

CASE STUDY 33

Livelihood Generation for Rural Women

Okhai is a contemporary fashion brand that symbolises the empowerment of rural women. It promotes traditional handicraft techniques that are in danger of dying. Product innovation, strong process of distributed manufacturing and social media presence is helping Okhai grow every day.

Okhai has made a significant contribution to the lives of rural women by providing livelihood opportunities that help women empower themselves. Artisans working with Okhai, improved their economic as well as social status. They are now educating their children, improving their homes, travelling to cities and are respected in the village for having jobs.



What did Tata Chemicals do?

Okhai, as a brand was created and continues to be promoted by Tata Chemicals Limited and Tata Chemicals Society for Rural Development (TCSRSD) with the aim of generating empowerment in rural areas. The brand was built with the vision of setting up a sustainable business of rural handicrafts/products, that helps in empowering women and uplifting their economic status.



Key success factors: What worked?

- Storytelling through social media helped gather patrons who genuinely supported the cause and helped reach more people
- Selling online helped Okhai enhance profitability, which resulted in higher impact for the same effort
- The same team has been with Okhai since 2014 which has doubled the impact
- Last year, Okhai created products that were first-of-its-kind designs in the industry and hence, enhanced demand.



Project impact

Okhai was set up by the Tata Chemicals Society for Rural Development (TCSRSD) in 2008. Over 500 rural artisans have benefited from this programme, through self-help groups (SHGs) and trained in the processes of modern handicraft production. Artisans have been earning a monthly income of ₹ 500 to ₹ 11,000 depending on the hours they work at home or the centre, their skill level and design difficulty. The idea was to ensure that women could work at their pace and in their homes while managing their household. A team of professional designers supported the cause, and helped Okhai develop products distinct from any other brand. Special training on embroidery techniques, tailoring, color theory, costing and design coupled with factory visits was provided on an ongoing basis to keep the women in touch with the latest trends, colours and fashions. In the current year, Okhai expanded to Kenya (40 artisans), Lucknow (90 artisans), Babrala (30 artisans), Ahmedabad (20 artisans), impacting 800 artisans through trainings or sale of their products. In the next five years, Okhai aims to impact 5,000 women.

GOAL# 8 IMPACTS

- Okhai hopes to empower 5,000 rural women by manufacturing and retailing their handmade products
- Wants to be India's most loved ethical fashion brand, an artisan-led brand

VALUE LEVERS FOR THE COMPANY

- Women empowerment
- Ethical fashion
- Responsible manufacturing



Challenges

- Capacity of training and manufacturing handmade products on a large scale across rural locations
- Developed crafts with cost-effective methods to impact a large number of women in rural India
- Okhai is a women empowerment initiative, that alone is not sufficient for it to brand and sell the products the women make
- Limited resources to market like a fashion brand has been a challenge, yet has also led to frugal marketing techniques that have proved impactful.



Working women for working women – Okhai aims to empower 5000 rural women by manufacturing and retailing their handmade products. Over 500 rural artisans have benefited from this programme through self-help groups and trained in processes of modern handicraft production.