

A Study on the Challenges Faced by Indian Artisans and the Potential of a Pan-India Marketplace Solution

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Abstract: India, the country with the largest population in the world (according to 2024), possesses an enriching diversity of culture and heritage such that for every 200km of Indian Soil, the Language and Culture change. (DUBnSUB.com, 2021) Amid the age of globalisation, digitalisation and the golden decade for India's growth, 'Indianization' is seen on a large scale, with Handicrafts playing a major role in the process. However, in the US \$830.4 Billion Global Handicraft Industry, India's market is worth a mere US \$4.2775 billion, despite its sheer diversity. This is due to the unorganization in the sector. A KPMG study for the National Skill Development Corporation estimated that approximately 7.3 million people depend on Handicrafts and other allied activities as their source of income, with other sources confirming 6.8 million of them to be Artisans, however, In 2020, 30% of Indian artisans quit their job due to several problems that make it difficult for them to survive in their trade. These are mainly: Little Visibility in the national Wide Market, Struggle to stay in tune with new trends and the Unawareness of a Large section of the public regarding the skill of the artisans, the ingenuity of their techniques and the Natural Beauty of their Products. Solving this is of egregious importance as these harbingers of cultural exchange boost local and international economies, preserve traditional craftsmanship, open up several employment opportunities, and promote diversity and unity. Hence, this research was done with the help of a comprehensive analysis of pre-existing data, in-field research of defined areas in India, and analysis of competitors in the market, to understand these issues better and to propose a solution to them in the form of a Pan-India Marketplace, 'PROJECT SANSKRITI' that not only helps artisans increase their business, such that they act as competition in the handicraft market, but also solves a key issue of accessing these handicrafts that the public faces; along with an analysis of its impacts after all appreciating and preserving handicrafts is essential to maintaining the cultural identity of any locality and supporting artisan communities worldwide. (imarcgroup, 2023)

Keywords: Artisans, Handicrafts, Unorganised Sector, Pan-India, Growth, Culture, Indianization, Sanskriti.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Artisans are the backbone of India's non-agricultural rural economy; however, despite being regarded as the custodians of the Indian heritage, they are largely deprived of constructive assistance and opportunities to grow their businesses and struggle to survive in the trade in the long term. The key issues of artisans we aim to solve boil down to 3 contentious problems. Firstly, the wages of the craft artisans are insufficient, and artisans aren't adept in sensitive adaptation, Proper Quality Control and Accurate Costing, due to which they aren't able to keep a place in the wider commercial market; this causes a lack of regular work for Artisans. Secondly, Artisans lack various facilities like communication, packing facilities and transport due to which they depend on several middlemen for selling their products (however, this is neither economical nor efficient as there isn't any centralisation) due to lack of education and training, these

artisans reach customers through platforms such as departmental stores and shopping malls, thus lacking organic connections with prospective buyers (Banik.S, 2017). Lastly, most Artisans aren't at par with modern trends due to a lack of access to modern design tools, a high illiteracy rate (90% of female artisans were completely uneducated and 50% of household heads of craft-producing families were uneducated in 2003) and technology as well as limited exposure to contemporary art forms, moreover, their understanding being limited to old-school methods and them not receiving any constructive assistance results in the inability to tailor to the demands and inability to sell their products online or onsite effectively. (miradorlife.com, 2021) However, the problematic affairs in the handicraft industry do not limit themselves to the artisans but also affect the customers. Assume you are sitting in Mumbai, and want to decorate your home with Dhokra Handicrafts from Odisha and West Bengal, Warli art from Northern Maharashtra, Madhubani art

from Bihar or Birdware handicrafts from Karnataka, and the list goes on.. This is only possible with online marketplaces; however, the handicraft sector of these businesses is highly unorganised, where copies of the same product are displayed as new products numerous times, as mostly these companies are concerned with clothing, cutlery, clocks and other items that become small and old with time. Because of this, consumers generally aren't able to find unique products representing local artisans and most of the time, are forced to purchase them onsite. (K.& K, 2018) (There is also no big player in the market in the Affordable sector, it is a Market Gap). In light of these issues, We came up with Sanskriti, which is a Pan-India Decentralised Marketplace that provides Iconic Handicrafts produced by the Artisans of India primarily in the Affordable, and even in the Sub-Premium categories of Pricing. Here, we provide carefully and uniquely crafted handicrafts and arts directly from the hands of skilled artisans around India, with a high standard of Variety, Functionality and Overall User Experience, in comparison to other Craft-selling Enterprises in this

unorganised sector. Moreover, we work directly with Artisans, where in exchange for their skilled workmanship, we guarantee fair compensation by acting as an intermediary (furthermore assisting in ensuring the correct pricing for their creations), to maintain a delightful cultural experience for the public and boost the welfare of their localised artisanal businesses.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY

The given designs have been created using Canva.com; however, the actual functionality and final design are still under development. But when developed, the entire digital platform will have been rigorously tested to ensure efficiency on even the basic smartphone model to maximise the margin and number of users. In addition, Sanskriti (the app and the website) will be available in all the major languages of India, and any locality volunteers for the inclusion of their language is quite welcome to do so.



Fig 1 Draft Log-in Page of App



Fig 2 Draft Home Page of App

➤ Organisation:

The Handicrafts are organized based on the categories of 'Monuments', 'Festivals', 'Local Culture', 'Religion' and 'Decorative Add-ons' (eg: Lamp Covers, Candle Holders) with each of the Options being subdivided into Handicrafts from the different states of India, which are further subdivided into categories based on the Original Theme (eg: Theme: Festivals – State: Rajasthan – Subdivision: Diwali), moreover, each of the handicrafts has a customizability option, where they can change the colours of the craft and even secondary objects (eg: a sitar, in a craft of a woman playing the sitar); These Customized Handicrafts are the ones that touch the Sub-Premium Sector of Pricing; further on we intend to provide the user AI assistance in blue-printing a customized product of his/her choice; depending on the craft, a display of the making process (mainly through video format), name of the artisan(s) that built it, the region in the state where it came from and a description of the size of the handicraft.

➤ Trust-Building and Agreements:

The contacts and agreements with the artisans will be made using strategies such as having, the Panchayat (in rural areas) or the Municipal Committee (in small towns) endorse us with us explaining the several positive impacts of our work on them, and, assuring them a considerable portion of the sales of each product through us and assuring assistance in solving problems in their businesses as discussed previously in the paper; under the guidance of specific people working in the industry and other entrepreneurs who can contact the artisans and advise us throughout our operation. It is of utmost importance to successfully influence the individuals of the system so that this platform will allow for the economic development of all artisans. Hence, using our strategies, we hope to establish connections with 400-500 artisans within the first 6 months. Moreover, to encourage them to maintain their loyalty, it connects them to health insurance schemes in a better manner, and if extra profits are gained and if they fill a predetermined quota of artisanal value in a period, it aids in providing education to their children. The artisans will also

have the option to apply for collateral loans facilitated by Sanskriti to fund their working capital. (Rural artisans will be offered loans with a near 0% ROI, and urban artisans will have a slightly higher ROI) Once a centre in a village is established, certain staff (familiar with the language of the region and the people) would be grounded there, employed with the role of ensuring a certain quota of handicrafts is made and managing one end of the transportation. To further cement the trust, we will help them to experience Sanskriti from the user end as well as from the perspective of the artisans, by which they are given a more positive outlook about the Project. To build Transactional Trust, we will be using UPI (Unified Payments Interface) and BHIM (Bharat Interface for Money) Technology, and will have a team to monitor potential abuses, report them and come up with required solutions.

➤ *Marketing:*

To spread awareness of our brand, our main ideas are celebrity endorsement, word of mouth and even projects that we could do along with other competitors in the market. In the later stages, with special permission, we plan to facilitate visits throughout our workplace for students, thus spreading awareness about the reliability and authenticity of this brand, while also appealing to the younger audience without outright advertising. At Sanskriti, we consider Marketing to be a Long-Term Investment; thus, our strategies will expand and change with the course of Development. (Balagopal et.al, 2022).

➤ *Working with Artisans:*

To help artisans solve their various issues, we will have teams periodically visiting their workplaces. These teams will inspect operations and make artisans aware of new changes in Sanskriti's operations and the handicraft market. They may also work along with other competitors in the market to bring

awareness about the artisans' skills and trade to more and more people. Additionally, we will work closely with other highly skilled artisans to, assist rural artisans in being versed with contemporary art forms to a certain level, create new designs and provide better access to markets through partnerships, when Sanskriti is more developed, driven by the fact that, 92% of the Artisans have shown keen interest in learning such new designing via Live Sessions or Videos. By this, the uniqueness of the products and improvement in the vernacular businesses are also ensured. (Shree.N, 2021) Our approach to bringing a variety of crafts will divide the artisans into two categories. First, an artisan group will be dedicated to crafting standardised products, while other highly skilled artisans focus on experimenting and producing distinctly tailored items, along with working on customised orders. This will ensure that we have a product catalogue that strikes the correct balance between the original mass-marketed and niche products.

These and several other features and plans together come up as a Feasible Solution to the previously listed problems, focusing on omnichannel commerce on the buyers' and sellers' side, hence, improving the situation for Artisans and catering to the desires of the Public.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The wealth of data gathered through our research presents a compelling narrative of the challenges faced by Indian artisans, painting a stark picture of their economic struggles and vulnerability to exploitation, a testament to this volatility in their lives is their aggregate daily earnings, ranging from a mere USD 1.3 for an average artisan to USD 4.5 for higher-end skilled workers which is also quite inconsistent for 34% of artisans in India, and that 98% of artisan businesses lack regulatory oversight.

Table 1 A Few Types of Handicraft Artisans and Earnings Per Day

Type of rural artisans	Unit manufactured per day	Earnings per day
Puppet makers of Katputli Nagar	10 pieces	Rupees 300
Block printers of Sanganer	7-8 bedsheets	Rupees 500
Handmade Jewellery	*****	Rupees 400
Blue potters of Jaipur	*****	Rupees 500

However, amidst these challenges lies a compelling opportunity for positive change. The data suggests that there is a significant market for artisanal goods, with tourists demonstrating a willingness to pay a premium of up to 17% for products rich in cultural significance, where the uniqueness of artisanal goods, which are not mass-produced and guarantee high quality and individuality, further bolsters their market appeal. Most Importantly, supporting the production of artisanal goods has a cascading effect on the local economy and our proposed solution catalyses the spread of awareness by bridging the gap between artisans and consumers, offering economic empowerment and legal protection to our artisans and having consumers make more responsible choices (where they tend to incline towards these

products that align with their values). Thus, ensuring a sustainable and culturally rich future for this vital sector of the Indian economy. (CraftyThinking.com, 2023)

Acting as a Promoter in this Change, the Decentralised nature of Sanskriti's model embraces the scattered workforce, champions individuality, and even reduces costs, helping us to expedite product availability, develop pleasing packaging and improve doorstep delivery so that users have a premium experience. (iTokri, 2024) (The India Craft House, 2024) In the light of the Indian Handicraft Market Sanskriti emerges as a potential beacon of change with USPs such as enabling customization of products (an extended functionality), an efficient organisation of products, display

of extensive background information of products (including the actual making process of the craft in video format and a size comparison graphic), website as well as app-based platforms, 7-day return policy, buyer satisfaction of strengthening the local economy and value-based pricing

by Sanskriti; (CA Rahul Malodia: Business Coach, 2022) which projects an aura of transformation in this challenging market landscape and also appeals to the customer greatly. (ExclusiveLane, 2024) (Jaypore, 2024) (eCraftIndia, 2024).

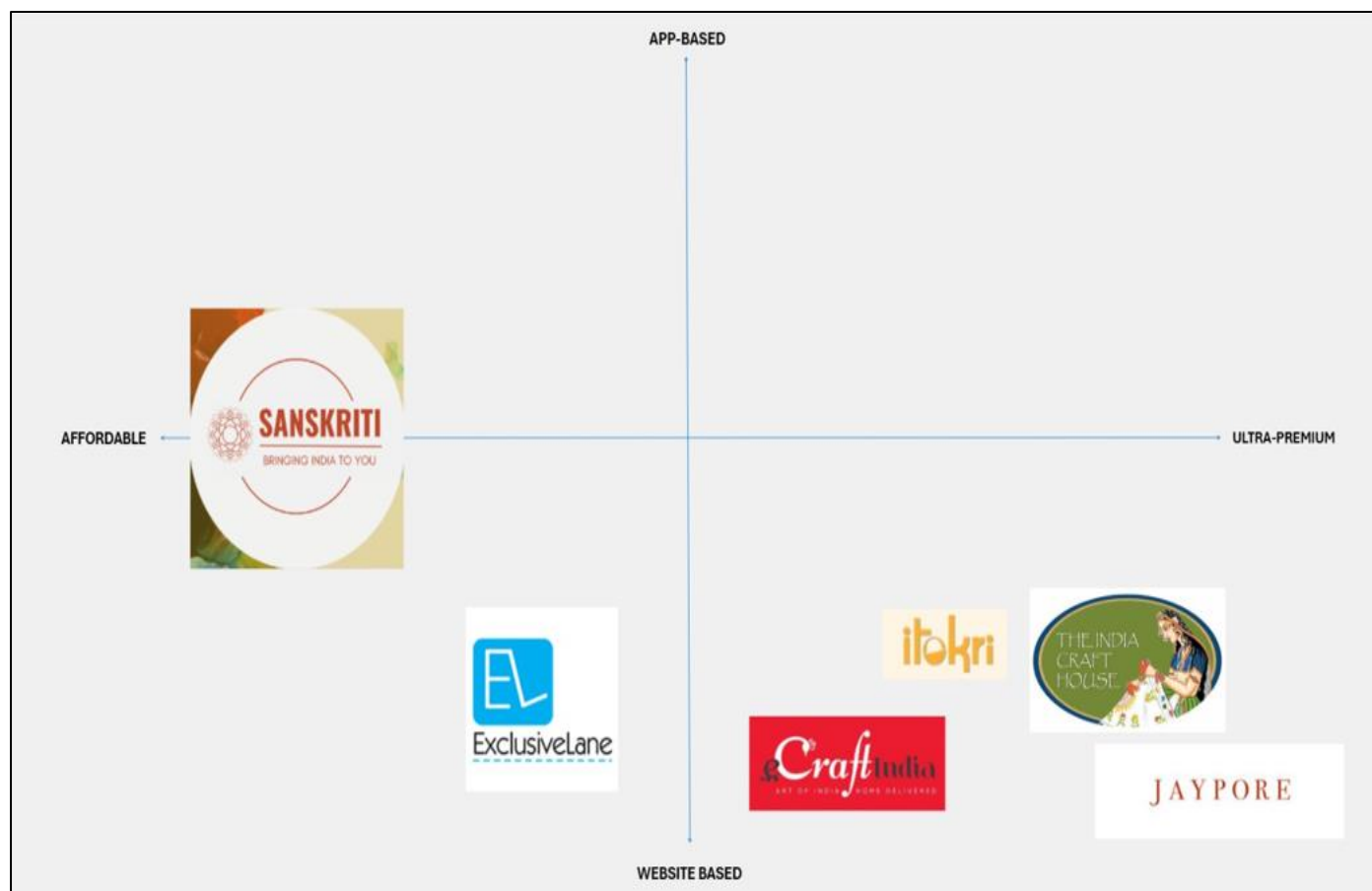


Fig 3 Competition Analysis

Table 2 Cost and Platform-Based Description of Competitors in the Market

SANSKRITI	Affordable and Sub-Premium, App and Website Based
Exclusive Lane	Sub-Premium, Website based
eCraft India	Premium, Website based
The India Craft House	Premium and Ultra-Premium, Website Based
itokri	Premium, Website based
Jaypore	Ultra-Premium, Website based

IV. IMPACT OF SANSKRITI

➤ Artisans:

Sanskriti solves several issues of artisans by, providing them with another source of income (generally a promised 20% of our sales), placing several orders of handicrafts that not only put their efficiency to a test but also give an impetus to them being extra-creative with their handicrafts, lowering their work in Quality Control, Accurate Costing and Packaging, aiding them in receiving Organic Connections with buyers through Sanskriti, adding Online Sales and Onsite Sales through a brand, to their Businesses indirectly and more. This allows Artisans to better share their works and art with the world, thus catching the attention of more customers, benefiting Sanskriti, the public and them.

➤ Consumers:

Sanskriti emphasises the work of Artisans in India and displays Indian Culture at an Affordable Price, thus fulfilling the artistic wants of the Public, which they get more drawn towards the work of these Artisans online also. The Purpose of Sanskriti doesn't lie in competing against Handicraft fairs or other Culture-based enterprises. Still, it lies in working together with them in the form of different projects that amplify the Culture and Heritage of India through the work of these Artisans. Hence, guaranteeing a reliable system of purchasing these timeless art pieces.

➤ Philanthropy:

Sanskriti will be involved in philanthropy also, where we will use a certain amount of our profits to educate the

children of the rural artisans and hold training programs for these rural artisans on quality control and pricing.

➤ *Culture and Heritage:*

Any Market in the world is meant for competition between companies, however, Sanskriti's aim isn't just to create a superior place in a sector of the market but is also to work along with Handicraft fairs and firms in the form of partnerships to promulgate rural culture, promote sustainable practices in the handicraft industry and empower women artisans. (ihgfdelhifair.in, 2024)

V. FUTURE PLANS FOR SANSKRITI

We aim to expand Sanskriti in a series of steps that range from expansion in operation city-to-city as well as product diversity region-to-region. We plan to operate from Mumbai and start selling only within the city and its satellite

areas, at first. We aim to sell the different handicrafts of several artisans, state-wise, starting from Maharashtra, then gradually Western India, Central India, Northern India and so forth, such that the end product is a Pan-India Marketplace.

Throughout this expansion plan, we plan to expand our operation to other metropolitan areas, in even more ways, such as kiosks in easily accessible areas such as tourist attractions and malls, even checking tourists on our list. After all, Sanskriti's focus is on bringing culture and heritage around India to the largest number of people possible.

At Sanskriti, we work with the idea that to make a brand, one should either be 'THE FIRST', 'THE BEST' or 'DIFFERENT' in a Market. With a high regard for the Products and hard work of Artisans being the biggest marketing tool and most importantly, the Heart of Sanskriti, we aim to be the Best in the Market.

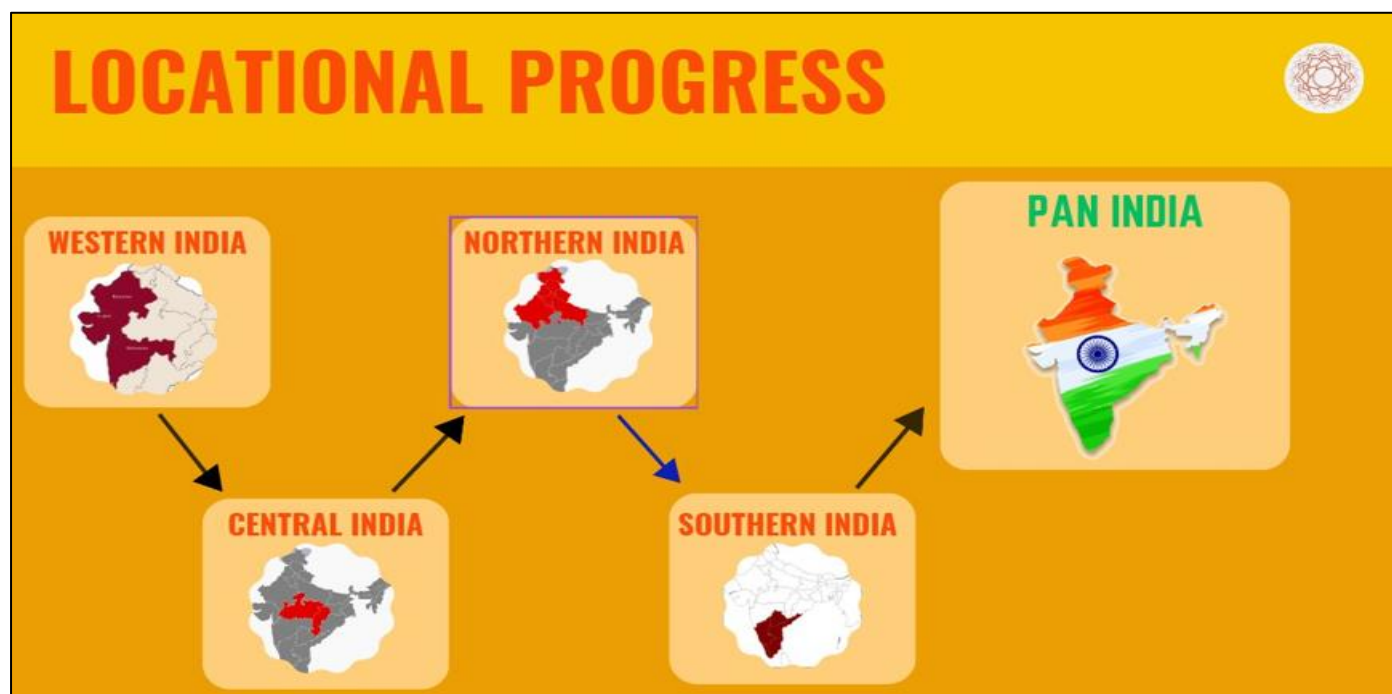


Fig 4 Locational Progress Plan

VI. CONCLUSION

Sanskriti is not just a business venture but a culmination of Artistic skill and Omnichannel efficiency proposed to catalyse Global Indianization via timeless creations. It's a harmonious blend of artistic finesse and operational prowess, dedicated to propelling the essence and appreciation of the ancient and immortal Indian Culture.

Through meticulous data analysis and rigorous model testing, Sanskriti has identified a vast audience and promising profit margins, all while ensuring a positive impact on both artisans and consumers. At the heart of Sanskriti's mission is the establishment of a collaborative framework that champions fair trade practices, thereby empowering artisans and securing their livelihoods within the fabric of the Indian economy. By prioritising sustainable partnerships and cultural preservation, Sanskriti is committed to fostering a

future where traditional craftsmanship flourishes amidst modern economic landscapes.

Each purchase from Sanskriti becomes a gateway to India's rich heritage, fostering appreciation for craftsmanship and facilitating cultural exchange on a global scale. Sanskriti isn't just about transactions; it's about creating meaningful connections that transcend borders and generations. It stands as a testament to the resilience and creativity of artisans while reshaping the narrative of Indian artistry on the global stage.

Sanskriti is not just a business venture but a culmination of Artistic skill and Omnichannel efficiency proposed to catalyse Global Indianization via timeless creations, each with a story behind them. By analysis of data and testing our model, Sanskriti proves to have a vast target audience, considerable profit prospect and most importantly, a net positive impact on the lives of Artisans and the public.

By establishing a framework that fosters collaboration and guarantees fair practices, we aspire to uplift the artisan community, ensuring a sustainable and culturally rich future for this vital sector of the Indian economy.

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