

Skill Development and Entrepreneurial Growth among Indian Footwear Artisans: Traditional Clusters, Institutional Interventions, and Pathways to Sustainable Livelihoods

¹Sanatan Sahoo, ²Dr. Pratibha Gupta

¹Research Scholar, ²Associate Professor

Poornima University, Jaipur (India)

Abstract: The leather and footwear industry is one of the most labor intensive industries in India, with an estimated employment of 4.42 million people and is based on a huge body of craft known as leather craft which has been passed down from generation to generation in pockets like Kolhapur, Agra, Kanpur, Chennai, Ambur, Jaipur and Jodhpur. However, those who continue to carry on this tradition are still mostly part of the informal sector, with small and uncertain wages, from which they are often excluded from the value assigned to their work by international markets. This paper explores the link between skill development and entrepreneurial development of artisans in the category of craftsmen- Footwear artisans in India and whether today's skilling initiatives are transferring skills from traditional crafts to self-working, profitable enterprises. The study is designed using a qualitative approach and secondary data, and the data is synthesized based on industry statistics, government scheme documents, cluster-level data, and existing theory about human capital, entrepreneurship, and sustainable livelihoods. It matches the institutional skilling framework, such as Leather Sector Skill Council, Footwear Design and Development Institute, Central Footwear Training Institutes, Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana, PM Vishwakarma and PM-AJAY schemes, and One District One Product with the lived experiences of artisan clusters. The analysis reveals that skill development is not enough in entrepreneurial growth; entrepreneurs must also be technically upskilled to achieve livelihood benefits, which was evident during the Kolhapuri chappal controversy in 2025 when they lacked the capacity to design and brand the food and market link. The paper suggests an integrated “skill-to-enterprise” mechanism and suggests policy interventions for building a sustainable, artisan owned enterprise ecosystem from the Indian artisanal footwear base.

Keywords: skill development; entrepreneurship; footwear artisans; leather industry; sustainable livelihoods; craft clusters; Geographical Indication; India

1. Introduction

Making footwear is one of the oldest crafts practiced on the Indian subcontinent and is still one of the largest sectors in economic activities. Leather and footwear is one of the most labour-intensive industries in India and involves some 4.42 million individuals, of which a significant population are women and people from historically marginalised communities (Invest India, 2025; IBEF, 2025). Today, India is the world's second largest producer and the second largest consumer of shoes, producing over 2.5 billion pairs of shoes per year, and contributing to almost 13 per cent of the world leather production (UJA, 2026; IBEF, 2025). The leather and footwear export value increased by about a quarter in the financial year 2024-25 to USD 5.7 billion and the industry wants to see a turnover of around USD 39 billion by 2030 (DD News, 2025).

But behind the overall totals, there is a structural paradox. The industry is dominated by the informal sector with an estimated 85 per cent of footwear production occurring in unorganised sector with about 15,000 small and micro enterprises, cottage workshops and home-based artisans (Council for Footwear, Leather & Accessories, n.d.; UJA, 2026). The artisans of Kolhapur, Agra, Kanpur, Chennai, Ambur, Ranipet and Jodhpur are the people who represent the craft and who are usually found in the bottom of the value chain. They are paid for by piece rates by contractors, have little bargaining power, have no enterprise name and are unable to benefit from the premiums that domestic brands and the international fashion houses achieve on their designs. In mid-2025, the

Italian luxury brand Prada launched open-toe sandals that bore striking similarities to Kolhapuris, which are a part of the Geographical Indications, for over a lakh rupees, whereas the artisans who created the design commonly sell a pair for just a few hundred rupees (SpicerIP, 2025; Chambers and Partners, 2025).

This paradox of plenty and fragility of living that emerged from the abundance of crafts and the fragility of livelihood is the main theme of this paper. The Indian state has spent the last ten years actively promoting skill development as a tool for achieving economic inclusion by creating a National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), sector skill councils (SSC) and creating flagship schemes like Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY). In more recent times, there have been some efforts to integrate the skilling with credit and market support through an artisanal-specific programme called PM Vishwakarma. The unspoken notion is that skills development will lead to higher levels of productivity, employability, and ultimately entrepreneurial ability. The latter is an empirical and policy question that has been given only limited focus in relation to skill acquisition and the development of self-directed enterprises and whether that theory applies to footwear artisans.

This paper fills that void. Explores the connection between skill development and entrepreneurial development of artisans in the footwear sector of India – the difference between skilling for wage-labour and skilling for entrepreneurship. The remainder of the paper is organised as follows. The theoretical and empirical literature is reviewed in section 2. The goals and research questions are outlined in Section 3. The method is detailed in Section 4. Section 5 describes the artisan ecosystem and main clusters. Institutional skilling landscape is mapped in section 6. In Section 7, the linkages between the skills and entrepreneurship and the factors that facilitate and hinder this linkage are examined. The integrated conceptual framework is presented in Section 8. The policy recommendations are provided in Section 9 and the conclusion is provided in Section 10.

2. Review of Literature

2.1 Human capital and the economics of skilling

There are two dominant perspectives on the rationale for public funding of skilling, the first being the human capital view that considers education and training as investments that increase productivity and income of the individual (Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1961). In this tradition, capital is the skill of the worker and the returns are in the form of a wage increase and increased employability. But when applied to artisans, it needs to be qualified. Traditional craft skill is often implicit and learnt through apprenticeship, amongst family and caste networks, not through formal learning, and is not easily accessible to standardised certification. One could also argue that a purely wage-based interpretation of human capital will fail because it does not distinguish between the two types of skills, skilling to depend more on the employer and skilling for greater autonomy. For the artisans, the more pertinent question is whether training develops the composite skill-set (technical, managerial, financial and commercial) that is needed for enterprise operation or merely to carry out the tasks of enterprise operation for others.

2.2 Entrepreneurship, innovation and the artisan

The classical theory of entrepreneurship views the entrepreneur as an innovator who reconfigures resources to generate new value (Schumpeter, 1934) and as a risk bearer in uncertain situations (Knight, 1921). Subsequent theories extended the idea to encompass the identification and utilization of opportunities (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000). Artisan or “craft” entrepreneurship is in a unique position in this literature as the entrepreneur is not only driven by profit but by love of the craft, and competitive advantage is derived from authenticity, heritage and embodied skill, not from scale or cost leadership. It is a strength and also a weakness because of its dual nature. It can set boundaries for growth in premium markets for artisanal products, but can also limit growth when artisans are opposed to standardisation, delegation, and marketing practices which underlie scaling.

2.3 Clusters, industrial districts and collective efficiency

Spatial concentration of footwear production is the key characteristic of Indian footwear production and cluster theory is the central theory in understanding that. Marshall (1890) noted that external economies arise from the

geographical clustering of related producers, including a common labour market, specialised suppliers and the spread of knowledge. Porter (1990) extended this to a competitiveness paradigm, while more recent cluster research in developing countries has focused on “collective efficiency” that is created through collective efforts or “passive” external economies of scale (Schmitz, 1995). The benefits of clusters is that they can help remove some of the obstacles to entrepreneurship by providing shared infrastructure, common facility centres and collective bargaining to small producers. However, clustering does not automatically imply upgrading: if not supported by institutional arrangements, clusters can also lead to low value, low margins, and high intra-cluster price competition for artisans.

2.4 Sustainable livelihoods and the capability approach

A livelihoods lens places skilling and enterprise in the context of the other assets that households have at their disposal – human, financial, social, physical and natural (Chambers and Conway, 1992; Scoones, 1998; DFID, 1999). It highlights vulnerability, seasonality and shocks, and it poses the question of whether an intervention builds up an asset base in a sustainable way or provides an one-off gain. To complement this, Sen's (1999) capability approach turns development into the growth of what people have reason to value to their substantive freedoms. To skilling artisans this means that the success of a skilling programme is not the number of certificates that are given, it is whether an artisan has the real ability to make the skill into a living.

2.5 The gap in the literature

These are all well developed individually, but the particular nexus of skill development and entrepreneurial growth of footwear artisans in India has not been well studied. Much of the literature in the sector is descriptive or export oriented, which emphasizes firms and trade, and not artisans as entrepreneurs. Research on government skilling initiatives tend to measure enrolment and certification rather than the outcomes of the enterprise. The paper does this by making the links between the skilling architecture and entrepreneurial trajectories explicit, and by articulating the conditions that lead to the conversion between skill and enterprise.

3. Research Objectives and Questions

The study pursues the following objectives:

1. To profile the Indian footwear artisan ecosystem, its principal clusters, and the socio-economic conditions of artisans within them.
2. To map the institutional architecture of skill development available to footwear artisans and assess its design and reach.
3. To analyse the relationship between skill development and entrepreneurial growth, identifying the factors that enable or obstruct the conversion of skill into enterprise.
4. To propose an integrated framework and policy measures for fostering sustainable, artisan-owned enterprise.

These objectives are addressed through three research questions: (RQ1) What is the current condition of footwear artisans and how is the skilling ecosystem structured to serve them? (RQ2) To what extent, and through what mechanisms, does skill development translate into entrepreneurial growth for artisans? (RQ3) What interventions would strengthen that translation?

4. Methodology

This paper uses a qualitative, secondary data analysis design, suitable for capturing a "messy" and quickly developing evidence base into a synthesised narrative. It involves a systematic search of literature and a documentary and thematic analysis of the sources of literature from the institutions and industries.

Data sources. Four types of secondary data were used: (i) Industry and trade statistics from Invest India, India Brand Equity Foundation (IBEF), Council for Leather Exports (CLE) and Market analysis; (ii) Government and institutional information such as Leather Sector Skill Council (LSSC), Footwear Design and Development

Institute (FDDI), National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and skilling initiatives like PMKVY, PM Vishwakarma, PM-AJAY, Indian Footwear and Leather Development Programme (IFLDP) and One District One Product (ODOP) programme; (iii) Cluster-level reports and media reporting on artisan clusters in Kolhapur, Agra and Chennai; (iv) Scholarly literature on human capital, entrepreneurship and clusters, and sustainable livelihoods.

Analytical strategy. Evidence is arranged by themes linking to the three research questions of the study and is analysed using a multi-pronged lens of human capital theory, entrepreneurship theory, cluster theory and the sustainable livelihoods framework. The triangulation among different types of sources was employed to reinforce claims and to bring to light tensions among official stories and cluster realities.

Scope and limitations. The design is analytical, not primary-empirical, meaning that it does not involve original artisan surveys or fieldwork and thus cannot measure effect sizes and causal magnitudes. Data from various sources and for different years cannot always be perfectly comparable and the informal nature of the sector affects the extent to which much of the activity of artisans is reflected in official statistics. These restrictions are tackled in Section 9, and provide guidelines for further primary research.

5. The Indian Footwear Artisan Ecosystem

5.1 Scale, structure and social composition

The Indian footwear industry is also a large and fragmented industry. Some 15,000 small and medium enterprises along with approximately 100 fully mechanised modern shoe plants co-exist with a much larger, uncountable number of home-based and cottage artisans, which accounts for about 85 per cent of production (Council for Footwear, Leather & Accessories, n.d.). The workforce is socially unique; women are estimated to represent a third to a fourth of the labor force in leather products, while traditionally, making footwear has been the sole domain of members of the Scheduled Caste (SC) community, especially the Charmakar and allied leather products SC communities, where the craft serves as both livelihood and a social marker (IBEF, 2025; LSSC, 2025). In this social mix, interventions in the sector are not just economic but are directly related to caste, gender and inclusion.

5.2 The principal clusters

The organization of footwear production is geographically clustered and each cluster has a specialization in footwear production, orientation and a history. The most important are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. Major Indian footwear artisan clusters and their characteristics.

Cluster	State	Specialisation & orientation	Notable features
Kolhapur / Belagavi belt	Maharashtra & Karnataka	Handcrafted leather Kolhapuri chappals; heritage/craft market	GI-tagged (2019); ~1.5 lakh families in the belt depend on leatherwork
Agra	Uttar Pradesh	Leather footwear; large export and domestic volumes	Accounts for a large share of India's footwear exports; decentralised MSME base; ODOP focus product
Kanpur	Uttar Pradesh	Tanning and leather footwear/goods	Historic tanning hub; environmental compliance pressures
Chennai–Ambur–Ranipet	Tamil Nadu	Leather footwear and uppers; strongly export-oriented	Largest export cluster; higher degree of organised production

Jodhpur	Rajasthan	Traditional embroidered jutti / mojari	Craft and tourism-linked market; predominantly home-based
---------	-----------	--	---

There are two salient facts in Table 1 for analysis. First, the clusters have contrasting characteristics in terms of their degree of formality and export orientation, with the Tamil Nadu belt being more organised and export-oriented, and the Kolhapur and Jodhpur heritage-craft clusters continuing to be primarily home-based and craft-oriented. Second, a single, uniform model of skilling would not necessarily suit all clusters, as volume, export contracting and premium heritage are all crafted with very different value propositions.

5.3 The livelihood condition of artisans

Artisans have low and irregular incomes, their income is captured by contractors/intermediaries, they don't have formal enterprise registration, collateral and credit history, and thus are unable to receive institutional finance and are being driven out by cheap machine-made and imported products and counterfeits, which lower the value of craft (Maps of India, 2025; Gulf News, 2022). The additional challenges of regulatory and infrastructural pressures add to these difficulties, including environmental restrictions in the Taj Trapezium Zone around Agra, the impact of the Goods and Services Tax on small leather units and the inconsistencies in raw-material supply among those units. The Kolhapur episode in 2025 with Prada highlighted another larger problem of value capture, which is the misuse of existing IP protection for collectively held craft that a global brand realised from a close imitation of the craft design, even though it was a refinement of the original over many generations by the artisans (Chambers and Partners, 2025; SpicyIP, 2025).

6. The Skill Development Landscape

The skilling or training framework of the footwear sector in India exists at various levels – sectoral standard-setting, institutional training, mass skilling programmes and artisan-specific skilling programmes that integrate skilling with enterprise support. The main instruments are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2. Principal institutions and schemes relevant to footwear artisan skilling.

Institution / scheme	Role and focus	Relevance to artisans
Leather Sector Skill Council (LSSC)	Sector skill council under NSDC (est. 2012); sets Qualification Packs and National Occupational Standards; delivers PMKVY, RPL and apprenticeship training	Certifies competencies; has assessed large numbers of artisans, including under PM Vishwakarma
Footwear Design & Development Institute (FDDI)	Institute of National Importance (FDDI Act, 2017); design, technology and management education	Design capability, testing and higher-order skills; historically firm- rather than artisan-facing
Central Footwear Training Institutes (CFTIs)	Human resource development for footwear and allied industry through its different courses on designing, and manufacturing technology and skill operator courses.	Product Design, enhancement of manufacturing skills through short term courses of 3 to 24 months, skill upgradation of footwear artisans.
PMKVY	Flagship short-term skilling and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) scheme	Certifies existing artisan skills and trains new entrants
PM Vishwakarma	Artisan-focused scheme bundling skilling with toolkits, collateral-free credit and market support	Directly targets traditional craftspeople, including leather-working artisans

PM-AJAY	Support for Scheduled Caste communities, including entrepreneurship-based skill training	Reaches Charmakar and allied leather-working communities
IFLDP / ODOP	Sectoral development programme and district-product cluster upgrading (e.g., Agra footwear)	Common facility centres, mechanisation, credit linkage and market access at cluster level

6.1 Sectoral standard-setting and institutional training

The training of institutions is part of the sectoral standard-setting process. Training of institutions is part and parcel of the sectoral standard setting process.

The system is anchored by a Leather Sector Skill Council, which was formed under NSDC in 2012. It has evolved an extensive portfolio of Qualification Packs and National Occupational Standards (NOS) for most of the job roles in the sector and offers training and certification through partners across the country as part of schemes such as STAR, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and PMKVY (LSSC, 2025). It has a significant level of cumulative activity with cohorts in the thousands being trained or certified through successive schemes. Recognized as an Institute of National Importance under the FDDI Act, 2017, FDDI offers higher order education in the field of footwear design, technology & management. However, FDDI's orientation throughout history has been directed towards the professionals and organizations in the industry, and overcoming this gap to reach the artisans is still a current challenge. Central Footwear Training Institutes at Agra and Chennai function under the aegis of MoMSME for more than 6 decades have been catering the growing need of technically skilled manpower for the footwear and allied industry through their certified long term, short term and need based training programs.

6.2 Recognition of Prior Learning

For artisans, the instrument most conceptually fitting is Recognition of Prior Learning, which recognizes competencies that artisans acquire after years of practice, not as unskilled trainees. In theory, certification can increase bargaining power, open up formal work and credit opportunities, and be a portable recognised identity. The LSSC has already assessed and certified a large number of workers under RPL and has reported the number of artisans assessed and certified under the PM Vishwakarma scheme in thousands. Whether certification alone or in conjunction with credit and tools, particularly, can change the economic position of artisans is explored below.

6.3 Artisan-focused and cluster-level programmes

The newer generation of interventions are clearly focused on the artisan and, crucially, on enterprise and not employment. PM Vishwakarma brings together skilling with modern toolkits and collateral-free credit facilities and market linkages, and deals with several of the crippling constraints mentioned in Section 5. One of the several ways that PM-AJAY reaches out to the Scheduled Caste communities is through entrepreneurship-based skill training, for example, in leather, where entrepreneurship trainings were provided to the SC participants in Maharashtra (LSSC, 2025). The Indian Footwear and Leather Development Programme and One District One Product programme (in the Uttar Pradesh state) have targeted the Agra cluster, with the provision of common facility centres to provide artisans with mechanised cutting, stitching and finishing, as well as bank loans and subsidies to alleviate dependence on informal contractors (Whalesbook 2026). These programmes are a big conceptual shift from skilling-for-employment, to skilling-for-enterprise however, they have not yet been well documented to reach the large informal artisan population and the downstream enterprise outcomes.

7. Skill Development and Entrepreneurial Growth: Analysis

The evidence presented above therefore suggests a core statement: skill development is a key but not a sufficient element of entrepreneurial development among the footwear artisans. Technical skills are the basis of any

business, but they are more likely to generate wage dependent workers than independent businessmen. Skill-to-enterprise is dependent on a set of complementary enablers, and a set of constraints stalls the process.

7.1 How skilling can enable entrepreneurship

- **Competence and confidence.** Structured training and certification, particularly RPL can provide tacit skill validation, quality standardisation, and confidence and credibility for artisans to engage directly with buyers, bypassing intermediaries.
- **Productivity and quality upgrading.** Common facilities centres provide access to modern tools and techniques, which increase output and consistency, prerequisites for providing larger or more demanding markets.
- **Bundled enterprise support.** When skilling is complemented with toolkits, when collateral is not required and credit is given directly on the market, as in PM Vishwakarma, the artisan not only achieves skill but also is empowered to apply it on his own.
- **Formal identity.** Certification and enterprise registration create a recognised identity that unlocks institutional finance, government procurement and formal market channels otherwise closed to informal artisans.

7.2 Why skilling often fails to convert into enterprise

- **The finance gap.** Low-cost credit is the biggest constraint on small business in India, and according to studies, many women and small entrepreneurs, particularly, face difficulties in getting formal finance, as their family members are unable to offer them credit with no collateral or history. (Tide India, as reported in Deccan Herald, 2024). An artisan who does not have working capital can never become an entrepreneur.
- **Missing managerial and commercial skills.** Most of the skilling is still of a purely technical nature. Other areas that need to be covered yet are very lightly touched upon in the current programmes are entrepreneurship skills such as costing, pricing, inventory and cash-flow management, negotiation and customer acquisition.
- **Weak market linkage and branding.** Marketing and branding are recognized as the weakest link in the marketing sector (Council for Footwear, Leather & Accessories, n.d.). If there is no direct market, the artisans will be stuck with capturing a margin by the contractor.
- **Unprotected intellectual property.** . The Kolhapur – Prada episode brought to light that even a GI offers limited protection of value – GI rights are territorial and collective, artisans do not have individual rights to compensation for imitation outside the territory, and awareness of the rights among the producers is low (SpicyIP, 2025; News UPSC, 2025). Designs that are not owned can be taken by an artisan.
- **Structural and social constraints.** Informality, occupational confinement by caste, competition from low-cost imports and counterfeits, compliance issues with the Goods and Services Tax (GST) for micro enterprises, and environmental restrictions in clusters like Agra have raised the bar for enterprise formation.

7.3 Synthesis

The theory of change that often underlies a lot of skilling policy is missing a significant component: train the artisan and the enterprise will follow. Skilling puts the ceiling up on what an artisan can produce, but whether the complementary assets defined in the sustainable livelihoods framework—financial, social and physical capital and a conducive institutional environment—are available at the same time determines the economic trajectory of the artisan. This is the reason why conceptually programmes, that integrate skilling with credit, tools and market access, like PM Vishwakarma, ODOP common facility centres, are better aligned towards entrepreneurial outcome. Why, for example, is the Kolhapur region with its high skill concentration in the domain of craft, but can be economically precarious? It's because the limiting factor there is not skill but value capture and market power.

8. An Integrated Skill-to-Enterprise Framework

The paper then brings the pieces together, combining an "entrepreneurship growth" approach with "skilling as part of a broader package of enabling assets and institutions. At the heart of the framework is the need to build craft skill, and it has four interdependent pillars with a goal of building sustainable, artisan-owned livelihoods.

1. **Capability pillar-** technical upskilling and RPL certification, and managerial, financial and commercial training, to ensure that artisans develop the complete set of enterprise skills not just production skills.
2. **Capital pillar-** source of collateral free credit, toolkits and shared physical infrastructure (common facility centres), transform capability to productive capacity.
3. **Market pillar-** direct market linkage, cooperative and producer-company models, branding, digital and e-commerce enablement, public procurement etc., to maximise the value of the labour of artisans.
4. **Protection pillar-** effective use of Geographical Indications and collective marks, awareness of rights, benefit-sharing and social protection, ensuring artisans' ownership of their craft and protecting them from shocks.

The heart of the framework is that these pillars are complementary and not mutually exclusive-that is, if you make one a priority and neglect the other three, you do not get as much out of the framework. A well-trained artisan, who is not a credit or does not have a market, or who has a market with no protection of designs, will not be able to have sustainable entrepreneurial development. Policy effectiveness, however, will only be achieved when all four are provided simultaneously, in a coordinated fashion – and these most recent artisan-focused schemes just hint at, but don't yet offer at scale.

9. Policy Implications and Recommendations

In accordance with the framework, the following are measures proposed to enhance the linkage between learning with a view to achieving a sustainable enterprise:

1. **Bundle skilling with finance and tools by default.** Consider stand-alone technical certification as a beginning, and allow artisans to have their tools, working capital and credit-guarantee coverage without collateral.
2. **Add an entrepreneurship module to every artisan skilling programme,** in local languages and using a low-literacy approach, covering topics like costing, pricing, digital payment, basic accounting and negotiation for acquiring customers.
3. **Scale Recognition of Prior Learning** as the main tool to existing artisans, where they can get a portable and credit worthy identity for their skill at lower costs than if they were to learn the skills again.
4. **Strengthen market/brand building ability through collective action.** Encourage the formation of artisan producer companies, cooperatives, and self-help-group federations to bring together production, invest in common branding and directly engage with buyers and platforms.
5. **Close the digital divide. Hands-on onboarding** for e-commerce marketplaces, digital-marketing and government e-marketplace (GeM) support, shared photography and listing services at common facility centres.
6. **Enhance awareness and protection of IPR.** Increase the number of authorized users for current GIs, increase awareness among artisans about their rights, discuss collective marks and benefit sharing, and increase international recognition of GI tagged crafts.
7. **Work with artisanal base to develop** design outreach, design incubation and market-intelligence support of FDDIs and CFTIs within clusters, which brings heritage craft in tune with contemporary demand.

10. Conclusion

India's shoe craftsmen have a unique blend of craftsmanship, tradition and exposure to one of the largest and fastest growing markets for shoes in the world. But most are stagnant at the bottom of the value chain, and their skills inadequately compensated, while their designs are easily appropriated. This paper has maintained that although skill development is a necessity, it alone will not change this state of affairs. Skilling increases the artisans' output, but not every artisan becomes an entrepreneur – it depends on the broader financial, market and

digital environment and the protection of intellectual property. Those promising new interventions that are currently underway – such as the integration of skilling with credit, tools and market linkage – offer a good direction of travel but need to be scaled up and tested for livelihood outcomes, not certifications. The transition of India's huge artisanal labour force from the status of a low paid craft labour to a network of craft based business/producer owned enterprise will be an act of economic and social inclusion, not only for the craft but also to provide sustainable livelihoods to the people who carry on the craft. The enabler and opportunity to really make that happen is the challenge and the opportunity of skilling policy in this space.

Future research should validate the framework outlined herein through primary and cluster level field testing, including longitudinal studies of groups of qualified artisans, a comparison of the bundled and stand-alone skilling models, and a direct assessment of enterprise formation, income and resilience. Comparative studies between clusters of varying level of formalisation would further define the conditions for skill to become enterprise.

References

- [1] Becker, G. S. (1964). Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis, with Special Reference to Education. New York: Columbia University Press.
- [2] Chambers, R., & Conway, G. (1992). Sustainable Rural Livelihoods: Practical Concepts for the 21st Century. IDS Discussion Paper 296. Brighton: Institute of Development Studies.
- [3] Chambers and Partners. (2025). The Prada Paradox. Retrieved from <https://chambers.com/articles/the-prada-paradox>
- [4] Council for Footwear, Leather & Accessories (CFLA). (n.d.). Industry Insights. Retrieved from <https://cfla.co.in/industry-insights/>
- [5] DD News. (2025, April 21). India's leather, footwear exports jump 25 pc to \$5.7 billion in FY25. Retrieved from <https://ddnews.gov.in/>
- [6] Deccan Herald. (2024). A striving for the attainable [reporting Tide India, Bharat Women Aspiration Index Report, April 2024]. Retrieved from <https://www.deccanherald.com/>
- [7] Department for International Development (DFID). (1999). Sustainable Livelihoods Guidance Sheets. London: DFID.
- [8] Gulf News. (2022). India: Kolhapuri Chappal — finding their feet once again. Retrieved from <https://gulfnews.com/>
- [9] India Brand Equity Foundation (IBEF). (2025). Indian Leather Industry: Leather Manufacturers & Exports in India. Retrieved from <https://www.ibef.org/exports/leather-industry-india>
- [10] Invest India. (2025). Investment Opportunities in Leather & Footwear. Retrieved from <https://www.investindia.gov.in/sector/leather-and-footwear>
- [11] Knight, F. H. (1921). Risk, Uncertainty and Profit. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- [12] Leather Sector Skill Council (LSSC). (2025). Institutional profile and scheme reports (PMKVY 4.0, RPL, PM Vishwakarma, PM-AJAY). Retrieved from <https://www.leatherssc.org/>
- [13] Maps of India. (2025). Making Kolhapuri Chappals: The Art of Leather Craft. Retrieved from <https://www.mapsofindia.com/>
- [14] Marshall, A. (1890). Principles of Economics. London: Macmillan.
- [15] Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSME). (2019). India's footwear industry. Retrieved from <https://msme.gov.in/indias-footwear-industry>
- [16] News UPSC. (2025). Kolhapuri Chappal Controversy. Retrieved from <https://newsupsc.com/kolhapuri-chappal-controversy/>

- [17] Porter, M. E. (1990). *The Competitive Advantage of Nations*. New York: Free Press.
- [18] Schmitz, H. (1995). Collective efficiency: Growth path for small-scale industry. *Journal of Development Studies*, 31(4), 529–566.
- [19] Schultz, T. W. (1961). Investment in human capital. *American Economic Review*, 51(1), 1–17.
- [20] Schumpeter, J. A. (1934). *The Theory of Economic Development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- [21] Scoones, I. (1998). *Sustainable Rural Livelihoods: A Framework for Analysis*. IDS Working Paper 72. Brighton: Institute of Development Studies.
- [22] Sen, A. (1999). *Development as Freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [23] Shane, S., & Venkataraman, S. (2000). The promise of entrepreneurship as a field of research. *Academy of Management Review*, 25(1), 217–226.
- [24] SpicyIP. (2025, July 4). *The Devil Wears Kolhapuri or Prada? Understanding GI Law, Cultural Appropriation & More*. Retrieved from <https://spicyip.com/>
- [25] UJA. (2026). *India's Leather & Footwear Industry*. Retrieved from <https://uja.in/blog/market-reports/indias-leather-footwear-industry/>
- [26] Whalesbook. (2026). *Agra Footwear Sector Modernizes Under UP's ODOP Initiative*. Retrieved from <https://www.whalesbook.com/>