



The role of consumer behaviour in motivating traditional artisans to enter the online market

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Abstract

Understanding how consumers behave is essential for promoting digital inclusion among traditional artisan communities across India. As online platforms become increasingly influential in shaping the market for handcrafted textiles and crafts, aspects such as building consumer trust, improving digital literacy, and ensuring product authenticity are key factors that encourage artisans to adopt e-commerce. This study adopts a quantitative approach to investigate how consumer preferences affect artisans' participation in digital marketplaces. We collected data through a structured questionnaire from 200 respondents from urban and semi-urban areas who had prior experience buying traditional products online. The main factors examined included trust in digital transactions, ease of platform use, behavioral changes prompted by COVID-19, and awareness of artisan-specific e-commerce sites. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics and chi-square tests to identify significant relationships between consumer habits and the involvement of artisans. While the study has limitations due to its convenience sampling, the results highlight how shifting consumer behaviors can open up new digital opportunities for artisans and offer practical recommendations for policymakers and platform developers.

Keywords: Consumer behaviour, traditional artisans, e-commerce, digital inclusion, online marketplaces

Introduction

The way consumers shop has led to significant changes in traditional markets, particularly in India's rapidly evolving economy. Artisans working in textiles and crafts, who have historically relied on local markets and middlemen, now face a mix of challenges and new opportunities as they explore online selling. Research indicates that many of these artisans lack sufficient digital literacy, access to appropriate technology, or awareness of what online buyers expect (Dey & Rai, 2019; Chatterjee & Kar, 2020) ^[1, 3]. However, increased consumer interest in sustainable, ethical, and handmade products has created promising avenues for artisans through digital platforms (Mukherjee & Roy, 2017). Moreover, an increasing segment of consumers is willing to pay higher prices for products that are unique and rooted in local authenticity, highlighting how e-commerce can be a powerful platform for artisans. Technological advances, such as mobile internet and low-cost data plans, have further lowered barriers to digital access. Despite these developments, many artisans still prefer to operate through curated platforms or middlemen, which can limit their independence and visibility (KPMG, 2019) ^[18]. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated trends in digital shopping, making it increasingly critical to understand how consumer behaviors influence artisans' ability to engage in online markets (UNCTAD, 2021). This study explores how consumers' online behaviors—shaped by their attitudes, perceptions, and digital interactions—affect the entry of traditional artisans into the e-commerce space. The objective is to generate insights that will help policymakers

and platform developers encourage a more comprehensive and effective digital transformation.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

This study builds upon well-established theories related to behavioral patterns and the adoption of innovations. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989) ^[15] suggests that users' perceptions of how valuable and easy to use a technology is have a significant impact on their willingness to welcome digital tools. Likewise, the Diffusion of Innovation Theory (Rogers, 2003) ^[16] emphasizes the importance of peer influence, perceived benefits, and compatibility with existing practices in the adoption process of new technologies. These theoretical perspectives are particularly relevant when examining how artisans adopt digital solutions in response to shifting consumer expectations and the development of trust-building mechanisms.

Consumer Purchase Behaviour in Handicraft E-Commerce

The demand from consumers for handcrafted products is heavily shaped by their cultural significance, ethical manufacturing processes, and the unique character perceived in each item (Barnes *et al.*, 2011; Gopal & Bedi, 2018) ^[5]. Online marketplaces like Etsy and Amazon Karigar use storytelling, opportunities for customization, and authenticity signals to appeal to this specific consumer base. However, the absence of physical inspection,

ambiguous product previews, and limited awareness of artisan branding often diminishes consumer confidence (Dangi & Singh, 2021)^[2].

Adoption of Digital Tools by Artisans

Challenges such as limited literacy levels, insufficient language support, and inadequate infrastructure restrict artisans’ ability to participate in digital markets (Srinivasan, 2012; Kumar *et al.*, 2020)^[7, 13]. While government initiatives like India Handmade and Digital India strive to narrow this divide, ongoing consumer interest and increased visibility continue to motivate artisans to join online platforms. Social media and mobile applications, such as digital catalogs, have become accessible avenues for artisans to connect directly with customers and expand their reach.

Methodology

Research Design

To explore the relationship between consumer behaviours and the digital engagement of traditional artisans, a descriptive, quantitative research approach was employed. The primary goal was to discover the main behavioural factors that motivate artisans to participate in online marketplaces.

Sampling and Participants

Participants were recruited through convenience sampling, totalling 200 individuals from urban and semi-urban areas. All participants had prior experience purchasing traditional textiles or crafts online. While this sampling method may limit the broader applicability of findings, it proved suitable for initial investigations into emerging behavioural trends (Wegrzyn *et al.*, 2020)^[14].

Instrumentation

Data collection utilized a structured questionnaire developed after an in-depth review of the existing literature on e-commerce, digital consumer behaviour, and the marketing of artisan products. The questionnaire comprised closed-ended questions and Likert-scale items covering areas such as trust and perceptions of authenticity, Ease of platform use and product presentation, Online shopping habits and preferences, the impact of COVID-19 on purchasing patterns, and Awareness levels and expectations regarding digital platforms.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and means, were employed to profile participant behaviours and demographics. Additionally, chi-square tests were used to examine the relationships between consumer behaviours and key variables.

Results and Data Analysis

Overview of Respondent Demographics

A total of 200 valid responses were collected and analyzed. The demographic characteristics of the respondents are summarized below:

Table 1

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age Group (Years)		
18–24	64	32.0%
25–34	35	17.5%
35–44	64	32.0%
45–54	33	16.5%
55–64	4	2.0%
Total	200	100.0%
Gender		
Female	154	77.0%
Male	46	23.0%
Total	200	100.0%
Educational Qualification		
Undergraduate (Bachelor)	92	46.0%
Postgraduate (Master)	70	35.0%
Others	38	19.0%
Total	200	100.0%
Occupation		
Private Sector Employees	56	28.0%
Students	50	25.0%
Professionals	31	15.5%
Homemakers	29	14.5%
Others	34	17.0%
Total	200	100.0%
Bi-Monthly Income		
Above ₹1,00,000	73	36.5%
₹50,001 – ₹1,00,000	53	26.5%
₹25,001 – ₹50,000	40	20.0%
₹10,000 – ₹25,000	25	12.5%
Below ₹10,000	7	3.5%
Total	200	100.0%

- **Age Spread:** In Table 1, the most considerable portion of the respondents were between the ages of 18–24 (32%) and 35–44 (32%), with 25–34 (17.5%) and 45–54 (16.5%) holding close seconds. Only 2% were aged 55–64 years, indicating a predominantly middle-aged sample.
- **Gender:** The sample was skewed towards females with 77% of the participants, while male respondents were only 23%, a gender imbalance that may indicate that women cared more about handicrafts or decided to shop online more frequently.
- **Education:** The population was highly educated, with almost 81% holding either an undergraduate or postgraduate degree (bachelor's degree at 46% and master's degree at 35%).
- **Occupation:** Among the respondents, more than a fourth (28%) were private sector employees, nearly the same proportion (25%) were students, while 15.5% were professionals, and the rest (14.5%) were homemakers. Entrepreneurs, government employees, skilled workers, and daily wage earners also comprised the remainder.
- **Income:** The vast majority of respondents came from middle- or upper-income families, and those with bi-monthly incomes greater than ₹ 1,00,000 numbered 36

percent, while 26.5 percent earned between ₹50,001 and ₹1,00,000. A small 3.5% earned less than ₹10,000—signs of a financially secure sample.

Descriptive Statistics

The mean age score on a 5-point scale was M = 2.39, suggesting a concentration in the younger categories. The gender means of M = 1.23 (on a 2-point scale) and high skewness (1.293) confirm male underrepresentation. Education showed a high average (M = 5.95, on an 8-point scale), with a strong negative skew, indicating concentration at higher education levels. Occupation scores (M = 5.06, on a 10-point scale) and income (M = 3.79, on a 5-point scale) displayed moderate diversity.

Table No. 2

Variable	Scale Range	Mean (M)	Skewness
Age	1-5	2.39	0.163
Gender	1-2	1.23	1.293
Education	1-8	5.95	-1.8
Occupation	1-10	5.06	-0.21
Income	1-5	3.79	-0.635

Using Chi-Square Analysis

Table 3: Shopping Preferences and Frequency

Variable	χ^2 Value	df	p-value
Preference: Online vs. Offline	8.820	1	.003
Frequency of Online Shopping	162.940	5	< .001
Traditional vs. Online Format	5.780	1	.016

The current evidence, as shown in Table 3, suggests significant behavioural variations among consumers who shop for different purposes. Notably, the correlation between online and offline shopping, as well as consumer behavior as a whole, was substantial (p = 0.003). Moreover, other groups of consumers were revealed to be statistically significant (p < 0.001). Respondents further displayed differentiated behavioral characteristics in traditional retail formats compared to online (p = .030), indicating the changing nature of purchase decision-making in the digital age.

Table 4: E-Commerce Platform Usage and Awareness

Variable	χ^2 Value	df	p-value
Frequency of Buying Handicrafts	14.880	3	.002
Preferred E-Commerce Platforms	210.600	3	< .001
E-Commerce Awareness	215.480	3	< .001

The results presented in Table 4 demonstrate the significant differences in platform usage and consumer awareness, suggesting that consumer behavior is heavily influenced by the platform-specific traits discussed here. Noteworthy drivers, such as familiarity with usage, manufacturer perception, and regional availability, were identified as having a significant impact on preferences, indicating that these features associated with the manufacturer engaged consumers across different shopping channels.

Table 5: Consumer Behavior Factors

Variable	χ^2 Value	df	p-value
Preference for Shopping Online	132.970	2	< .001
Challenges in Shopping Textiles	111.700	4	< .001
Reading Reviews Before Purchase	151.380	1	< .001

As shown in Table 5, consumers demonstrated a strong reliance on reviews and exhibited a distinct preference for online shopping, despite facing certain challenges such as size inconsistencies, uncertainty regarding fabric quality, and issues with delivery.

Table 6: Platform Experience and Impulse Buying

Variable	χ^2 Value	df	p-value
Comparing Shopping Platforms	148.640	3	< .001
Overall Online Experience	253.750	4	< .001
Impulse Purchases	84.250	4	< .001

The findings presented in Table 6 indicate that consumer experiences vary considerably across different platforms, with impulse purchasing behaviors being shaped by elements such as user interface design, visual appeal, and promotional strategies.

Table 7: Post-Pandemic Behavior and 3D Features

Variable	χ^2 Value	df	p-value
Buying Handicrafts Post-Pandemic	84.250	4	< .001
Use of 3D Preview Feature	84.250	4	< .001
Reported Challenges	0.430	2	.807

As shown in Table 7, there was a notable shift in online purchasing habits following the pandemic, with consumers demonstrating a heightened preference for features such as 3D product previews. Despite this change, the types of challenges encountered remained largely consistent across different consumer groups (p = .807).

Summary

The examination of respondent data reveals several noteworthy patterns that influence consumer behavior within the online handicraft marketplace. The demographic profile indicates a predominance of younger to middle-aged individuals, primarily between 18 and 44 years old. A substantial majority are female (77%), emphasizing greater female participation in this segment. Participants tend to be well-educated, holding undergraduate or postgraduate qualifications, with their occupational backgrounds being diverse; the largest groups include private sector employees and students. Most respondents also belong to middle- or upper-income strata, reflecting a consumer base that is both financially stable and digitally savvy. Descriptive statistics reinforce these insights, depicting a youthful, female-majority, highly literate cohort equipped to navigate online platforms effectively. In terms of shopping habits, there is a marked and statistically major preference for digital over traditional retail channels. Notable differences in awareness and utilization of various online platforms suggest that ease of use and familiarity strongly influence consumer preferences. Behavioral aspects such as dependence on reviews, challenges related to textiles, and tendencies toward impulse purchasing considerably shape decision-making processes. The post-pandemic environment reveals increased acceptance of digital features like 3D previews, although ongoing concerns around sizing and product authenticity persist. Collectively, these findings emphasize the important role of consumer-centric design and functional excellence in effectively marketing artisan products via e-commerce channels.

Conclusion

In summary, this research emphasizes how consumer behavior plays a critical role in helping traditional artisans' transition into the digital marketplace. By examining consumer attitudes, preferences, and behaviors through quantitative data, it's evident that changes in online shopping habits—especially after the pandemic—are creating new opportunities for artisans to connect through e-commerce. Trust in online platforms, the authenticity of products, and how easy it is to navigate websites are key factors influencing whether customers choose to buy handcrafted items online. Shoppers often depend on reviews, visual content like 3D previews, and a smooth user experience to build confidence and make purchasing decisions. Demographic factors such as age, income, and education level also show strong links to engagement in develop-related e-commerce, underlining needing personalized strategies that address these specific groups. Also, the shifts in consumer behavior since COVID-19 have increased interest in ethical buying and purchasing directly from artisans, providing a great chance to display cultural heritage digitally. However, there are still obstacles—like concerns about product fit, tactile qualities, and delivery logistics—that impact trust and satisfaction in online shopping. Overcoming these challenges means designing user-friendly platforms, sharing compelling stories, adding interactive features, and offering dedicated support systems to meet the needs of both consumers and artisans. By better understanding and catering to digitally savvy shoppers, platforms focused on artisans and policymakers can develop more comprehensive, sustainable online spaces. Promoting transparency, education, and intuitive technology will be essential to encouraging more engagement, closing digital gaps, and preserving India's rich artisanal tradition for future generations.

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