

THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AND E-COMMERCE ON THE INDIAN ART MARKET

Masarrat Asrari ¹  , Dr. Badar Jahan ²  

¹ Research Scholar, Department of Fine Arts, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh, India

² Professor, Department of Fine Arts, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh, India



Received 15 April 2025
Accepted 17 May 2025
Published 30 June 2025

Corresponding Author

Masarrat Asrari,
masarratasrari@gmail.com

DOI

[10.29121/granthaalayah.v13.i6.2025.6232](https://doi.org/10.29121/granthaalayah.v13.i6.2025.6232)

Funding: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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ABSTRACT

The paper discusses the Indian art market concerning e-commerce and digital transformation. The author attempts to present the interplay between technology and art business. There has been a sea change in the Indian art market post technological innovations and the rise of online art platforms. This expansion of online platforms has created new opportunities for artists and buyers in the form of artist studios, virtual exhibitions, and digital galleries. Significantly, the internet has become a mainstream venue for buying, selling, and investing in art, with people feeling more comfortable in the digital space. In this way, both technology and the art market are closely related. This study explores key aspects of the market, such as online auctions, new revenue streams and social media's role in art promotion. Therefore, using secondary data and a descriptive research approach, the study presents an in-depth analysis of the Indian art market in relation to technological advancements. A thorough analysis of the opportunities and challenges presented by digitalisation concludes that while these advancements offer unparalleled benefits, they also introduce some serious risks. This new digital space also requires some modifications to preserve integrity and authenticity.

Keywords: Art Market, Digitalisation, E-Commerce, Online Platforms, Technology

1. INTRODUCTION

Art in India has transformed from prehistoric rock paintings to modern forms of expression. It was impacted by social and political upheavals, foreign invasion, and its customs. Early instances of Indian art can be found in the ceramic cultures of the Indus Valley civilisations, which created a great deal of exquisite items such as seals, pottery, and jewellery. Then, we saw a fusion of Indian and Persian styles throughout the Mughal era, which produced some of the finest examples of miniature art depicting scenes from the court and battles. The British Colonial era

introduced a new influence on art by combining Indian and Western artistic traditions. Several art schools were also founded during this period, the most significant of which was the Bengal School of Art. Reviving indigenous Indian art forms and themes was the school's rebellious response to colonial oppression [Mitter \(1994\)](#). Compared to European art, Indian art was viewed as subpar and commercial rather than divine by the British. They hired Indian artists to produce artwork, which they purchased and sold for a great price in the West. Due to this, the demand for Indian artwork increased, particularly in Europe and France, and soon around the world. This marked the emergence of the Indian art market and brought global recognition to Indian artists. In the post-independence era, the modern and contemporary movements dominated this newly formed art market, and artists like M.F. Husain, S.H. Raza and Tyeb Mehta came to the fore, particularly in the West. During this period, many significant organisations were established to promote and uphold Indian art, such as the National Gallery of Modern Art and Lalit Kala Academy.

The 1990s economic liberalisation brought new prospects and attracted investment and interest in Indian artists worldwide. The big international auction houses like Christie's and Sotheby's started featuring Indian art and realised a growing demand. Subsequently, Indian art started selling for record prices on the global stage. India has become the host country for significant art events like the India Art Fair and Kochi Biennale. These events led artists, galleries, collectors and fans to come together to check out the latest trends and deals [Fuchs \(2014\)](#). In the 21st century, the arrival of the internet significantly impacted and altered the Indian art scene. Historically defined by physical galleries and in-person events, the Indian art market has undergone a sea change with the internet and online shopping starting to play a significant role. One cannot emphasise how crucial the Internet revolution is to the art business. Because there are no longer any middlemen between artists and audiences worldwide, it has democratised access to the arts. These days, artists may directly contact potential purchasers and present their work to a wider audience thanks to internet platforms that have opened up new channels for art promotion. Online sales and purchases have significantly transformed in the 21st century, and India was no exception. A Deloitte Luxembourg and Art Tactic poll of the year 2016 that was included in the Art and Finance Report states that the number of art collectors who are worried about their purchase's possible return on investment has increased [Rani \(2017\)](#).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Several studies have been performed on digitalisation in the Indian art across various educational institutions. This paper provides a selective review of some relevant studies in the field. [Mitter \(2001\)](#) presented a comprehensive exploration of Indian art across millennia, with a clear and chronological understanding of Indian art by covering key periods. The narrative of the book expands into the 20th and 21st centuries, documenting the advent of modern and contemporary Indian art. [Shehu and Singh \(2022\)](#) revealed that North-Eva Respini's book "Art in the Age of the Internet: 1989 to Today" documents a historical exploration of internet art and its development from 1989 onwards. This book is a compilation of artworks, historical information, theoretical essays and conversations on art, providing multiple perspectives on the relationship between art and digital culture. Whereas, [Fuchs \(2014\)](#) provided a good understanding of the difficulties that characterise the Indian art market as it shows the effect of digitalisation, globalisation and dependence on culture. The study demonstrates all dimensions of the Indian art

market in depth, including galleries, auction houses, and art fairs, examining their role in the market mechanism.

Meanwhile, [Arora and Vermeylen \(2013\)](#) presented an unprejudiced overview of how digitisation transforms the art market. The book chapter underlines the dual nature of this transformation. Although it brings new opportunities for artists, collectors, and galleries, it also questions the authenticity and value of art in the digital age. The authors suggest that digitalisation democratises access to art, fuelling the emergence of online art markets.

At the same time, [Rani \(2017\)](#) discovered that the online art platforms are being prioritised over galleries in driving the market. The study is a thorough analysis of e-commerce transforming the art sector and highlighting both its advantages and disadvantages. The research implies that there has been a significant change in the way that people look for art these days. Whereas [Düzenli and Perdahçı \(2024\)](#) revealed how emerging technologies are reshaping the creation, distribution, and perception of art. The paper explores how digitalisation, particularly through AI, has enabled digital art to establish an independent presence within a decentralised framework, positioning it as a widely accessible digital asset.

According to [Van Hest and Vermeylen \(2016\)](#), local institutions and cultural dynamics continue to have a significant impact on the art markets in China and India, even in the face of increased international interest. They contest the notion of a truly global art market and highlight persistent regional differences, arguing that global integration is inequitable and frequently superficial. On the other hand, [Wang et al. \(2021\)](#) used a psychological perspective to examine how e-commerce affects the art market, paying particular attention to consumer behavior, trust systems, and decision-making in online transactions. The study showed how consumers' opinions of the authenticity, worth, and emotional bond of artworks are influenced by internet platforms. [Tian \(2024\)](#) offers a concise analysis of the impact of digital technologies on art management. The work highlights opportunities such as broader accessibility and innovative promotion, while also addressing challenges like digital piracy and authenticity concerns. Tian underscores the need for adaptive strategies and digital literacy among art professionals. Meanwhile, [Enhuber \(2015\)](#) emphasised that the transformation from physical world to virtual space has influenced the way people view, interact with, and value art. The researcher suggests that there is a dire need to maintain a balance between digitalisation and the original essence of art so that the new opportunities brought by digitalisation can be entirely utilised.

2.1. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To explore and analyse the effects of digitalisation and how it has moulded the current market mechanism.
- To examine the long-term sustainability of e-commerce in the art market.
- To examine the role of online auction houses in eliminating technological barriers.
- To present a comprehensive analysis of the opportunities and challenges faced by market actors in adopting technological advancements.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study attempts to explore and analyse the effects of digital transformation and e-commerce on the Indian art market, focusing on understanding the shifts in consumer behaviour, its distribution, and sales of art through online platforms. To achieve this, the researcher analyses an extensive review of relevant literature and reflects on the technological modifications in the art market. The study focuses on key art players, artists, art collectors, galleries, and online art platforms operating in India. The research approach is based on secondary data collected from various sources, including books, journals, research papers, and newspaper reports. This included thoroughly examining existing research on digitalisation and e-commerce in the art sector. Through a descriptive research approach, the study impartially documents the opportunities and challenges the digital transformation presents.

4. INDIAN ART MARKET

Figure 1



Figure 1 Christie's Auction at Mumbai

Source The Economic Times

An art market would be best described as a marketplace for the exchange of cultural items. Sometimes, monetary transactions involved in this trade appear more important than the exchange of artworks themselves. An art market is a complex network of commercial galleries, auction houses, art fairs, online platforms, art collectors and patrons. In the context of India, the art market structure comprises prominent galleries such as Vadehra Art Gallery, leading auction houses like Saffronart, and major art fairs like the India Art Fair [Fuchs \(2014\)](#).

- **Galleries:** Galleries form the backbone of the art world, as exhibiting artwork is the first step in selling art. Galleries like Delhi's Vadehra Art Gallery and Mumbai's Chemould Prescott Road play a crucial role in promoting traditional and contemporary Indian art [Vermeulen and Bhat \(2023\)](#).
- **Auction houses:** An Auction House holds the most important place in the overall positioning of an art market as it contributes the most to the sales of artwork. Christie's and Sotheby's have a presence in India and play a pivotal role in selling high-value Indian art. Home-grown auction houses like Saffronart and AstaGuru also put high-profile auctions, fostering international interest and investment in Indian artists [Saffronart \(2025\)](#).
- **Art Fairs and Biennales:** India is the host nation for two major events: the India Art Fair and the Kochi-Muziris Biennale. An art fair aims to

create cutting-edge exhibitions and focus on the actual sales of artworks [Fuchs \(2014\)](#).

- **Online Art Platforms:** Digital platforms, such as artist studios, virtual exhibitions, and digital galleries, have created new opportunities for art development. Mojarto and Artisera are renowned online platforms in India.

5. DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN THE INDIAN ART MARKET

In the past years, traditional physical spaces such as art galleries and auction houses were the main places the art market operated. Only in the early 2000s, with the widespread use of the internet, did the art market go online, with major auction houses like Saffronart pioneering online auctions. These developments were one of the first examples of digitalisation in the Indian art scene [Rani \(2017\)](#). The research paper provides insight into how the digital revolution influences today's art market. For this purpose, the terms 'digitisation', 'digitalisation' and digital transformation are distinguished from each other [Enhuber \(2015\)](#).

[According to Business Dictionary \(2013\)](#), digitisation is the process of converting analogue data into digital form (text, images, voice, etc.) with appropriate electronic devices (such as a scanner, etc). This process is carried out in order to manage, save and send data via computer networks and digital circuits [Enhuber \(2015\)](#).

According to Gartner's IT Glossary, digitalisation is the process that uses technologies to change analogue business processes into digital ones, generating new revenue streams and cost-effective models. It goes beyond just converting data; it also integrates digital technologies into existing processes. However, digital transformation focuses on the holistic modification of the entire organisation due to digitisation [Winikoff \(2024\)](#). By using digital tools and innovations, it increases the efficiency and productivity of a business model [Bloomberg \(2018\)](#). For example, transitioning from physical visits to art galleries to experiencing virtual tours of distant galleries while sitting at home exemplifies digitalisation.

However, digital transformation in the art market is a broader and more comprehensive concept. It implies the significant changes brought about by the advent of technology in various art market segments. Digital transformation includes a variety of technological innovations and digital tools aimed at boosting art sales and the overall development of the Indian art industry. These innovations include digital archives, Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR), Blockchain technology and NFTs, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) [Cahyaningrum and Wijaya \(2024\)](#). Digitalisation refers to enhancing procedures using digital means, while digital transformation entails using technology to change a business process [Winikoff \(2024\)](#).

One significant digital transformation is digital archives. These archives contain a wealth of information about the monetary value and quality of an artwork, ownership, provenience, and accounts of previous transactions. Millions of artworks and photographs are digitally scanned and shared through websites. These websites are usually run by galleries, museums, research centres, and designers for business or educational purposes. Moreover, brand-new artistic mediums have emerged that exist only as computer images and have no physical substance. Audiences can now engage with museum art from anywhere worldwide because of the digitisation of art collections. For instance, the Google Art Project aims to enhance the art experience for art enthusiasts by providing high-quality

photos and engaging navigation features of world-class museums [Arora and Vermeulen \(2013\)](#).

6. E-COMMERCE IN THE INDIAN ART MARKET

The late 1990s saw the introduction of the internet to the general public. As with many other sectors, the art market also began to shift. Many online platforms for art-related services emerged with the advent of e-commerce in India, but the art industry was initially slow to adopt this technology due to concerns over provenance and authenticity. Gradually, with increased internet availability, people became more comfortable in the digital space. Market participants—including artists, collectors, and buyers—now use the internet not only for trade but also to enhance their artistic creativity and stay updated with trends [Poza et al. \(2016\)](#). Online sales and purchases have significantly transformed in the 21st century, and India is no exception [Rani \(2017\)](#). Leading platforms like Saffronart embraced the digital revolution in the middle of the 2000s. It was established in 2000 and was one of the pioneers in online auctions and virtual galleries. Leveraging these technological innovations, art lovers now have access to high-resolution photographs of artworks and a greater engagement with art auctions. [Saffronart \(2025\)](#).

“E-commerce,” or electronic commerce, refers to using computer networks, primarily the Internet, to purchase, transfer, and exchange goods, services, and data [Khosla and Kumar \(2017\)](#). In the context of the Indian art market, e-commerce websites showcase, manage and present an extensive range of artworks in the most organised way. This helps Indian artists market their works and gives art buyers a comfortable approach to exploring various works [Arya \(2025\)](#). The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development describes e-commerce as exchanging goods and services over networks mediated by computers between individuals, companies, consumers, authorities, and other organisations. With e-commerce, a person can make transactions without the presence of conventional physical spaces like galleries and auction houses by utilising a range of digital channels, such as mobile apps, social networks, and webpages [Wood \(2024 April 1\)](#). Nevertheless, the utilisation of electronic commerce extends beyond the simple exchange of products and services via computer networks; it entails “the entire online process of developing, marketing, selling and paying for products and services” [Khosla and Kumar \(2017\)](#).

Renowned art critic Uma Nair said in an interview with Livemint “We need use the online platform not just to have webinars, which cater to the selected 1%, but actually teach our children about the rich tradition we have.” Online exhibitions are appealing because they are economical, visually appealing, time-efficient, and open to all users. “Online is definitely the way forward,” Nair added. Meanwhile, Roshni Vadehra, director of Delhi’s Vadehra Art Gallery, has been sending paintings to customers so they can look at the artworks before making a purchase. “You need to feel the art before spending so much money” she added [Singh \(2020\)](#).

7. THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AND E-COMMERCE ON THE INDIAN ART MARKET

Only in the last few years have gallerists realised the benefits of having a web presence for marketing. The advent of digitalisation prompted galleries to develop their respective websites that primarily showcase descriptions of the artists they represent. These sites also provide valuable details about the gallery and

forthcoming activities like exhibitions [Arora and Vermeulen \(2013\)](#). Likewise, auction houses have adopted digital technologies; the catalogues are frequently digitalised and posted on the website, in addition to the conveniences of live bidding. As stated by Payal Arora and Filip Vermeulen in their work *Digitisation of Art* [\(2013\)](#), the majority of auction houses saw the internet and digital transformation merely as an additional trading tool for marketing, which allows customers to bid online on items that are auctioned off in person.

Online auctions improve buyers' understanding of artworks and enable them to make informed purchasing decisions from the comfort of their homes. Home-grown auction houses like Saffronart and AstaGuru have pioneered profitable digital auctions for visual art and offered mobile phone bidding [Mansukhani \(2024\)](#). Dinesh Vazirani, co-founder and CEO of Saffronart, has been a vocal advocate for the digital transformation of the art market. He highlighted how digital platforms have expanded the reach of Indian art to a global audience. When asked whether he would choose live or online, he said, "Online auctions run usually for two days, while physical auctions go on for two hours. So, in online auctions, people have more time to think and evaluate their decision, which is less in physical auctions." He further added, "In live auctions, things move fast. One has to decide in a second, or the hammer will go down. In an online auction too, on the last day, one can see the excitement on screen" [Banerjee \(2018\)](#).

8. ONLINE ART PLATFORMS

Online art platforms, the major e-commerce component, have hugely transformed the Indian art market in various ways. Some renowned online marketplaces in India include Saatchi Art, Etsy, Redbubble, Amazon Art, Society6 and more. Here is a thorough analysis of these platforms' role in the market:

- **Artists' profiles and artwork listing:** Creating an account, giving personal information, and accepting the auction house's terms and conditions are usually essential for an artist's profile. These websites also possess complete artwork information, including its dimensions, composition, material, and potential flaws [Arora and Vermeulen \(2013\)](#).
- **Authenticity and Ownership:** Digital platforms provide complete provenance records and certificates of authenticity to build customers' trust. Due to this transparency, art collectors can make wise decisions about their artwork purchases [Nalawade \(2024\)](#).
- **Live-streamed Auctions:** Multiple online auction sites hold timed sales in which participants can submit bids within a set time. Due to real-time bidding and automatic bid increments, this digitised process is exceptionally advanced and competitive. Platforms such as AstaGuru and Mojarto popularise these digital processes, attracting local and global buyers [Saffronart \(2025\)](#).
- **Shipping and handling:** Reputable online retailers let customers know exactly what their policies are, including any costs or limitations, and let them know as soon as an item ships so they can plan for when it should arrive at home.
- **Major Online Art Platforms:** Saffronart is a renowned international auction house and the first to introduce online auctions nationwide. Founded in 2008, Saffronart recognised the potential of the internet to democratise the art market [Saffronart \(2025\)](#). Another online auction house, AstaGuru, has achieved notable progress through its carefully

selected auctions that showcase high-end artworks and luxury artefacts [The Economic Times \(2021\)](#). Pundole's, a privately owned Mumbai-based auction house, entered the world of online auctions in 2011. The name is well known as a leading auction house specialised in Indian modern and contemporary art, both locally and internationally. Established in 2007, Bid & Hammer has made a name for itself as India's first multi-category auction house. Specialised in Indian fine art and antiques, the auction house brought variety to the market [Mojarto \(n.d.\)](#).

9. OPPORTUNITIES

- **Enhanced Accessibility:** Traditionally, art transactions were limited to physical galleries and auction houses, predominantly in urban centres like Mumbai, Delhi, and Kolkata—this somewhat restrained access to art to a niche audience of collectors. However, online platforms have removed these geographical barriers, enabling art lovers to trade art from the comfort of their homes [Thomson et al. \(2013\)](#).
- **Leveraging Social Platforms:** Through platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Pinterest, artists can now effectively display their work, interact with potential customers, and increase traffic to their online stores. Social media enables artists to foster their fan base and community. These platforms have changed the traditional ways of engaging with art so that artists and buyers can communicate directly without the interference of gallery administrators [Yang \(2024\)](#).
- **Efficient and Convenient:** Online platforms offer a user-friendly experience, allowing buyers to browse artworks from across the globe at their own pace. Artists and buyers no longer need physical galleries and their associated costs. These financial savings are beneficial to both artists and collectors. Alternatively, buyers may peruse, bid on, and buy art conveniently from their homes [Art \(2024\)](#).
- **Support for Emerging Artists:** Digital space proves to be an excellent platform for emerging artists who might not have access to established galleries. They can connect directly with collectors, connoisseurs and art investors and build loyal connections [Art \(2024\)](#).
- **Digital Archives:** Digitising art archives via online platforms has significant advantages, especially in the public domain. Physically preserving art, particularly artworks with cultural relevance, is significant for documenting history, but at the same time, it is very challenging as it is prone to damage from time and decay [Arora and Vermeylen \(2013\)](#).
- **Expansion of the Market:** Several online platforms are significantly shaping the Indian online art market. Some such successful marketplaces include Art Alive Gallery, Artflute, and Artzolo, which provide a wide range of artworks by Indian artists [Art \(2024\)](#). Furthermore, the spread of cell phones and enhanced internet connectivity, which have made it simpler for people to use these platforms, have contributed to this expansion [Arora and Vermeylen \(2013\)](#).
- **New Revenue Streams:** NFTs and Blockchain Technology are emerging as promising innovations in the digital space. This blockchain-based art provenance system allows institutions, galleries, and

collectors to confirm a piece's authenticity with never-before-seen accuracy [Nalawade \(2024\)](#). Founder of ART India magazine, Sangita Jindal, quoted, "NFTs have expanded the notion of what collectable and desirable art looks like. The digital mode has expanded modes of creativity and consumption" [Art \(2024\)](#).

- **Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic:** The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 somehow turned out to be positive on adopting online art platforms. With physical galleries and auction houses temporarily closed, buyers and sellers switched to online platforms. Virtual exhibitions, online auctions, and digital art fairs became the new norm, significantly increasing online art sales as collectors adapted to the new reality and artists found innovative ways to connect with their audience [Art \(2024\)](#).

10. CHALLENGES

- **Digital Inequality:** Artists from rural or economically poor areas are affected by this digital divide as they do not have equal access to digital resources. This divide is one of the significant problems digitisations has brought, and these advancements cannot benefit some. Many traditional and folk artists may be left out of this split because they lack the tools or knowledge necessary for using digital mediums [Chandola \(2022\)](#).
- **Risk of Art Forgery:** The digital space market is more vulnerable to fraud and forgeries. The ease with which digital photos can be altered and the danger of buying fake artwork rises when one cannot personally examine the items. This problem could damage consumer confidence in the industry and discourage people from making online purchases [Asher-Schapiro \(2022\)](#).
- **Security and Privacy Issues:** There are serious privacy and security issues with digital transactions and online auctions. Cyberattacks could manipulate private data by gaining access to financial and personal information. These attacks could discourage buyers and sellers from conducting online transactions [Neville \(2023\)](#). For example, there have been cases in the art market where buyer information has been hacked, harming both buyers' and sellers' reputations and finances.
- **Loss of Physical Experience and Sensitivity:** The tangible feels of experiencing art in person cannot be found when art is consumed digitally. The physical setting in which artworks are shown is vital to their impact. Therefore, this change may impact the appreciation of artworks. Digital media may not adequately portray real artworks' presence, scale, and texture. Even though art collectors and enthusiasts are satisfied with how art is showcased online, they still believe that visiting real galleries is a better way to buy art than doing it online [Quesenberry and Skyes \(2008\)](#).
- **Market Saturation and Fluctuating Prices:** Art transactions were limited to galleries in the past. However, with the advent of the digital market, there is now an endless supply of art from established and emerging artists, which results in market saturation. This, in turn, drops the prices of artworks, making it challenging for artists to maintain their value.

11. CONCLUSION

In recent decades, the art market has been confronted by significant shifts, such as financial instability and digitalisation. Digital transformation has radically altered traditional market processes, reshaping the art markets worldwide. In the Indian context, the art market is developing and requires structural reforms promoting growth. In this scenario, the arrival of e-commerce and digital transformations have proved to be vital in the resurgence of the Indian art market. In particular, the convenience and effectiveness of online marketplaces have drawn a new wave of tech-savvy art collectors, democratising the process of purchasing art. Challenging the traditional norms of the market, incorporating digital tools such as online auctions and digital archives has helped the Indian art market grow manifold. Due to these technological advancements, more individuals can now acquire diverse roles as art collectors, investors and artists in the Indian art market. As the market continues to globalise, Indian art increasingly seeks to establish a strong digital presence. Unquestionably, the development of the internet and digitalisation were significant factors in this success story of the twenty-first century. Although it has created numerous opportunities for Indian artists to reach worldwide audiences, it is not without challenges, especially for art organisations that are used to traditional ways. Significant challenges such as cybersecurity, digital inequality, the preservation of artistic value in a virtual context and risks related to fraud must be addressed. This fast-paced technological advancement also demands that art organisations stay flexible and innovative. The proliferation of e-commerce and digital transformation paints an image of a more adaptable and connected market that could evolve. The Indian art market is predicted to preserve a balance between traditional and contemporary approaches and local and global perspectives in the coming times.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

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