

**Article**

Rebuilding Artisan Trust Through Technology: A Study on the Relationship of Psychology, Commerce, and Blockchain in Kashmir's Craft Ecosystem

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Abstract: Kashmir's handicraft sector represents one of the most culturally significant artisan economies in South Asia, yet it continues to suffer from pervasive challenges including value-chain opacity, counterfeit production, low technological readiness, and widespread distrust among artisans. This study investigates how psychological factors, commercial structures, and blockchain-enabled transparency collectively shape artisan trust and livelihood outcomes. Drawing on behavioural, technological, and supply-chain theories, the study develops and empirically tests a tri-dimensional framework using survey data from 262 artisans across major craft clusters in Kashmir. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) reveals that psychological factors such as perceived fairness, trust disposition, and technology self-efficacy significantly influence both trust and intention to adopt blockchain-based systems. Value-chain opacity emerges as a major negative determinant of artisan trust, while perceived blockchain usefulness substantially enhances both trust and potential direct market access. Artisan trust is further shown to improve motivation and well-being, underscoring its role as a psychological driver of sustained engagement in craft production. Mediation analysis confirms that trust serves as a key mechanism through which blockchain usefulness shapes motivation and market participation. These findings advance theoretical understanding of technology adoption in traditional creative economies and highlight blockchain's dual function as both a transparency tool and a trust-building mechanism. The study provides actionable guidance for managers, policymakers, and cooperatives seeking to rebuild artisan confidence, protect cultural heritage, and integrate Kashmir's crafts into ethically conscious global markets.

Keywords: Kashmir artisans; blockchain; trust; transparency; handicraft sector; behavioural economics; value-chain opacity; artisan motivation; technology adoption; cultural heritage.

INTRODUCTION

Kashmir's handicraft sector stands as one of the most celebrated heritage economies of South Asia, known for its intricate Pashmina shawls, Kani weaves, papier-mâché art, walnut wood carving, carpets, and other artisan-

based crafts valued in global luxury markets. Despite this cultural and commercial significance, the sector has been experiencing prolonged structural distress. Artisans, who carry forward centuries-old knowledge, face exploitation by intermediaries, inconsistent demand, inadequate