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E COMMERCE ACTS AS A CATALYST FOR WOMEN ARTISANS: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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ABSTRACT

With its increased visibility, improved financial prospects, and access to larger markets, e-commerce has become a potent instrument for empowering female craftsmen around the world. The present study explores the ways in which e-commerce platforms can act as catalysts for the expansion and durability of artisanal companies managed by women.

It explores the particular difficulties that women artists encounter, such as cultural hurdles, low levels of computer literacy, technological accessibility and practical problems like payment and shipping methods. It also emphasizes how e-commerce offers advantages including worldwide audience reach, financial freedom , and the ability to transcend geographic boundaries. Additionally covered in the paper is how social media, online marketplaces, and digital marketing may help women artisans promote their goods and create long-term careers. The objective of this paper is to offer insights into how e-commerce can be adapted to assist the growth of women artisans by critically analyzing case studies and industry trends. This will address both opportunities and challenges for inclusive economic development.

KEYWORDS: *E Commerce, Women Artisans ,Business, Challenges, Opportunities.*

INTRODUCTION

Businesses of all sizes are rapidly integrating information and communication technology, or ICT. ICT applications provide businesses a competitive edge by increasing production and efficiency, which in turn boosts profitability. Businesses all across the world are finding that the Internet is a game-changer. E-commerce is one ICT application that businesses of all size extensively.

The purchasing and selling of products and services, as well as the sending of money or data, over an electronic network—most often the Internet—is known as e-commerce.

These exchanges fall into one of four categories: business-to-business (B2B), business-to-consumer (B2C), consumer-to-business (C2B), or business-to-business (B2B). In India, online shopping has become a feasible commercial tool as a result of the nation's rapidly expanding Internet user base, with India leading the world in terms of new users, with over 232 million and 63 million new users added. Mobile wallet usage has increased as a result of the growing popularity of mobile commerce, which in 2014 accounted for 41% of all e-commerce sales made on mobile platforms. Although they might or might not have their own internet portal, 43% of SMEs in India engage in online sales. In general, web-enabled SMEs have better consumer reach and generate more revenues as well as more job openings (Goswami, 2017).

India has a rich cultural legacy, and its handicrafts have a long and thriving history dating back several centuries. History attests to the fact that Indian artists were renowned around the world for their talent and artistry. The temples' carvings serve as evidence of the handcraft workers' proficiency, expertise, and dedication to their profession. Indian handcrafted items have been exported from the beginning of time. This industry, which contributes significantly to the nation's rich cultural legacy, makes use of the traditional skills of craftspeople in a variety of fields, including jewelry, leather goods, marble and stone crafts, textile weaving and printing, metal ware, and wooden ware. This ability is passed down as a family legacy from one generation to the next. As the name suggests, the "Handicraft" (crafts created by hands) sector produces a variety of goods using traditional manual techniques rather than cutting-edge technology. It is a labor-intensive, dispersed, and unstructured cottage enterprise. India's diverse culture produces many amazing handicrafts and artworks. The Indian handicraft sector employs a lot of workers and is often dispersed throughout the nation. Despite employing millions of craftspeople, the handicraft business is still quite small in comparison to the worldwide industry. With the emergence of several websites supporting the e-commerce of the Indian handicraft sector, this situation is evolving. The government has also started a number of initiatives to give craftsmen operating in the unorganized sector access to markets.

A skilled manual laborer who creates something that can be either attractive or practical is known as an artisan. Each piece is given character and uniqueness via the use of hands and hand tools. One significant segment of our society is made up of craftspeople. They improve our visual quality of life by offering us exquisitely designed goods. In addition, they provide a substantial contribution to the economy of our country. In both industrialized and developing nations, our handicrafts have established a unique market. A person who works with common or basic equipment to create necessities is referred to as a "artisan." Without the use of machinery, they create valuable things primarily using locally accessible materials. Therefore, artisans might be defined as skilled manual laborers who use their hands to envision, plan, and construct things in response to the needs of the local population. The craftspeople incorporate the customs of the people into their work, transforming it into an artistic endeavor. Due to caste and

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familial ties, the majority of artisans have acquired their trade from their parents.(Shah, 2016).

The richness of Indian culture produces amazing handicrafts and artwork. Among the most sought-after Indian handicrafts include carpets, woodware, bamboo products, marble and bronze sculptures, leather goods, paintings, zari and embroidered items, and jewelry. There are various opportunities due to the growing demand for Indian handicrafts in the US, UK, Canada, Germany, Italy, and other countries. Every business, including the fashion, real estate, and home décor sectors, requires handicrafts. Online shopping is the most convenient way for tech-savvy consumers to locate and purchase a variety of handicrafts. Additionally, one of the most promising avenues for handcraft sales in the current marketing environment is e-commerce. It ensures that things are easily accessible on a worldwide scale. (Shah ,2016).

E-commerce, like any other digital technology or consumer-based sector, has changed over time. Mobile commerce has emerged as a distinct business as mobile devices have grown in popularity. Social media has emerged as a key force behind e-commerce with the growth of websites like Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest. Information technology and e-commerce have grown significantly in India. Tours and travel, movies, hotel reservations, matrimonial services, technological devices, fashion items, and groceries are just a few of the products and services that are available on the internet market. (Shah ,2016).

E-commerce businesses claim that transactions have increased by 30% to 50% in certain cities. Only 16% of Indians were online in 2013, and only 14% of those online, or 28 million people, made purchases online, according to Forrester Research, an independent technology and market research firm. However, the Indian online market has seen significant transformation, growing at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 34% since 2009 to reach 16.4 billion USD in 2014. In 2015, the industry is projected to be worth over 22 billion USD. Even though it has the second-largest user base in the world (475 million, or 40% of the population), e-commerce penetration is still low when compared to places like the USA (266 million, or 84%) or France (54 million, or 81%), but it is expanding at an unparalleled rate, bringing in almost 6 million new customers each month. Google India reports that by 2016, there were 100 million Indians shopping online, up from 35 million in 2014. Additionally, it is anticipated that India would generate $100 billion in online retail income by 2021.(Sueetha ,2019).

LITERATURE REVIEW

(Singh et al., 2024) investigates the usage of social media by Madhubani painting artists in Bihar, India, to display their abilities. It seeks to comprehend the difficulties they have while trying to use social media platforms to display their art and suggests ways to improve their online visibility and clientele. The study used primary data, which was gathered through a qualitative inquiry that included the use of instruments including literature reviews, interviews, and personal narratives. On October 22, 2022, a focus group discussion approach was used in Jitwarpur village, Madhubani, Bihar, India, to gather a sample of 60 women artisans. According to the survey, Madhubani painting artists have difficulties when using social media to showcase their abilities and attract potential clients. Opportunities to remedy these issues are highlighted by insights. The results of this study may not be as broadly applicable as they may be due to the limited sample size and the study's regional emphasis. Nonetheless, the results provide insightful information for further study on social media use by artists engaged in different artistic disciplines. By examining the relationship between traditional art and social media, specifically in Madhubani painting, the current study contributes to the body of previous literature. It provides workable ways to improve the economic prospects and internet visibility of craftsmen.

(Rezapouraghdam., and Sharifinejad,2025), emphasizes on the Middle East and South Asia, this article explores the critical role that women entrepreneurs play in promoting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in rural regions. Through a thorough literature evaluation of articles from journals related to the tourist and hospitality industries, this study seeks to clarify the complex link between women's empowerment, handicrafts, and the growth of the tourism business. In order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN, we look at key issues including women's economic empowerment, the development of handmade products capability, and the promotion of cultural heritage tourism. The article also emphasizes the increasing interest in the handicraft sector and the commercial ventures of female craftsmen throughout the world, acknowledging the importance of female-owned enterprises for the development of jobs, economic expansion, and women's empowerment.. The study finds four main themes through data analysis: 1) women's empowerment; 2) handicraft capability; 3) education and training; and 4) historic tourism as a core market. The study identifies gaps and makes recommendations for future research areas in this area, as well as possible implications for resolving the difficulties faced by female craftsmen and tourist sites.

(Potočnik, 2024), analyzes the existing legislative approach to safeguarding women and gender-diverse music creatives, this chapter builds on academic criticism of performers' rights in intellectual property law by combining feminist ideas in music and law. The United Kingdom (UK) and its laws pertaining to musicians' rights in the music industry are the main subject of this chapter's investigation. The chapter examines two primary categories of challenges or obstacles faced by women and creatives who identify as gender nonconforming. First, because the music industry does not provide women and gender-diverse musicians with financial and professional assistance, there are less options for them to pursue careers in the UK. Second, hazardous working conditions, creative censorship, and gender-based economic discrimination, such as lower salaries and the gender pay gap, hamper the professional life of women and gender-diverse artists when they do enter the commercial sector. As a result, women and musicians of other gender identities are not given the autonomy and encouragement to create or perform music in the ways that they want. In order to eliminate the legal distinction between performers as the originators of creativity and their performances, this chapter advocates for a new understanding of performers' rights.

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(Bogaerts, 2015),states that the art market has long been portrayed as being extremely secretive, within the past 50 years, as the industry has become more financially oriented, more information about the art market has been produced and disseminated. Over time, this information enabled art investors learn more about art as an investment sector. This argument backed up the notion that the art investor may make better selections with more knowledge, which is contrary to what some scholars have previously asserted. The current study focuses on evaluating the data found on art e-commerce platforms that sell art online directly to customers using a "click-and-buy" paradigm, utilizing theories on "art price determinants" and research on the degree of confidence of online purchasers. Art investors may obtain a wealth of information on art e-commerce platforms, which are considered "information marketplaces." The empirical results show that buyers interested in the economic value of art can rely on information about the materialistic qualities of artworks and the demographics of artists, which is particularly accessible on online platforms and can help them make more informed decisions.

(Kanimozhi, 2022), examines the relationship between the female hand and creation and knowledge in the context of everyday stitching, painting, and media craft. In order to produce art that is primarily about them and demonstrates a feminist identity, women artists frequently employ a range of distinctive materials and processes. These priceless handicrafts and embroidery were frequently employed by women as a means of freely expressing their ideas and feelings. Textiles and embroidery are linked to the artistic endeavors of women. In order to express themselves and rebel against the male-dominated art world, women artists employed textiles, needlework, and embroidery as potent symbolic mediums. The lack of more modern patterns, materials, and threads in the villages was the main issue that all of the ladies had to deal with. As a result, it will become clear that the diverse embroidery techniques that add value, such as using different raw materials and stitches than the ones that are already used, are an attempt to reach the future vision of date embroidery, tailoring, and handicrafts. Therefore, the study aims to track how social media has contributed to the resurgence of women's self-learning. Consequently, social media and digitization have contributed to the empowerment of women.

(Prakash, 1990), stated the four elements of the marketing mix—product, price, place, and promotion—are a strategic strategy that businesses adopt when launching new goods. These factors assist businesses in making strategic choices that will provide them a competitive edge. Choosing a product's pricing, which varies based on the market, is part of the marketing mix. Businesses in India must comprehend geographical variances and cultural quirks in order to modify their products to suit local market demands. Because India has many different areas, languages, and cultures, they also need to accommodate a range of product preferences. Due to the great price sensitivity of India's sizable population with a wide range of income levels, businesses must carefully consider product pricing to accommodate various income brackets. Price promotions and discounts greatly affect customer behaviour, making it vital for organizations to create suitable pricing strategies. India's enormous geography challenges distribution networks, forcing corporations to build effective methods for accessing urban and rural customers. Since e-commerce has grown in popularity, businesses need to think about their rural vs urban focus. Creating a thorough plan is essential for efficient distribution. In India, digital marketing is an essential tool that allows businesses to promote, interact on social media, and carry out e-commerce. Successful campaigns require cultural awareness, and localizing advertising content is critical to connecting with the varied community. The mix fluctuates dependent on marketing circumstances and environmental considerations. It is a collection of determinable factors that a business might utilize to affect customer reactions.

(Khoo et.al, 2024) emphasises that due to gender and social inequalities that are being replicated in the online environment, women entrepreneurs' access to and adoption of digital platforms cannot be assumed to occur naturally, even though more and more economic and social exchanges are occurring in the digital environment globally. From a gendered perspective, this study examines the potential and difficulties of entrepreneurial digital capabilities for women tourist entrepreneurs (WTEs) in Latin America. Thirty-three women entrepreneurs in the tourist industry in Ecuador and Mexico were interviewed. . According to the findings, women entrepreneurs in the tourism industry can and have been empowered by using digital platforms and technologies. However, they also face a number of obstacles and challenges, such as a lack of digital competencies, limited access to digital devices, infrastructure, and training, a need to rely on family members and support staff, and worries about work-life balance, safety, and security. By highlighting the institutional and social injustices that obstruct the expansion of women's tourist businesses, this study adds to the body of knowledge already available on entrepreneurship. The results also show how the macro gender digital gap and micro-level variables hinder women's ability to acquire digital capabilities. There are implications for the creation of policies pertaining to women entrepreneurs' digital capabilities.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- Explore the challenges faced by women artisans in e-commerce sector
- Explore the opportunities faced by women artisans in e -commerce sector.
- Offer solutions for these issues.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is entirely dependent on secondary data gathered from reviews, journals, articles, books, websites, and newspapers.

Challenges faced by women artisans in e-commerce sector:

- **Business Difficulties:** Obtaining necessary loans for seed money and/or to ensure consistent funding for an existing project is a major challenge for women running micro (e-commerce/e-retailing) businesses. As a result, they frequently become heavily dependent on government sources, and (male) government

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officials and fellow villagers are resistant to women's empowerment. In many poor nations, women are unable to travel independently to numerous distant offices and organizations, making it difficult for them to organize alternative financial resources.

- **Social Difficulties:** Women's business endeavors are frequently discouraged, both inside the family and in the community. Obstacles in their way are frequently caused by the worry that it would alter or move the power structure. After marriage, a lot of women are likewise unsure of their career prospects. Furthermore, it can be extremely difficult to balance job and home obligations, which may lead to women choosing not to participate in ICT-driven developmental initiatives (Hafkin & Huyer, 2006).
- **Goods Distinctiveness**: Customers worry about the items' quality since they cannot be physically seen or handled.
- **Development of technology:** It also led to an increase in rivalry in the business sector. Strong competition is making it difficult for artisans to sell as a result. Comparable things have been sale by several women artisans, making it difficult for each women artisans to draw clients with their goods. These elements are causing women artisans to struggle with pricing and extensive marketing campaigns.
- **Shipping issues:** In addition to the difficulties associated with e-commerce for women artisans. Due to the long delivery distance, there is a significant chance of product damage.(Basenet,2024).

Opportunities to women artisans in e commerce sector:

- **Women's empowerment and training:** The importance of training in the success of ICT-based projects carried out by women is demonstrated by a number of case studies, including the Village Pay Phones (VPPs) in Bangladesh, the Computer Facility at Kasargod, Kerala, India, Divine Computers of Vadakara, India, the e-Seva Centers in Andhra Pradesh, India, and India Shop and Cottage Industry–Global Marketplace, India.
- **Increasing market accessibility and creating prospects for profit:** As demonstrated by case studies like Tortas Peru, Women Weavers in Morocco, CI-GM, Computer Facility at Kasargod, Kerala, India, and Divine Computers of Vadakara, India, increasing market access to viable business prospects was another crucial factor in success.
- **Increased market penetration**: Through internet sales, artisans may showcase their distinctiveness and global tradition. Product sales in overseas markets are increased via e-commerce. Online platforms make it simple and offer a large assortment of handcraft products for consumers to purchase and furnish their homes. E-commerce has made it possible for customers to find and buy distinctive Finnish crafts.
- **Cost-effective marketing and promotion:** This is another benefit of e-commerce in the atists industry. Social media and online platforms have made it easier for artisans to contact their target audience and promote their goods at a reasonable cost. Furthermore, E-commerce platform uses secure payment method which build trust in both artisan and consumer. This secure payment method encourages both artisan and consumer to buy and sell product online. Basenet (2024).

CONCLUSION

As more people utilize the internet, the e-commerce sector will expand. Cash on delivery is the most popular payment option in India. This is the largest obstacle for women artisans, but it should also present an opportunity. The women artisans ought to provide more incentives to clients in order to get them to use an online payment gateway for payment.

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