

Reviving Indian Handcrafted Art Forms Through Contemporary Interiors

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Abstract—This study investigates the impact of integrating traditional Indian wall art into modern interior spaces, focusing on user perception, spatial experience, and emotional engagement. Using a mixed-method research design, the study combines a structured survey with observational analysis to evaluate how traditional art influences aesthetics, cultural connection, and overall satisfaction within contemporary environments. The hypotheses propose that integrating traditional wall art through modern techniques enhances aesthetic appeal, cultural relevance, and user acceptance in contemporary spaces. Findings reveal that while users highly appreciate traditional art, awareness remains largely superficial, with cost, scarcity of artisans, and lack of modern fabrication knowledge emerging as major barriers. Quantitative results show strong preference for reinterpretations of Madhubani, Warli, Pattachitra, and Kerala mural art using modern materials. The study concludes that integrating traditional art meaningfully enhances spatial warmth, identity, and user experience, provided modern fabrication and affordability challenges are addressed. Future design practice can greatly benefit from hybrid approaches that preserve cultural value while adapting to contemporary contexts.

Keywords—Traditional wall art; Modern interiors; User perception; Spatial experience; Cultural integration; Interior design research; Madhubani; Warli; Pattachitra.

I. INTRODUCTION

India's interior design tradition has always been deeply rooted in its arts and crafts. Across centuries, communities have expressed their beliefs, rituals, and daily life through handcrafted art — not merely as decoration, but as a visual language of identity and belonging. Art forms like Madhubani from Bihar, Warli from Maharashtra, and Pattachitra from Odisha are prominent examples. However, in recent decades, these traditional practices have seen a decline due to rapid urbanization and changing lifestyles, with modern interiors embracing minimalism and industrial materials. Consequently, many regional crafts are now viewed more as museum artefacts than as living, evolving art forms within contemporary life.

However, there is a growing global movement toward sustainability, handmade authenticity, and cultural preservation in design, which presents an opportunity to revive Indian wall art by adapting it to contemporary settings. Designers are beginning to reinterpret traditional motifs, patterns, and techniques using modern materials, digital tools, and fabrication technologies, effectively bridging heritage with modernity. A prominent example is Warli art, traditionally created with rice paste on red-mud walls, characterized by simple geometric forms that illustrate human and animal figures. In modern applications, these motifs are being laser-engraved on wood, metal, or concrete, or digitally printed on acoustic boards for use in offices and hospitality

interiors. Such adaptations maintain the symbolic and visual essence of Warli art while enhancing its durability and relevance in contemporary design.

This research aims to explore how handcrafted Indian wall art can be integrated into modern interiors through innovative use of materials, techniques, and design processes, while maintaining cultural authenticity and meaning. It highlights how design can act as a bridge between past and present, enabling traditional art forms to evolve rather than fade. Ultimately, reviving these wall art traditions within modern interiors contributes not only to aesthetics and sustainability, but also to the preservation of India's intangible cultural heritage, ensuring that design continues to tell stories of community, belief, and identity in a contemporary voice.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. *Traditional Indian Art in Contemporary Design*

Studies indicate that traditional art enhances spatial identity, evokes cultural pride, and contributes to biophilic emotional comfort. Researchers emphasize its relevance for hospitality, residential, and institutional spaces. Haribhau (2024) states that these art forms communicate cultural identity, ritual meaning, and societal values through motifs and narratives.

2.2. *Challenges of Traditional Integration*

Multiple scholars report barriers including high cost, limited artisans, time-consuming processes, and difficulty adapting traditional methods to modern materials. Singh, Rajak & Sharma (2025) highlights the cultural importance of Madhubani art and examines how commercialization, globalization, and socio-economic changes affect its survival. The findings reveal that although the art form holds strong cultural value, it is threatened by declining patronage, commercialization pressures, and the loss of traditional knowledge.

2.3. *User Perception Trends*

"*The Contemporary Renaissance in Art*" (Haroon, 2024) explores the global revival of ancient artistic techniques and how modern artists reinterpret traditional craftsmanship. Contemporary users show strong aesthetic appreciation but lack deep knowledge. Hybrid reinterpretations using digital fabrication are highly preferred.

III. AIM, OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

3.1. *Aim*

To explore how traditional Indian wall art — especially Mithila painting — can be reinterpreted into contemporary interiors through modern materials, fabrication technologies, and culturally sensitive design strategies, while preserving their authenticity, symbolism, and artisanal value.

3.2. *Objectives*

- To study the cultural, visual, and material characteristics of traditional Indian wall art forms of Madhubani, Warli, and Pattachitra.
- To analyze the reasons behind the decline of handcrafted wall art in contemporary interior design.
- To explore modern materials and fabrication techniques, such as digital printing, CNC engraving, and modular panels, that can reinterpret traditional wall art forms.

- To identify design strategies that balance authentic cultural representation with modern aesthetic and functional needs.
- To propose design guidelines or concepts for integrating traditional wall art into modern interiors in a way that preserves cultural meaning, craftsmanship, and sustainability.

3.3. *Scope*

- Focus limited to Mithila/Madhubani painting, with supplementary insights from Warli, Gond, and Pattachitra symbolism.
- Design integration explored for interior surfaces such as walls, partitions, furniture panels, lighting, and decorative installations.
- Based on literature review — no field experiments or prototyping involved.

3.4. *Limitations*

- No direct fieldwork with artisans (secondary literature only).
- No material testing or design prototyping performed within this study.
- Does not address commercialization challenges beyond literature-reported issues.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study followed a mixed-methods research approach, consisting of the following components:

4.1. *Literature Review*

Reviewed academic journals (Google Scholar, ResearchGate, Sci/Scopus), government reports, cultural studies, and archive material relating to folk art symbolism, socio-economic challenges, and craft revival movements.

4.2. *Comparative Cultural Analysis*

The symbolic and stylistic features of regional folk art styles (Madhubani, Warli, Gond, Pattachitra) were compared to identify design-relevant elements.

4.3. *User Perception Survey*

A structured questionnaire with 14 questions was administered to **32 respondents** to analyze preference, knowledge, cultural connection, challenges, and consumer acceptance.

4.4. *Design Implication Mapping*

Insights were synthesized into potential interior design applications and reinterpretation strategies.

V. HYPOTHESIS

5.1. *Hypothesis in Question Form*

Does integrating Madhubani, Warli, and Pattachitra art increase the aesthetic appeal of modern interior spaces?

This hypothesis explores whether the inclusion of traditional Indian wall art forms — specifically Madhubani, Warli, and Pattachitra — has a measurable impact on enhancing the visual and experiential quality of contemporary interiors. It assumes that these indigenous art styles, with their rich symbolism, intricate detailing, and culturally rooted narratives, could create a stronger aesthetic value when blended with

modern design elements. The hypothesis is grounded in the belief that traditional arts offer unique visual identity, vibrancy, and craftsmanship that may elevate the overall ambience, making spaces feel more meaningful, expressive, and culturally connected.

The hypothesis aims to test if these traditional Indian art forms can successfully complement modern aesthetics — through colour, pattern, form, and storytelling — and whether their inclusion leads users to perceive interior spaces as more aesthetically appealing, enriching, and culturally sophisticated.

VI. SURVEY ANALYSIS

The data suggests a highly favorable market for integrating traditional Indian art into modern interiors, provided that the logistical barriers of cost and artisan availability are addressed — potentially through the use of modern materials and fabrication techniques, which the majority of respondents are open to exploring.

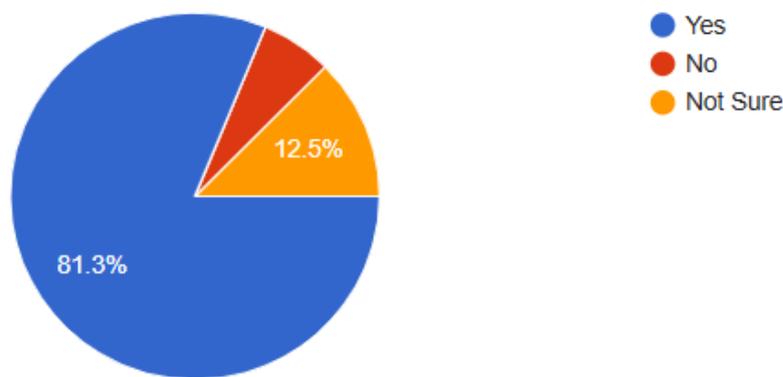


Fig. 1: Familiarity with Madhubani, Warli and Pattachitra Art

Most respondents are only moderately (37.5%) or slightly aware (31.3%) of traditional Indian wall art forms. Only a small percentage reported high awareness, revealing that while people recognize these art styles, their knowledge remains largely superficial.

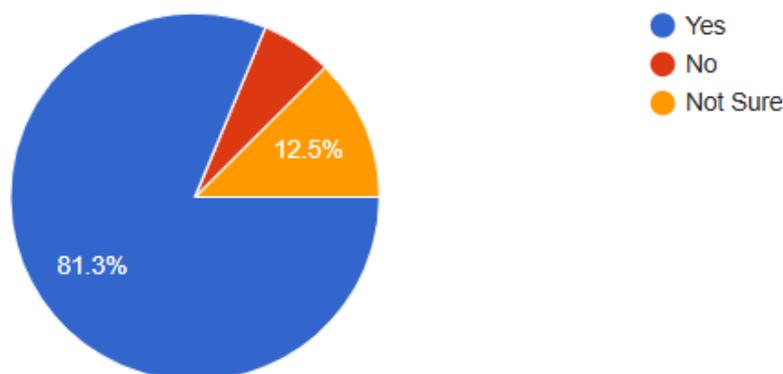


Fig. 2: Open to using traditional art forms recreated with modern materials

A large majority (81.3%) expressed interest in seeing more traditional Indian art in interior spaces. This shows a clear demand and openness from users towards incorporating handcrafted art in modern environments.

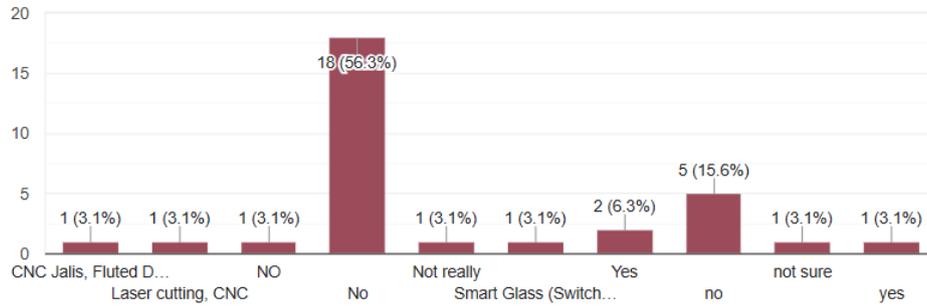


Fig. 3: Awareness of Modern Materials and Fabrication Techniques

More than half of the respondents (56.3%) indicated no awareness of modern fabrication technologies used in interiors. Only a few mentioned materials such as CNC jalis, laser cutting, or smart glass. This highlights a major knowledge gap, suggesting that most users are unfamiliar with how modern techniques can support or reinterpret traditional art in contemporary spaces.

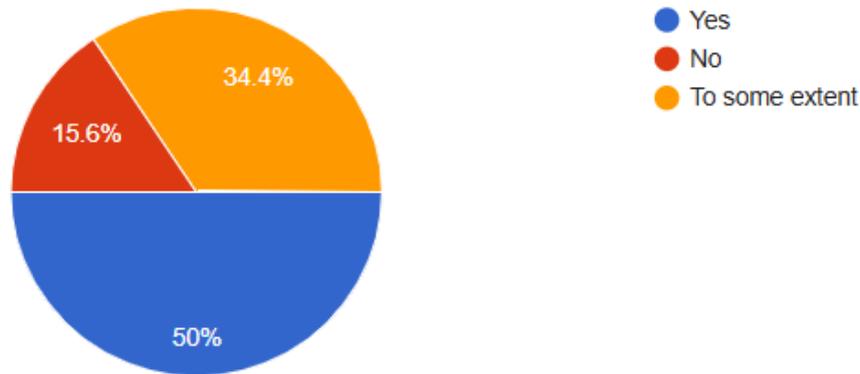


Fig. 4: Modern Materials Preserving Cultural Authenticity

Half of the participants (50%) believe modern materials can preserve cultural authenticity, while another 34.4% feel it can do so to some extent. Only a small group disagreed. This indicates an overall positive attitude toward blending tradition with innovation, provided the essence of the artwork is maintained.

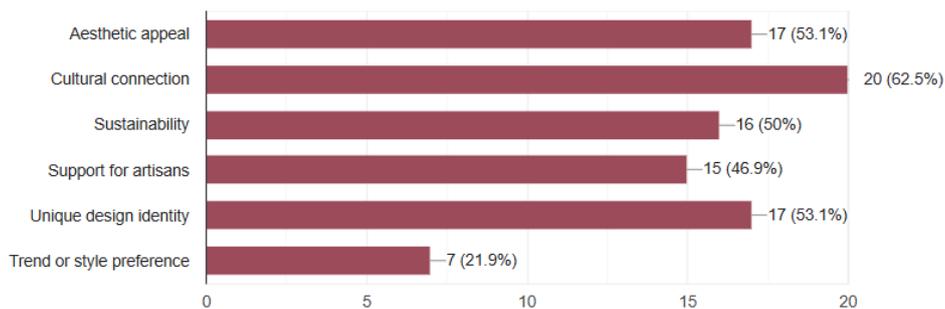


Fig. 5: Motivations for Using Traditional Indian Art

Cultural connection (62.5%) and aesthetic appeal (53.1%) emerged as the strongest motivators, followed by unique design identity and sustainability. This suggests that emotional, cultural, and visual factors strongly influence interest in traditional art, alongside growing value for artisan support.

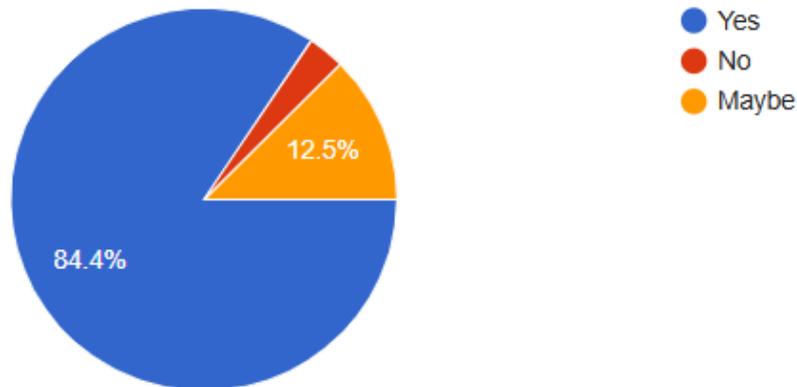


Fig. 6: Preference to see handcrafted Indian art forms in commercial and residential interiors

About 84.4% of respondents are willing to explore modern reinterpretations of traditional wall art. This reflects the growing acceptance of contemporary adaptations, hybrid designs, and fusion techniques in interiors.

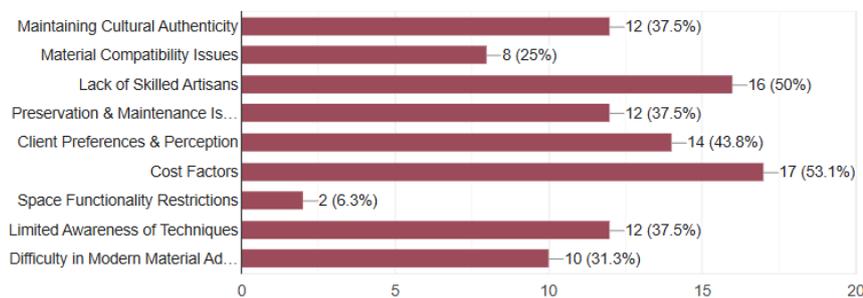


Fig. 7: Challenges in integrating traditional wall art into modern spaces

The key challenges identified include cost factors (53.1%), lack of skilled artisans (50%), and client perception or preferences (43.8%). Preservation issues, cultural authenticity, and limited technique awareness were additional barriers. These responses highlight both practical and cultural limitations that affect adoption in design projects.

The survey reveals a clear gap between interest and application: while people believe traditional Indian art is relevant to modern interiors, actual usage is low due to high costs and a scarcity of skilled artisans. However, a strong solution exists — respondents are open to using modern materials and fabrication techniques to recreate these art forms. Driven by a desire for cultural connection and unique aesthetics, the market is highly receptive to integrating authentic traditional motifs into wall panels and textiles, provided the cultural integrity of the design is preserved.

VII. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis shows that traditional Indian wall art — especially Mithila painting — holds strong aesthetic, cultural, and symbolic value that aligns well with current interior design trends prioritizing authenticity,

storytelling, and handcrafted detailing. The findings indicate that traditional motifs can be effectively adapted into contemporary materials such as MDF panels, digital prints, backlit acrylic, laminated surfaces, and textured finishes. This opens new possibilities for modular wall art, accent panels, and functional décor pieces.

Furthermore, consumers today increasingly appreciate culturally rooted design elements, suggesting that reimagined folk art can appeal to modern sensibilities without losing its traditional essence. The study confirms that design innovation — through material experimentation, scalable fabrication techniques, and hybrid craft-tech approaches — can act as a bridge between cultural heritage and modern interiors. This reinforces the relevance of integrating traditional wall art into present-day living and commercial spaces while supporting cultural sustainability and artisan-based livelihoods.

Opportunities for material and technological innovation include:

- Laser-cut reinterpretations
- CNC-routed panels
- Digital textile printing
- Hybrid craft-tech installations
- Eco-friendly paints and natural dyes
- Illumination-enhanced panels

VIII. CONCLUSION

The review confirms that Indian folk arts possess strong symbolic richness and cultural relevance, yet face sustainability challenges due to modernization and commercialization. The literature review highlights that these art forms are deeply rooted in India's cultural heritage, yet remain adaptable to evolving design trends when supported by modern materials and fabrication techniques. The hypotheses proposed — that awareness influences adoption, that modern materials can help integrate traditional art in contemporary spaces, and that key motivators include cultural connection and aesthetics — are strongly supported by survey findings.

The survey results indicate moderate familiarity among respondents, with many being aware of these art forms but lacking deeper knowledge of modern fabrication technologies. Despite this, a majority believe that modern techniques can preserve cultural authenticity, and an overwhelming number express willingness to incorporate traditional art in interiors. Aesthetic appeal, cultural connection, sustainability, and unique design identity emerged as the primary motivators, while cost, limited artisan availability, and material compatibility issues were identified as major barriers.

This research positions design intervention as a bridge between tradition and modernity. By exploring new materials, modular formats, and innovative fabrication techniques, traditional wall art — especially Mithila painting — can be successfully reinterpreted for modern living and commercial spaces. Such an approach supports cultural preservation, strengthens artisan livelihoods, and enriches interior environments through meaningful visual storytelling.

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