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Jaipur's skilled artisans industry need digital innovation, financial support and IP protection: Jaipur Rugs' Yogesh Chaudhary

By Garima Bora, ET Special Last Updated: Nov 12, 2024, 09:48:00 AM IST



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Synopsis

Jaipur local artisan businesses' struggles with modernised tools calls for technology innovation, better access to capital and protection for designs.



Yogesh Chaudhary, Director of Jaipur Rugs.

Jaipur, often known as India's craft capital, is home to a vibrant population of skilled artisans in segments ranging from block printing to stone carving. These businesses give the city an identity and also contribute significantly to Jaipur's economy. However, they are now struggling due to the rise of machinery and

digitalisation.

There is a need to push digital innovation, financial support and other measures into the skilled artisans industry for it to thrive, says Yogesh Chaudhary, Director of Jaipur Rugs.

“The skilled artisan industry in Jaipur has a deep history dating back to centuries. It is especially known for its traditional crafts like block printing, jewellery making, carpet weaving and stone carving. These crafts, particularly weaving and textile arts, are integral to Jaipur's cultural identity, with artisans' skills often passed down through generations. However, over the years, the industry has faced challenges due to the rise of machine-made products, and fluctuating demand, which led to concerns about preserving traditional craftsmanship,” he says.



To counter these issues, the director of Jaipur Rugs says that the industry has seen significant efforts focused on artisan welfare, preservation of traditional techniques, and market adaptation. Companies like Jaipur Rugs have often emphasised on handcrafted quality and ethical sourcing, which has fostered a resurgence in demand for Jaipur's artisanal products, both domestically and internationally.

Given that these crafts create the economic and cultural foundation of Jaipur, the ET Make in India SME Regional Summit will be held here on November 13 to bring together stakeholders, policymakers, small business owners and artisans on a platform to find the best way forward for the economic betterment of the city.



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Challenges

Chaudhary points out that some of the major challenges for Jaipur are competition and pricing pressure, access to capital, supply chain limitations, skilled labour shortage, rising raw material costs and intellectual property and design protection. Industrialised production and cheaper, machine-made imports have flooded the markets, making it difficult for handmade products to compete on price. This has impacted artisans' earnings and forced MSMEs



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to find niche markets that value authenticity. But many artisans lack access to affordable loans and financing options, which restrict their ability to expand and modernise. “High-interest rates and limited financial literacy also pose barriers,” he says.

Chaudhary says that the younger generations are increasingly moving away from traditional crafts and to more lucrative careers, risking the loss of centuries-old skills and leading to a shortage of skilled labour in the industry.

Also, MSMEs and artisans struggle to reach broader markets due to limited marketing resources and digital presence. Many lack the tools or knowledge for effective online selling, making it hard to compete in a globalised market.

“Artisans face challenges in protecting their unique designs and patterns, with many large companies copying traditional designs without credit or compensation, undermining the artisans’ creativity and brand value. Despite these hurdles, some MSMEs and artisans are adapting through partnerships, digital platforms, and innovative business models, working to sustain their crafts in a challenging market landscape,” he says.

Talking about solutions, he calls for enhanced digital training and e-commerce access, saying that equipping artisans with digital skills is crucial for reaching global audiences. Training in e-commerce, digital marketing and

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social media will allow artisans to showcase their work and engage directly with consumers, reducing dependency on intermediaries and enhancing profit margins. Platforms dedicated to Indian artisans, potentially supported by state partnerships, could further empower artisans to expand their digital footprint.

Regarding capital, he points out that accessible, low-interest microloans tailored for artisans can help them invest in quality raw materials, better tools and small-scale equipment. “Additionally, more partnerships with fintech companies to provide artisans with digital financial literacy and mobile banking access can support savings, budget management, and overall financial empowerment,” he says.

There is also a need for developing a dedicated intellectual property framework for crafts that would protect artisan designs and regional crafts from being copied by mass producers.

“Registering unique patterns, motifs, and techniques under geographical indication (GI) tags could increase their value, ensuring that artisans receive recognition and fair compensation. By combining digital innovation, financial support, sustainability practices, and protections for intellectual property, the skilled artisan industry in Rajasthan can continue to thrive, preserving its rich cultural legacy while adapting to a globalised economy,” he adds.

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