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Article

Analysis of The Current State of Consumer Demand for Handicraft Products in The Bukhara Region

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Abstract: This study is aimed at empirically analyzing consumer demand for handicraft products and their purchasing behavior in the Bukhara region. Reviving national cultural heritage, developing local economy and promoting tourism are transforming handicrafts into the vital direction in Uzbekistan in recent years. Thus, knowing what consumers want and the factors driving market demand are more important than ever. Under the study design, a degree and structured survey with questions of closed-ended format was carried out among 571 respondents. The findings reveals that the main consumer sector for handicraft products are the young consumers who aged 18–35 and individuals with an increased level of education. Many of the respondents indicated that they purchase such products as gifts in addition to reasons concerning aspects of aesthetics, culture, and practical value. Despite social media being the main source of information, purchasing online is still low. Consumer demand, on the other hand, is driven down by price sensitivity, a lack of advertising and competition from import products — the study found. Practical implications: From the findings, practical recommendations were formulated to develop market, design innovation, digital marketing, branding, and pricing. Overall, this research contributes to the scholarly understanding of consumer behavior in the handicraft market and provides a valuable foundation for future policy and marketing decisions.

Keywords: handicraft market; consumer behavior; demand formation; marketing strategies; digital marketing; cultural consumption; product design; branding; consumer motivations.

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1. Introduction

The market for handicraft products is increasingly recognized in many countries not only as a segment of economic activity, but also as an important instrument for preserving cultural heritage, developing the creative industries, and supporting sustainable tourism. The increasing economic value of the global creative economy has played a role in redefining traditional sectors- from handicrafts to fresh streams of value addition for new areas (UNCTAD) [1] in domain creation, especially for developing economies. With continuing growth of the economic and social importance of the handicraft sector, the scientific investigation into the behaviour of consumers, the formation of demand, and the reasons behind the purchase has become a hot research topic (Pratt & Virani).

Uzbekistan, and particularly the Bukhara region, is distinguished by its long-standing traditions of craftsmanship [2]. Traditional forms such as gold embroidery, silk weaving, wood carving, metal engraving, and carpet weaving continue to constitute an important part of the region's economic activity. In recent years, the strengthening of national policies aimed at supporting creative and cultural industries has significantly expanded opportunities to stimulate both domestic and international demand for handicraft

products (World Bank). At the same time, the development of effective marketing strategies requires an in-depth understanding of consumer needs, preferences, and cultural values in the marketplace (2025) [3].

This study aims to identify the actual state of the handicraft market in the Bukhara region by empirically examining consumers' attitudes toward handicraft products, their purchasing motivations, sources of information, price sensitivity, and key marketing factors (2024) [4]. These findings enable artisans, marketing practitioners as well as policymakers to better tailor their target markets and formulate effective market-oriented strategies in order to improve the overall competitive performance of the sector.

Therefore, this research makes an academic contribution to the recent literature on consumer intention in the handicraft products market, and develops a basis for further development of the cultural economy of Bukhara region–continent.

2. Materials and Methods

This study employed a quantitative research approach and utilized a cross-sectional survey design to examine consumer attitudes toward handicraft products in the Bukhara region. Structured questionnaires consisting of closed-ended items were administered both online (via Google Forms) and offline during June–July 2025, yielding 571 complete and valid responses for analysis. This methodological approach enables the systematic exploration of consumer behavior, purchasing motivations, and attitudes toward key marketing factors within a relatively short period (Cooksey).

The survey tool consisted of five sections: personal information, purchase frequency, attitudes towards handicraft products, information sources, and perceptions of marketing factors [5]. A four-point Likert scale was used in most items, this approach is considered appropriate to yield consistent, and stable insights on consumer behavior (Ferrando).

Descriptive statistical methods such as percentages, means, and frequency distributions were used to analyze data. Cross-tabulations and chi-square (χ^2) tests, when appropriate, would be used to test whether demographic variables would be associated with purchasing behaviors. Interpretation of results was conducted with careful consideration of potential methodological biases resulting from differences in responses between online and offline modes (Wu).

Prior to participation all subjects had been informed of the purpose of the study, and their responses were collected anonymously [6]. The collected data were only used for educational and analysis purposes in line with ethical research practices.

3. Results

Results: Apart from variables included in many domestic and international studies, this section offers a thorough and systematic evaluation of consumer perceptions, purchasing patterns and behavior regarding marketing related factors of the hand- craft products market in Bukhara region. The analysis is based on empirical data from a sample of 571 fully validated respondents, who completed a structured survey.

The survey was conducted in Bukhara, June–July 2025 and because of the accessibility and lack of internet survey possibly distributed both online and devices. Before analysis, all questionnaires were processed by strict data-cleaning protocols and incomplete or internally inconsistent responses were discarded [7]. As a result, the final dataset comes from a reputable and analytically sound body of responses, which serves well for extracting meaningful conclusions.

Of the 571 participants, 273 (47.8%) lived in rural and 298 (52.2%) urban enumareted centers. This even distribution of territory enables detailed and insightful comparisons across rural and urban consumers and creates a more complete picture of the regional handicraft market.

The gender composition of the sample indicates that 232 respondents (40.6%) were male and 339 (59.4%) were female, highlighting the predominance of women in the

consumer base for handicraft products an aspect frequently noted in studies of cultural and creative industries. The survey also encompassed participants from diverse age categories, thereby ensuring that the analysis captures generational differences in consumer behavior, preferences, and cultural engagement. Figure 1 presents the detailed age distribution of respondents, offering an initial demographic profile essential for subsequent analytical interpretations.

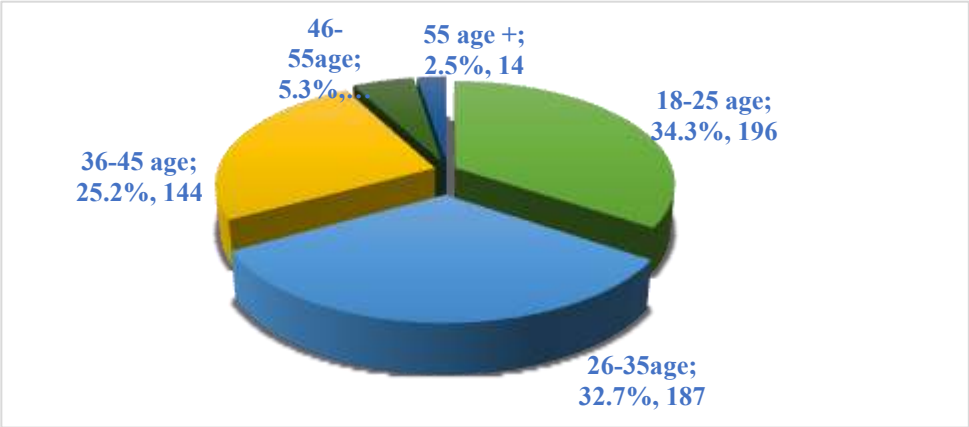

Figure 1. Age Distribution of Survey Respondents in the Bukhara Region

According to the data presented in Figure 1, the survey results indicate that the highest level of interest in handicraft products is observed among young consumers aged 18-35, who constitute approximately 67 percent of the total sample. This demographic trend underscores the necessity of tailoring marketing strategies specifically to the needs, preferences, and consumption behaviors of the younger audience [8]. The relatively small proportion of elderly respondents further suggests that this segment requires differentiated and targeted approaches to stimulate their engagement with handicraft products.

As is well established in consumer behavior research, educational attainment has a direct influence on individuals' economic activity and income-generating capacity. In this regard, analyzing respondents' monthly income levels provides deeper insights into their purchasing power, demand potential, and product preferences within the handicraft market. Such information is essential for segmenting consumers accurately and designing marketing strategies that align with the financial and behavioral characteristics of each group. The income distribution of respondents is illustrated in Figure 2, which presents a detailed assessment of their earning categories.

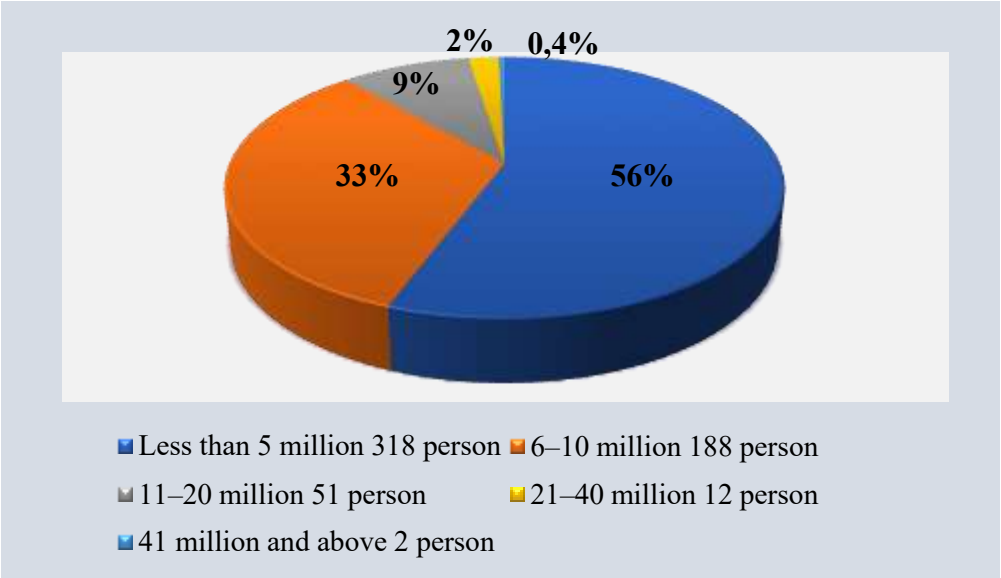

Figure 2. Analysis of Respondents' Income Distribution

According to the survey results illustrated in Figure 2, the majority of respondents 55.7 percent - belong to the lowest income category, earning less than 5 million UZS per month. The second largest group consists of consumers with monthly incomes ranging from 6 to 10 million UZS, accounting for 32.9 percent of the sample. In contrast, individuals earning more than 11 million UZS constitute only 8.9 percent of respondents, while those with incomes exceeding 21 million UZS represent a mere 2.5 percent. Notably, the proportion of respondents with monthly earnings of 41 million UZS or more is extremely small (0.4 percent), indicating that the handicraft market is not primarily oriented toward high-income consumers.

Overall, these results suggest that market strategies should be adapted to the needs, purchasing capacities, and behavioral characteristics of low- and middle-income segments, which form the dominant consumer base within the region.

The survey results show that 33.3 per cent of the respondents have purchased a handicraft product at least in last month period of time, and 27.1 per cent last purchased their product about a year ago. This trend indicates that purchasing activity in the sector is sporadic and scattered throughout the year [9]. Moreover, 16,3 per cent of participants said they have never bought handicraft products, indicating that marketing efforts have not managed to reach or interest a diversity wave of the population bloody yet.

Regarding how much consumers spend on handicraft products annually, 30.3 percent of respondents indicated that their annual expenditure was within 100,000 UZS, while 31.9 percent of respondents reported spending between 100,000 and 500,000 UZS on handicraft products a year. The results clearly show that many of the consumers are likely to indulge in the lower price brackets, or mass ranges.

Also,almost 21 percent of survey respondents annually spent 500,000–5 million UZS, so they are representa semi-loyal, mid-tier consumer segment. However, just 4,6% of respondents said they spent 5m + UZS per year, confirming how small the top segment of high-spending consumers is in the regional handicraft market.

It is noteworthy that 12.4 percent of respondents reported that they do not spend any amount on handicraft products [10]. This finding indicates that existing marketing strategies have not been sufficiently effective in reaching or influencing all potential consumer segments within the market.

The survey also examined the purposes for which consumers purchase handicraft products, and the results are presented in Figure 3. These insights provide a clearer understanding of the underlying motivations driving consumer demand in the handicraft sector.

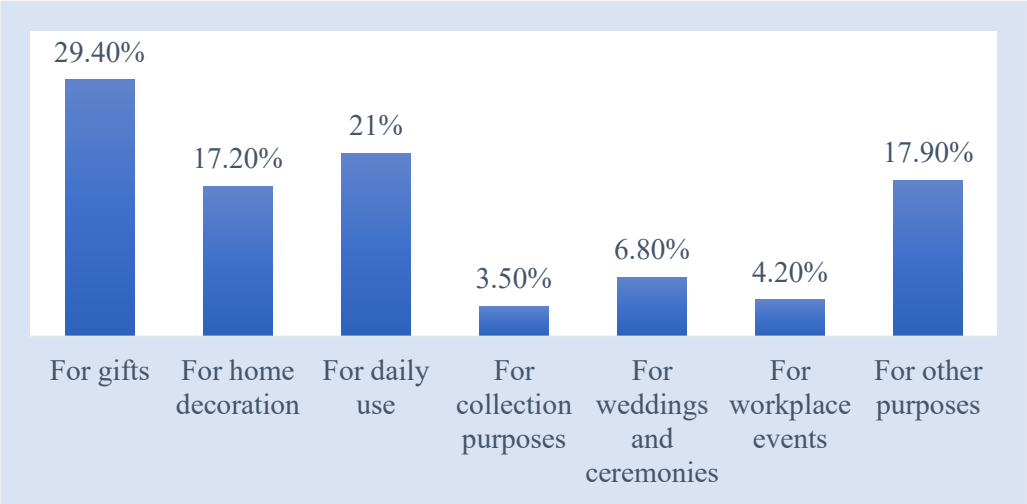

Figure 3. Analysis of Respondents' Purposes for Purchasing Handicraft Products

According to the data presented in Figure 3, the majority of respondents - 29.4 percent - reported purchasing handicraft products primarily as gifts, indicating that these items carry significant aesthetic and symbolic value. Additionally, 21 percent of participants stated that they acquire such products for everyday use, which reflects their practical utility and functional appeal.

A further 17.2 percent purchase handicraft products for home decoration, suggesting the presence of a strong aesthetic preference and an appreciation for traditional cultural motifs among consumers [12]. Moreover, purchases made for weddings and ceremonial events (6.8%), workplace-related purposes (4.2%), and personal collections (3.5%) illustrate that certain categories of demand are linked to seasonal, situational, or individualized needs.

Notably, 17.9 percent of respondents indicated that they buy handicraft products for various other specific purposes [11]. This finding underscores the heterogeneity of consumer motivations and highlights the necessity for deeper market segmentation and the development of more targeted marketing strategies tailored to diverse consumer groups.

Consumer demand for handicraft products is shaped by a combination of aesthetic preferences, cultural values, practical needs, and socio-spiritual orientations. From this perspective, understanding which types of handicraft items respondents tend to prefer is crucial for identifying the structural composition of demand within this market segment. Figure 4 presents the categories of handicraft products most frequently purchased by consumers, offering insights into the dominant product groups that drive market activity.

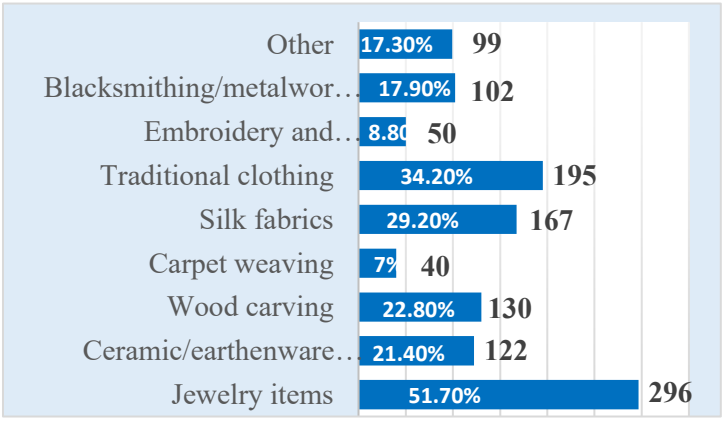

Figure 4. Analysis of Demand by Product Assortment

According to the survey results, the majority of respondents indicated a preference for jewelry items, with 51.7 percent selecting this category. This suggests that jewelry occupies a leading position in meeting both everyday needs and aesthetic values among consumers. Additionally, the relatively high demand for traditional clothing (34.2 percent) and silk fabrics (29.2 percent) reflects the continued cultural significance of national customs and the appreciation of traditional attire.

By contrast, categories such as carpet weaving and gold embroidery while culturally important received comparatively lower levels of consumer preference [13]. This indicates a need for further enhancement of marketing practices, product design, and promotional strategies within these segments to strengthen their market appeal.

Based on the survey findings, Table 1 presents a detailed analysis of respondents' evaluations across various question categories, offering a more nuanced understanding of consumer perceptions regarding the functional and aesthetic attributes of handicraft products.

According to the results presented in Table 1, the average distribution of responses demonstrates that 42.4 percent of respondents rated the assessed indicators as "very good," while 53.5 percent evaluated them as "good." This overwhelmingly positive perception indicates that consumers generally regard the quality of handicraft products as high. In contrast, the proportion of negative evaluations remains extremely low - approximately 4.1 percent - suggesting minimal dissatisfaction among consumers.

Overall, these findings reveal a strong positive attitude toward handicraft products, particularly in relation to marketing offers (such as complementary items) and product design, both of which received notably high approval ratings. However, the results also indicate the need for further improvement in product usability and functional attributes, as these areas received comparatively lower scores and may benefit from targeted enhancements.

Understanding where and how consumers prefer to purchase handicraft products is critical for identifying the most effective sales channels [14]. These insights play an important role in shaping marketing strategies for artisans and enhancing competitive performance within the market. Tables 2 and 3 provide a detailed analysis of respondents' views on various marketing strategies aimed at stimulating consumer demand for handicraft products.

According to the data presented in Table 2, social media platforms serve as the primary source of information about handicraft products, accounting for 41.2 percent of all responses. This finding underscores the growing importance and influence of modern digital communication channels in shaping consumer awareness. In contrast, only 1.9 percent of respondents reported receiving information through television, indicating that the role of traditional mass media in this context has become minimal.

Regarding online purchasing behavior, 39.6 percent of respondents indicated that they had never made an online purchase of handicraft products. This suggests a noticeable reluctance or slow adoption of digital commerce opportunities within this consumer segment. However, the importance of channels like Instagram (17.3%) and Telegram (13.8%), which now lead in online commerce, is very evident.

In terms of factors related to low demand for handicraft products, the highest percentage of respondents indicated that the primary reason was the note that there was low public interest in general (28.7%). On the other hand, perceived lack of modernity of the products was the least mentioned cause (5.3%). This emphasizes the importance of reinvigoration of both marketing and design areas and encourages extending communication efforts. Attractiveness of products through modern designs and better marketing can help position such products closer to changing consumer preferences and lead to higher demand.

Based on the results shown in Table 3, the most effective channel to promote handicraft products was social media (57.6%). This result confirms the high speed and

efficiency of digital platforms in targeting audiences [15]. Meanwhile, among 87 possible mediums on which to conduct a promotion, television was selected by only 4.7 percent of respondents as the least effective choice— the clear winner as the lowest-impact promotional vehicle. It means that it is time to start shaping marketing towards digital transformation and focusing more on online communication processes.

As far as demand-boosting strategies, pricing policy (21.5%) and innovative designs (20.3%) were pointed as the two top contents that respondents believe to be essential. These insights signal that while market price sensitivity remains very high, visibility on aesthetic and design-related features for marketers is also increasing. Finally, increasing advertising efforts in other distant or country locations (3.9%) was identified as the lowest priority, which may indicate a general sense that this approach is less effective in driving overall demand stimulation.

With regards to the level of interest in national handicraft products, most respondents (57.4 percent) said they were slightly interested. This suggests that current addressable market opportunity is being under-monetized. On the other side of the coin, just 3 percent said they had optimistic sentiments, which some experts say is a good sign for future market growth.

In terms of consumer motivation on buying handicraft products, "long continuous interest" was the most prominent driving force (44.7 percent), whilst advertising was the least (6.7 percent) influential factor. The implication here is that cultural values and local affinity are a much bigger driver in purchasing decisions than external promotional stimuli.

When we ask respondents to rank most important factors to consider at the point of purchase, product quality (29.2 percent), followed by national identity or branding (19.6 percent.) took top honors. It means artisans should set as their strategic priorities the most efficient ways of improving the quality of their products and developing powerful national brands. By comparison, 8 percent of consumers pick price and discounts, a much lower ranking, and it shows that consumers care more about quality and looks than cost.

In short, the results obtained from the survey and later analysis shows aesthetic consideration, cultural affinity and estimated functional ability of consumer products shape consumer behaviour in handicraft products market. The respondents had a favorable response regarding handicraft items, while advertisement through social media and the product design stood out as the main factors influencing their purchases. Buyers' motivations among the main purchase ground were: long-standing cultural interest; national identity of the product; and good craftsmanship seen as the three most decisive categories.

More likely, the findings also suggest that consumers still care about price and promotional offers, but less than they do about quality and authenticity. The key strategic directions for improving market demand based on these insights are innovative design strategies, enhanced digital marketing practices, branding initiatives, and product quality improvement. Collectively, these steps can play a significant role in attracting consumer interest and facilitating sustainable growth for the handicraft industry.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study provide deep empirical and theoretical insights into the key determinants shaping consumer behavior in the handicraft products market of the Bukhara region. The results indicate that demand for handicraft products is multidimensional, emerging through a complex interaction of aesthetic values, cultural identity, functional utility, price sensitivity, and the influence of digital information channels. This pattern aligns closely with contemporary approaches in consumer behavior research, particularly Consumer Culture Theory (CCT), value-based consumption, and Digital Marketing Adoption Models (Arnould, Price, & Zinkhan; UNCTAD)

According to the results of the study, the majority of consumers purchase handicraft products due to their aesthetic appeal, degree of national authenticity, and cultural-symbolic value. The fact that 29.4 percent of respondents indicated that they buy such products as gifts demonstrates the personal and socio-cultural significance attributed to handicrafts. For instance, these findings echo studies conducted on creative industries worldwide that have indicated that traditional craft increasingly finds itself re-interpreted as a significant element in the contemporary practices of consumption (Pratt & Virani).

Perhaps most importantly, consumers between the ages of 18 and 35 represent the most significant factor in near-market growth. This segment, which represents 67 percent of all respondents, shows an increasing interest of youth in cultural heritage. This is in line with policy directions guiding the development of the creative economy in Uzbekistan and the growing role of innovative design, digital marketing, and branding in creative industries, including the handicrafts segment (World Bank). The significant impact of digital technologies on purchasing behavior especially the impact of social media as the prevalent source of information (41.2%) reflects the migration of the core vector of marketing communications to digital media.

One significant takeaway is that trust in the e-commerce venue still has not been completely established amongst consumers. According to the responses, 39.6 percent of respondents had not made any online purchases at all, reflecting some caution or perceived risk about purchasing items online. However, the high rate of purchasing through IG and Telegram, in this case, does not deny the ability of digital platforms for mobilizing outreach. This indicates that artisans must focus more on improving digital channels for selling, easy online payment mode, upgrading quality of visual content, and enhance interactive communication with customers (Kaur and Singh).

Among the main reasons for low demand, the lack of general public interest (28.7%) and the relatively high prices of handicraft products (23.6%) stand out as dominant factors. Despite this, product quality (29.2%) and national identity (19.6%) were identified as the leading determinants influencing purchasing decisions. This dual pattern highlights several strategic priorities for artisans:

1. Improving product quality and standardizing production processes;
2. Building and strengthening a distinct national brand image;
3. Adjusting pricing models to better accommodate price-sensitive consumer segments.

These strategic directions provide both theoretical and practical foundations for developing marketing approaches that are aligned with consumer values and behavioral tendencies.

Overall, the findings of the study indicate that, although the handicraft market in the Bukhara region possesses significant potential, realizing this potential fully requires the adoption of innovative marketing approaches, the strengthening of digital communication channels, and the implementation of creative solutions in branding and design (2024). These conclusions offer important theoretical and practical implications for ensuring the sustainable development of the handicraft sector.

5. Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that consumer behavior in the handicraft market of the Bukhara region is shaped by a complex and multifaceted set of determinants. The formation of demand is influenced by aesthetic values, national identity, product quality, price sensitivity, and the role of digital information channels. The most remarkable aspect of the study is the dominance of young consumers (18–35 years), which implies that up-to-date design, great techniques and digital communication tools have to be involved in the elaboration of handicraft products. However, low trust in e-commerce, high prices relatively, and insufficient general consumer interest were recognised as the main barriers to development of these markets.

These findings lead to several recommendations for practitioners. Firstly, product quality and design improvements should be consistent with the key demand drivers which are attractiveness and cultural authenticity. Secondly, reinforcing digital marketing strategies and increasing presence on social platforms; this is critical in order to open up effective communication with consumers. Third, artisan branding and national identity is crucial for sustainable market development. Fourth, online sales infrastructure improvement streamlining payment systems and product visibility to increase consumer confidence in e-commerce. Fifth, more versatile pricing strategies and price-sensitive segments will help widen the market.

Finally, the study brings a solid theoretical basis concerning the understanding of consumer behavior in this market and present a path on how approaches related to strategies related to the development of the handicraft sector can be planned.

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