

Creative economies as a gateway to pro-poor tourism in India

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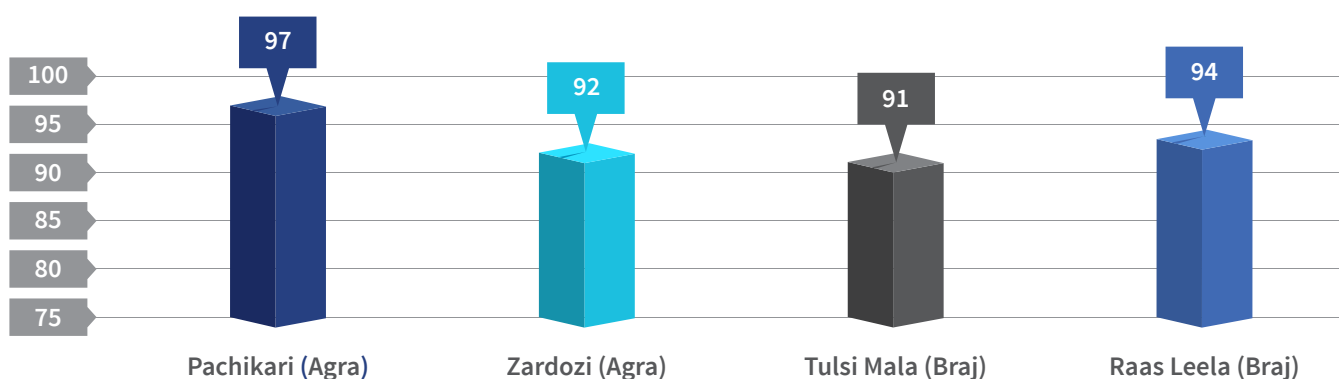


Uttar Pradesh (U.P.) in India is home to some of the most spectacular tourist assets of the country, attracting a huge tourist footfall. [Taj Mahal](#) in [Agra](#), for example, is visited by more than half a million [tourists](#) from all over the world every year. Other important tourist sites include the Banke Bihari temple and Govardhan *parikrama* in [Braj](#) as well as Sarnath *stupa* and Kushinagar *Mahaparinirvana* sites in the [Buddhist Circuit](#). Yet, to give some perspective on [U.P.'s economy](#), the average annual per capita income in the state is [USD 676](#) only, while [30%](#) of the population lives below the official poverty line and the unemployment rate is [7.9%](#). The contradiction is evident: these tourism-rich areas are also sites of poverty and destitution in the state. And yet many unique arts and crafts are practiced around these tourist assets. These can generate employment and incomes,

particularly for vulnerable artisans like youth and women.

Indeed, there has been little attention given to the needs of self-employed artisans residing around the tourist assets. When tourists buy their products, it is typically through intermediaries, who invariably take a very large part of the revenues. As a result, there is a dwindling base of artisans in and around tourist sites, as the younger generation (the 15–30 age group) is not willing to learn the requisite skills to craft these products¹ due to lack of anticipated income. In Agra alone, more than 90% of the artisans do not want future generations to continue working in traditional crafts. Similar is the state of affairs of different crafts in other parts of the state like the Braj region (see graph 1). They instead prefer migration to bigger cities and engage in unskilled labour.

Graph 1: Percentage of professionals who do not wish future generations to continue their work



1. <http://www.craftrevival.org/voiceDetails.asp?Code=248>

To provide these artisans an opportunity to flourish, policymakers have introduced the concept of creative economies.² These bring together the aspects of creativity, culture, economics, technology, and intellectual property, providing value addition at points of production.³ ‘Creative economy’⁴ thus provides young local entrepreneurs working in traditional and contemporary industries around tourism-rich areas to use their talents for commercial pursuits. Accordingly, the World Bank and the Government of U.P developed a pro-poor tourism [project](#) centred on creative economies in tourism-rich areas of the state. Since there is a lack of critical data on such creative economies, [MSC](#), as part of the project, mapped and assessed creative economies in U.P., collecting the hitherto undocumented information. We thereafter designed value chain interventions such that more control rests in the hands of the artisans, motivating young people and future generations to stay and flourish in the profession.

that require diverse sector level solutions. A case in point is the splendid art form of *pachikari* practised in Agra, replicating the *pietra dura* work at the Taj Mahal. Trained by



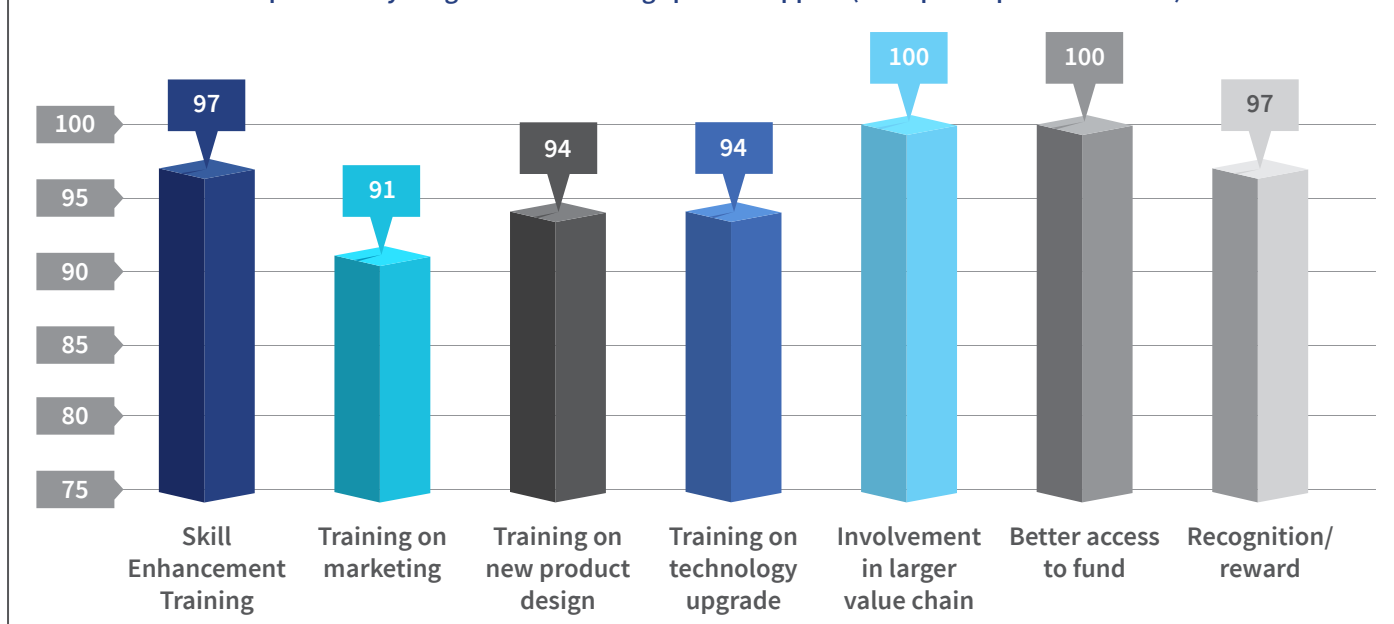
Rejuvenating the creative economies in India

We identified and studied many creative economies, across sectors including handicrafts, agro products, and performing arts, all of which have strong synergies with tourism. These include embroidery (*zardozi*), culinary items (*kalanamak* rice), sculpture (soft stone statues of the Buddha), performing arts (*charkula*), pottery (terracotta), and handicraft (*sikki*), among others. We researched the genesis of each art form to understand whether there has been a decline in the artistic standards over time due to commercialisation. We also examined the related supply chains, production processes, and market linkages. Additional dimensions such as social practices, environmental influences, gender and labour aspects formed important components of the assessment process.

their ancestors, young *pachikari* artisans cut semi-precious stones like lapis, malachite, and onyx into different shapes and sizes and fit them in grooves on marble surfaces to create delightful designs. The difference between the wages earned by those working in this age-old trade and the margins realized by retailers who sell the finished product is stark, sometimes as high as 90%. There is a need to identify ways to improve the remuneration of artisans for their skills. In our engagements with young artisans, they cited key business and technical support as areas to help them earn larger margins (see graph 2).

Each creative economy presented its own set of challenges

Graph 2: % of young artisans wanting specific support (multiple response recorded)



2. [What is the creative economy?, UNCTAD](#)

3. [Creative Economy, UNCTAD](#)

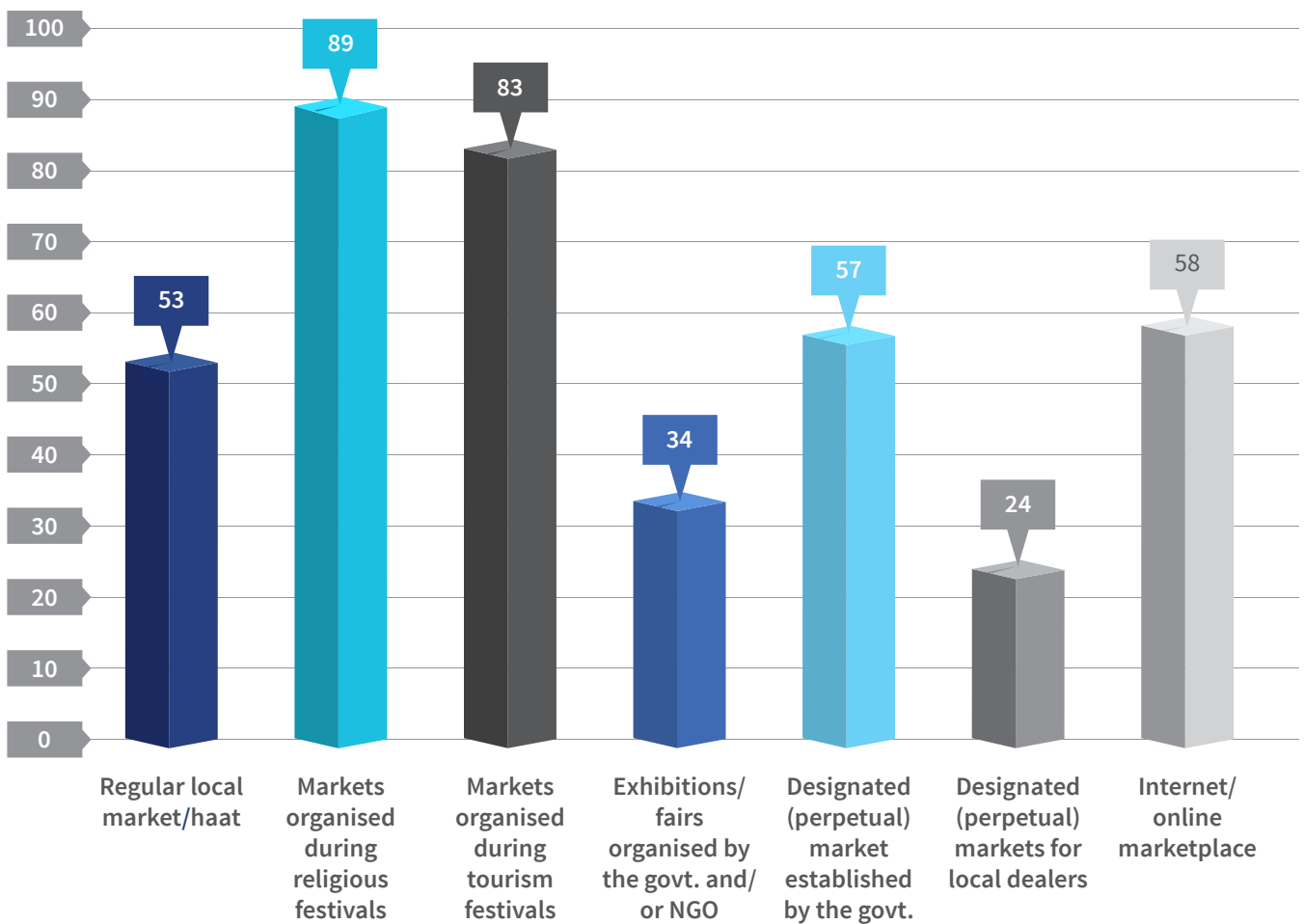
4. In its first incarnation, the term ‘creative industry’ was coined by the Government of United Kingdom and referred to ‘those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property.’



Similarly, young artisans in the Braj region make religious and decorative strings, such as *malas* and bracelets, out of basil stem, specially crafted on indigenously made machines. Sales of genuine products made from basil stem face stiff competition from counterfeits that are sold at low prices on the streets outside the precincts of the Banke Bihari temple in Vrindavan despite the fact that the only micro-cluster carrying out the authentic work on basil stem is located at Joint village, 15 km from the temple site. These artisans mentioned the need for support in creating new market platforms to broaden their client base and increase sales (see graph 3).

Suitable business and technical support can have an impact on distribution channels, quality control, product design, product range and attributes, and brand formation – in short, the entire ecosystem around the creative economy. With this

Graph 3: Percentage of young artisans wanting new market platforms (multiple response recorded)



support, young artisans and women can achieve higher income through sales to tourists – whether domestic or international, budget or high-end. Such integrated ecosystem support to increase business volumes and margins will also motivate them to inculcate creative skill-sets among future generations (see Exhibit). They thus can become job creators for other unemployed youth and women, promoting all-around economic development around tourist areas.

Exhibit



In Agra, we expect our roadmap to result in

50% more income
for existing young artisans

5-7% employment
to the young job-seekers

Key features of the roadmaps



Pachikari



Training support

technical skill training to first-generation learners



Technological upgradation

machinery for teaching the young artisans



Sales platforms

products sold at emporiums, exhibitions, e-commerce etc.



Physical infrastructure

dedicated centre for training, warehousing and retail



Zardozi



Training support

business development and enterprise management skills



Process quality improvement

better quality products to ensure ready sale



Product designs

new designs and motifs to cater to tourists' sensibilities



Providing sales platforms

shops and emporiums where tourists frequent

The way forward

Currently, in India, the government is faced with a high rate of distressed youth migration from small towns and the rural non-farm sector seeking informal employment in unorganized enterprises in urban areas. Such informal employment generally involves a lower level of skills and reduced value addition when compared to their potential contributions working in a creative economy as a skilled professional. Many creative economies in India face extinction, as the skills have historically been passed down as a result of ancestral tutelage.⁵

The intellectual property rights, a critical dimension of creative economies, provides immense entrepreneurial opportunities for youth and women to uniquely showcase their skills. They should be provided with integrated support – from raw material to design and production, marketing, financial services, technology, and skill enhancement – all under the creative economy ecosystem development policy.

There are examples from other developing countries where integrated support to creative economies has helped strengthen inclusive and sustainable tourism. [Honduras](#), [Kenya](#), and [Indonesia](#) have tried to place creative economies at the centre of their pro-poor tourism strategies. In Honduras, for example, the World Bank has successfully implemented a pro-poor tourism project in the Copan Valley where it linked preservation of archaeological parks and the natural environment with the development and commercialisation of high-quality local crafts like [Lenca ceramics](#). Indonesia has gone a step further whereby an ecosystem-led approach has resulted in the formation of [Bekraf](#) (Indonesian Creative Economy Agency) which has [dedicated staff](#) for research, access to capital, marketing, and intellectual property, and provided dividends for local communities.⁶

Promoting such creative economies by building an enabling ecosystem will reduce distress migration, prevent loss of exquisite creative economies, and enhance employment opportunities and income levels of youth and females.⁷ It is crucial that policymakers in India and across the globe make efforts to unleash the power of creative economy ecosystems.

5. Laila Tyabji, [Ignoring artisanship](#), The Indian Express, 2014

6. UNESCO and Citi Indonesia Support Youths to Help Strengthen Creative Economy and Cultural Activities around Tourism and Heritage Sites in Indonesia, [UNESCO Jakarta](#), 2017

7. [Factors for Enabling the Creative Economy](#), World Economic Forum, 2016