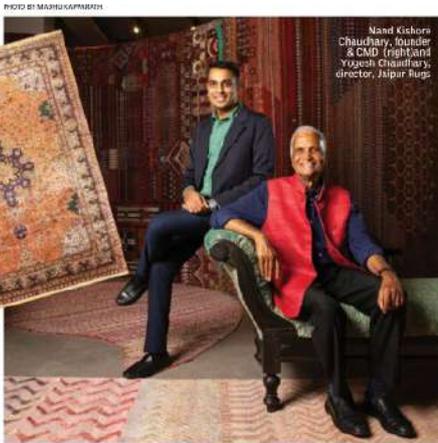


“For the upper end, design is as important as functionality, and it is on brands like us to create something unique that has value in the future and people have a story to tell about.”

YOGESH CHAUDHARY (left), director, Jaipur Rugs



Nand Kishore Chaudhary, founder & CMD (right) and Yogesh Chaudhary, director, Jaipur Rugs

journey has taken a long time.”

At ILLI, co-founders Shani Himanshu and Mia Morikawa have revived indigo dyeing methods that are nearly 5,000 years old, weaving traditions that date back almost 500 years, and re-engineered bandhani (tie-and-dye) techniques, adapting them to everyday wear silhouettes rather than limiting them to traditional saris and scarves. “But, in India, the understanding of craft-led design for everyday wear is very different from abroad. For us, scaling outside was a little easier and faster than within India,” says Himanshu. “Here, we still struggle to assign greater value to crafted products. Everyday-wear brands with a craft focus have low visibility due to the unorganised retail sector.”

Add to that the exponential growth of the counterfeit market. Media reports say that, globally, luxury companies lose about \$30 billion annually due to the rise of fakes. The counterfeit shoe market alone has risen 1,200 percent in 10

years, from \$46.1 billion in 2013 to nearly \$600 billion in 2023, while, according to Statista, the fake luxury watch market is expected to reach \$9.3 billion in 2025. Computer-generated embroidery can now create 18 colourways in apparels, something unimaginable even five years ago. “Authenticity

is one of the biggest problems in the luxury market now. I have trained my staff and taken upon myself to educate customers and make them understand the feel of handwork,” says Mishra.

If counterfeiters threaten luxury brands from the outside, an equally pressing challenge lies within, in the Indian industry’s mindset to prioritise scale over craft and exclusivity. And change is painfully slow. “It took us almost a decade to build value chains for indigenous craft practices while keeping sustainability at the core—from tracing the raw material chain to identifying master craftsmen, and

creating IPs after in-depth R&D in each sector to establish an efficient system that truly supports artisans,” says Himanshu of ILLI. “Only now are we turning our focus towards scaling up the venture. India has nearly 2,000 Khadi Gram Udyogs, yet we still haven’t been able to channel them into producing world-quality products. That gap is less about skill and more about the absence of systems, design intervention, and market linkage—and that is precisely the space ILLI is working to bridge.”

The lack of a community to foster luxury enterprises has been highlighted by Paritosh Mehta too, who set up the Trunks Company with the support of his brother Prayank to handcraft artisanal trunks that range from trunks for bars, watches and games to even a former Indian cricket team captain’s bespoke kitbag. “If you go back in time, a ‘Made in India’ label was preferred over ‘Made in Britain’. We had all the pedigree, but no one valued it—we didn’t contribute to it,” says Mehta, founder and artistic director, who made one

Projected luxury market growth in India between 2023 and 2028 (CAGR)



of his first products for a former minister—a customised trunk for tea and coffee. “But that is changing. Today, it’s globally visible that luxury brands are using Indian aesthetics, materials, and crafts.”

In a handwritten note of appreciation, a member of a Middle Eastern royal family, who had commissioned a bespoke set of travel trunks for his private jet, mentioned that both he and his father (to whom he had gifted one) had replaced their legacy-brand trunks with those from

Trunks Company. One of Mehta’s trunks was recently auctioned by Sotheby’s for \$40,000, vindicating his conviction in a venture that was started in a vacuum—at a time when leather accents were unheard of—with only “the desire to showcase the best of India to the world.”

Agrees Vikram Goyal, founder of Vikram Goyal Studio and lifestyle-brand Viya: “Customers are now becoming more design-conscious, focussed on process and quality, what the design inspiration is,

“We can’t be everything to everyone. Selling a bag for ₹80,000 and an espresso cup for ₹500 are two different market segments altogether.”

GAUTAM SINHA, founder and creative director, Nappa Day



PHOTO BY AMI VERMA

“Opportunities for Indian luxury brands are tremendous. They can set the context and introduce a luxury product, because the tailwinds are in place.”

CHIRAG SHAH, principal, Avendus Future Leaders Fund