

DIVERSE VOICES, IMPACTFUL DESIGNS:
BROADENING GRAPHIC DESIGN HORIZONS: OUTCOMES

| GRDS 301

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Artisan practices in contemporary design and culture.

Understanding the Problem

Across India, artisans have shaped the country's cultural and material identity for centuries. Their crafts carry generations of knowledge, unique regional symbolism, and deeply human intention. They are storytellers, cultural carriers, and invisible infrastructure within India's artistic and economic history. Today, however, these communities are widely excluded from the mainstream design and economic dialogue.

Due to colonization, the rise of industrialization, and globalization, traditional artisan systems have been devalued and displaced. Where India once contributed nearly 25% of the world's industrial output (Maddison, 2003), much of this handmade economy has become fragmented and unsupported. Artisans now account for the second-largest workforce in India—yet less than 10% have access to formal finance (Kula Conclave). While organizations like AIACA exist to support them, many artisans are unaware these systems are even there.

Through my research, journey maps, and empathy exploration, I identified one recurring truth: artisans feel invisible. They are proud of their craft but uncertain about their place in the future. Many feel misunderstood, underpaid, and forced to work with middlemen who take most of the credit and profit. On the other side, consumers, travelers, and even businesses often fail to recognize the depth of knowledge and cultural legacy behind these handmade goods.

Assumptions

- Handcrafted goods are perceived as abundant and easily available, thus economically undervalued and labor under-compensated.
- Limited understanding among consumers about the skill, labor, and cultural heritage embedded in artisanal practices.
- Consumers often assume artisans receive adequate compensation for their labor and that cultural practices will continue naturally without deliberate support.
- Artisans believe that their work and skill are increasingly marginalized, undervalued economically, and culturally overlooked.
- There's a sentiment among artisans that younger generations may not pursue these crafts due to unsustainable economic returns.
- Artisans believe there are no accessible systems designed for them.
- Many artisans think support only exists for medium-sized enterprises or urban markets—not for them.
- From social media listening and anecdotal observations, artisans expressed feeling invisible, ignored, and unsure about where to turn for help.
- They often assume their lack of formal education or digital knowledge excludes them from participating in modern marketplaces.
- There is also fear of being exploited when opportunities do arise, especially through intermediaries or third-party platforms.
- Businesses assume artisan connections are difficult to access and navigate.

Challenges

- Most artisans lack access to digital tools, formal education, and entrepreneurial knowledge.
- Language, and infrastructure gaps limit accessibility and how they can seek support.
- They face emotional exhaustion and a deep sense of cultural invisibility.
- Consumers and businesses lack exposure to artisan stories, and context.
- Business and artisans lack an acknowledged avenue to partake in ethical hiring/partnerships

Gaps

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- **Accessibility**
- Many digital platforms remain out of reach due to artisans' limited internet access, literacy, or language barriers.
- Premium pricing on ethical platforms limits consumer diversity and alienates budget-conscious buyers.
- In-person platforms require fees, materials, and infrastructure that many artisans cannot afford or access consistently.
- **Awareness & Education**
- Artisans often remain unaware of organizations like AIACA or resources like 200 Million Artisans due to fragmented outreach and limited network access.
- Consumers lack understanding of craft origin, labor, and value—resulting in commodification or preference for cheaper alternatives.
- Entrepreneurs and brands often operate in silos, unaware of best practices in equitable collaboration or cultural sensitivity.
- **Insights from Case Stories & Reports**
- Business of Handmade case stories show artisans feel empowered when they're included in decision-making and when their labor is understood as emotional, not just material.
- AIACA and 200 Million Artisans identify lack of education—not just access—as a root challenge: artisans are often invited to platforms they don't understand or trust.
- Kula and India Craft House succeed where trust, branding, and educational communication are prioritized.

Opportunities - what & why

Based on all of these insights, I've identified several specific opportunities to make this ecosystem more inclusive, supportive, and curiosity-driven:

- Posters + Matchbox + Newspaper flyer Campaigns — Artisans often engage with simple, everyday materials. A poster or matchbox in their local language with a QR code and phone number can offer information about programs, upcoming workshops, or financial tools. This approach meets artisans where they are—literally—and invites them into systems they didn't know existed.
- Skill-Building Workshops — Hosting monthly gatherings for artisans (led by an NGO extension of AIACA) offers an informal, community-based way to build entrepreneurial skills and digital confidence. This also helps artisans connect with each other and feel supported.
- Social Media Campaign — Many travelers and locals naturally find themselves buying from or photographing artisans. Why not create a way for them to engage, document and share artisan stories—This adds visibility, authenticity & cultural literacy.
- Ethical Business Directory — Business owners looking to hire artisans often lack a trustworthy, ethical route. A platform that verifies artisans, helps businesses write fair contracts, and provides contact directly reduces barriers and builds transparent relationships.
- Subscription Box + Newsletter — For curious consumers, a monthly story featuring one artisan/artisaan family, their craft's cultural history, and a small handmade object becomes a doorway into deeper respect. This can include phrases in their native language, translated stories, and a message from the artisan. This could engage with consumers and help bring the humanistic aspect to these artisans increasing awareness, and sentiment. This also creates a doorway to connect these consumers to registered artisans to further conversation in either purchase or a business endeavour creating new jobs and new interest to essentially support the community.

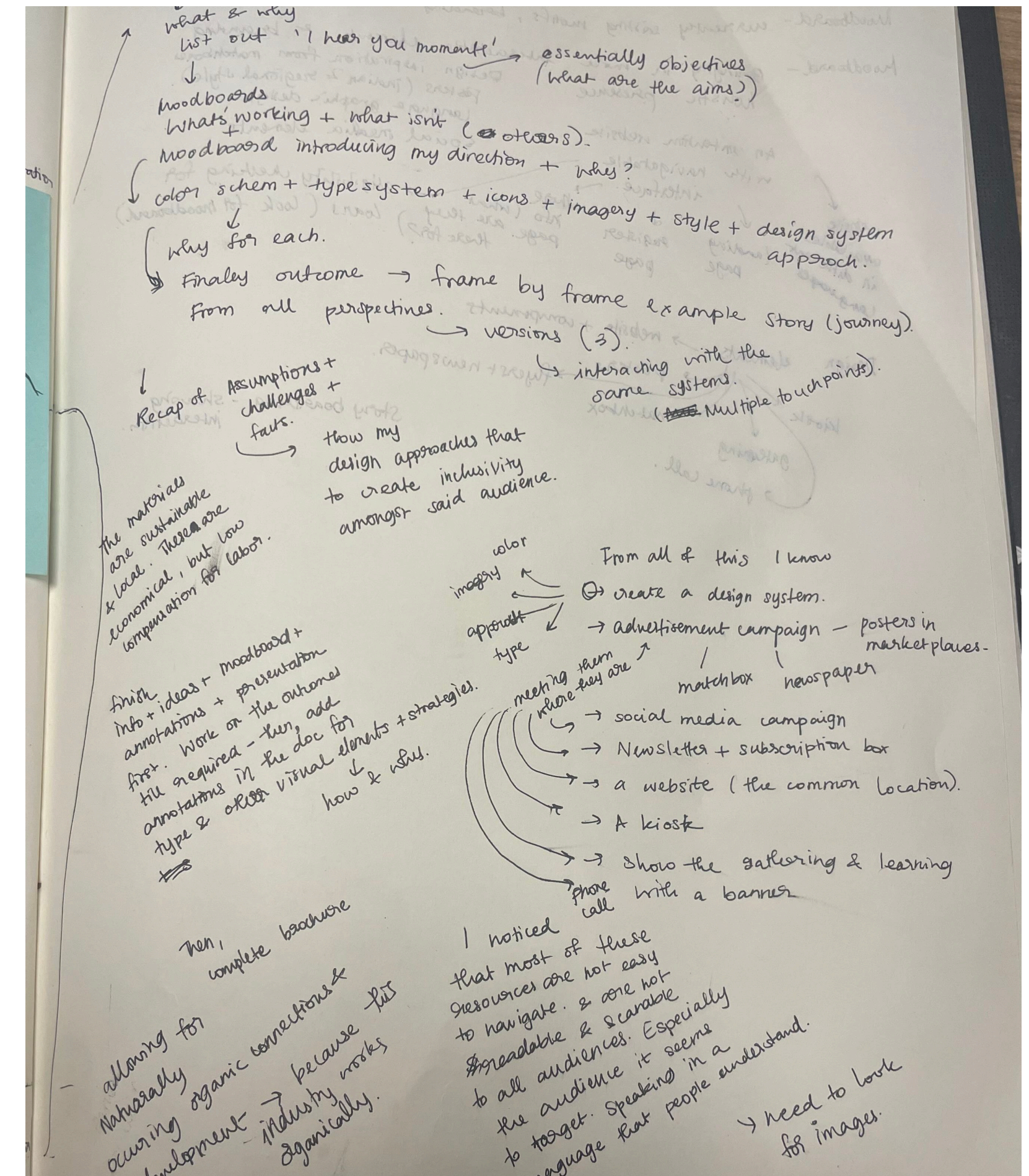
Each of these touchpoints is grounded in inclusive design and shaped directly by empathy and audience mapping. They consider what different users need: literacy, access, trust, consistency, and emotional connection. But most importantly better access to information. All these touchpoints can be accessed and interacted with by any of the stakeholders (artisans, businesses, shops, and consumers) in this community, giving them choice and preference control.

Ideation

In class, we were told to let our research lead the tone and form of our work. That's what I focused on.

- From the very beginning, my research pointed to the absence of connection: artisans are not lacking talent—they are lacking visibility, support, and access. Journey maps showed frustration, hopelessness, and resignation. It made clear that artisans want to keep doing what they love, but they need someone to meet them halfway.
- So I started ideating around support, visibility, and education. I didn't want to create a complex app that assumed high digital access. I wanted multiple, simple touchpoints that feel familiar, warm, and open.
- That's when I began thinking in layers:
 - Printed and physical formats for better accessibility
 - Web-based portals as a space for resources, creating a network and interactions
 - Story-driven, emotional channels for consumers.
 - Participation-based tools for consumers.

I asked myself how I could keep this experience sensitive to literacy, regional language, mobile access, and the emotional experience of being seen. I considered different learning styles—visual, oral, tactile. I built every part of this system to adapt across those needs.



Outcome Proposal statement

An inclusive ecosystem extension of the existing All India Artisans and Craftworkers Welfare Association (AIACA) framework to holistically address critical gaps affecting Indian artisans—economic marginalization, lack of visibility, and exclusion. By strategically fostering active collaboration among artisans, businesses, and consumers, this system aims to amplify artisans' voices, provide better access to resources, and stimulate meaningful economic and cultural engagement. The initiative prioritizes artisans' autonomy, enhances ethical transparency for businesses, enriches consumer understanding and interactions to amplify authentic storytelling, thus re-centering artisans as valued participants in India's contemporary cultural and economic dialogues.

Outcomes Validated - Inclusive Design principles

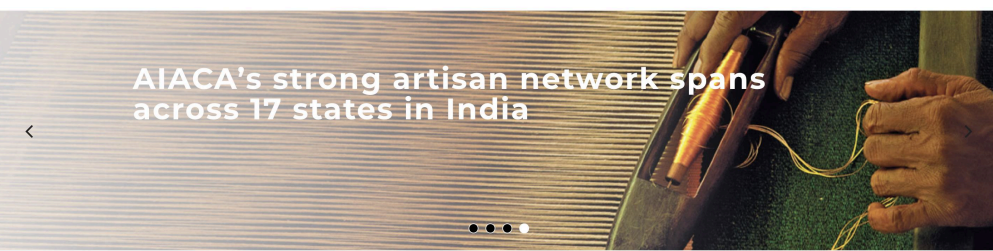
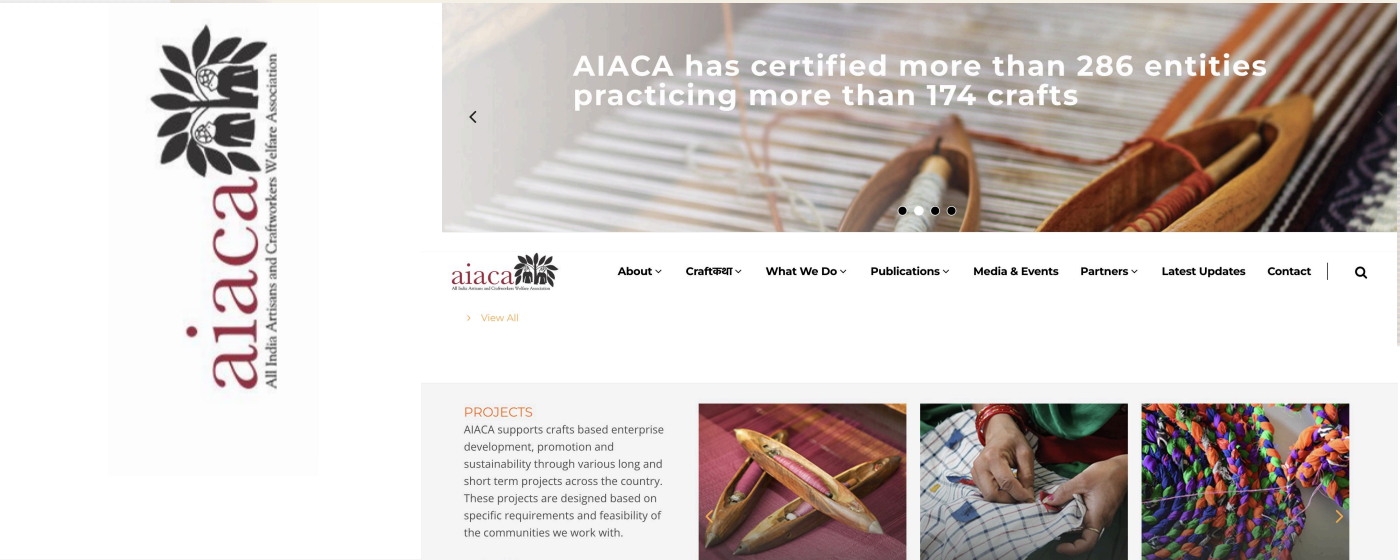
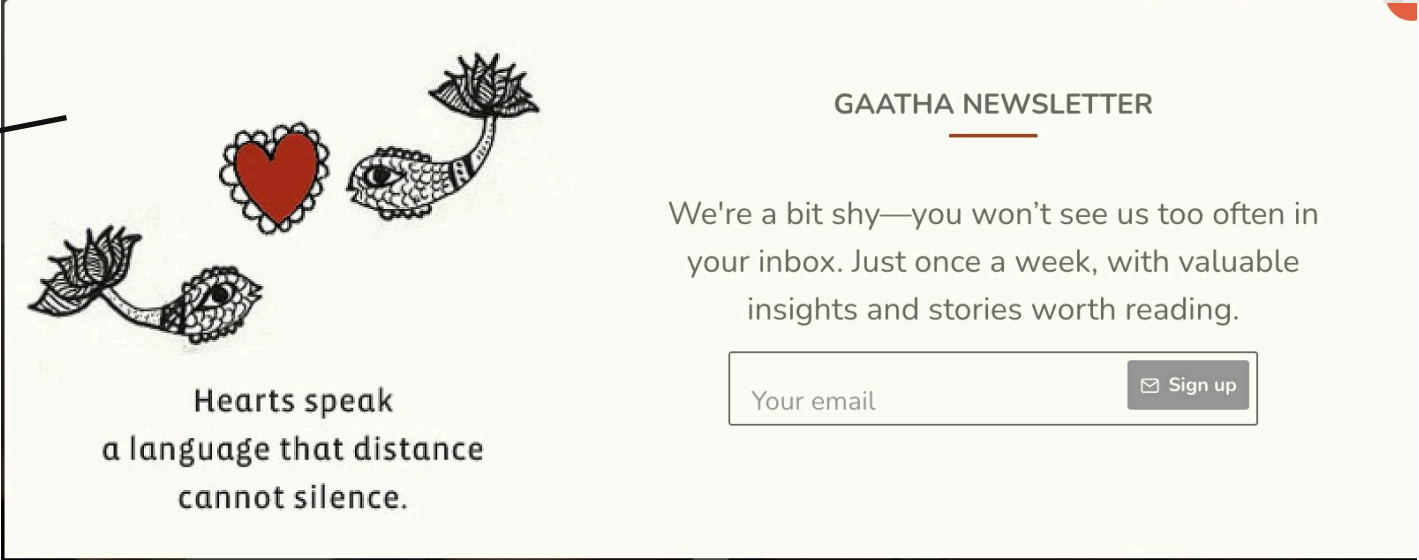
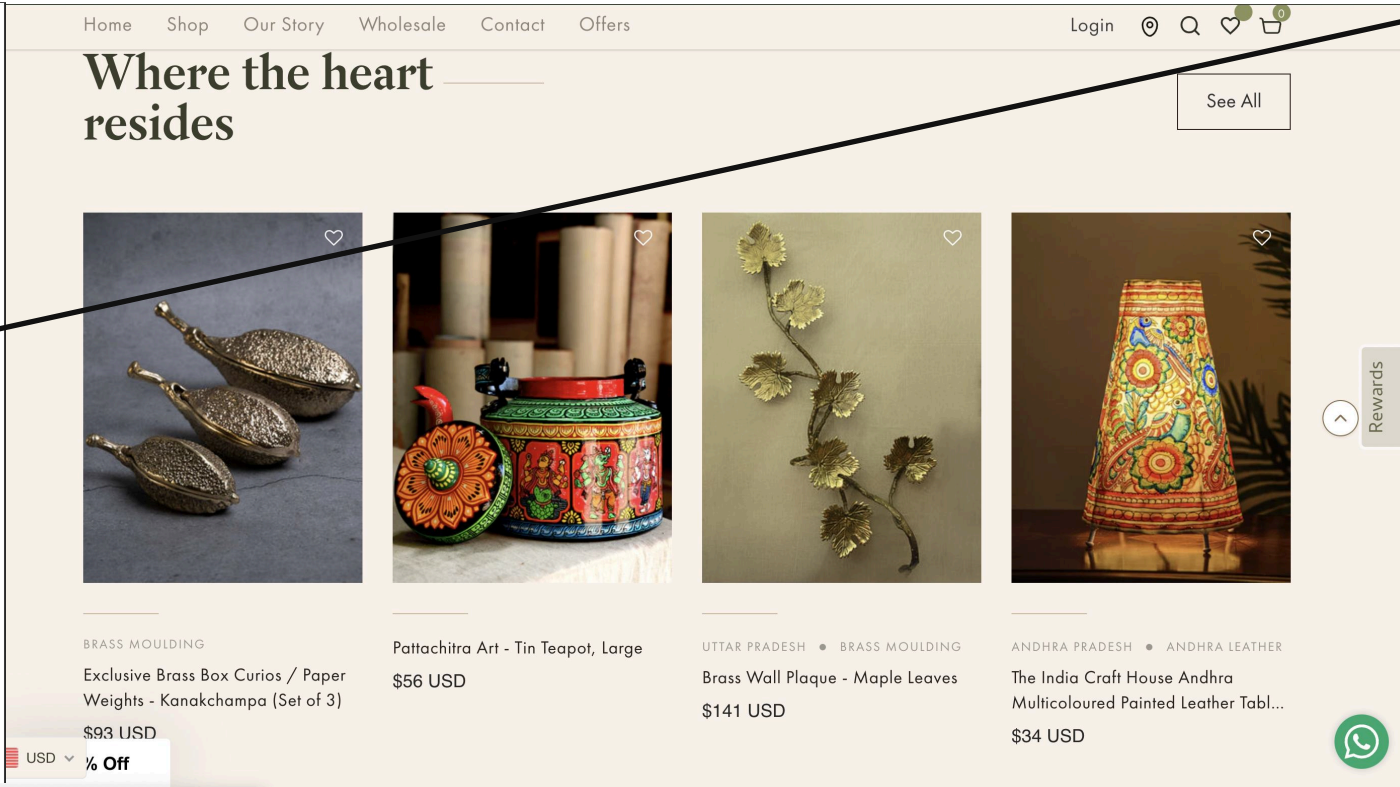
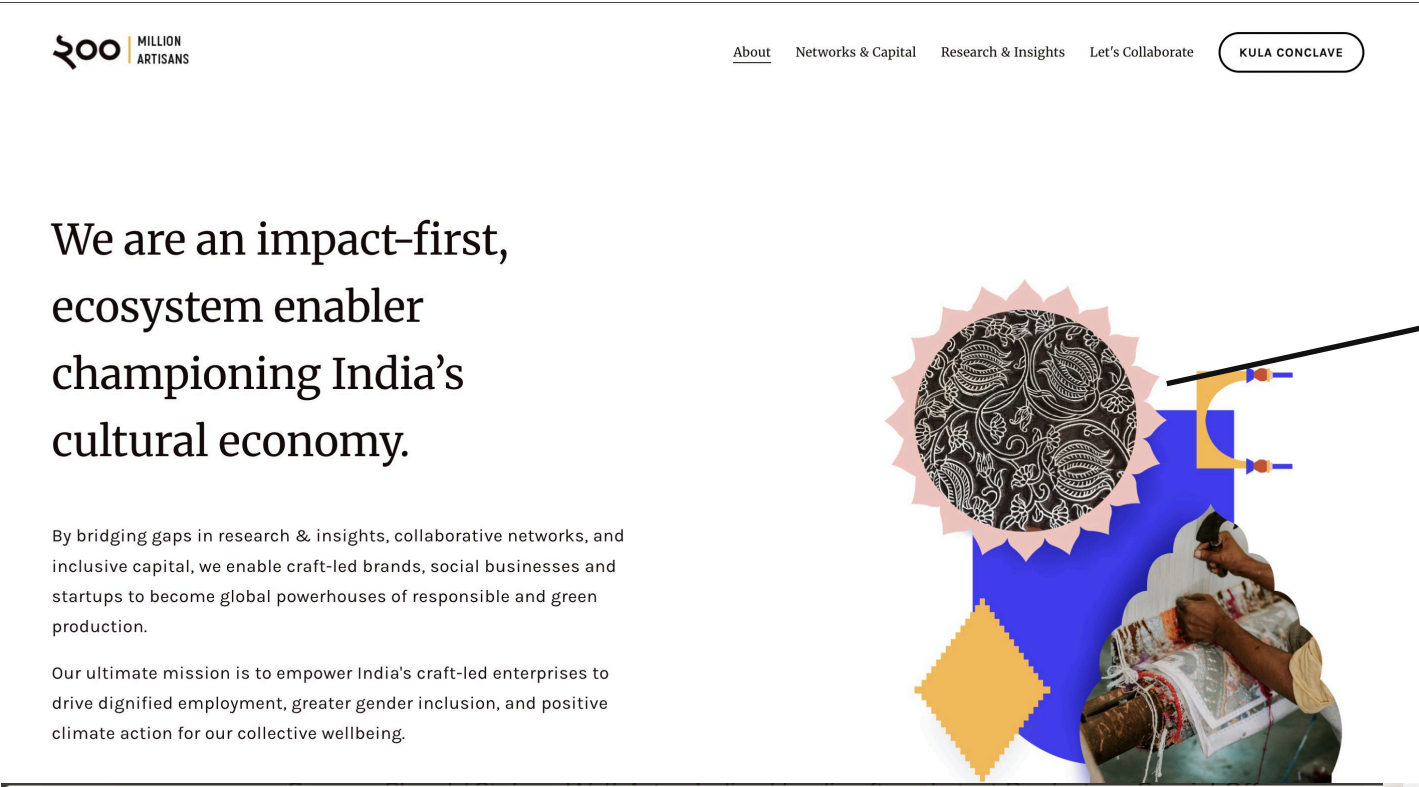
- Provide Comparable Experience:
Different people in said ecosystem get the same core information, just in different formats: posters, audio (phone call), matchboxes, QR links, community meetings, and social media. These options help people engage in the way that suits them best.
- Give Control:
Users—especially artisans—choose how they want to participate. They can opt into storytelling, request support, or attend a workshop. There is no one fixed entry point.
- Offer Choice:
From a matchbox to a navigational website, the system offers many paths. consumers can share stories, help connect artisans to the ngo, subscribe to the monthly newsletter/package, businesses can ethically connect. The system adapts to the complexity and informality of people's lives.
- Consider Situation:
This design recognizes that many artisans don't have steady electricity, internet, or formal education. That's why it includes offline methods, spoken instructions, and local languages.
- Be Consistent:
All touchpoints follow the same visual system: typography, color, icons, and layout cues repeat to build trust and recognition.
- Prioritize Content:
Content comes from the journey maps, I found that there is lack of information, frustration, and lack of active engagement in all aspects, so that is my focus.
- Add Value:
An attempt at a long-term support system. It brings value to artisans by helping them grow. It gives consumers a real relationship with what they buy. It offers businesses a new way to build ethically. Eventually allowing artisans to improve their quality of life.

Moodboard - existing strong digital presence

In terms of strategies and visual language, the existing design solutions focus on a larger digital presence and approach the problem by personally getting an artisan on board rather than opening up the platform to foster community and have a higher reach. Their digital presence often doesn't reflect the authentic richness that artisans in India have a huge commitment to. They have a commitment to mastery, and have invested many years to their craft. The readability and scanability is good, however it doesn't do a good job at directly interacting with the programme and doesn't have intuitive navigation. It either only converses with the business owners or has a holistic programme but lacks CTAs. The visual language also doesn't necessarily scream hand crafted objects made with love and precision.

colors and motifs are not very representative of the actual shape and form these crafts and objects take

Does a good job at impactful messaging, encouraging people consumers and business owners to get involved



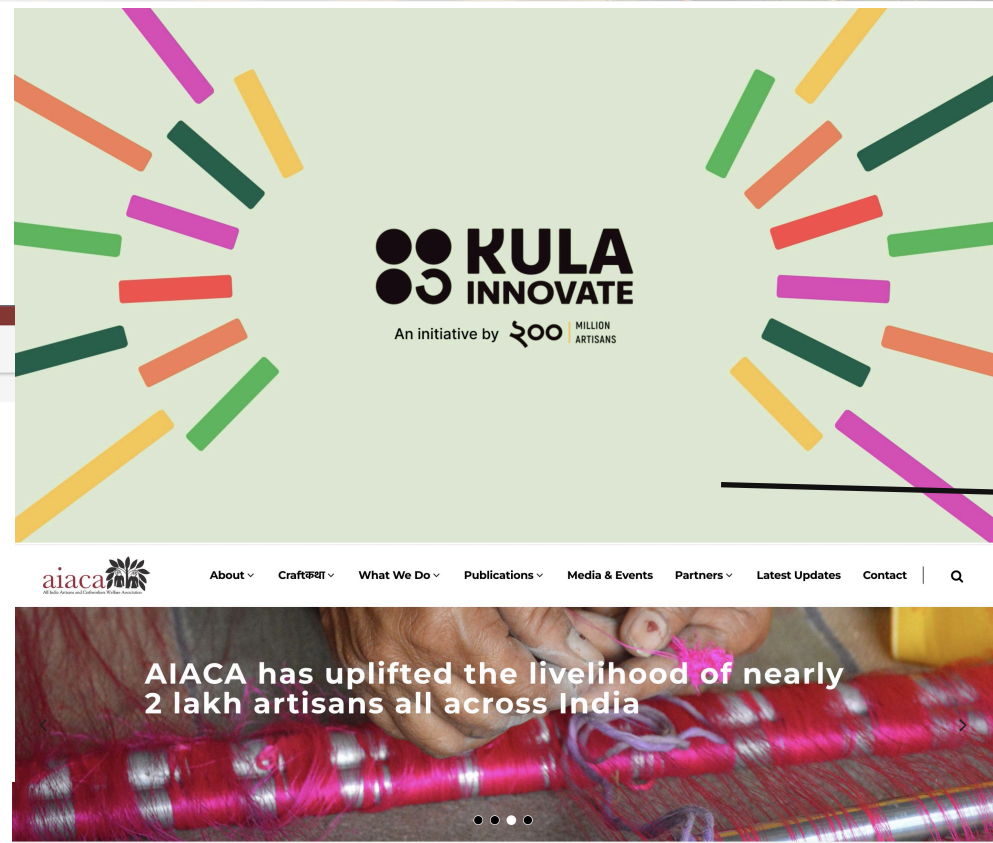
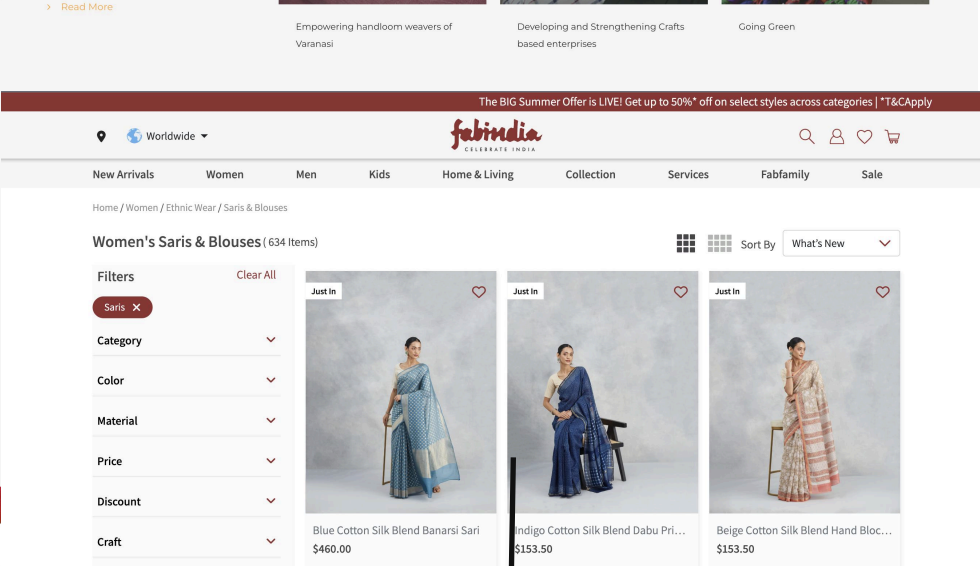
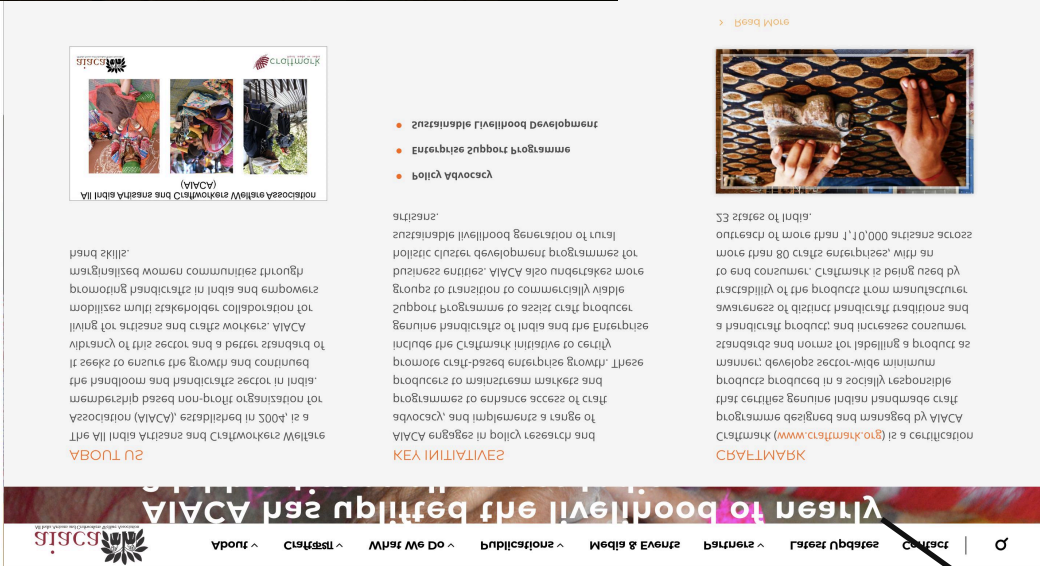
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Our very own newsletter, delivered to you only when we have something important to say.

Kural in the Tamil language, means "voice".



Very good introduction of language, but these websites and avenues target a more literate population and only have information in English.

There is a very strong digital presence, in terms of shops and organizations, inviting people to know more through their newsletters.

The layout and colors are very plain, possibly to keep focus on the content, but I noticed that there aren't clear calls to actions, if I was a business owner or an artisan, I wouldn't know where to find this support.

Overall, I feel like the design needs to foster more involvement from all parties and not just present information

This type of branding is targeted more toward business owners

Moodboard - visual and strategic direction

From further research, I found that people feel excluded due to the lack of familiarity, introducing new branding and moving to the digital realm maybe does a good job at targeting an already interested, aware population. Involving people at the grassroots level and providing access to information and resources would mean that we need to first initiate them into it, and this requires familiarity, understandability and approachable design. I think it revolves around the realms of inclusivity and accessibility. Staying true to the message, and the people through visual language and content and language became a priority. This reminded me of the age old methods of advertising and campaigning which still exist in India today. Painted posters, posters, matchboxes and newspapers. These are all common methods of communication that people are familiar with. This lead my approach.



Painterly motifs in
campaigns and
advertisements - keeping
the cultural design
language alive



Color scheme seems to be leaning more toward yellows, reds, beiges, and blues, I will try to incorporate this cultural aspect to color



Understanding the particulars - what *AIACA* does



- The All India Artisans and Craftworkers Welfare Association (AIACA) is a Delhi-based nonprofit organization established in 2004. It serves as a membership-based apex body for India's handloom and handicraft sectors, aiming to enhance the livelihoods of artisans and craftworkers through a multifaceted approach encompassing enterprise development, policy advocacy, and market access initiatives.

- **Core Programs and Activities**

1. Enterprise Support Programme (ESP)

- AIACA's ESP focuses on empowering artisans by providing:
 - Capacity Building: Training in business skills, design innovation, and production techniques.
 - Market Facilitation: Assistance in accessing domestic and international markets.
 - Social Convergence: Linking artisans with social welfare schemes and benefits.

This program is dedicated to fostering sustainable development and improving the standard of living for craftworkers across India.

2. Craftmark Certification

- Launched in 2006, Craftmark is AIACA's initiative to:
 - Authenticate Handicrafts: Providing a certification that assures the authenticity of handmade products.
 - Promote Ethical Practices: Encouraging environmentally conscious and fair trade practices among artisans.
 - Enhance Market Visibility: Helping consumers identify genuine handmade crafts, thereby increasing market access for artisans.

3. Policy Advocacy

- AIACA actively engages in policy advocacy to:
 - Influence Government Policies: Working towards policies that favor the growth and sustainability of the handloom and handicraft sectors.
 - Represent Artisan Interests: Serving as a voice for artisans in national forums to address their needs and challenges.
 - Collaborate Internationally: Sharing best practices and frameworks with international bodies, such as facilitating learning sessions for delegates from Bhutan's Ministry of Industry, Commerce & Employment
- Additional Initiatives
 - Research and Development: Conducting studies on environmental and occupational health in traditional crafts, particularly in regions like Jaipur, to inform sustainable practices .
 - Community-Owned Enterprises: Piloting models for community-owned companies that focus on joint production and marketing of handloom and handicraft products, supported by grants from organizations like the Ford Foundation .
 - Digital Empowerment: Implementing digital tools and platforms to enhance the visibility and reach of artisans in the global market.

Takeaway and shaping further direction

At first, I thought the ecosystem would benefit from more infrastructure and opportunities, but from a further deep dive, I realize that there are organizations and frameworks in place to help each section of my identified stakeholders, however I feel that the outreach, involvement and actual engagement is limited, or non-existent. This organization creates a space to teach artisans, update their skill set and provide them access to the market place and improve their agency and involvement in the dialogue, however, I did not notice any CTA on their website or any campaign. If I wanted to know more or interact, I had to contact them. I think this is a huge opportunity for me, to create a space where a community and organic networks and interactions can take place. My main idea was to have the website be accessible in different languages, but with the time frame, I think it would be more purposeful to hone in on the awareness, education and accessibility aspects. This could allow for more visibility, interaction and involvement. So the idea is to connect all the experiences I previously talked about—create posters, matchbox that reach the general public that allow them to connect to representatives from the ngo, get access to the website and have a registered profile, and eventually, partake in the skill building and info sessions. As for the business people and consumers, my ideas remain consistent—connecting them to the website to navigate to further resources, although I decided against it in the interest of time, however I still feel that it would add a valuable layer to the mesh that I am trying to create.

Visual elements

The goal is to make it feel inclusive, using regional language script (Hindi here for the purpose of this project)

देवनागरी

Averia Serif Libre

This typeface for everything but the name of the campaign - reminiscent of blockprint texture

Helvetica

A clean readable typeface for body copy so that information is translated correctly

An Indian typeface, meant to create familiarity and grab attention, fitting the conventional approach of traditional campaigns, advertisements and brand.

A familiar color scheme in local Indian posters and design systems, an attempt to make this campaign feel approachable.

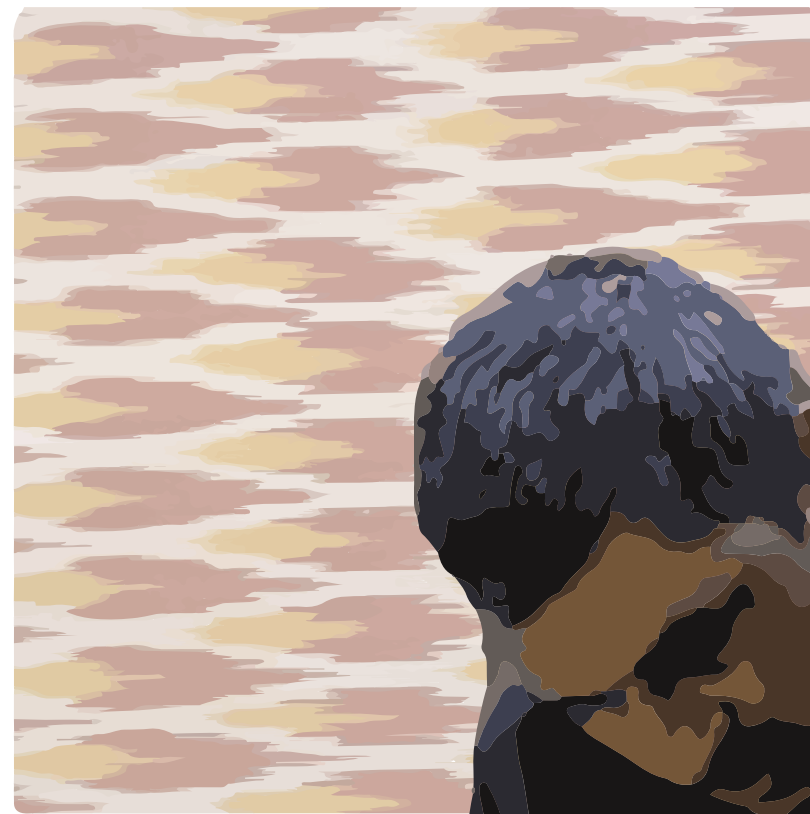
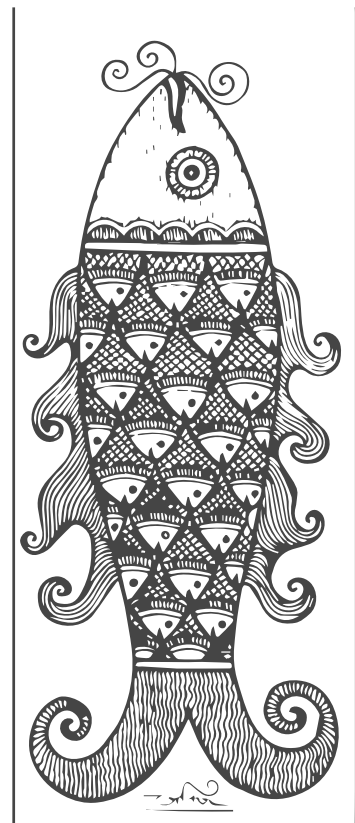


Branding reminiscent of familiar design language
in traditional settings as highlighted in the mood
board

काशीगार & Co.

Imagery and motifs

The imagery and motifs used are directly related to artisans, their work, and their craftsmanship. Trying to evoke a sense of, yes, this is grabbing my attention, this might be relevant to me.



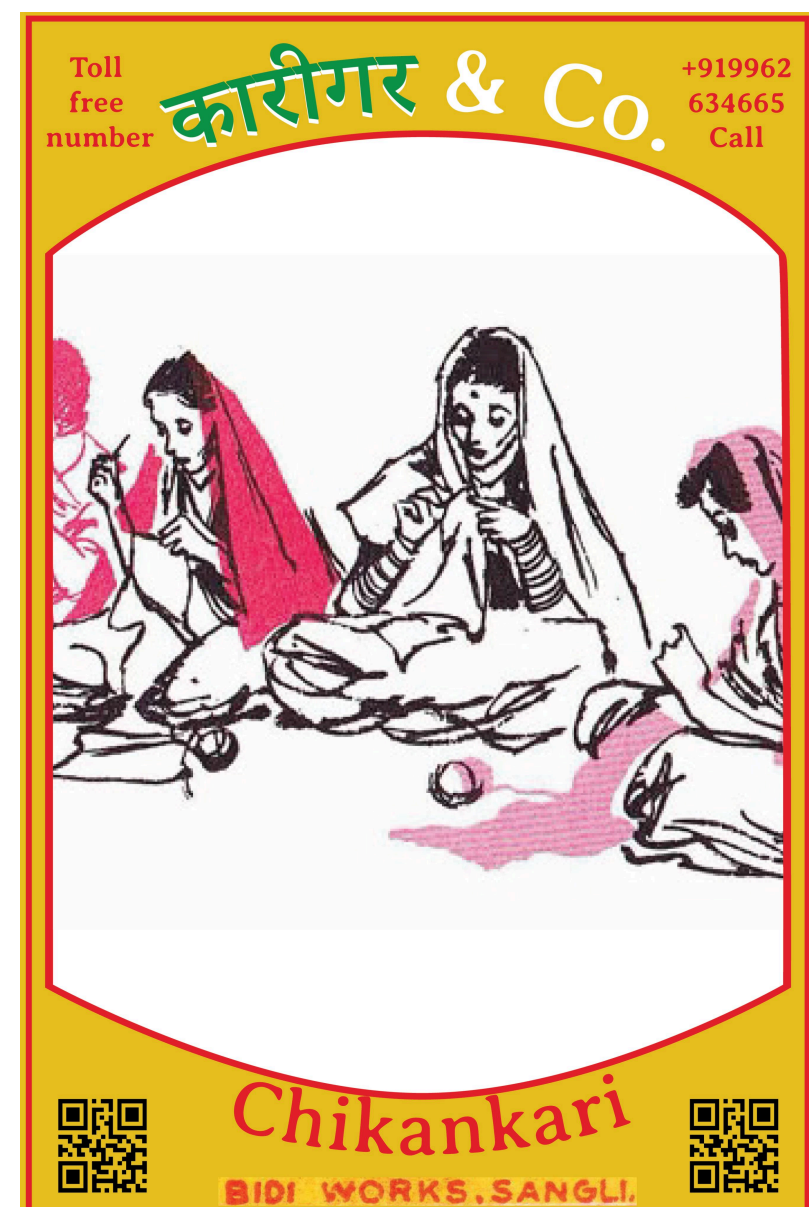
Outcomes & Prototypes

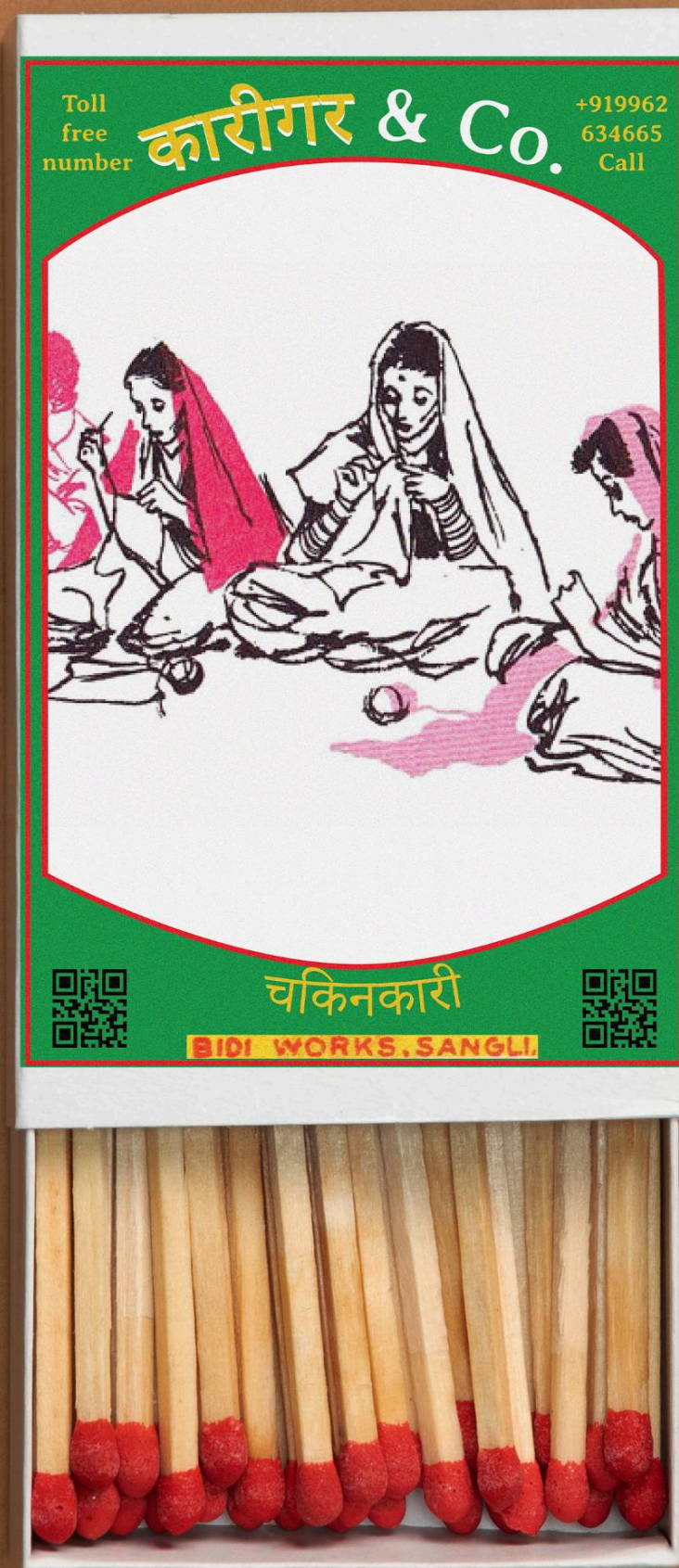
Matchbox advertise campaign

The matchbox campaign has been timeless in India. Matchboxes have been used as a form of advertisement because it reaches common people, and is very cheap and abundant, therefore i thought it would be appropriate to meet the audience where they are.

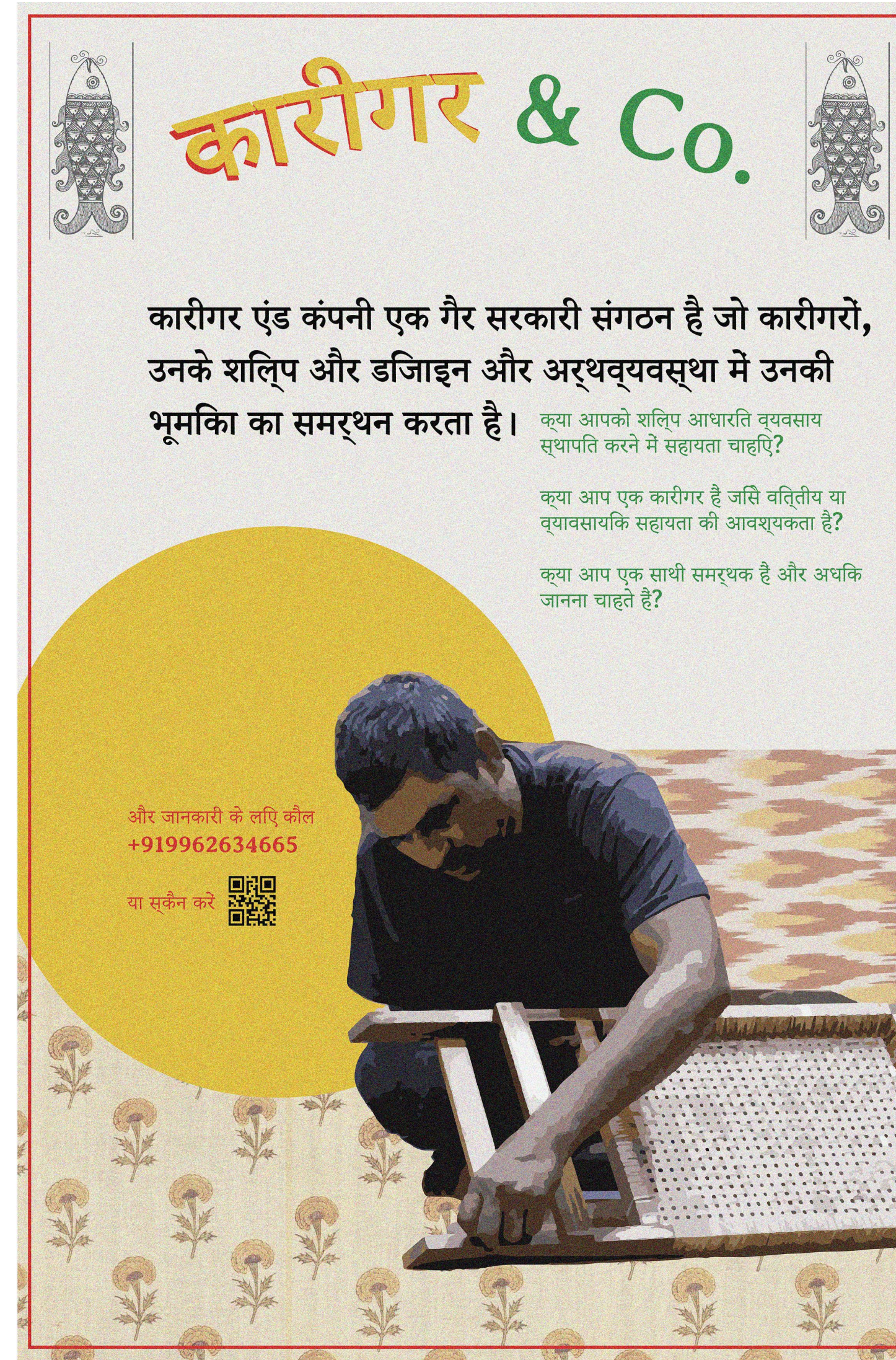
Simple introduction of subject matter through image and word, direct and simple call to action so that there can be larger engagement and outreach with minimal confusion and frustration. A number and qr code both provided to provide choice.

Another aspect is language inclusivity, so that artisans that aren't learnt in english don't feel less valuable.









Poster

A poster with the aim to reach people in marketplaces, shops, newspaper flyers, etc.

Simple introduction of subject matter through image and word, direct and simple call to action so that there can be larger engagement and outreach with minimal confusion and frustration. A number and qr code both provided to provide choice.

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कारीगर & Co.



Karigar & Co. is an NGO that supports artisans, their craft and their role in design and economy.

Need help setting up a craft based business?

Are you an artisan that needs financial or business support?

Are you a fellow supporter and want to know more?

For more info call
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or scan 





कारीगर & Co.



कारीगर एंड कंपनी एक गैर सरकारी संगठन है जो कारीगरों, उनके शिल्प और डिजाइन और अर्थव्यवस्था में उनकी भूमिका का समर्थन करता है।

क्या आपको शिल्प आधारित व्यवसाय स्थापित करने में सहायता चाहिए?

क्या आप एक कारीगर हैं जिसे वित्तीय या व्यावसायिक सहायता की आवश्यकता है?

क्या आप एक साथी समर्थक हैं और अधिक जानना चाहते हैं?

और जानकारी के लिए कॉल
+919962634665

या स्कैन करें



Subscription box





Object + artist featured, creating a stronger sense of connectivity and engagement with a call to action to learn more about the featured artisan of the month

Eventually, creating spaces at local banks or other institutions to organise info session, skill building and integration into market and thus creating a supportive community and meeting artisans where they are. Which is, that they are heavily unaware of any framework available to help their quality of life.

