

Crafting Narratives: Digital Storytelling and the Conveyance of Cultural Significance in Indian Artisan Ventures

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51583/IJLTEMAS.2026.150900004>

Received: 13 September 2026; Accepted: 18 September 2026; Published: 29 September 2026

ABSTRACT

The importance of Indian handicrafts extends beyond the tangible attributes of a product. Expertise in craftsmanship, artisan identity, regionality, cultural recollection, and manufacturing methods can shape consumer perceptions and appreciation of handcrafted goods. However, these intangible elements may not be readily apparent when artisanal goods are promoted via contemporary online platforms and social networks. This research examines digital storytelling as a medium for transforming the cultural significance of Indian artisan goods into accessible digital narratives. The current research is founded on a qualitative integrative literature analysis. It utilizes research in narrative techniques, immersive storytelling, digital cultural preservation, social media promotion, artisanal business ventures, and genuineness. The literature is examined thematically to identify the essential elements that facilitate impactful craft storytelling. Four interconnected attributes arise: artisan identity, geographical and cultural context, crafting techniques and expertise, and authenticity. This research elaborates on these subjects by introducing a Craft-to-Story Communication Framework that facilitates the translation of craft identity and production expertise into digital narratives, hence enhancing consumer understanding of cultural significance. The research contends that digital storytelling ought not to be perceived merely as a marketing tactic, but instead can be regarded as a form of value conversion, rendering abstract craftsmanship attributes more comprehensible to modern consumers. The notion has tangible implications for artisan enterprises, designers, and fashion management professionals seeking to leverage online platforms without reducing craft traditions to simple marketing material.

Keywords: Digital narratives, Indian craftsmanship, Artisan ventures, Cultural significance, Authenticity.

INTRODUCTION

Indian handicrafts represent a distinctive mode of economic and cultural creation, wherein physical objects are deeply connected to knowledge, regional narratives, craftsmanship, communities, and locations. Consequently, the worth of a handcrafted item extends beyond its tangible attributes. Consumers could value the identity of the creator, the uniqueness of the production technique, the cultural significance associated with a craft, and the locale of its creation. In the expanding digital economy, much of this intangible worth must be communicated via photographs, product descriptions, brief films, social media content, and various forms of digital media.

Narrative techniques serve as a viable means to convey this less apparent value. Narratives have historically been acknowledged as significant in marketing research regarding customer perceptions of brands, products, and consumption experiences (Woodside et al., 2008). A recent investigation has examined narrative transportation, consumer engagement, and the significance of storytelling in purchasing behavior (Anaza et al., 2020; Brechman & Purvis, 2015; Júnior et al., 2023; Thomas & Grigsby, 2024). Digital storytelling can facilitate audience engagement within cultural heritage settings by linking artifacts, sites, and narratives through interactive narratives (Kotsakis, 2021).

This matter has become increasingly significant for Indian artisan enterprises as social media and e-commerce offer avenues to connect with consumers beyond conventional physical markets. Research about

Indian handicrafts indicates that digital and social media strategies could improve brand recognition, perceived worth, and market accessibility (Guha et al., 2021; Kishor & Sharma, 2025). Research on Chanderi, Jaipur, and various craft environments similarly indicates that digital platforms can facilitate market innovation and business growth (Mathur & Ranawat, 2024; Sharma et al., 2024; Yadav et al., 2023).

However, the mere visibility of anything in a digital format does not imply its cultural significance. Items may be showcased online devoid of any attribution to their manufacturer, origin, production methods, or the importance of its cultural characteristics. This paper views digital storytelling as a process of value translation: a method that organizes the abstract attributes of craftsmanship into understandable digital narratives.

This paper has three objectives. Initially, it examines the significance of digital storytelling in showcasing the cultural worth of Indian handicrafts and artisan goods. Secondly, it emphasizes the essential attributes that might enhance engaging digital narratives for artisan goods. Third, it provides a theoretical structure for comprehending the transformation of craft knowledge into digital narratives. The project is theoretical and grounded in literary sources, lacking any original empirical results.

Background & Context

Handicraft items embody both the material and immaterial dimensions of worth. The physical element encompasses substance, form, hue, aesthetics, and utility. The non-physical aspect may include the artisan's identity, cultural wisdom, manufacturing customs, geographical connections, and the significance associated with specific topics or methods. These factors could influence how consumers distinguish between handcrafted items and mass-produced commodities.

Digitalization is swiftly gaining acknowledgment as a crucial pathway for market growth in the discourse surrounding Indian handicraft enterprises. Yadav et al. (2023) examined digital and innovative entrepreneurship within the Indian handicraft industry, highlighting the prospects and limitations of digital platforms. Sharma et al. (2024) elucidated the function of social platforms in facilitating market innovation inside the Chanderi cluster.

These investigations indicate that digital platforms can enhance the market accessibility of artisan enterprises. However, commercial penetration differs from cultural communication. The initial aspect is the ability to identify and connect with consumers; the subsequent aspect is the ability to help consumers understand the cultural significance of a particular product.

Digitalization has transformed the methods by which small artisan enterprises engage with markets. Social networking networks allow artisans, manufacturing entities, and intermediaries to showcase their items directly to prospective buyers. Investigations on digital entrepreneurship within the Indian handicraft industry indicate that online platforms can assist businesses in adjusting to changing market dynamics, despite challenges such as skills, technology, market competition, and digital accessibility (Yadav et al., 2023).

Studies in social media marketing indicate that digital communication can affect consumers' perceptions of artisanal items. The financial viability of digital communication is partially contingent upon the calibre and pertinence of the content. In artisanal enterprises, visuals that solely display the completed item may obscure significant cultural and production worth of the product. Digital storytelling enables a transition from mere product display to contextualized interaction.

Problem Statement

This paper primarily examines the disparity in communication between the cultural significance embedded in Indian artisan products and the limited contextual information accessible to consumers in online marketplaces. Digital platforms can enhance exposure; nevertheless, exposure does not inherently convey

craftsmanship, artisan identity, locality, or cultural significance. If these specifications are absent, the product may be condensed to a visual representation, a cost, and a basic description.

Consequently, the challenge for craft enterprises extends beyond mere digital visibility. The purpose is to articulate the factors that render a handcrafted item unique and precious. This necessitates a communicative approach that transforms implicit and culturally rooted knowledge into comprehensible digital narratives without altering or commercializing the tradition.

Research Gap

The scholarly works provide significant insights on storytelling, narrative immersion, social media promotion, digital commerce, and the dissemination of cultural resources. However, these streams are frequently addressed separately. Narrative research primarily focuses on consumer reactions and brand messaging. Investigating handicrafts often pertains to market accessibility and the integration of digital technologies. Cultural heritage research pertains to the engagement of audiences with heritage narratives. A more cohesive conceptual comprehension is required regarding the transmission of unique attributes of craft expertise into digital narratives. There exists an opportunity to integrate artisan identity, region, technique, cultural context, and authenticity into a cohesive communication framework for Indian artisan enterprises. This study aims to close that divide by creating a Craft-to-Story Communication Framework.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the role of digital storytelling in conveying the cultural importance of Indian handicrafts and artisan products.
2. To identify essential elements that contribute to engaging digital narratives for artisanal products.
3. To create a conceptual framework for converting artisanal expertise into digital narratives.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Scholars have explored the use of storytelling to structure information into coherent narratives, rather as isolated product assertions. Narrative construction is a significant area of inquiry within psychology and marketing (Woodside et al., 2008), and it is proposed that narratives affect consumer information processing and brand affiliation. Chiu et al. (2012) demonstrated the significance of alignment between brand narratives and product characteristics, asserting that the efficacy of a story hinges on the consistency between a brand's message and the essence of the product.

A comprehensive analysis conducted by Júnior et al. (2023) indicates that investigations into storytelling within consumer behaviour have expanded to encompass themes such as customer identity, emotional significance, and engagement. These findings pertain to handcrafted goods, as the consumption of crafts may possess both symbolic and emotional attributes, alongside practical worth.

Narrative transmission is a broad phrase that refers to the engagement of viewers in a story. Brechman and Purvis (2015) examined narrative conveyance within advertising and its significance for advertising efficacy. Anaza et al. (2020) investigated narrative transit in business-to-business advertising and demonstrated how narrative structure influences audience reactions. In a comprehensive review of narrative transportation studies, Thomas and Grigsby (2024) identified significant opportunities for additional research in consumer and communication domains.

Narrative transmission holds conceptual significance for storytelling techniques, as it shifts focus from the individual visual attributes of a product to a continuum of significance involving individuals, locations, and procedures. A narrative about craftsmanship may provide a more nuanced comprehension of the result.

Digital storytelling has become increasingly significant in the context of communicating cultural heritage. Kotsakis (2021) examined audience involvement in digital storytelling inside an interactive documentary, illustrating how narrative and interactive media can enhance heritage engagement. Recent cultural heritage studies increasingly investigate the function of digital storytelling in enhancing destination and heritage communication.

This literature is pertinent to craft enterprises since it presents the opportunity to associate a tangible object with its cultural origins. Digital storytelling can enhance the accessibility of production methodologies, regional narratives, and communal wisdom to audiences lacking direct engagement with the craft sector.

The literature on Indian handicrafts is progressively acknowledging social media as a medium for marketing and communication. There are instances where the strategies of social media marketing in promoting handicrafts and noted positive correlations with brand-related metrics and purchase outcomes. Kishor and Sharma (2025) examined social media marketing for handicrafts and identified relationships among recognition, perception, product value, and purchase intention.

These results validate the importance of digital communication in promoting handcrafted goods. Nevertheless, they inadequately engage with the narrative content that facilitates the expression of cultural value. This is an essential differentiation to recognize, as a social media approach may be operational yet not inherently culturally enlightening.

Investigations into Indian artisan collectives indicate that internet platforms can facilitate novel forms of market engagement. Sharma et al. (2024) examined social platforms within the Chanderi cluster and identified their contribution to market innovation. Mathur and Ranawat (2024) investigated the influence of e-commerce and social media on the marketing of handicrafts in Jaipur. Yadav et al. (2023) examined the digital and innovative entrepreneurship within the Indian handicraft sector during the COVID-19 pandemic, emphasizing both opportunities and challenges of digital adaption.

Singh et al. (2024) examined female craftsmen engaged in Madhubani painting who encounter digital challenges that jeopardize their long-term viability. Collectively, these investigations indicate that the utilization of digital technology transcends a simply technical matter, encompassing skills, content creation, market positioning, and the capacity to articulate the distinctiveness of artisanal products.

Genuineness is crucial, particularly when narratives possess cultural and artisanal importance. A favorable consumer reaction may occur when a narrative is perceived as aligned with the product and its attributes. Yin et al. (2023) examined genuine storytelling and distinguished between indexical and iconic forms of authenticity. They determined that authenticity can influence brand perceptions in relation to product category and pricing.

For artisan enterprises, authenticity possesses an additional cultural aspect. A narrative ought to accurately represent the artistry, creator, and locale instead of distorting or amplifying cultural assertions. Effective storytelling necessitates not just exceptional communication skills but also suitable representation.

METHODOLOGY

This research employs a qualitative integrative literature review. This methodology was employed because the objective of the research is to connect ideas from several research domains and to develop a conceptual framework, rather than to quantify a statistical impact. The pertinent literature was categorized into five principal domains: (1) narrative techniques and marketing communication, (2) narrative immersion and consumer response, (3) digital narratives and cultural legacy, (4) social media and Indian artisanal crafts, and (5) digital entrepreneurship and genuineness. The keywords encompassed variations of “digital storytelling,” “storytelling in marketing,” “narrative transportation,” “Indian handicrafts,” “artisan entrepreneurship,” “marketing of handicrafts,” “social media related to handicrafts,” “digital entrepreneurship,” “storytelling of cultural heritage,” and “authenticity in storytelling.” Publications in peer-reviewed journals with recognizable bibliographic details and DOI information were favoured. The chosen material underwent

thematic analysis. The analysis of repeated keywords produced four overarching themes: artisan identity, geographical and cultural context, craft methodology and proficiency, and authenticity. The ideas were then amalgamated into the proposed Craft-to-Story Communication Framework.

This research relies exclusively on existing literature and does not engage in the recruitment of human subjects or the generation of original survey or interview data. The manuscript, therefore, does not aspire to make assertions for empirical generalization beyond the conceptual analysis of the examined literature.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The initial subject that surfaced from the literature was the significance of the creator. Narratives might depict the artist not merely as a creator, but also as a custodian of wisdom. Insights regarding the maker's role, competencies, educational journey, and connection to the craft contribute to personalizing the product.

This is particularly applicable to artisanal goods, where the worth often resides in the human element of skill and diversity. A digital narrative that presents the artisan can transform communication from “what the product is” to “who created it and the significance of its creation.” This interpretation aligns with the extensive storytelling literature that highlights identification and engagement as essential aspects of narrative response (Júnior et al., 2023).

Craft is generally situated within certain geographical and social contexts. The origin of an item can reveal insights about its materials, manufacturing methods, regional histories, and cultural practices. Digital storytelling can so portray location as an engaged entity in the narrative rather than merely a geographical point.

Research on Indian craft clusters highlights the importance of geographically distinct identities like Chanderi and Jaipur in digital marketing communication (Mathur & Ranawat, 2024; Sharma et al., 2024). When utilized correctly, location can assist purchasers in understanding the reasons behind variations in technique, cultural significance, or production heritage among comparable things.

The manufacturing procedure may reflect the labor, knowledge, and skill inherent in a handcrafted item. Concise films, a collection of images, discussions, and accounts of methodologies can disclose stages of creation that remain obscured in an image of the final product.

From a marketing perspective, narrative techniques can convert an intangible commitment such as “handcrafted” into tangible proof. It can also be enlightening, enabling consumers to recognize processes and value the time and expertise required in production.

Artistic methods and motifs are generally anchored in cultural frameworks. A narrative can clarify the significance of a motif, the origin of a technique, the relationship between artistry and society, or the historical context in which a craft developed. The cultural backdrop enhances the narrative of the product beyond just esthetics.

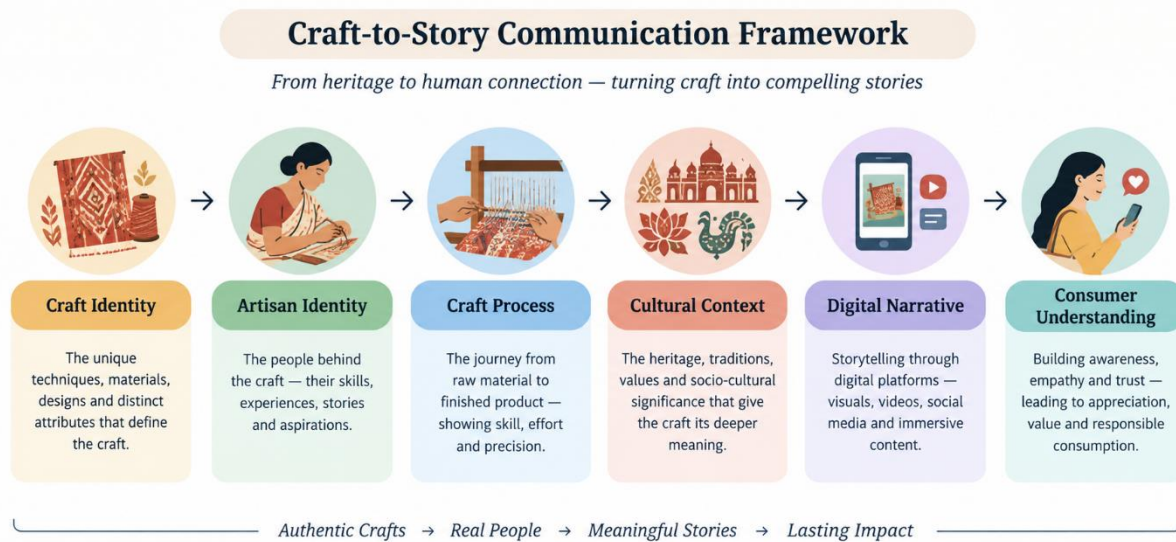
The significance of contextual storytelling for audience involvement is demonstrated in the digital heritage literature (Kotsakis, 2021). For Indian artisan enterprises, this suggests that cultural understanding need not to be regarded as mere embellishment in digital discourse. Cultural background may be incorporated into the core product story instead.

The four themes that surfaced from this analysis all revolve around authenticity. The significance of artisan identity, location, methodology, and cultural backdrop is only acknowledged when the narrative crafted aligns with the product and its authentic origins. Consequently, authenticity might link the tangible products with the virtual narrative.

Genuine narrative literature suggests that alignment between narrative and product can influence consumer perception (Chiu et al., 2012; Yin et al., 2023). For artisan enterprises, genuineness also encompasses an

awareness of cultural depiction. Narratives ought to avoid fabricated history, exaggerated assertions, or vague cultural terminology that lacks validation from the creator or the community.

This study established a Craft-to-Story Communication Framework derived from topic synthesis, comprising six interrelated stages:



The initial phase is recognizing the unique characteristics of the craft. The second denotes the producer and the expertise of the creator. The third illustrates the manufacturing process of the product. The fourth element incorporates cultural and geographical context. These components are subsequently compiled into a digital narrative employing appropriate media types, including photographs, brief videos, interviews, process showcases, subtitles, and extended stories. The final phase involves comprehending the consumer.

The framework does not imply that every craft narrative must encompass all components with uniform profundity. It rather offers a checklist for what need to be conveyed. The key idea is that digital storytelling may facilitate the conversion of the abstract value of Indian craftsmanship into a tangible representation that is understandable to contemporary consumers.

Case Vignette: Chanderi Sarees

The proposed Craft-to-Story Communication Framework can be practically applied through the example of Chanderi sarees which is a traditional handloom craft associated with Chanderi in Madhya Pradesh, India. The example shows how the different components of craft knowledge can be converted into a digital story that allows consumers to understand not only the product but also the people, processes and cultural meanings that go with it. The vignette is illustrative and designed to demonstrate how the conceptual framework works, rather than to present primary empirical findings.

The unique identity of Chanderi saree is derived from its unique handloom esthetics, fabric characteristics, motifs, weaving traditions and design vocabulary. From these attributes the basic content of an authentic craft story can be developed.

The craft becomes more human and relatable when the story brings in the artisans who create it. It is the skills of weaving, the experience, the knowledge passed through generations and the relationship with the craft that give a human dimension and take the narrative beyond the saree as a commercial product.

Digital storytelling can then demonstrate the making of the saree, from the preparation of materials through weaving and the detailed processes involved in producing the finished textile. Consumers have the opportunity to see craft through visual content such as images, short videos or sequential graphics that would otherwise be invisible.

The story can then tie the product to the cultural and historical setting of Chanderi. Local knowledge, traditions, motifs and the continued relevance of handloom weaving make the saree a cultural practice and a fashion product for consumers.

These elements can be blended through digital platforms with photographs, artisan stories, short-form videos, process demonstrations, interviews and other forms of visual storytelling. It goes beyond simply communicating product attributes like design or price; the digital narrative tells a connected story around the craft, its maker, process and cultural value.

The last phase is the consumer's interpretation of this story. Greater visibility of the artisan, the production process and the cultural context can help consumers become aware and appreciate the craft and potentially perceive greater value in products whose stories and origin are made visible. Thus, the framework conceptualizes digital storytelling as a communication channel through which craft identity is translated into human-centred and culturally meaningful information for the consumers.



Figure 1. Craft-to-Story Communication Framework



An illustrative application of the Craft-to-Story Communication Framework

The example of Chanderi then illustrates the sequential logic of the proposed framework: Craft Identity Artisan Identity Craft Process Cultural Context Digital Narrative Consumer Understanding. This framework does not imply that digital communication on its own facilitates consumer understanding, rather it suggests that when these interconnected dimensions are made visible, conditions can be created to foster more informed, meaningful and culturally sensitive consumer engagement with craft-based fashion.

The primary conceptual contribution of the study is the idea of digital storytelling as a means of value translation. In this context, value translation refers to the conversion of knowledge inherent in individuals, locations, actions, and cultural customs into readily available digital communication. This perspective differs from considering narrative as a marketing instrument. In what manner may the narrative facilitate the promotion of the product? A promotional strategy involves a value-translation method that poses an initial inquiry: “Which elements of the product's cultural and artisanal significance must the consumer comprehend? “That value is subsequently integrated into the narrative.

This distinction is crucial for artisanal businesses. Digital storytelling does not supplant artisanal expertise with promotional terminology. It pertains to enhancing the visibility and clarity of existing knowledge. The approach prioritizes the product, the craftsman, and the cultural context over the marketing message.

Implications

Companies can initiate by creating content that focuses on the manufacturer instead of solely relying on product images. Secondly, content that emphasizes processes can demonstrate artistry and enhance consumer appreciation. Thirdly, narratives associated with geography can express the unique character of a craft community. Fourth, cultural elucidations can aid consumers in comprehending motivations, methodologies, and customs. Fifth, the narrative and the product must align in reality, a requirement for the companies.

These techniques may also serve as reusable content resources. For instance, one artisan interview can be transformed into a brief video, a product narrative, a social media update, and an extended online article. This type of strategy can assist small enterprises in optimizing their scarce resources for content creation.

The research indicates that digital craft communication ought to be regarded as an interdisciplinary endeavor for designers and fashion management professionals. It necessitates an understanding of product design, craftsmanship history, consumer behavior, visual communication, and digital marketing.

Experts collaborating with artisan enterprises can assist in chronicling craft methodologies, formulating content narratives, and devising digital branding protocols. They can assist organizations in distinguishing genuine cultural narratives from superficial embellishments. This is particularly true for handmade goods promoted inside modern fashion and leisure sectors, where cultural identity may be readily diminished for commercial messaging.

The findings connect three domains of literature that are frequently considered in isolation. Consequently, narratives might assist us in comprehending and being more involved — according to the studies on storytelling. Investigations on digital marketing indicate the efficacy of social media platforms for artisanal enterprises. Investigations into cultural heritage underscore the need of context and audience engagement. The Craft-to-Story Communication Framework integrates these elements for the specific challenge of conveying cultural significance.

The notion also implies a conflict in management. Digital communication frequently prioritizes straightforward and easily comprehensible modes of interaction, whereas craft knowledge tends to be intricate and reliant on context. A proficient narrator must distil complexity without misrepresentation. Authenticity is therefore not merely an optional aspect of the framework, but an essential requirement for accountable value conversion. The utilization of traditional narratives in commercial messaging raises concerns of representation and ownership. Artisan narratives ought not to be perceived as complimentary promotional resources. In contexts where cultural knowledge is derived from the community, businesses and communication specialists must recognize the importance of attribution, consent, and the authenticity of cultural assertions.

CONCLUSION

Digital platforms have created new opportunities for Indian artisan enterprises to reach consumers; nevertheless, mere digital presence does not guaranty the transmission of cultural significance. In this study, we suggest that digital storytelling could function as a mechanism for translating value, making the intangible aspects of craftsmanship more attainable for modern audiences.

The literature examined in this research underscores four fundamental components: artisan identity, local context and culture, craft techniques and expertise, and authenticity. The Craft-to-Story Communication Framework outlined below integrates these components, linking craft identity with artisan proficiency, manufacturing technique, cultural backdrop, digital storytelling, and consumer comprehension. This paper conceptually positions digital storytelling as both a promotional endeavour and a means of rendering craft knowledge accessible and understandable. The framework provides a practical foundation for designers and fashion management experts in artisan enterprises to create more profound digital stories while honouring the craft and its cultural significance.

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