 report the result of SHGs location, all the 300 SHGs were operating in rural areas of Himachal Pradesh, with a focus on Handloom, handicrafts, Cuisine and local resource management, and women's empowerment. These groups play a crucial role in enhancing the livelihoods of community members by facilitating access to resources and markets. As shown in the table there are no SHGs functioning in urban areas, highlighting the concentration of these initiatives in rural settings where they can significantly impact local economies and social structures.

**Table 1: SHGs Location**

Location	Frequency	%Age	Valid %age	Cumulative %age
Rural	300	100.0	100.0	100.0
Urban	00	00	00	00

Source: Output Generated from SPSS

### Education of Representatives of SHGs

The Table 2 shows the educational backgrounds of representatives in SHGs. There are 121 representatives, have a high school diploma. Next, 78 representatives have completed intermediate or diploma-level education. There are 59 representatives with

education below high school, while 29 hold a bachelor's degree. Only 13 representatives have a postgraduate degree or higher. This shows that most SHG representatives have basic to intermediate education, highlighting opportunities for further training and skill development.

**Table 2: Education of Representatives of SHGs**

Education	Frequency	%	Valid %
Below High School	59	19.7	19.7
High School	121	40.3	40.3
Intermediate/Diploma	78	26.0	26.0
Bachelor Degree	29	9.7	9.7
PG Degree and above	13	4.3	4.3
Total	300	100.0	100.0

Source: Output generated from SPSS

### SHGs adapt to changing consumer preferences and market trends

Table 3 describes how various SHGs operating in Himachal Pradesh adapt to

changes in consumer taste and preferences and follows the market trend.

The results show that out of 300 respondents about 242 participants agreed, and 19

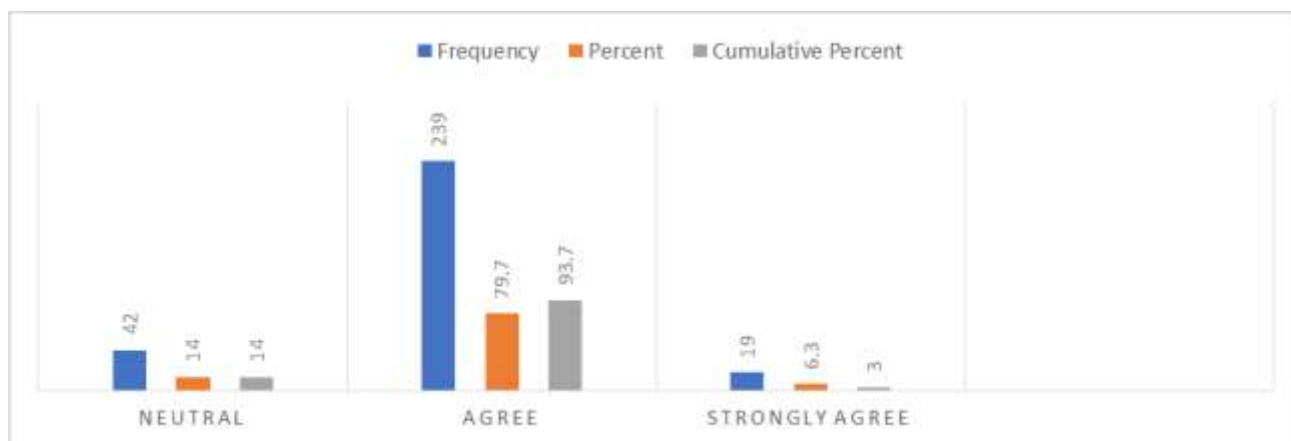
strongly agreed, highlighting that most SHGs understand the importance of evolving with consumer demands. However, 42 were neutral, suggesting some groups may still be adjusting.

Overall, the data indicates that the majority recognize the need to adapt to remain competitive and meet market expectations.

**Table 3: SHGs adapt to changing consumer preferences and market trends**

Particular	Frequency	Percent	Valid %age
Neutral	42	14.0	14.0
Agree	239	79.7	79.7
Strongly Agree	19	6.3	6.3
Total	300	100.0	100.0

Source: Output generated from SPSS



**Figure 1: SHGs adapt to changing consumer preferences and market trends**

Source: Output generated from SPSS

### Collaboration with other SHGs

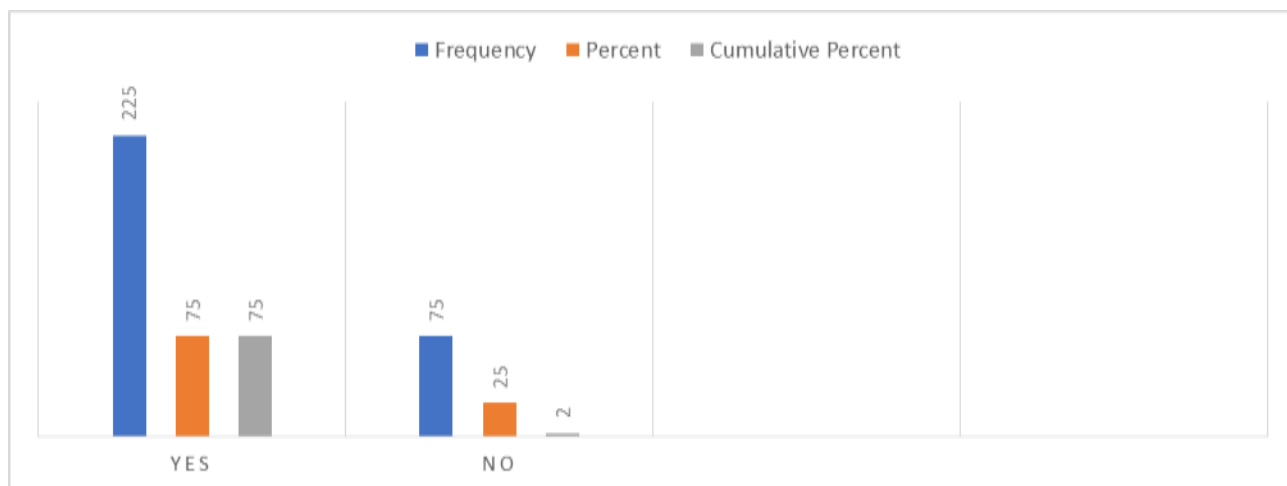
Table 4 describes “Are SHGs collaborate with other artisans and SHGs in Himachal Pradesh?”. The result suggested that out of 300 SHGs, 225 actively collaborate with other artisans and SHGs to enhance their

work and achieve mutual goals. This type of partnership helps improve the quality of the concerned products and services while development a spirit of teamwork and shared growth. By joining forces, these groups can access new resources, ideas, and markets, ultimately strengthening their impact and ensuring long-term success for all involved.

**Table 4: Collaboration with other SHGs**

Particular	Frequency	% Age
Yes	225	75.0
No	75	25.0
Total	300	100.0

Source: Output generated from SPSS



**Figure 2: Collaboration with other SHGs**

Source: Output generated from SPSS

### Sourcing of Material for Products

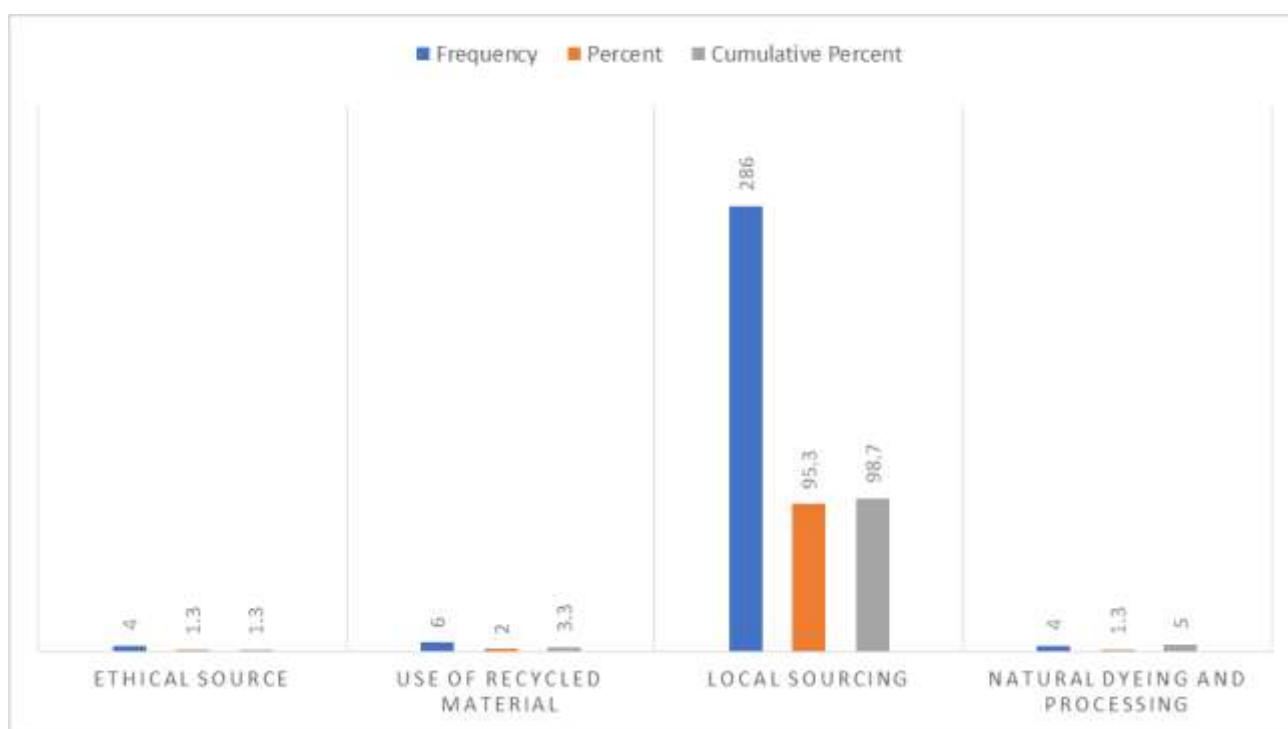
From the Table 5, it is observed that 286 SHGs rely on local sourcing of materials, while the remaining groups utilize ethical sourcing, recycled materials, and natural dyeing products. This highlights a significant emphasis on local sourcing among these SHGs, suggesting a strong commitment to supporting local economies and reducing

transportation emissions. Simultaneously, the presence of groups adopting ethical and recycled materials, along with natural dyeing practices, indicates a growing awareness of sustainable practices and social responsibility within the broader network. This diverse approach reflects a multifaceted strategy toward sustainable production, balancing local engagement with ethical and environmentally friendly sourcing methods.

**Table 5: Sourcing of material for products**

Particulars	Frequency	% Age
Ethical Source	4	1.3
Use of Recycled material	6	2.0
Local Sourcing	286	95.3
Natural Dyeing and Processing	4	1.3
Total	300	100.0

Source: Output generated from SPSS



**Figure 3: Sourcing of Material for Products**

Source: Output generated from SPSS

### Customer Feedback to Improve Product Quality and Offering

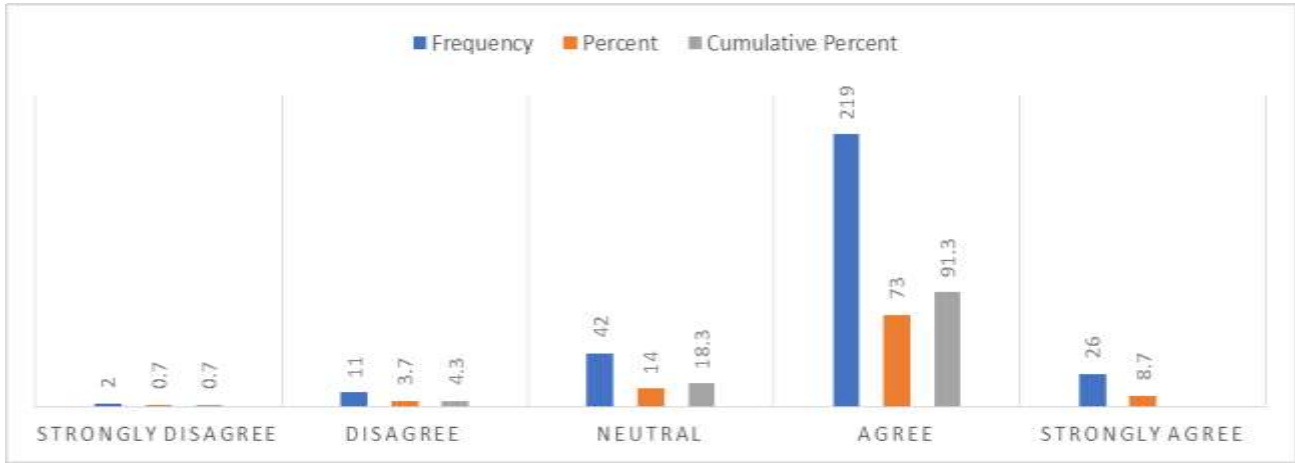
From Table 6 it is observed that maximum SHGs i.e., 219 agree to consider the

customers feedback for the improvement of their products with new era. That will defiantly help to improve the creativity and quality of the product.

**Table 6: Customer feedback to improve product quality and offering**

Particulars	Frequency	%	Cumulative %
Strongly Disagree	2	.7	.7
Disagree	11	3.7	4.3
Neutral	42	14.0	18.3
Agree	219	73.0	91.3
Strongly Agree	26	8.7	100.0
Total	300	100.0	

Source: Output generated from SPSS



**Figure 4: Feedback from the customers**

Source: Output generated from SPSS

### Technology Adaption among SHGs in Himachal Pradesh

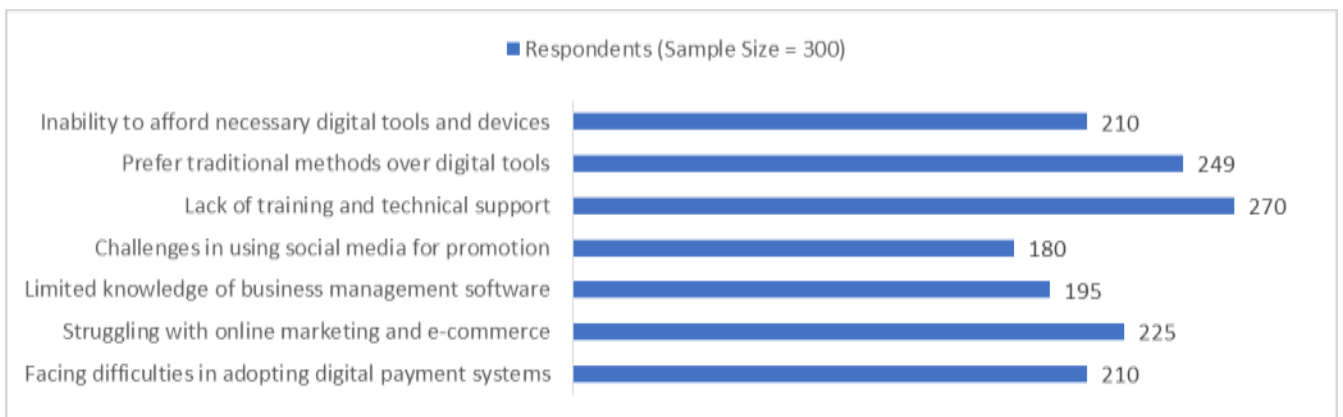
Table 7 reported the results of technology adoption difficulties faced by various SHGs in Himachal Pradesh. The results show that 70 percent of SHGs representatives are facing difficulties in payment process through digital mode, 75 percent of SHGs members are struggling with online marketing and e-commerce platforms. Further, 65 percent of the member reported limited knowledge of business management software’s and 60 percent reveals that they are facing challenges in using social media for

promotion of their products. Most importantly, 90 percent of the SHGs representatives reported that they have lack of training and technical support facilities received from the government. Furthermore, 70 percent of the SHGs says that they can’t afford the digital tools and devices as they increased their marketing expenses. Therefore, 83 percent of the SHGs are still operating with traditional methods over digital goods. The government should provide targeted digital training programs, financial support for technology adoption, and better access to digital infrastructure to help SHGs overcome technological challenges.

**Table 7: Technology adaption among SHGs in Himachal Pradesh**

Parameter	Respondents (Sample Size = 300)	(%)
Facing difficulties in adopting digital payment systems	210	70%
Struggling with online marketing and e-commerce	225	75%
Limited knowledge of business management software	195	65%
Challenges in using social media for promotion	180	60%
Lack of training and technical support	270	90%
Prefer traditional methods over digital tools	249	83%
Inability to afford necessary digital tools and devices	210	70%

Source: Output generated from SPSS Software.



**Figure 4: Technology adaption among SHGs in Himachal Pradesh**

Source: Output from SPSS Software



## CONCLUSION

The number of SHGs in rural areas is growing their attention towards cultural entrepreneurship to improve traditional cultural product marketing. These strategies help the groups obtain power along with creating opportunities to demonstrate their distinct history to broader market audiences. The groups team up with trained artisans and other SHGs to advance product quality standards as well as gain market reach and share innovative thinking techniques. The groups become better equipped by working together which enables them to establish distinctive products for competing markets.

These SHGs build their success on local raw material use because it connects their products to community cultural heritage while guaranteeing product authenticity. Using local supplies in their operations aids both the economics of their target community and sustains traditional trades. Several of these groups maintain ongoing customer relations through feedback programs because they strive to improve their products and fulfil market needs. Consumer preferences lead to product design adjustments at these organizations which makes their products relevant throughout market transitions.

Through collaborative work and innovations integrated with consumer input rural SHGs develop top-quality multicultural products that match market expectations which deliver substantial benefits to their communities along with potential success in broader markets. Further, the government should provide targeted digital training programs, financial support for technology adoption, and better access to digital infrastructure to help SHGs overcome technological challenges.

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