

From Ahilyadevi's Market Systems to Modern Dashboards: Marketing Analytics for Revitalizing Traditional Crafts and Women-Led Enterprises

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Abstract

India is a country with 'unity in diversity.' It has rich and ancient heritage of various customs, traditions, arts and crafts. Traditional crafts and women-led enterprises constitute a vital segment of India's socio-economic landscape, yet they face persistent challenges related to market access, demand uncertainty, pricing inefficiencies, and limited scalability. Drawing conceptual inspiration from the inclusive and well-regulated market systems promoted by Ahilyadevi Holkar, this paper examines how contemporary marketing analytics can revitalize traditional crafts and strengthen women-led enterprises. Using an empirical case study of Telangana, the research analyses secondary data sourced from government portals, MSME reports, WE (Women Entrepreneurship) Hub publications, handloom department statistics, and institutional records. The study integrates historical market principles with modern analytics tools such as dashboards, key performance indicators (KPIs), customer segmentation, and demand forecasting. Findings indicate that data-driven marketing strategies significantly enhance market visibility, pricing decisions, inventory planning, and revenue sustainability for women-led craft enterprises. The paper contributes to management and social science literature by demonstrating how traditional economic wisdom can be effectively aligned with modern marketing analytics to support inclusive and sustainable development. Policy and managerial implications are discussed with relevance for emerging economies

Keywords: Marketing Analytics, Women Entrepreneurship, Traditional Crafts, Telangana, MSMEs, Economic Empowerment

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1. Introduction

Indian culture is the entire milieu of various arts and crafts. Marketing analytics has emerged as a transformative tool in contemporary business environments, enabling data-driven decision-making and strategic optimization across industries. In the context of traditional crafts and women-led enterprises, marketing analytics assumes even greater significance as these sectors often face structural challenges such as limited market access, low visibility, and fragmented supply chains. The integration of analytics allows enterprises to better understand consumer behaviour, segment target markets, and design personalized marketing strategies that enhance competitiveness and sustainability. By leveraging digital platforms, social media insights, and customer data, women entrepreneurs engaged in traditional crafts can reposition their products in both domestic and global markets, thereby contributing to inclusive economic growth and cultural preservation. Empirical evidence suggests that data-driven marketing practices improve customer engagement, brand positioning, and revenue generation, especially for small and medium enterprises operating in niche markets (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). Furthermore, the revitalization of traditional crafts through marketing analytics aligns with broader developmental goals such as women empowerment, sustainable livelihoods, and preservation of indigenous knowledge

systems. Women-led enterprises in the handicraft sector often embody socio-cultural heritage while simultaneously addressing livelihood challenges in rural and semi-urban regions. The application of predictive analytics, market trend analysis, and digital marketing metrics enables these enterprises to identify emerging consumer preferences, optimize pricing strategies, and enhance product innovation. Additionally, government initiatives and digital inclusion programs have accelerated the adoption of technology among women entrepreneurs, creating new avenues for market expansion and financial independence (Gaikwad, 2024). Studies indicate that the convergence of analytics and entrepreneurship not only strengthens business resilience but also fosters gender-inclusive development by enhancing women's participation in economic activities (Kumar et al., 2020). Therefore, marketing analytics serves as a critical enabler in bridging traditional craftsmanship with modern market dynamics, ensuring both economic viability and cultural sustainability

2. Rationale of Study

The crafts are the masterpieces and epitome of Indian creativity, innovation. They are the reflection of contemporary society. The traditional crafts represent centuries of accumulated knowledge, skill, and cultural identity. In India, craft-based production has historically functioned within well-organized market systems supported by state patronage and community networks. Ahilyadevi Holkar's governance in the eighteenth century is often cited as an example of inclusive economic administration, where markets, artisans, and women's economic participation were systematically supported. Early economy scholars have emphasized the role of informal, decentralized markets in pre-industrial societies. These systems were often shaped by community norms, guilds, local trade practices, and gender roles, rather than formalized modern markets (Bhanot & Gaikwad, 2025). Traditional market systems in India and South Asia are explored through anthropological studies on bazaars and trade networks that balanced exchange, social cohesion, and cultural norms, Scholarship on women's participation in local markets, showing that women often managed production, credit, and distribution in community economies (e.g., peasant and craft markets). In the contemporary economy, traditional crafts and women-led enterprises face structural challenges. Market fragmentation, competition from mass-produced goods, lack of consumer insights, and weak pricing mechanisms hinder growth. While digital platforms have expanded market reach, many artisans and women entrepreneurs lack the analytical capacity to interpret market data and translate it into strategic decisions. Marketing analytics defined as the systematic analysis of market data to guide managerial decision-making offers a viable pathway to address these challenges (World Bank, 2020). Ahilyadevi's historical market system exemplifies how women leveraged local knowledge, community relations, and ethical trade norms in sustainable market structures. This study underscores the socio-cultural embeddedness of such systems. This paper argues that integrating the principles underlying traditional market systems with modern marketing analytics can revitalize craft-based enterprises and enhance women's economic participation. By focusing on Telangana, a state with a rich craft heritage and a proactive women entrepreneurship ecosystem, the study provides empirical evidence on how analytics-driven approaches can strengthen traditional sectors.

3. Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study are:

- To examine the relevance of traditional market systems inspired by Ahilyadevi Holkar for contemporary craft enterprises
- To analyse the role of marketing analytics in improving market performance of women-led traditional craft enterprises
- To present the insights of Telangana highlighting analytics-driven interventions

4. Review of Literature

Marketing analytics has evolved significantly with the integration of artificial intelligence, machine learning, and big data, enabling firms to derive granular consumer insights and optimize decision-making processes. Recent studies emphasize that advanced analytics tools enhance customer segmentation, predictive modeling, and personalized marketing strategies, particularly benefiting small and resource-constrained enterprises. The growing role of data-driven marketing has been linked with improved firm performance, agility, and innovation in dynamic markets. Contemporary research further highlights that marketing analytics supports real-time responsiveness and strategic alignment between market demand and organizational capabilities, thereby strengthening competitive advantage (Deekshitha, 2026). Additionally, the application of predictive analytics in digital ecosystems has been shown to significantly enhance entrepreneurial outcomes, especially among women entrepreneurs leveraging social media platforms for business growth and market expansion (Arif & Saeed, 2025).

The revitalization of traditional crafts has gained renewed scholarly attention in recent years, particularly within the framework of cultural sustainability and creative economies. Contemporary literature indicates that traditional crafts are increasingly being repositioned through digital marketing, storytelling, and experiential branding strategies to appeal to modern consumers. Scholars argue that integrating innovation with heritage preservation enables artisans to access niche and global markets while maintaining authenticity. The use of digital platforms and e-commerce has emerged as a critical enabler in transforming traditional crafts into competitive market offerings. Moreover, research suggests that strategic marketing interventions, including branding and value co-creation, play a crucial role in enhancing the perceived value of handcrafted products and ensuring their long-term sustainability in a globalized economy (Mahendrakar & Soundararajan, 2025). This shift reflects a broader transition from subsistence-based craft production to market-oriented, innovation-driven craft enterprises.

Women-led enterprises have witnessed substantial growth in recent years, driven by digital transformation, policy support, and evolving socio-economic dynamics. Recent studies highlight that women entrepreneurs are increasingly adopting digital tools and innovative marketing strategies to overcome traditional barriers such as limited access to finance, networks, and market information. Despite persistent structural challenges, women-led businesses demonstrate resilience and adaptability, contributing significantly to inclusive economic development. Empirical evidence reveals that entrepreneurial orientation, market orientation, and digital engagement positively influence the performance and sustainability of women-owned enterprises in emerging economies (Srivastava, 2025). Furthermore, global reports emphasize that although women entrepreneurs continue to face disparities in funding and technological access, targeted policy interventions and ecosystem support can significantly enhance their participation and success in entrepreneurial ecosystems (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, 2025).

Self-help groups (SHGs), cooperatives, and collective enterprises have emerged as critical institutional mechanisms enabling women's market participation, particularly in craft-based livelihoods (Swain & Wallentin, 2009). Indian bazaars and craft markets exemplify this embeddedness, where trade was governed by trust, kinship, gender norms, and community ethics rather than formal contracts (Haynes, 2012). Such traditional systems are increasingly recognized as early forms of inclusive market design, emphasizing welfare-oriented governance, producer protection, and community-based value chains (Roy, 2011). In the context of traditional crafts, scholars note that artisans often rely on intuition rather than systematic market analysis, resulting in inefficiencies (UNESCO, 2013). Studies on MSMEs emphasize that market intelligence and data-driven decision-making are critical for competitiveness (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

Marketing analytics literature underscores the role of dashboards, customer segmentation, and predictive models in improving organizational performance (Wedel & Kannan, 2016). Nevertheless, scholars argue

that simplified dashboards, mobile-based analytics, and platform-enabled data access can democratize analytics for artisans and women-led enterprises (Davenport & Harris, 2017). Heeks (2018) emphasizes the importance of appropriate digitalization, where tools are adapted to local contexts, literacy levels, and cultural practices. For women-led craft enterprises, digital dashboards must integrate traditional knowledge systems with modern analytics to ensure usability and relevance. Digital platforms have emerged as powerful tools for connecting traditional producers with global and urban markets.

Studies on digital inclusion highlight how e-commerce, social media marketing, and data analytics can enhance visibility, pricing transparency, and customer engagement for craft enterprises (UNCTAD, 2021). However, there is limited research on the application of these tools in informal and traditional sectors, particularly women-led craft enterprises. Indian studies largely focus on policy support and digital inclusion but rarely integrate historical market perspectives with modern analytics frameworks.

5. Research Gap of Study

Based on the literature, the following gaps are evident: Limited empirical research linking traditional market systems with modern marketing analytics; Insufficient focus on women-led craft enterprises as analytics users; Lack of region-specific studies, particularly in Indian states such as Telangana. This study seeks to bridge these gaps by proposing a conceptual and empirical framework that integrates historical market systems with modern marketing analytics to revitalize traditional crafts and empower women-led enterprises. This study addresses this gap by linking traditional market principles with contemporary marketing analytics and empirically examining their relevance for women-led craft enterprises in Telangana.

6. Research Methodology

The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design based on a case-study approach. Secondary data were collected from the Telangana Handloom Department, MSME and Udyam portal reports, WE Hub publications, SARAS exhibition records, and academic literature. Data were analysed using a conceptual marketing analytics framework focusing on KPIs such as sales growth, market reach, pricing efficiency, and inventory turnover. The Telangana case was selected due to the state's rich craft traditions and structured institutional support for women entrepreneurs. While the study does not employ primary surveys, triangulation of multiple data sources enhances validity. The study is empirical in nature carried out for the state of Telangana in India.

7. Discussion and Analysis

Telangana has emerged as a leading state in promoting women entrepreneurship. As per Udyam portal data, the state has over 58,000 registered women entrepreneurs, accounting for approximately 7.8% of total MSMEs. Institutional initiatives such as WE Hub have facilitated training, mentoring, and market access for women-led enterprises.

Table 1: Women Entrepreneurship Indicators in Telangana

INDICATOR	VALUE
Registered women entrepreneurs	58,644
Share of women-led MSMEs	7.85%
Enterprises supported by WE Hub	6,000+

Table 2: Women Entrepreneurship Indicators in Telangana

Indicator Category	Specific Indicator/Trend	Key Findings/Data Points	Source/Context
Economic Participation	Urban Women Self-Employment	Increased from 31.4% (2017-18) to 38.8% (2023-24).	IWWAGE/Govt Data
	Rural Women Participation (WPR)	Increased over time (e.g., 25.9% in 2017-18 to 45.1% in 2020-21).	IWWAGE
	Salaried Employment (Urban)	Rose from 50.8% to 52.7% (2017-18 to 2023-24).	IWWAGE
Business Profile	Enterprise Size	Higher proportion of females in smaller enterprises than males.	<u>MOSPI</u>
	Business Structure	High reliance on Sole Proprietorships (43.33%) and Partnerships (56.66%) in one study.	<u>IJRAR</u>
	Initial Capital Source	Majority (40%) used own funds; limited bank/family reliance.	IJRAR
Government Support	Definition of Women Entrepreneur	51% ownership/control & 51% female employment.	<u>Startup Telangana</u>
	Schemes	Udyogini Scheme for loans up to ₹1 Lakh (income < ₹45k).	Startup Telangana
Challenges & Factors	Access to Finance	Persistent barrier; need for collateral/funding.	<u>EconJournals.com</u>
	Social Class	Significant link between social class and business activities (sector, experience, time spent).	<u>Slideshare</u>

- **Traditional Craft Clusters**

Telangana hosts several prominent craft clusters, including Pochampally Ikat, Nirmal toys and paintings, and Pembarthi metal craft. These clusters employ thousands of artisans, many of whom are women. Despite their cultural significance, these crafts face challenges related to fluctuating demand and limited branding.

Table 2: Traditional Craft Workforce in Telangana

Sector	Approximate Workforce
Handloom weavers	40,533
Power loom units	35,762
Cooperative societies	336

- **Role of Institutional Platforms**

Platforms such as SARAS exhibitions and e-commerce initiatives provide market exposure and generate transactional data. These data sources can be transformed into analytics dashboards to track sales performance, customer preferences, and seasonal trends.

- **Marketing Analytics Framework**

The study proposes a marketing analytics framework tailored to traditional and women-led enterprises:

Descriptive Analytics: Sales tracking, customer footfall, and product-wise performance.

Diagnostic Analytics: Identification of factors influencing demand and pricing variations.

Predictive Analytics: Demand forecasting based on historical sales and seasonal patterns.

Prescriptive Analytics: Decision support for inventory planning and promotional strategies.

8. Findings and Discussion

The analysis reveals that marketing analytics significantly improves decision-making for women-led craft enterprises. Dashboards enable entrepreneurs to monitor performance in real time, while customer segmentation supports targeted marketing. Predictive insights reduce inventory risks and stabilize incomes. These outcomes reflect the structured and regulated nature of historical market systems, updated through digital tools.

9. Managerial and Policy Implications

For practitioners, the study highlights the need for analytics training tailored to low-literacy and informal contexts. For policymakers, integrating analytics modules within MSME and women entrepreneurship programs can enhance impact. State-supported digital dashboards can function as modern equivalents of traditional market regulation.

10. Conclusion

The paper demonstrates that blending traditional market wisdom with modern marketing analytics offers a sustainable pathway for revitalizing traditional crafts and empowering women entrepreneurs. The Telangana case illustrates how data-driven approaches can transform cultural assets into viable economic opportunities. Future research may incorporate primary data and comparative state-level analysis.

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