

# Challenges and Scopes of Pottery Industry

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## **Abstract**

*Pottery is unique art of making artifacts from clay. It produces different kinds of clay and ceramics items such as flowerpots, water and grain storage jars, large vessels for distilling rice spirits called rakshi, cooking pots, tableware, stoneware cups, bowls, and plates, stoneware pitcher and mug, etc. This research aims to examine challenges faced by the pottery industries and to examine scopes of the pottery industries in Nepal. This research is based on the descriptive method. The results show that there is good scope in the this industry but the people involved in this industry are facing different kinds of challenges or problems like shortage of raw materials, manpower, and lack of space to dry the formed pottery, firing pottery, to store the finished goods along with the different raw materials. The sales of the product in the national and international markets are being increased. This industry is being affected by the change in lifestyle and different substitute products. The intermediaries get good profits but they face the problem of getting the products damaged, demand dependent on the festive occasion, problem of transportation, etc. Study shows that there is a huge demand for Nepali handmade ceramic products in the international market due to their improved quality. Buyers are willing to pay a premium for handmade goods, which are propelling exports.*

**Key words:** Pottery, Challenges, Scopes, Ceramics.

## **Introduction**

Pottery is the term derived from French word 'Poeteric' or Latin word 'Potium'. The literary meaning of it is the drinking vessel. All the objects made from clay and hardened by fire is termed as pottery. It is unique art of making artifacts from clay. It has been indispensable part of human life from beginning of the human history. The historical evidence shows that pottery was there before 10000 yrs in around the Nile River. The modern ceramics introduced in 1980 in Nepal. At present many kinds of earthen ware, ceramics and porcelains are used for daily use, scientific experiments and electrical apparatus. The pottery industry today is not very large scale, but is working efficiently under small scale cottage industrial groups. The artists in the small scale industries of pottery are generally from rural locations.

In Nepal, pottery, glassware and kitchenware industries are fast developing industries. Some of the major places where pottery industries remain are Thimi, Chyamhasingh, Pottery Square, Byasi etc. in Bhaktapur District, Harishiddi, Imadol, Khokana, Bungmati, Balifal and Patan, etc. in Lalitpur District, Jyatha in Kathmandu. Similarly the potters are there in Dang, Morang, Janakpur, etc. There are around 10,000 families involved in Pottery industries. The pottery has become very popular. There are different items produced in pottery industry. It produces traditional items

and ceramic products. The traditional items of the pottery industries are the products using the locally available raw materials and using the traditional technology. Clay is used to make these products and red clay (rato mato) is used to color them. Producers use cart wheel or different keys (saancho) to make the items of the clay. Then these products are dried and firing process is used to produce final products. The traditional items of the pottery industry are related with the cultural and religious practice as well as related with the daily item. Pala (a small bowl shaped clay pot), gagri, surahi and ghyampo (clay pot for collecting and storing water), flowering pot, makal, heater, handi, khutrukke used for collection of money, and other gift items are produced by traditional pottery industry in Nepal.

The ceramic products are the modern products of pottery industry. In this ceramics different chemicals or glaze are used. For the production of these products modern equipments and tools are used. Ceramic products include different items like cup, plate, and other decoration materials and gift items. These products are also exported in different countries as handicraft products.

Pottery has been adopted as a main occupation especially by the Prajapati community in Nepal. In Nepal, pottery industry has been taken as one of the traditional industry. This is clay based cottage industry. This industry has been contributing a lot for the production of cultural and traditional products. This industry has different types of products that are traditional pottery products; ceramics and recently being introduced stone ware as a part of ceramics. Most of the people involved in this industry are Prajapati. This industry is based on local raw materials and local technology. The change in lifestyle, other substituting products and many more problems have been threatening this industry. So, this study tries to examine the major challenges associated with this industry and the scopes of this industry.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The major objectives of this study are as follows:

- a. To examine the challenges associated with pottery industry.
- b. To examine the scopes of the pottery industry in international market.

### **Methodology**

Descriptive research design is used in this study. According to the Nepal Ceramic Cooperative there are around 10,000 people involved in this industry in Nepal. The majority of the people involved in this business are located in Bhaktapur district. The booklet published by 'Nepal Ceramics Co-operative Society Ltd.' states that there are 23 ceramics factories in Bhaktapur only. Likewise, according to Federation of Handicraft Associations of Nepal (FHAN), Bhaktapur is the major supplier of ceramic products, and accounts for more than 70 percent of the exports. That's why Madhyapur municipality and Bhaktapur municipality are selected for the study. Both the producers and the intermediaries are selected for the study. The producers are selected to know the condition and the problems related with the production where as intermediaries are selected to know the market condition. This study is based on the convenient sampling method. Questionnaires were distributed to 40 producers and 40 intermediaries. But only 60 of them replied.

Data has been collected from both primary sources and secondary sources. The

primary sources of data were the questionnaire prepared separately for the producers of the pottery and the marketing intermediaries involved in pottery industry. Similarly field observation and interview with different people were also conducted. The secondary data were collected from Mahaguthi, Sana Hastakala, Nepal Prajapati Samaj, Nepal Ceramic Cooperative, and other daily newspaper and journals.

### Empirical Findings and Analysis

This section deals with the some of the empirical findings and analysis based on collected data.

### Analysis of Producers' Responses

This section presents the analysis of producers' responses.

*Table 1: Descriptive Analysis of Producers' Response (N = 30)*

	Mean
Years in Pottery Industry	23.87
Change in production trend	2.07
Production related problem	1.40
Problem of raw materials	1.93
Problem related with the manpower	1.83
Formal Training	1.40
Percentage of damage product in distribution	1.80
Product receiver	1.93
Percentage profit	2.00
Modern equipments are being used for production	1.80
There is sufficient manpower for this industry	3.53
Raw materials are easily available	3.50
There is fuel problem	2.20
This industry has good scope	2.47
There is need of training for this industry	1.67
There is need of institutional or government support	1.60
There is problem of storage and distribution.	2.33

*Table 2: The numbers of family members involved in pottery*

Family members	Frequency	Percent
1	1	3.3
2	8	26.7
3	4	13.3
4	8	26.7
5	3	10.0
6	4	13.3
10	1	3.3
13	1	3.3
Total	30	100.0

Above table shows the numbers of family members of the respondent (producers) involved in pottery. It is found that all the working members of the family are not involved in the family business of production of pottery products. In this regard, most the respondent during the conversation say that the reason behind not involving in the family business is the change in lifestyle and disregard of the youngsters' for its continuity.

*Table 3: The numbers of years involved in pottery*

No of years	Frequency	Percent
10	1	3.3
12	2	6.7
15	1	3.3
17	2	6.7
18	2	6.7
20	1	3.3
21	1	3.3
22	2	6.7
23	2	6.7
24	2	6.7
25	1	3.3
26	3	10.0
27	1	3.3
28	1	3.3
30	6	20.0
40	2	6.7
Total	30	100.0

It is found that the most of the respondents have been involved in this industry from a long time. It means that it is being followed as traditional occupation. Not a single respondent was seen who has been involved in this business less than ten years. It also shows that the charm of this business is not there in the modern period.

*Table 4: The numbers of hired worker*

Number of hired workers	Frequency	Percent
0	14	46.66
1	2	6.7
2	6	20.0
3	1	3.3
4	1	3.3
5	2	6.7
8	2	6.7
14	2	6.7
Total	30	100.0

Above table shows the number of hired workers by the producers. Out of thirty

respondents, only sixteen people hire workers. Most of the traditional pottery producers have less numbers of hired workers, only the ceramic producers have some numbers of the hired workers. The respondents say that the production is not in the large scale so they don't hire more numbers of the workers.

*Table 5: Change in production trend*

Change	Frequency	Percent
Decrease	11	36.7
Increased by less than 10%	10	33.3
Increased by 10% - 20%	5	16.7
Increased by more than 20%	4	13.3
Total	30	100.0

Above table shows that most of the respondents are indicating the increasing trend of production. The outmoded production technique is constraints faced by this industry in Nepal. There are handful of machines, tools and techniques. But there seems to have taken a little bit improvement in this respect.

*Table 6: Production related problem*

	Frequency	Percent
Raw materials	23	76.7
Manpower	4	13.3
Sales	1	3.3
Problems of firing	2	6.7
Total	30	100.0

Above tables show the problem related with the production of goods. It is seen that the most of the respondents are facing the problem of raw materials. The raw materials include basically the clay used for production, beside which the husk and hay used for the firing in the traditional pottery, kerosene and electricity for the ceramic are also expensive and not available at the needed time. Some respondents say that they have the problem of manpower. It is seen that the traditional pottery producers have the problem of firing.

*Table 7: Problem of raw materials*

Problem	Frequency	Percent
Increase in price	11	36.7
Scarcity	11	36.7
Low quality	7	23.3
Differ in quality	1	3.3
Total	30	100.0

The above table further indicates that problems of raw materials are due to the increase in price and non availability of it at the time of need. It is found that the most of the respondent feel there is scarcity of raw materials. The sources of raw materials

especially clay is getting scarce. They have to pay more amounts for the raw materials and even the raw material quality is not good.

*Table 8: Problem of man power*

Problem	Frequency	Percent
Scarcity	13	43.3
Increase in wages	9	30.0
Lack of training	8	26.7
Total	30	100.0

The respondent says that there is problem of manpower. There is scarcity of manpower who is skilled one. The reason behind this is that there are only limited numbers of the institution who rarely provide training for the production of these products and less people are interested to involve in this occupation so they don't try to get skill of making pottery. Similarly the increase in wage rate is also one of the problems of man power.

*Table 9: Formal training*

Training	Frequency	Percent
Trained	18	60.0
Untrained	12	40.0
Total	30	100.0

Above table shows the numbers of the respondent who are trained by some organization. It is obvious that the producers gain skilled from practice than the formal training. Among the respondents only 18 are trained formally.

*Table 10: Percentage of damaged products during production*

Damaged products	Frequency	Percent
Less than 10%	13	43.3
10% - 20%	12	40.0
20% - 30%	3	10.0
More than 30	2	6.7
Total	30	100.0

Above table shows the percentage of the damaged products during the production. Products get damaged specially during the process of firing. If the heat is not maintained as needed the products get damaged? From the table it is obvious that the most of the respondents say the percentage of damage is less than 10%

*Table 11: Product receiver*

Receiver of products	Frequency	Percent
Consumers	12	40.0
Wholesaler	10	33.3
Retailer	6	20.0
Others	2	6.7
Total	30	100.0

Above table shows the product receiver. Most of the producers of the traditional pottery sell their products directly to the consumers, but some of them sell it to the intermediaries like whole seller and retailers. It is found that some of them sell through the agents.

*Table 12: Percentage profit*

Profit margin	Frequency	Percent
Less than 10%	7	23.3
10% - 20%	16	53.3
20% - 30%	7	23.3
Total	30	100.0

Above table shows the percentage profit received by the producers. Most of the respondents say that they get profit near about 10%-20%. There is not much difficulty in finding out the customers for the pottery product as it is customary, cheap and wide use product. Due to internal competition and the potters' urgency to sell the profit margin is low. There is not much competition from products of the well known pottery but the internal competition remains and it is quite significant.

### **Analysis of Intermediaries Responses**

This section presents some of the realities of intermediaries' responses:

*Table 13: Year of establishment*

Established year	Frequency	Percent
1	1	3.3
5	4	13.3
7	2	6.7
8	1	3.3
10	1	3.3
12	2	6.7
15	3	10.0
16	1	3.3
18	1	3.3
20	6	20.0
25	3	10.0
30	5	16.7
Total	30	100.0

Above table shows the year of establishment of the businesses of the respondents. It is obvious from the table that some intermediaries are involved in it from a long time period, but some are the new entrants.

Table 14: Form of business

Form of Business	Frequency
Sole trading	30
Partnership	0
Joint Stock	0

Above table shows the form of business. Most of pottery units in Bhaktapur are proprietary concerns

Table 15: Percentage of damaged products

Damage product	Frequency	Percent
Less than 5%	7	23.3
5% - 10%	8	26.7
10% - 15%	11	36.7
More than 15%	4	13.3
Total	30	100.0

Above table describes the percentage of products that get damaged during transportation and other activities.

Table 16: Change in sales trend

Change in sales	Frequency	Percent
Decrease	9	30.0
Increased by less than 10%	6	20.0
Increased by 10% - 20%	10	33.3
Increased by more than 20%	5	16.7
Total	30	100.0

Most of the respondents say that there is increase in sales in each and every year. There are increasing trend for sales .The reason behind for this were explained as follows.

Table 17: Reason behind the change in sales

Factors	Frequency	Percent
Shortage of foreigner	2	6.7
Awareness	1	3.3
Change life style	1	3.3
Festive use	1	3.3
Growth of competitor	2	6.7
High demand	2	6.7
Increase in awareness	2	6.7
increase in population	2	6.7
Increase in population	2	6.7



Location	1	3.3
More Use	3	10.0
Plastic and metals used	1	3.3
Population growth	4	13.4
Shortage of foreigner	3	10.0
Slow movement	1	3.3
Use of products	1	6.6
Total	30	100.0

*Table 18: Percentage profit from the sales*

Profit percentage	Frequency	Percent
10% - 20%	17	56.7
20% - 30%	11	36.7
More than 30%	2	6.7
Total	30	100.0

Above table shows the percentage profit from the sales. Most of the respondents say that they get the profit margin of 10%-20%. As there are loss in the storage, delivery and other competitive factors, there are fewer profit margins.

*Table 19: Sales related problem*

Problem	Frequency	Percent
Shortage of products	12	40.0
Availability of substitute products	12	40.0
Transportation problem	6	20.0
Total	30	100.0

The respondents say that there is problem of sales because of the shortage of the products and availability of the substitute products in the market. The producers can't provide the items in needed quantity.

*Table 20: Reason behind the shortage of products*

Reason for shortage	Frequency	Percent
Problem of supply	11	36.6
Increase in demand	11	36.6
Lack of storage	8	26.6
Total	30	100.0

Above table shows the reason behind the shortage of the products. In the view of respondents there is problem of supply of the products in the market and the demand is being increased. This shows that there is shortage of the products in the market.

*Table 21: Substitute products of pottery*

Substitute products	Frequency	Percent
Metal products	2	6.7
Plastic products	25	83.3
Others	3	10.0
Total	30	100.0

Above table shows the substitute products of pottery that has been taken as the threats for pottery. Most of the respondents show that the plastic products are mostly used as substitute products of pottery.

*Table 22: Importance of location in selling goods*

Effect of Location	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	14	46.7
Agree	16	53.3
Total	30	100.0

The majority of the respondents among the middlemen believe that the location plays important role while selling the products.

### **Scopes of Pottery Industry in International Market**

There is a huge demand for Nepali handmade ceramic products in the international market due to their improved quality. Buyers are willing to pay a premium price for handmade goods, which are propelling exports. Ceramics has contribution in the export, too. These products are exported as handicraft products to many countries. According to a national daily newspaper, exports of ceramic products surged 45 percent in the first five months of fiscal 2016-17, reflecting a rebound from the earthquakes of 2015 and increased demand for handmade goods in the international market ([www.kathmandupost.ekantipur.com](http://www.kathmandupost.ekantipur.com)). Nepal shipped ceramic products worth Rs.13.3 million from mid-July to mid-December, up from Rs.9.2 million during the same period in the last fiscal year, according to the latest statistics of the Federation of Handicraft Associations of Nepal (FHAN). The US is the largest importer of Nepali ceramic products. In the last fiscal year, Americans bought Rs.10.1 million worth of ceramic products from Nepal. Another large importer of Nepali ceramic products is Germany. Shipments to Germany in the last fiscal year totaled Rs.2.6 million. Canada imported Rs.2.5 million worth of ceramic products from Nepal in fiscal 2015-16. These all shows a huge scope of pottery business in international markets.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

This study shows that all the family members in the potters (producers of pottery) are not involved in pottery industry. It shows that the charm in this industry is slowly being faded away due to many more problems. Hence this industry is slowly in the threat of disappearance. It is found that all the respondent being involved in this business from the period of their parents. It shows that this is the family and

the traditional business. There are numbers of problem in this business both for the producers and the sellers. The producers are facing the problems of raw materials, good storage, and firing place. Similarly the expansion of the industry in modern context is not there. There is not organized group for the solution of the problem related with this industry. The only one cooperative related with this industry named Nepal Ceramic Cooperation is trying to solve some of the problems related with this industry, but it is not sufficient. There is lack of training for production of the products similarly lack of idea for export of the products.

Most of the ceramics products are exported through different intermediaries. Then the producers are not well benefited. That's why there is need of training about the export of the products to the producers of pottery. This industry has witnessed tremendous demand for and utilization of its products and, in turn, has provided means of livelihood to a large numbers of workers employed directly or indirectly in it. In spite of its vast potentialities, the industry still suffers form several limitation resulting in its improper, unbalanced and inadequate growth. That is why it deserves the attention of economists, planner, researchers and authorities concerned.

This study shows that there are scopes and opportunities in the pottery industry but the people involved in this industry are facing different kinds of challenges or problems like shortage of raw materials, manpower, and lack of space to dry the formed pottery, firing pottery, to store the finished goods along with the different raw materials. The sales of the product in the national and international markets are being increased. This industry is being affected by the change in lifestyle and different substitute products. The intermediaries get good profits but they face the problem of getting the products damaged, demand dependent on the festival, occasions, problem of transportation, etc.

### **Limitation and Direction for Further Research**

This study is carried out within Bhaktapur and Madhyapur municipality. That's why the findings of this study may not be applicable for all situations. Thus, further research can be conducted taking the different place into consideration. There may be respondents' biasness while filling the questionnaire. Findings of the study may vary over time because of change in the behavior of the people. This study is based on the 60 sample survey, so it may not represent all. Hence, further research can be undertaken taking different many more other samples for comparative study.

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