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Developing a Roadmap of Sustainable Luxury Brand Creation from a pre-colonial Indian Craft: A Managerial Perspective

Introduction

This paper aims to present a strategic roadmap for an Indian craft-based product to succeed in the global luxury market. This paper seeks to illustrate how traditional craftsmanship, such as Badohi, can be leveraged to satisfy the changing requirements of the luxury market and can be cultivated into a luxury brand with a robust Indian heritage. Furthermore, it underscores the opportunity to empower local artisans to develop a distinctive value proposition that appeals to contemporary consumers.

Literature Review

Carpet Industry and Its Waste

Based on IMARC (2024) the global carpet market size is \$65.01 million (Miraftab et al., 1999) researched that the carpet industry generates 935 million pounds in income annually in the UK. However, 7% of the income annually is lost as the industry produces huge waste during manufacturing processes and fittings. The Environment Technology Best Practice Program identified the landfill as the prime destination for carpet waste. Disposal to landfills is a huge cost for all countries. As the public becomes more environmentally conscious, governments introduce large taxes on dumping in landfills, and manufacturers are under more pressure to reduce waste and focus on proper waste management. Their paper documented the source of the waste and assessed quantitatively the generated waste in the entire carpet manufacturing value chain.

Indian Carpet Industry, Skilled Artisans and Innovations

Sinha (1982) stated that carpet weaving, a major cottage industry in India that employs many village artisans, contributes significantly to the balance of payment and exerts pressure on wages in underdeveloped areas of India. The industry has grown extremely fast in the past two decades. However, internationally, China, Pakistan and Iran provided huge competition to India. Skilled artisans in India introduced innovations that have a significant impact on craftsmanship and the lives of artisans. Roy (2007) asserted these innovations sometimes created conflict among Asian communities. Conflicts were absent or

managed well when social and political leaders intervened and when skilled artisans came from unconventional backgrounds.

Identifying types of Marketing Efforts for Carpets and Rugs

Majidi & Eidi (2016) through their quantitative research, argued that advertising is the most important in selling handmade carpets and rugs. They also stated that effective distribution, pricing and product-related factors are the other most important factors for marketing handmade carpets and rugs. The Iranian carpet export industry may get a significant boost by building e-commerce marketing capabilities. (Peikani et al., 2021) argued through a structural equation model the importance of contextual, causal, strategic and intervening factors for promoting the carpet export industry in Iran.

Carpets of Bhadohi, Its Outreach and Impact on Society and Economy

In India, the carpet industry is formed mainly in the northern region, which comprises Jammu Kashmir, Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh & Bihar. Bhadohi, in Uttar Pradesh, is a very significant centre of carpet manufacturing, which is characterised by knotting techniques and motifs and it has earned a position in the global market (Bhargava & Sharan, 2020). (Malik, 2015) surveyed 65 carpet firms in the Bhadohi district. He found North America is the major importer of those firms followed by Europe. Carpet entrepreneurs followed strategies like strengthening R&D, diversification of products, bringing investment, expansion of the sales network, developing value-added products, etc.

Knowledge Gap

Mihailovich & Taylor (2021) argued that considering the extensive legacy of Indian handmade craft-based products, India does not have global luxury brands. India is now a consumer of luxury brands.

There is significant literature available on the internationalisation of luxury brands and India's current challenges to win the international luxury market. However, there is a scarcity of research focusing on the process of strategic development of Indian craft into a luxury brand. This paper aims to address this gap in existing literature.

Methodology

The present paper is based on secondary data primarily from books, journals, magazines, websites, reports, etc. Our research is exploratory. Based on the secondary sources, primarily with existing theories of luxury brands, we conceptualised a strategic road map for building a craft-based Indian luxury brand for the global market.

Findings

Hypothetical brand idea

Bhadohi Karigaari is the name chosen for the brand to represent the rich tradition and craftsmanship of Bhadohi, also popularly called as Carpet City as it is the center of the largest hand-knotted carpet weaving industry hubs in the Indian subcontinent. The name helps position the brand as a symbol of heritage and quality in the global market, appealing to consumers who value traditional craftsmanship and unique designs. When it comes to luxury brand positioning, country of origin (COO) plays a crucial part in influencing consumer decisions to purchase luxury products. In this context, the COO should leverage positive associations with the luxury brand, offering a notable competitive advantage and superior brand equity (Roxana-Denisa et al., 2016).

About the brand

Rooted in the heart of Bhadohi, **Bhadohi Karigaari** is a testament to centuries of unparalleled craftsmanship. Our story begins with the skilled hands of weavers, carrying forward a legacy of artistry that has flourished for generations. We weave together tradition and innovation, honouring the rich heritage of Bhadohi while embracing contemporary design sensibilities. Each creation is a masterpiece, reflecting the opulence and timeless elegance that defines true luxury.

Vision

To be the leading global ambassador of Indian textile artistry, reviving the lost grandeur of Bhadohi handloom and inspiring a new generation of artisans while crafting exquisite handlooms that embody timeless elegance, unparalleled quality, and a profound respect for tradition.

Mission

To nurture a thriving ecosystem that supports Bhadohi artisans fosters sustainable practices, and inspires a global appreciation for the timeless beauty of Indian handloom.

Brand Identity

Positioning is fundamental to brand management for both premium and mass brands, functioning as a continuous strategy to secure a greater market share. For luxury brands, the focus is not on positioning but on fostering uniqueness through their identity. Identity encapsulates the tangible and intangible characteristics of the brand, defining its essence. It is cultivated from the brand's origins, its legacy, and all that conveys its distinctive authority and legitimacy within a particular domain of values and advantages. An essential aspect of luxury brand identity is establishing a distinct identity that additionally helps in shaping the identity of its target clientele (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009). Thus, concerning Kapferer's luxury brand identity prism, a brand identity prism is suggested along with brand identity guidelines for the hypothetical brand.

Luxury Business Model

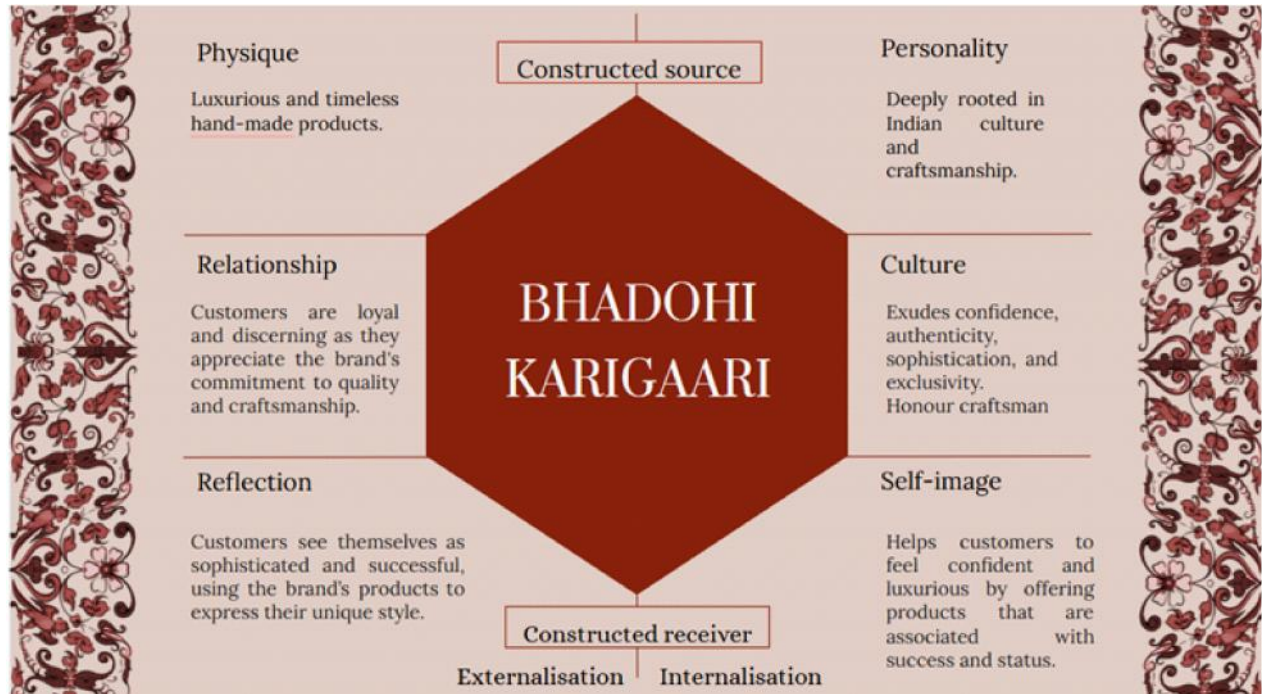
There are mainly 4 types of luxury business models based on products, perfume, luxury services, and luxury in high-tech. For luxury products, the business models are categorised into 2 main models: Pyramid and Galaxy. The Pyramid model focuses on exclusivity and scarcity, while the Galaxy model emphasises accessibility and mass appeal. Each luxury business model has its unique strategies and target markets, allowing luxury fashion brands to tailor their approach based on their desired positioning in the market (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009). For the hypothetical brand, a diversified pyramid model is suggested, which has a narrow entry range that would help it to create brand awareness while the midsection is wide, comprising the heart of the range, emphasising quality and luxury. The top range of the pyramid comprises the exclusive and limited-edition collection.

Bhadohi Karigaari Business Model Canvas

Startups are characterised by their unpredictable and dynamic nature, which

Goutam Saha, Sanghamitra Giri, Aitijhya Haldar, N. Sarmista, Sai Sweta Dash, Stuti Gupta, and Sayani Chakraborty

Brand Identity Prism - BhadohiKarigaari



Source: Author

Brand Identity Guidelines for Bhadohi Karigaari

LOGO Design 1

LOGO Design 2

LOGO Design 3

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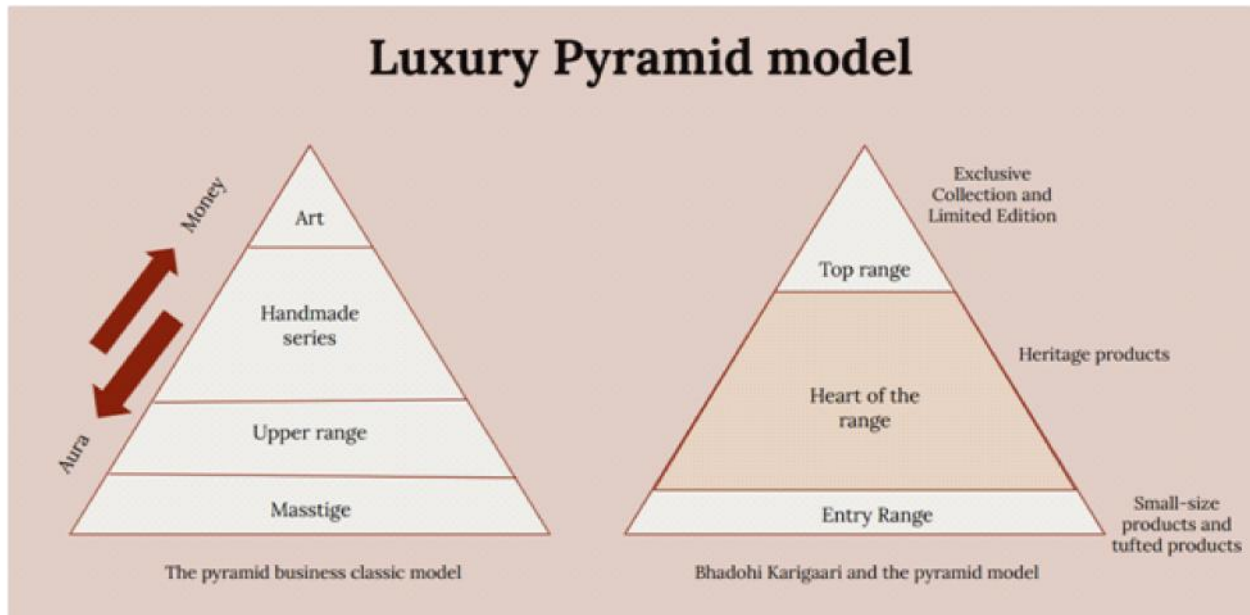
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Colour Palette

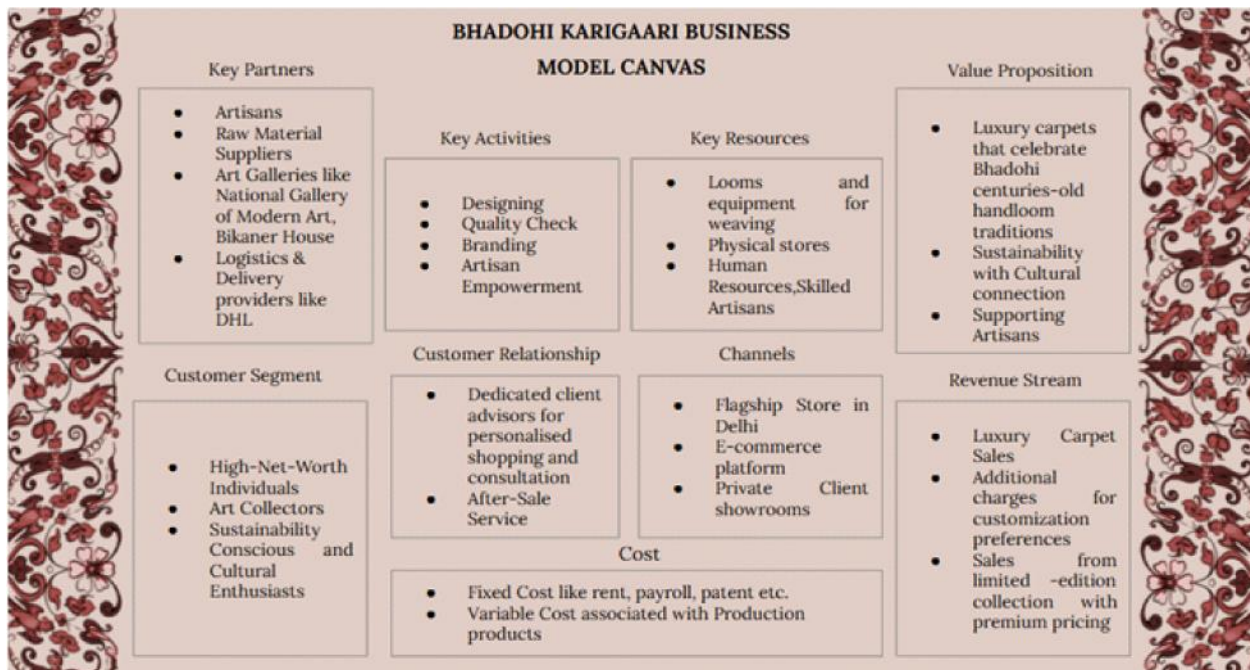
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Source: Author

Luxury Pyramid Model – Bhadohi Karigaari



Source: Author



Source: Author

renders a universally applicable business plan unattainable. There are several models of startups, but the Business Canvas Model is useful for understanding and analysing them. The Canvas helps evaluate a startup's

operations by visually showing its inter-related parts. This analysis examines the model's impact on key performance measures to better understand startups (Mikle et al., 2022).

Customer Segments

Bhadohi Kaarigari primarily targets high-net-worth individuals and art collectors who value luxury and exclusivity. They also appeal to environmentally aware customers and cultural lovers who value tradition and workmanship. These clients are looking for distinctive, high-quality products with a strong cultural link and a beneficial social impact.

Value Proposition

Bhadohi Kaarigari produces premium carpets that honor the centuries-old handloom traditions of Bhadohi. The brand prioritizes sustainability and cultural connection by collaborating with local craftspeople and employing traditional processes. They offer a personalized shopping experience with specialized client advisors and customization choices to accommodate specific preferences.

Channels

Bhadohi Kaarigari uses a multi-channel approach to contact its clients. They have a flagship store in Delhi, an e-commerce site, and private client showrooms to showcase their products and offer a more personalized shopping experience.

Customer Relationship

The brand builds strong customer ties through professional client advisers who offer tailored shopping and advice services. They also provide after-sales services to ensure customer happiness.

Revenue Streams

Bhadohi Kaarigari makes money via the sale of luxurious carpets. They also charge additional fees for customizing preferences and make money by selling limited-edition collections at premium prices.

Key Resources

Bhadohi Kaarigari's main resources are trained artisans, looms and weaving equipment, physical storefronts, and a strong brand identity.

Key Activities

The brand's main activities are design, quality control, branding, artisan empowerment, and logistics and delivery.

Key Partners

Bhadohi Kaarigari collaborates with craftspeople, raw material suppliers, and art galleries including the National Gallery of Modern Art and Bikaner House. They also work with logistics suppliers like DHL to ensure efficient delivery.

Cost Structure

Bhadohi Kaarigari's cost structure comprises both fixed costs such as rent, payroll, and patent fees, as well as variable costs related to production and product delivery.

This Business Canvas Model gives a clear framework for Bhadohi Kaarigari to better understand its operations and find areas for growth and improvement. By focusing on its fundamental beliefs and using its distinct capabilities, the brand may continue to prosper and contribute to the resurrection of Bhadohi's rich handloom tradition.

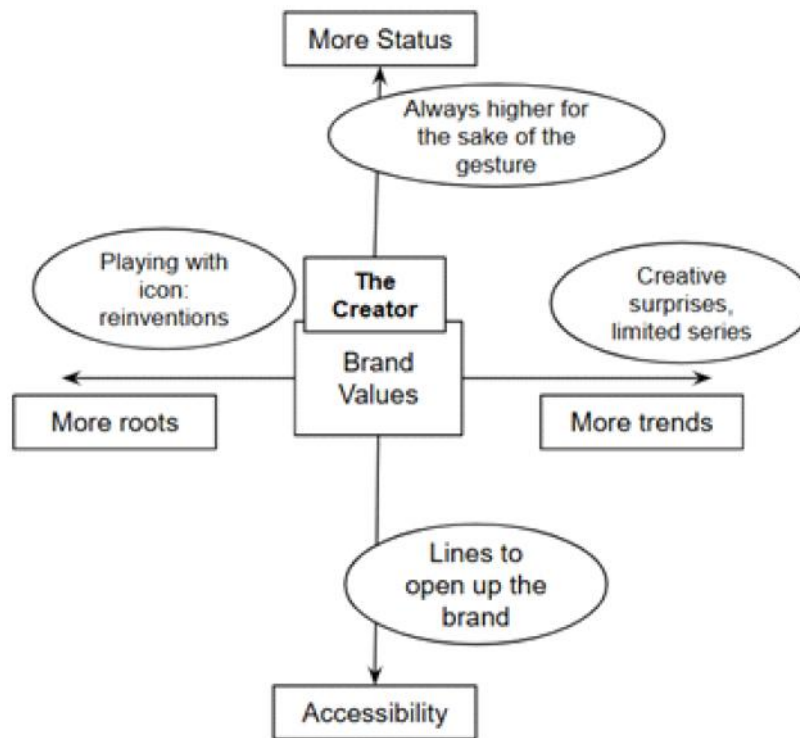
Bhadohi Karigaari Assortment Planning

The assortment planning is based on the principles of luxury brand architecture: poles and product roles (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009). Poles refer to the core values and essence of the brand, while product roles determine the specific functions and positioning of each product within the brand's overall portfolio. By carefully balancing these elements, luxury brands can create a cohesive and compelling assortment that resonates with their target consumers without devaluing their identity.

Sourcing

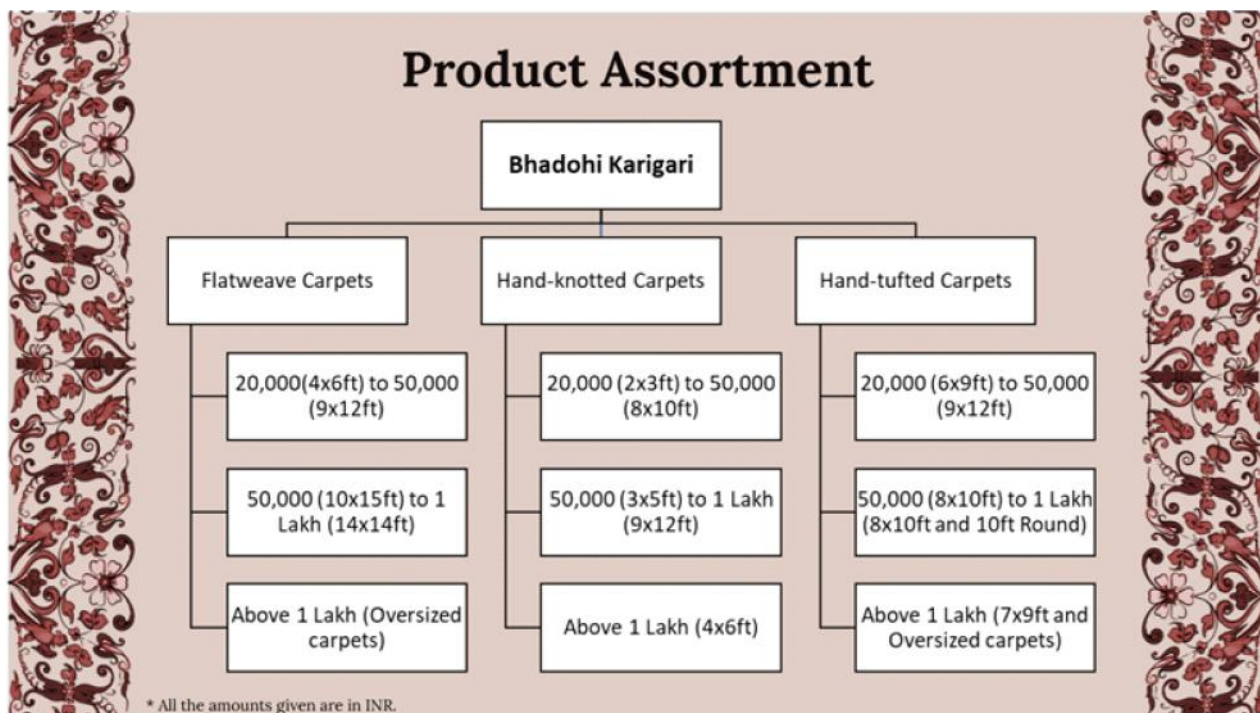
The primary basic material utilized in carpet production is yarn composed of wool. Yarn is sourced from local spinning factories or obtained from Bikaner and Surat via dealers. Tibetan wool possesses robust fiber length, excellent luster, and exceptional resilience. The New Zealand wool has a micron count of 36, a barb length of 100 mm, and is classified as type 128. British wool that meets regulatory criteria has begun to be accessible in the market. Over 90% of the yarn is acquired, dyed, and provided to weavers and small manufacturers via Merchant Export Firms.

Other than that, cotton and silk yarns are sourced from local vendors in Uttar Pradesh,



Luxury brand architecture: poles & product roles

Source: *The Luxury Strategy* by [Kapfferer, J.N and Bastien, V. \(2009\)](#).



Source: Author

Maharashtra and Gujarat. The key techniques used for Bhadohi carpet making are hand knotting, tufted and flat weaving.

Artisanal Training Programme

Artisanal training programs facilitate the preservation of traditional handicraft and cultural legacy, guaranteeing its perpetuation for future generations. These training programs can provide new employment and business prospects within the craft sector. Enhancing the proficiency of craftsmen enables local enterprises to enhance their competitiveness in both domestic and international markets. Following are the types of training programs that Bhadohi Karigaari can implement for the betterment of the craftsmen and their future-

standard for environmental management systems

- Sedex SMETA – Audit methodology that assesses a company's ethical and responsible business practices
- GRS – Global Recycled Standard (GRS) is a full product standard to verify and track recycled raw materials through the supply chain.

Marketing Strategies for the Luxury Market

Luxury brands should focus on maintaining high standards, delivering exceptional experiences, and maintaining an air of exclusivity by not openly selling products online. They

Name	Objective
Carpet Design with CAD	Ability to design more efficiently through the help of software
Carpet Yarn Dyeing	Technical Competence in dyeing various fibres and shade-matching
Natural Dyeing	Sourcing and Pre-treatment process
Inspection & Quality Control	Quality parameters, tests and performance assessments
Entrepreneurship	Registration required, current government schemes, financial management

Certifications

In 2010, the Bhadohi carpet industry received a GI certification to recognize the unique weaving methods of the region. This certification protects the Bhadohi carpet as a geographical indication, which means that only carpets produced in the Bhadohi-Mirzapur region can be sold in India under the Bhadohi carpet name. Further, Bhadohi Karigaari can strengthen its position in the industry by acquiring additional certifications like

- OekoTex – Textile and leather industry certification system that verifies the quality of raw, intermediate, and final products
- Good weave: assurance no child, forced or bonded labour was used in the making of a certified product
- ISO 9001 – Internationally recognised standard for Quality Management Systems (QMS)
- ISO 14001 – Internationally recognised

should target a select audience, create emotional connections, and maintain exclusivity to stand out in the market. By embracing these anti-laws of marketing, luxury brands can cultivate a strong identity and allure for discerning clients.

Key anti-marketing laws for luxury brands include not selling openly on the internet, keeping non-enthusiasts out, forgetting about positioning, and ensuring products have enough flaws to give them soul, making it difficult for clients to buy, thus increasing the hedonic value, protecting clients from non-clients, using advertising to build brand stories, communicating to those not targeted, ensuring the presumed price seems higher than the actual price, and setting prices based on luxury rather than industry trends (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009).

Marketing strategies include:

- Advertising in top interior and collector magazines such as Coveted and The Art

of Design: Luxury Home Interiors. And top in one of the top magazines as per the geographical location.

- Participating in major carpet collector events and exhibitions such as Domotex and The India Carpet Expo.
- Creating experiential boutiques in collaboration with reputable architects and interior designers, enabling clients to physically engage with luxury carpets and directly perceive their quality, can effectively highlight the brand's exclusivity and craftsmanship.
- Marketing through credible institutions.

"900 artisans from Uttar Pradesh, specifically Bhadohi and Mirzapur districts, weaved a total of 158 carpets for the Lok Sabha and 156 for the Rajya Sabha in the new Indian Parliament building. These carpets were meticulously hand-knotted for a total of 10 lakh man-hours. The weavers used ancient techniques to create high-quality carpets with intricate motifs of the national bird, the peacock and the national flower, the lotus. The carpets were designed to cover the floors of the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, each featuring unique colours and designs inspired by Indian culture and heritage" (Biplav, 2023).

Retail Atmospherics

Retail atmospherics is the deliberate design and alteration of a store's physical environment to trigger a certain emotional and psychological reaction among customers. The objective is to improve the shopping experience, elevate client happiness, and eventually boost sales. Overall, it acts as a marketing touchpoint for the brand as well as the products. The physical boutique of *Bhadohi Karigaari* is envisioned not only as a sales outlet but also as an experience centre creating a sense of luxury.

Upon entering the store, visitors are welcomed by a contemporary, sleek façade that is illuminated by a minimalist glass and steel LED structure. After stepping inside, visitors are welcomed into a spacious, high-ceilinged space that embodies the brand and its products with warmth and elegance. This is achieved through the use of a considerate colour scheme that includes deep reds, rich browns,

and warm golds. Elegant fixtures that are redolent of traditional Indian furniture emit soft, pleasant lighting, which creates a warm and inviting atmosphere in the area. The store's exquisite carpets are showcased in a lifestyle setting through themed vignettes that are scrupulously designed to resemble traditional Indian living rooms and bedrooms. Digital displays are seamlessly integrated into the décor, sharing product information and the brand's narrative. Intricately crafted Indian artifacts, such as sculptures, vases, and textiles, serve as stunning accent pieces, enhancing the visual appeal and profundity of the space. Carpet showcases and seasonal themes are the focal points of the window displays.

Pricing Strategies

In the world of luxury, the price is more than just a label, or a number; it's a statement of value, a symbol of status, and a promise of exclusivity. While in other markets, the price often reflects the relationship between supply, demand, and cost, in the luxury segment, price setting is a strategic tool that communicates the brand's identity and positioning.

- **Skimming pricing strategies for the heart of the range products:** Skimming strategy targets consumers willing to pay a premium for being the first to own the product or for the perceived value it represents. This strategy ensures that products meet high-quality and exclusivity expectations, maintaining consumer trust and loyalty.
- **No discounts and limited exclusive promotions:** Sales and promotions are common tactics in many markets to boost sales, clear stock, or attract new customers. However, in the luxury realm, these strategies are handled with extreme caution. Offering discounts can have significant repercussions on a brand's perceived value and exclusivity. Luxury brands often offer selective promotions or exclusive experiences to their most loyal customers, reinforcing the relationship between the brand and the client without devaluing the product. Private sales are also common, but their use must be measured and strategic.
- **Geographical adaptation:** Geographical adaptation is another key aspect of luxury

brands. They must adapt and respond to specific geographical conditions while maintaining their global identity. Regional price differences, taxes, import tariffs, operational costs, and local demand can lead to higher prices for luxury products. To avoid “grey market arbitrage,” brands must be cautious when setting prices, ensuring differences aren’t large enough to incentivise this practice.

- **Exclusive/Bespoke pricing for limited edition products:** In the luxury realm, rarity and exclusivity often equate to value, leading luxury brands to deliberately limit production and create a sense of scarcity. Limited editions, temporary releases, and controlled transparency are used to heighten desire and justify heftier prices. The psychology of scarcity is also used to justify heftier prices, and by limiting production, brands avoid market saturation by avoiding overabundance of their goods (Gutiérrez-Ravé Villalón, 2023).

Distribution Channels

Distribution channels refer to the pathways or routes that companies use to deliver their products or services to consumers or end-users. These channels can involve various intermediaries or be direct, depending on the strategy of the company. Distribution channels are an essential part of the marketing and logistics strategy because they affect product availability, pricing, and customer experience. Bhadohi Kaarigari includes 2 types of distribution: exclusive and selective distributions.

Exclusive Distribution: This will be done through 2 ways, which are retail and the e-commerce platform.

- **Boutique Flagship Stores:** Establishing a flagship store in New Delhi because of central connectivity for smooth transport, streamlined regulatory processes and affluent buyers and luxury decorators.
- **Private Client Showrooms:** Creating invite-only showrooms. These spaces would offer bespoke consultations. Clients can preview collections privately, ensuring an intimate, tailored experience that aligns with their tastes.
- **E-commerce:** Exclusive online boutique (website) redefines luxury retail by offering a

seamless, curated experience tailored for discerning connoisseurs. Accessing this can be by invitation only, ensuring an intimate, elite shopping journey.

Selective Distribution: A distribution strategy where a company chooses to make its products available through a limited number of carefully selected intermediaries.

- **Collaborations with Luxury Retailers:** Tie-up with OBEETEE or The Carpet Cellar for curated collections of limited-edition pieces. This ensures a strong export network and client base in international markets to showcase your brand’s craftsmanship.
- **Art Gallery Event:** Display the carpets as art pieces in renowned galleries such as the National Gallery of Modern Art (Delhi) due to artistic positioning, affluent audience and cultural connection.

Customer Service

CRM activities revolve around delivering an exceptional, personalized customer experience, maintaining exclusivity, and creating emotional connections with its clients. These strategies contribute to high customer loyalty and a prestigious brand image. CRM Activities listed for Bhadohi Kaarigari are as given table 1.

Personalisation: There can be several personalisations in CRM by using customer data to tailor interactions with individual customers. This can help businesses build better relationships with their customers and create happy customers who are more likely to return.

- **Bespoke Offerings:** Offering bespoke services such as personalized engraving of up to 3 personalised letters and made-to-order products.
- **Collect in-store:** Most of the stores offer a pick-up service for customer convenience.
- **Gift option:** By selecting the gift option at checkout, the order will be delivered in a roll with a signature knot closure.
- **Dedicated Sales Associates:** They can maintain individual customer profiles, providing personalized recommendations and updates about new collections or exclusive events.

Table 1

Activities	What Can Be Done
High-Quality Communication & Touchpoints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusive Packaging • Premium Customer Support
Loyalty Programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High-spending clients may receive early access to new collections & invitations to private events.
Omni-Channel Integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seamless Online and In-Store Experience • Personalized Online Communication
Exclusive Events & Experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VIP Invitations to celebrate their achievements • Experiential Marketing
Social Media & Digital Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content Marketing • Engagement Through Social Media
Data-Driven Campaigns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using customer data to target specific demographics with tailored marketing campaigns.

After Sales: After-sales service is the ongoing support and assistance a business provides to customers after they have purchased a product or service. It can include:

- **Making an appointment:** Requesting an appointment in-store with a dedicated client advisor for a personalized shopping experience.
- **Repair and Maintenance:** These services enhance the longevity of products, creating a long-term relationship with customers.
- **Aftercare:** Providing detailed product care instructions & tips for maintaining the quality & appearance of items.
- **Certificate of Craft:** The Certificate of Craft is a complimentary care service offering the possibility of benefiting from reparation services on a selection of items.

Risk Assessment and Mitigation Strategy

It is imperative to implement a risk assessment and mitigation strategy in order to identify potential hazards, reduce uncertainty, and prevent losses. Organisations can mitigate the risk of reputational harm and financial losses, enhance resilience, and comply with regulatory mandates by implementing a comprehensive strategy. The risk assessment and mitigation strategy for Bardohi Karigari is as given table 2.

Sustainable Ecosystem

The research paper “Providing Transformative Experiences through Art Foundations: A Conceptual Model for Luxury Fashion Brands” (Grassi, 2019) suggests that such implementations and improvements might make it possible for the luxury fashion brand’s art foundation to provide transformative experiences. The results have guided the development of a conceptual framework that luxury fashion brands can incorporate into their foundational strategies to enable such experiences.

To foster a sustainable ecosystem, the formation of a craft foundation is crucial as it aims to improve artisan skills, innovate techniques, and develop new designs through a dedicated training centre. This includes programs for new-age artisans to learn from master weavers and support for prodigies to enhance their talents and gain global exposure. Furthermore, the craft foundation focuses on developing sustainable product manufacturing processes, including models for dye bath water recycling and new finishing techniques. To further enhance the experience, plans are underway to establish a museum/showcasing area for the craft, inviting luxury consumers to immerse themselves in the world of Bhadohi handlooms.

Conclusion

This paper is a unique attempt to provide a strategic roadmap to build an international luxury brand

Table 2

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
Disruption in raw material supply (wool, silk, cotton) due to factors like weather conditions, pests or diseases.	Medium	High	Diversify raw material suppliers, develop relationships with local farmers, and invest in supply chain mapping and risk assessment tools.
Inconsistent quality of carpets due to variations in raw materials, weaving techniques or dyeing processes.	High	High	Robust quality control process-regular inspections, training to weavers on quality standards
Fluctuations in demand for Bhadohi carpets due to changes in consumer preferences, economic conditions or competition from other carpet-producing regions.	Medium	High	Diversify product offerings to cater to different market segments. Develop strategic partnerships with designers, retailers, and influencers to promote Bhadohi carpets.
Non-compliance with Indian laws and regulations related to labor, taxation, and environmental protection	Low	High	Ensure compliance with Indian laws and regulations through regular audits, training, and updates. Develop a compliance manual and communicate it to all employees.
Damage to brand reputation due to negative reviews, social media campaigns, or allegations of unethical business practices.	Medium	High	Develop a crisis management plan to address negative reviews, social media campaigns, or allegations of unethical business practices. Transparency and open communication with stakeholders
Disruption in carpet production due to equipment failure, power outages, or labour disputes.	Medium	High	Invest in equipment maintenance & develop a business continuity plan.

from India's heritage craft. India, a place with a 2000-year history in luxury commodities, which in earlier days attracted traders from the West, now has an image of a manufacturing hub on a

global platform. However, through this exploratory research paper, it is found that India has a huge potential to turn itself into a luxury epicentre. This aligns with the discussion highlighted by

Mihailovich and Taylor (2021) concerning India's emergence in the global luxury landscape, which explores India's potential to become a significant force in the 21st-century luxury world. Additionally, more empirical research is needed along with a few conceptual papers that will be essential to establish a robust model as well as validate the proposed framework.

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