



IMPACT OF NEW ECONOMIC POLICY ON COTTAGE AND SMALL SCALE INDUSTRIES OF UTTAR PRADESH: AN EMPIRICAL DATA ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

This empirical paper examines how India's New Economic Policy (NEP) of 1991 affected cottage and small-scale industries (SSIs), now grouped in the MSME framework, in Uttar Pradesh. Using secondary time-series and census data from the Second and Third SSI Censuses, Annual Survey of Industries, NSS 73rd Round, Ministry of MSME reports, Invest UP publications and recent policy documents, the study analyses changes in enterprise count, structure, investment, production, employment intensity, productivity, exports and cluster support. The evidence shows a dual impact. Liberalisation, de-licensing, export orientation and post-1991 state reforms expanded market opportunities and encouraged rural participation: the rural share of registered working units rose from 38.22 percent in 1987-88 to 46.95 percent in 2001-02, and Uttar Pradesh became India's largest MSME state with 89.99 lakh enterprises in 2015-16. At the same time, competition and technology adoption altered the labour-absorbing character of cottage production. Fixed investment per working SSI increased from Rs.1.84 lakh to Rs.4.62 lakh and production per unit rose from Rs.6.99 lakh to Rs.10.30 lakh, but employment per unit fell from 7.00 to 3.57 persons and employment per lakh of fixed assets dropped from 3.55 to 0.77. Formal manufacturing indicators also show Uttar Pradesh losing national share in fixed capital, output and net value added after 1998-99. The paper concludes that the NEP improved productivity and visibility but produced an uneven transition; inclusive gains require credit, design, technology, digital marketing and cluster infrastructure for traditional artisans beyond market forces, large-industry linkages and short-term subsidies in the long run alone.

Keywords: New Economic Policy¹; Cottage Industries²; Small Scale Industries³; MSME⁴; Uttar Pradesh⁵; Data Analysis⁶; Employment Productivity⁷.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Policy Context of the New Economic Policy

The New Economic Policy launched in 1991 shifted India's industrial regime from licensing, quantitative import controls and protection toward de-licensing, trade openness, fiscal discipline, financial-sector reform and a larger role for private enterprise. For cottage and small-scale industry units, the policy was not a single event but a long adjustment process. Product reservation, subsidised credit and state procurement remained important, yet small firms increasingly faced imported inputs, branded goods, quality standards and buyer-driven supply chains. The reforms also pushed state governments to compete for investment through infrastructure, simpler approvals and export promotion. Uttar Pradesh's later industrial policies, single-table clearance and cluster schemes can therefore be read as state-level responses to the national policy shift. Therefore, the main empirical question is whether liberalisation strengthened Uttar Pradesh's traditional producers through markets or weakened them by exposing them to competition.

1.2 Uttar Pradesh as a Cottage-Industry Economy

Uttar Pradesh is crucial to this debate because cottage and small-scale industries are embedded in its district economies. Varanasi silk and handloom, Lucknow chikankari, Bhadohi carpets, Moradabad metalware, Firozabad glass, Saharanpur woodcraft, Kanpur and Agra leather, and agro-processing units illustrate how household skill, caste-community specialization, local raw material and informal finance still shape production. Many such activities are carried out in homes or tiny workshops and employ family labour, apprentices and seasonal workers. The state also has the largest MSME base in India: official investment promotion material reports about 90 lakh MSMEs, 14.2 percent of the national stock, more than 14 million jobs and a large role in exports. Hence, Uttar Pradesh offers a strong case for observing whether reform-led opportunities reach artisans or remain concentrated in urban and formal firms.

1.3 Research Problem and Contribution

The paper evaluates impact through five connected dimensions: enterprise survival, rural participation, investment intensity, employment generation and market reach. It uses published secondary data instead of a fresh field survey because comparable long-period unit-level data for cottage industries are scarce. The empirical strategy is descriptive and relational: pre-reform and post-reform census indicators show structural change; post-1998 ASI indicators reveal formal manufacturing competitiveness; recent

MSME and ODOP data locate the current reform outcome. This design does not claim that every change was caused only by the NEP; power supply, migration, technology, labour laws and regional incentives also mattered. However, by reading the indicators together, the analysis identifies the direction of adjustment. The argument developed across the paper is that the NEP created productivity gains and export openings, but it also reduced labour intensity and widened the gap between dynamic clusters and vulnerable cottage producers.

2. SURVEY OF LITERATURE

The literature treats liberalisation as both a demand shock and a capability test for small producers. National studies argue that pre-1991 SSI policy protected units through reservation, concessional credit and purchase preference, but also encouraged fragmentation, technological stagnation and dependence on state support [13], [15], [17]. Tendulkar and Bhavani described the small-scale regime as a case where well-intended protection could preserve inefficient scale structures [16]. Mohan similarly argued that product reservation and investment ceilings restricted growth into efficient medium firms, even while they helped disperse entrepreneurship [17]. After 1991, exposure to competition, technology imports and export markets was expected to improve productivity, but only firms with finance, skills and marketing networks could respond fully.

Studies specific to Uttar Pradesh report this unevenness more sharply. The Planning Commission's Uttar Pradesh Development Report connected industrial underperformance with infrastructure gaps, weak governance and low human-capital quality [12]. Kumar's analysis of the state's manufacturing structure found that UP's formal industrial share in fixed capital, value added and output declined during the late 1990s and early 2000s, despite a long history of traditional industry [10]. Her work on SSI performance also showed rising investment and output per unit but falling employment per unit, which is important for a state where small industry is valued primarily for labour absorption [11]. The implication is that reform improved efficiency in surviving units but did not automatically solve sickness, marketing bottlenecks or regional imbalance.

Recent MSME literature shifts attention from protection to competitiveness. The NSS 73rd Round and Ministry of MSME reports show that Uttar Pradesh has India's largest estimated MSME base, which confirms a broad entrepreneurial spread [1], [4]. Studies by Fatima and Akhtar and later policy documents note that Udyog Aadhaar, Udyam registration, ODOP, credit guarantee, cluster development and RAMP have improved visibility and formal linkage for micro firms [5], [6], [30]. Cluster literature also stresses collective efficiency: common facility centres, design support and shared testing can help

artisans meet national and export standards without losing the flexible household base of production [22]. However, the evidence also shows that most UP enterprises remain micro, household-based and weakly capitalized. The survey therefore suggests a research gap: rather than asking whether the NEP was simply good or bad, it is necessary to examine the combined pattern of productivity, employment, rural reach and export capability.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study follows an empirical, secondary-data design. The unit of analysis is the cottage and small-scale enterprise segment of Uttar Pradesh, interpreted through registered SSI census indicators, formal manufacturing indicators and recent MSME/ODOP indicators. Data are drawn from the Second and Third SSI Censuses, Annual Survey of Industries, NSS 73rd Round, Ministry of MSME Annual Report 2023-24, Invest UP material and Uttar Pradesh MSME Promotion Policy 2022. The core proposition tested is that market-oriented reform improved productive capability but weakened the labour-intensive character of traditional industry unless supported by local institutions.

The variables selected reflect the expected channels of the New Economic Policy: de-licensing and entry are measured by enterprise numbers and working-unit shares; trade and market exposure are measured through output, export and district-product indicators; technology and finance are measured through fixed investment, plant and machinery investment and capital intensity; labour impact is measured through employment per unit, workers per factory and employment per rupee lakh of fixed assets. This is relevant for cottage industry because its welfare value depends not only on output but also on livelihoods, rural stability and artisan income. These indicators permit a relationship between productivity, competitiveness and inclusion.

The analysis is descriptive but comparative. Percentage-point changes, percentage changes and endpoint comparisons are used to identify direction and magnitude. Pre-reform conditions are represented by the 1987-88 Second Census and the policy baseline around 1991; post-reform outcomes are represented by the 2001-02 Third Census, ASI data for 1998-99 to 2005-06 and recent MSME data. Tables present the numerical evidence, while figures convert the same data into trend and composition visuals. Because definitions changed from SSI to MSME and many cottage units remain informal, results are interpreted cautiously as structural tendencies rather than exact causal estimates. The strength of the method lies in triangulation across independent sources.

4. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Data collection used official and scholarly secondary sources so that the impact of the New Economic Policy could be read over a long period. The tables intentionally combine historical SSI census evidence, formal manufacturing evidence and current MSME evidence. This is necessary because cottage industries in Uttar Pradesh moved through changing definitions: household and craft units were once analysed as cottage and SSI units, while recent policy treats them largely as micro enterprises within MSMEs. The analysis therefore focuses on direction, magnitude and relationship: whether liberalisation raised productivity, whether it preserved employment intensity, and whether recent policy instruments can compensate for the weaknesses revealed by earlier data.

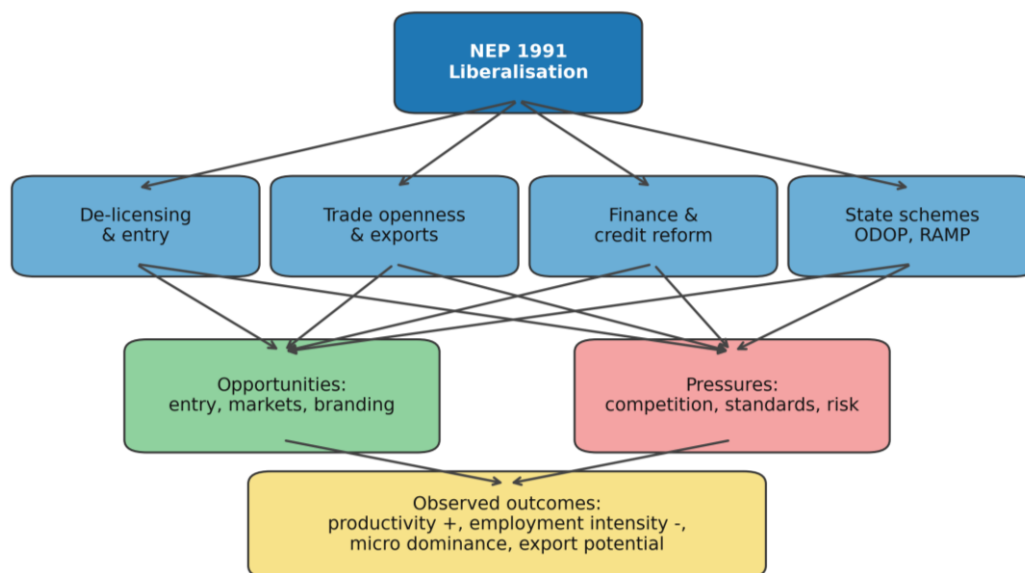


Figure 1: Analytical Pathway of NEP Impact on UP Cottage and SSI Units

Figure 1 places the New Economic Policy at the centre of four channels relevant to Uttar Pradesh: de-licensing, trade openness, financial reform and state-level cluster support. The arrows show that each channel can create positive outcomes, such as entry, exports, technology adoption and branding, but can also create pressure through competition, standards and credit risk. The diagram is important because cottage industries do not respond to reform in a linear way. A Bhadohi carpet weaver, a Moradabad metal artisan and a Kanpur leather unit face different mixes of market opportunity and vulnerability under the same national policy environment today overall.

Source: Author's construction based on Government of India industrial policy and Uttar Pradesh MSME policy documents [5], [24].

Table 1: Structural Change in Uttar Pradesh Registered SSI Sector, Second and Third Censuses

Indicator	1987-88 Second Census	2001-02 Third Census	Change
Working units (%)	55.91	56.84	+0.93 pp
Working units in rural areas (%)	38.22	46.95	+8.73 pp
Proprietorship working units (%)	80.14	90.85	+10.71 pp
Proprietorship units in manufacturing/assembly/processing (%)	76.46	53.88	-22.58 pp
Per working-unit fixed investment (Rs. lakh)	1.84	4.62	+151.1%
Per working-unit plant and machinery investment (Rs. lakh)	0.93	1.30	+39.8%
Per working-unit production (Rs. lakh)	6.99	10.30	+47.4%
Per working-unit employment (persons)	7.00	3.57	-49.0%
Employment per Rs. lakh fixed assets	3.55	0.77	-78.3%
Production per employee (Rs. lakh)	1.06	2.88	+171.7%

Source: Compiled from Second and Third Census indicators reported in Kumar and official SSI census sources [2], [3], [10].

Table 1 shows the strongest empirical relationship in the study. After reform, rural participation and proprietorship increased, indicating that small enterprise activity spread into household and district economies. Yet the internal composition changed sharply. Fixed investment per working unit increased by more than 151 percent and production per working unit increased by about 47 percent, but employment per unit fell by 49 percent. Production per employee increased by 172 percent. The figures support the abstract's finding that liberalisation improved productivity but weakened labour intensity, which is the central concern for cottage industries.

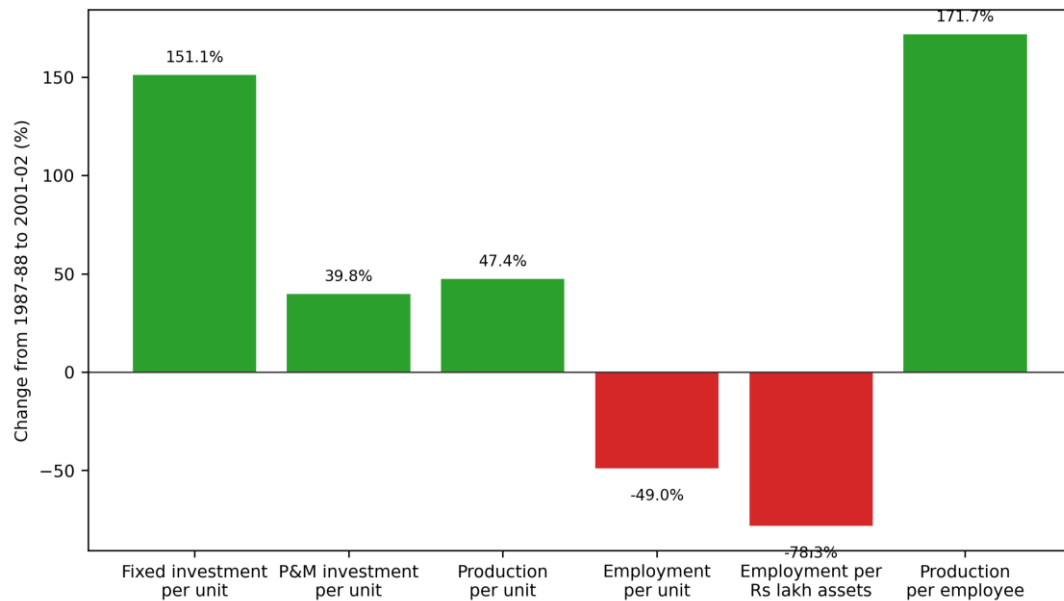


Figure 2: Post-NEP Shift in UP Registered SSI Performance Indicators

Figure 2 compares selected indicators from the Second and Third SSI Censuses. The clearest message is that reform-period survival and production were accompanied by capital deepening and labour shedding. Fixed investment per working unit rose sharply and production per unit increased, showing better productive capacity. However, employment per unit almost halved and employment per lakh of fixed assets declined steeply. This pattern supports the paper's central argument: the New Economic Policy did not destroy small industry, but it changed its internal economics. Units that modernised became more productive, while their ability to absorb large numbers of workers weakened over time.

Table 2: Uttar Pradesh's Contribution to National Industrialisation, 1998-99 to 2005-06 (Percent)

Year	Factories	Fixed Capital	Workers	Net Value Added	Output	GFCF
1998-99	7.98	13.15	7.16	7.20	7.42	11.80
1999-00	7.83	9.39	6.83	6.60	6.80	7.27
2000-01	7.34	8.70	6.55	6.67	7.00	6.55
2001-02	7.12	6.99	6.43	6.93	6.97	5.17
2002-03	7.02	6.40	6.64	6.59	7.12	6.26
2003-04	7.42	6.66	7.44	7.05	7.26	8.93
2004-05	7.03	6.15	6.86	5.50	6.53	6.89
2005-06	7.49	6.20	7.01	5.27	6.23	7.25

Source: Annual Survey of Industries data as reported by Kumar [10], [26].

Table 2 reveals the relative position of Uttar Pradesh within India's formal manufacturing sector. Between 1998-99 and 2005-06, the state's share in fixed capital fell from 13.15 percent to 6.20 percent, while its share in net value added declined from 7.20 percent to 5.27 percent. Output share also fell,

although the worker share remained comparatively stable. The implication is that Uttar Pradesh retained labour but did not attract or retain proportionate capital and value addition. This weakens the backward and forward linkages available to small and cottage units.

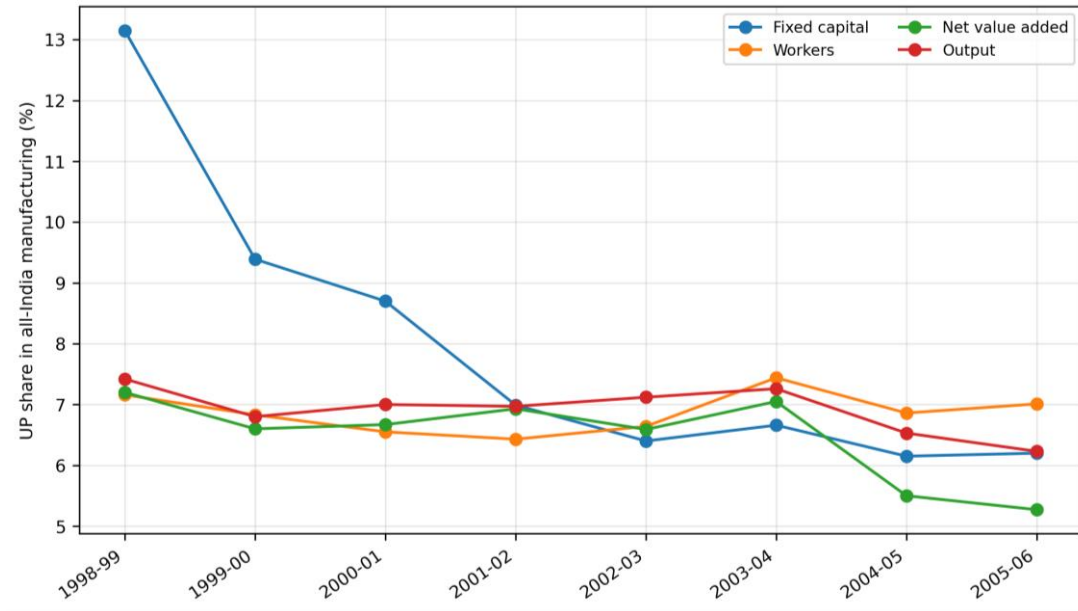


Figure 3: Uttar Pradesh's Share in National Formal Manufacturing

Figure 3 tracks Uttar Pradesh's share in national formal manufacturing indicators from 1998-99 to 2005-06. The decline in fixed capital, net value added and output shares indicates that UP's formal industrial base did not keep pace with faster-growing Indian states after liberalisation. The number of factories and workers fluctuated less, suggesting that the problem was not only exit of firms but lower investment intensity and weaker value creation. For cottage and SSI units, this matters because formal manufacturers provide subcontracting, technology spillovers and market access. A slower formal sector limits the statewide growth ladder from household enterprise to larger supplier.

Table 3: Structural Ratios: Uttar Pradesh versus India at Endpoints

Indicator	UP 1998-99	India 1998-99	UP 2005-06	India 2005-06	Interpretation
Output per worker (Rs. lakh)	1.65	1.63	2.75	2.55	UP rose faster than India, but output alone does not show retained value.
Capital intensity: fixed capital per worker (Rs. lakh)	11.30	6.20	7.50	8.80	UP moved from above India to below India, indicating relative investment weakness.
Net value added per	2.25	2.25	3.25	4.35	UP fell behind India in value creation per worker.

worker (Rs. lakh)					
Value-added/output coefficient	1.35	1.45	1.20	1.68	UP's value retention weakened relative to India.
Workers per factory	43.50	48.50	47.50	50.50	UP factories stayed smaller than the national average.

Source: Derived from ASI ratio tables reported by Kumar [10], [26].

Table 3 deepens the interpretation of Table 2. Uttar Pradesh's output per worker improved, but net value added per worker and the value-added/output coefficient lagged behind the Indian average by 2005-06. Capital intensity, which was initially much higher than India's, fell below the national average. For cottage and SSI units this means that simple production growth is not enough; the decisive issue is value retention. Without technology, quality control and bargaining power, small producers can increase output while remaining locked into low value-added segments of supply chains.

Table 4: State-wise Distribution of Estimated MSMEs, NSS 73rd Round, 2015-16

State/Group	Estimated MSMEs (lakh)	Share (%)
Uttar Pradesh	89.99	14
West Bengal	88.67	14
Tamil Nadu	49.48	8
Maharashtra	47.78	8
Karnataka	38.34	6
Bihar	34.46	5
Andhra Pradesh	33.87	5
Gujarat	33.16	5
Rajasthan	26.87	4
Madhya Pradesh	26.74	4
Top ten states	469.36	74
All India	633.88	100

Source: Ministry of MSME Annual Report 2023-24 and NSS 73rd Round [1], [4].

Table 4 places Uttar Pradesh within the national MSME map. With 89.99 lakh estimated MSMEs and around 14 percent of India's total, the state occupies the top position. This supports the conclusion that small enterprise activity is very broad in Uttar Pradesh. However, the comparison with Table 2 also creates a paradox: the state has a very high share of enterprises but a lower and declining share of formal manufacturing capital and value added. The policy challenge is therefore not only to increase unit counts but to upgrade survival-oriented enterprises into competitive producers.

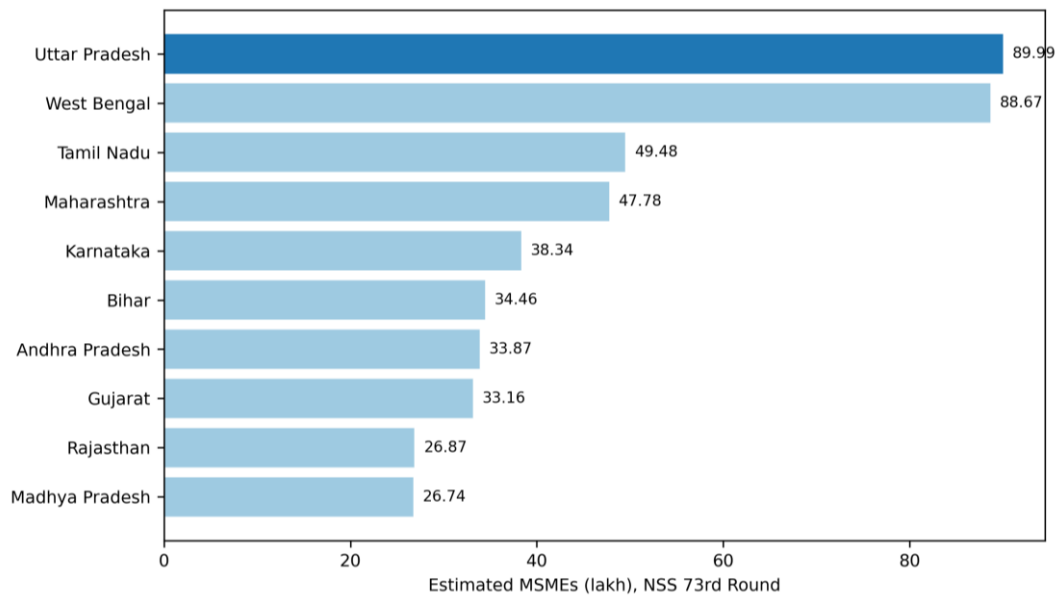


Figure 4: State-wise Estimated MSME Distribution, 2015-16

Figure 4 shows the state-wise distribution of estimated MSMEs from the NSS 73rd Round. Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal dominate the enterprise count, but Uttar Pradesh holds the largest share. This visual confirms the breadth of the state's entrepreneurial base and explains why any policy shock to small industry has major employment implications. Yet the same chart should not be read as proof of competitiveness. A large number of enterprises can reflect opportunity, necessity entrepreneurship, family labour and informality. The empirical challenge is therefore to move beyond counts and examine whether units are productive, creditworthy, export-ready and capable of upgrading.

Table 5: Current MSME and Cottage-Industry Profile of Uttar Pradesh

Indicator	Reported Value	Analytical Meaning
Estimated MSME base	About 90 lakh units	Largest state base; about 14.2% of India
Micro enterprises	89.64 lakh	Around 99.6% of the UP MSME base
Small enterprises	0.36 lakh	Around 0.4%; weak micro-to-small transition
Medium enterprises	3,019 units	Very small numerical presence
Employment	Over 14 million persons	Confirms labour-market importance
MSME export role	45% of state exports	Links cottage/small industry with global markets
Traditional-district strategy	ODOP across 75 districts	Attempts to convert local skill into market identity

Source: Invest UP MSME Sector page, UP MSME Policy and ODOP information [5], [6], [8].

Table 5 links the historical evidence with the present policy environment. Uttar Pradesh's MSME base is overwhelmingly micro, while small and medium units form a tiny numerical minority. The same table shows why the sector remains essential: it employs more than 14 million people, contributes significantly to exports and is connected to district-product strategies such as ODOP. The conclusion follows directly from this profile. Post-NEP policy must help micro units overcome scale, finance and marketing constraints rather than assuming that market access alone will create inclusive industrialisation.

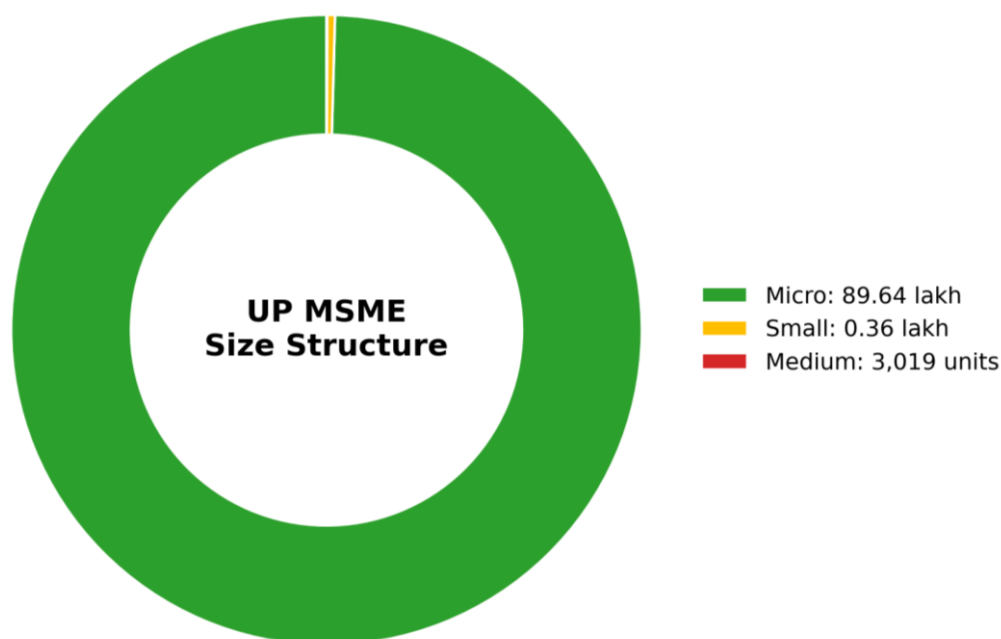


Figure 5: Dominance of Micro Enterprises in Uttar Pradesh

Figure 5 presents the composition of Uttar Pradesh's MSME base by enterprise size. The overwhelming share of micro enterprises shows that the state's cottage and small industries remain highly atomised. This structure is socially valuable because it spreads livelihood opportunities across districts and artisan communities, but it also creates constraints: tiny firms struggle to buy modern machinery, meet quality standards, borrow from banks, build brands or negotiate with digital platforms. The figure therefore connects the conclusion with the data. Post-NEP growth will be inclusive only if policy helps micro units graduate into small firms without destroying their local skill base.

5. DISCUSSION

The data support a mixed rather than one-sided assessment of the New Economic Policy. On the positive side, the rise in rural working units and the current size of Uttar Pradesh's MSME base indicate that entrepreneurship did not collapse under liberalisation. Market opening, de-licensing, lower entry barriers and later programmes such as ODOP created a larger arena for traditional products. Cottage units in

textiles, carpets, leather, brassware, glassware and food processing gained branding and export possibilities that were weaker under the protected regime. The increase in production per working unit and production per worker shows that many surviving firms learned to use inputs, designs and machinery more efficiently.

5.1 Critical Analysis of Data and Comparison with Past Work

The critical issue is that productivity gains were not matched by proportional employment gains. Employment per working SSI fell from 7.00 to 3.57, and employment per lakh of fixed assets fell even more sharply. For a labour-surplus state, this is a serious result. It means that the post-NEP small unit became less capable of absorbing marginal labour even when output rose. One interpretation is positive modernization: units replaced outdated processes and improved quality. Another interpretation is exclusion: artisans unable to finance machinery, packaging, certification or e-commerce were pushed into low-margin subcontracting or exit. The decline in UP's share of formal fixed capital and net value added after 1998-99 strengthens the second concern, because weak formal manufacturing reduces demand for local ancillaries and limits spillovers to micro suppliers.

The evidence is consistent with earlier work but adds a more integrated reading. Tendulkar and Bhavani warned that protection could preserve inefficient small scale; the rise in output per unit after reform supports the view that competition can induce efficiency [16]. Mohan argued that investment ceilings and reservation restricted efficient scaling; the extreme dominance of micro units in UP still reflects that historical legacy [17]. Bala Subrahmanya emphasized that globalization rewards flexible firms with technology and market access but penalizes weaker firms [13]. Kumar's UP studies reported the same paradox seen here: capital and production increased, while employment intensity declined and formal manufacturing shares weakened [10], [11]. The present analysis confirms those findings with recent MSME data showing that the state is large in enterprise count but still shallow in the micro-to-small transition.

A final limitation is definitional. Cottage industries, registered SSIs and MSMEs are not identical categories. Many artisans remain unregistered, and official data often combine manufacturing, trade and services. Therefore, the estimates should be read as evidence of structural direction rather than a precise treatment effect. The policy lesson is also gendered and regional: women, SC/ST entrepreneurs, Purvanchal and Bundelkhand need patient credit and common infrastructure before they can use liberalized markets. Without those complements, liberalisation raises standards faster than capabilities. Nevertheless, the convergence of census, ASI and policy data is strong enough to conclude that the NEP

improved competitiveness selectively and made support systems more important, not less important. This conclusion links directly to the abstract: reform works when markets and capability-building move together.

6. CONCLUSION

The empirical evidence shows that the New Economic Policy had a transformative but uneven impact on cottage and small-scale industries of Uttar Pradesh. Liberalisation widened market access, increased the importance of exports, encouraged technology adoption and gave district-based products new visibility. This is reflected in higher production per working unit, higher production per worker, larger rural participation in registered units and the state's current position as India's largest MSME base. These outcomes support the abstract's claim that reform created productivity and market gains.

However, the same data also reveal the cost of transition. Employment per working unit and employment per lakh of fixed assets declined sharply, while Uttar Pradesh's formal manufacturing shares in fixed capital, output and net value added weakened after 1998-99. The state therefore entered the post-NEP economy with many enterprises but limited scale, finance and technological depth. Its cottage industries remain socially essential but economically vulnerable when they face cheap imports, quality standards and digital competition.

The study concludes that Uttar Pradesh's policy priority should not be a return to protection, but a stronger capability framework. Credit must be linked with design, machinery, certification, common facility centres, e-commerce, branding and export intelligence. ODOP, RAMP and the MSME Promotion Policy 2022 are relevant only if they help micro and cottage units graduate without losing artisan identity. In short, the NEP improved opportunity; inclusive policy must now convert opportunity into resilient employment and sustainable local industrialization. The future depends on that balanced path for artisans, workers and entrepreneurs alike.

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