



# Flourish and Grow

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## INTRODUCTION

As the founder of Flourish and Grow Mikaila Stevens eagerly awaited the unveiling of her latest beadwork line, “The Anxiety Collection,” a wave of emotions washed over her. She sat down in anticipation and took a moment to reflect on the incredible journey that had brought her to this point — a journey marked with passion, perseverance, and the creation of meaningful artwork that resonated with her buyers. As her eyes lingered on the intricate designs of her latest collection, Stevens’ mind brimmed with ideas. How could she enhance her brand’s value, build stronger customer relationships, and solidify her identity as an artist? Having explored the Indigenous art space over the last few years, Stevens pondered over how to optimize several aspects of her business — product, pricing, promotion, and distribution — to remain competitive, while running a one-person business. Aware of the need to boost her operational capacity during 2023-24, Stevens realized that it was time to look into Flourish and Grow’s marketing strategy, and seek ways to elevate its effectiveness.

## HISTORY

### Flourish and Grow

Flourish and Grow was a sole proprietorship based in London, Ontario, and founded by Mikaila Stevens in 2019. It primarily engaged in selling contemporary-style beadwork, screen-printed apparel, and fine art to customers who appreciated the value in specially curated collections of handmade products. Using a combination of bold colors and design elements taken from nature, Flourish and Grow aimed at creating one-of-a-kind art pieces that conveyed a narrative about culture and values. Increased market demand for handcrafted apparel and jewelry allowed the company to expand its presence across Canada and the United States within three years of operations.

## Mikaila Stevens

In the early stages of Flourish and Grow, Stevens primarily engaged in screen-printing and apparel design.<sup>1</sup> As time progressed, however, she delved into the intricate art of beadwork. When the COVID-19 pandemic struck, forcing her to spend extended periods of time at home, she was temporarily unable to continue screen-printing. Instead, she immersed herself in her newfound passion for beading, dedicating countless hours to honing her skills and allowing her creativity to thrive. The solitude of her home became a sanctuary for Stevens to explore her artistry, which resulted in exquisite collections of beadwork. In the preceding year, she found alternative sources of funding to expand her business, obtaining government grants to finance larger-scale fine art projects.

As Stevens explored her Mi'kmaq ancestry, she created unique and introspective pieces including apparel, beaded accessories, and fine art. Stevens forged connections with her customers through her expressive and personal creations. Her art connected with people who had weathered life's diverse experiences and emotions by encapsulating feelings of grief, heartbreak, and anxiety, to name a few. Each piece carried a story and resonated with individuals who traversed similar paths. See Exhibit 1 for examples of some of her most popular product lines.

## INDUSTRY

### Industry

Research indicated that the North American handicrafts market was expected to achieve a valuation of \$531.2 billion by the year 2028, with a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 9.9% for the five-year period from 2022 to 2028.<sup>2</sup> The North American handicrafts market, which included hand printed textiles and handmade jewelry, was driven by several factors. A surge in the disposable incomes of households, and growing travel and tourism activities in the United States and Canada, enticed foreign tourists to spend a significant amount of money purchasing souvenirs and handmade products. Moreover, the rise of online retailing and the abundance of e-commerce platforms greatly enhanced the availability of handmade products, benefiting both producers and consumers. Consumers had the convenience of purchasing handicraft items with a simple tap on their smartphones, including no contact hassle-free doorstep delivery. Similarly, handicraft artists used social media promotions as a direct gateway to their target markets, effectively streamlining their reach to potential customers.<sup>3</sup>

Social trends in the jewelry market indicated a preference among young working professionals and millennials for beaded jewelry over traditional jewelry. The volatile prices of gold and silver also played a significant role in driving the global demand for beaded products. Furthermore, the growing fashion consciousness of consumers and the increasing popularity of piercings have contributed to the ongoing evolution of innovative and ornamental beaded creations.<sup>4</sup>

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[1] Screen-printing is a process in which ink is pressed through a mesh screen with a blade or squeegee, transferring the ink onto a base material (film, liner), except in areas where a stencil is placed to prevent ink from contacting the material, thereby creating unique designs. Screen-printing is often used for apparel, though the technique can be used for other surfaces as well.

[2] "North America Handicrafts Market: Industry Trends, Share, Size, Growth, Opportunity and Forecast 2023 – 2028," *Research and Markets: The World's Largest Market Research Store*, IMARC Group, March 2023, <https://www.researchandmarkets.com/reports/5769415/north-america-handicrafts-market-industry>.

[3] "North America Handicrafts Market Analysis- Industry Size, Share, Research Report, Insights, Covid-19 Impact, Statistics, Trends, Growth and Forecast 2023 – 2030," *Markwide Research*, June 2023, <https://markwideresearch.com/north-america-handicrafts-market/>.

[4] "GVR Report Cover Beaded Jewelry Market Size, Share & Trends Report Beaded Jewelry Market Size, Share & Trends Analysis Report By Product (Necklaces, Bracelets, Rings, Earrings), By Material (Plastic, Glass, Metal), By End-user (Women, Men), By Distribution Channel, By Region, And Segment Forecasts, 2022 – 2030," *Grand View Research*, July 2022, <https://www.grandviewresearch.com/industry-analysis/beaded-jewelry-market-report/toc>.

## COMPETITORS

### Claire's

The American retailer Claire's specialized in the sale of accessories, jewelry, and toys, targeting the teen girl and young women demographics. The company, established in 1961 and headquartered in Chicago, operated under two brand names: Claire's and ICING.<sup>5</sup> Claire's had a substantial global physical presence with 2,300 retail stores in North America and Europe, along with 190 ICING stores in North America.<sup>6</sup> In addition to selling their products in retail stores such as Walmart, Toys "R" Us, and French department store Galeries Lafayette, the company also maintains an e-commerce platform for its online sales. The brand's unique corporate strategy — the concession model<sup>7</sup> — allowed it to collaborate with retailers and maintain control over pricing and merchandising, as retailers were not required to purchase inventory directly from Claire's.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, Claire's reputation for quality ear piercings allowed the company to leverage its growing brand image to optimize its integrated operations.<sup>9</sup>

### Ardene

The family-owned fashion retailer, Ardene, was based in Quebec, Canada. Established in the early 1980s, Ardene initially focused on selling fashion-forward accessories and jewelry at affordable prices. Over time, the company expanded its product offering to include clothing, shoes, and brand collaborations. The company opened approximately 350 stores across Canada, the United States, and the Middle East, and it employed nearly 3,500 people across North America.<sup>10</sup> The brand's e-commerce portal — Ardene.com — was launched in 2012, and its online shopping application was launched in 2019, which helped the company's product development and geographic expansion.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, the company's charitable organization, Ardene Foundation, contributed to enhancing the brand's reputation as a sustainable entity by organizing group volunteering, in-store events, and fundraising initiatives.<sup>12</sup>

### Local Independent Artists

Independent local artists and crafters, along with family-owned shops, engaged in the sale of traditional artwork that reflected their culture and heritage. Their business models involved custom manufacturing based on orders, offering limited edition collections at premium prices, and a supply chain process characterized by longer lead times. Their target customer base consisted of individuals who sought a personal connection with both the artist and the culture, and who valued the purchase of specially curated products, even at higher price points. Local artists actively engage in the Indigenous art space, which included participating in local art committees and online platforms, aiming to establish their identities.

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[5] "Our Company," *Claire's*, accessed February 2, 2023, <https://corporate.claire.com/our-company/>.

[6] See note 5 above.

[7] A concession model, also called store-within-a-store setup, offers advantages to both retailers and brands. Retailers benefit from receiving rent or a commission based on in-store sales, while brands maintain control over the consumers' product experience and gain access to the retailer's foot traffic.

[8] Danny Parisi, "From Walmart to Galeries Lafayette: Inside Claire's expansive retail strategy," *Glossy*, September 20, 2022, <https://www.glossy.co/fashion/from-walmart-to-galeries-lafayette-inside-claires-expansive-retail-strategy/>.

[9] "Our Company," *Claire's*.

[10] "Store Locator," *Ardene*, <https://www.ardene.com/ca/en/store-locator/001.html#!>.

[11] "Who We Are," *Ardene*, <https://ardenecorporate.com/our-story>.

[12] "Social Responsibility," *Ardene*, <https://ardenecorporate.com/social-responsibility>.

## CUSTOMERS

Flourish and Grow's customers primarily consisted of 24- to 35-year-old women with disposable incomes across Canada and the United States. They were knowledgeable about the art space, particularly Indigenous art, and therefore appreciated the worth of handmade apparel and jewelry. Moreover, they perceived higher-end streetwear fashion as highly valuable and were willing to pay premium prices for the exceptional quality of handcrafted products. Customer purchasing patterns show that the majority of purchases were split between beadwork and screen-printed apparel, with some customers also buying fine art. Lower shipping rates allowed Flourish and Grow to further increase its online sales and expand its customer base in the United States.

## PRODUCT

The product range of Flourish and Grow mainly included screen-printed apparel, handmade beadwork, and other forms of fine art. These unique creations were perceived by customers as highly valuable because they were limited-edition and not mass-produced. The company's products encapsulated stories and fostered a deep connection between the customer, the artist, and the culture they represented. Furthermore, these products aligned with sustainability practices, adding to their appeal. Since both screen-printed apparel and beadwork were handcrafted product lines, the production process was both labor-intensive and time-consuming. For instance, while screen-printing apparel required physical work at the shop, beadwork entailed long hours of focused and intricate craftsmanship at home. Since Stevens solely managed all aspects of the business, including product creation, marketing, and shipping, it was considered beneficial to allocate time effectively for efficient product development. She was uncertain if she should prioritize products with the highest contribution margins or those that were the most popular. This dilemma involved making strategic decisions about which products should receive greater emphasis in terms of production and sales. Stevens also wanted to begin taking a wage for the hard work that went into making her products, and she hoped to pay herself an hourly rate of \$20. Refer to Exhibit 2 and 3 for detailed information on the cost and sales distribution of these product categories.

## PRICE

Among the three types of products, pricing and promoting screen-printed apparel posed the greatest challenge. Ensuring that the price aligned with the product's superior quality, artist's dedication, and its exclusivity, while accurately conveying these features to customers was crucial. This task was particularly challenging for online sales, as customers highly valued the tactile experience of purchasing apparel on site. To combat this difficulty, Stevens implemented various strategies, such as sharing product pictures and offering free samples, to market her one-of-a-kind pieces and justify their prices, yet these steps often led to increased expenses. Nonetheless, since Stevens handled the screen-printed apparel in-house instead of outsourcing it, the manufacturing process was cost effective.

Beadwork, characterized by intricate craftsmanship and demanding a considerable time investment from Stevens, was priced at significantly higher to accurately represent the value attributed to the artist's expertise and dedication. Considering these factors, it was necessary for Stevens to competitively price her products to attract customers, while upholding their value. Stevens assessed her pricing strategy and understood that she might need to adjust her prices to ensure they reflected the value of her artwork.

## PROMOTION

In the past, Stevens had not dedicated substantial financial resources to marketing Flourish and Grow. She determined an annual marketing budget for online promotion to be \$3,000 and print advertisements to be \$2,000. Nevertheless, she was unsure about the optimal distribution of these budgets across various platforms.

### Instagram

The advertising potential of Instagram reached 15.9 million Canadians, primarily appealing to the age group of 16- to 34-year-old people.<sup>13</sup> Flourish and Grow utilized Instagram as an advertising platform and had observed that its users actively engaged with posts through likes, comments, and shares, leading to increased brand exposure and awareness. Additionally, Instagram's visual-centric nature made it a suitable platform for showcasing the artwork on Flourish and Grow's products through captivating images and videos. Instagram charged customers on a cost-per-click (CPC) basis, with an average cost of \$0.60 per click.<sup>14</sup> The median conversion rate stood at 2.35%.<sup>15</sup> If Stevens chose to continue using Instagram advertising, she was interested in leveraging its features to effectively target her customers.

### Meta

Among all age groups, Meta enjoyed widespread popularity; however, variations emerged in terms of how different age groups utilized the platform and their specific objectives. Meta accounted for 53% of social media traffic directed towards websites, highlighting its efficacy in acquiring customers.<sup>16</sup> Meta also provided in-depth analytics and valuable insights regarding audience engagement. Additionally, Meta's integration with its other platforms and services, including Instagram, facilitated cross-platform advertising and allowed Flourish and Grow to efficiently expand its customer base. Flourish and Grow was billed at a rate of \$0.45 per click, while achieving a conversion rate of 4.11%.<sup>17</sup>

Given that Meta and Instagram were interconnected social media platforms, Stevens contemplated whether it would be more advantageous to continue promoting on both platforms simultaneously or opt for the most efficient and viable choice.

### Print Flyers and Posters

Flourish and Grow had the opportunity to acquire 8.5" × 11" posters at a discounted rate of \$0.20 per unit with a minimum purchase of 500 posters. However, if they placed larger orders of 2,500 units, the price per poster would decrease to \$0.13 per unit.<sup>18</sup> Print media was cost-effective, depending on the deal, and it targeted local communities and regions, such as pop-up markets and art fairs, to reach individuals who were more likely to support local artists and businesses.

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[13] Melody McKinnon, "2023 Report: Social Media Use in Canada (Statistics)," *Canada's Internet*, Online Business Canada, June 3, 2023. <https://canadiansinternet.com/2023-report-social-media-use-canada-statistics/>.

[14] Anna Khoma, "Instagram Ads Cost in 2023," *AdBraze*, December 29, 2022, <https://adbraz.com/blog/instagram-ad-cost>.

[15] Larry Kim, "What's a Good Conversion Rate? It's Higher Than You Think," *WordStream*, February 27, 2023, <https://www.wordstream.com/blog/ws/2014/03/17/what-is-a-good-conversion-rate>.

[16] Melody McKinnon, "2023 Report: Social Media Use in Canada (Statistics)."

[17] Mark Irvine, "Facebook Ad Benchmarks for YOUR Industry [Data]," *WordStream*, July 3, 2023, <https://www.wordstream.com/blog/ws/2017/02/28/facebook-advertising-benchmarks>.

[18] "Posters," *VistaPrint*, <https://www.vistaprint.com/signs-posters/posters>.

## PLACEMENT

### Online

Stevens used Flourish and Grow's online e-commerce platform to market and sell her products. This online portal offered the flexibility to showcase her products effectively, and she observed consistent demand for beaded jewelry throughout the year. Selling products online expanded the company's geographical scope and made Stevens' products more accessible and to a large customer base. Stevens established a direct sales channel to her customers, eliminating the involvement of wholesalers or adopting a B2B (Business-to-Business) approach. As an independent artist, she valued maintaining a personal connection with her customers and prioritized quality over mass production.

### Pop-up Markets

Stevens also offered her products at pop-up markets, which attracted individuals interested in handcrafted jewelry and apparel, as well as those who frequented local events and supported local businesses. At these markets, Flourish and Grow increased sales of apparel, as customers could personally engage with the products, eliminating the need to guess their sizes and allowing them to enjoy the tactile experience. Stevens considered dedicating more attention to pop-up markets and contemplated strategic placement strategies to foster the growth of her business. See Exhibit 4 for estimated costs and benefits of selling products through pop-up markets.

## DECISION

Mikaila Stevens believed that Flourish and Grow was already making a positive impact on many people. She knew it had the potential to become a more sustainable form of full-time employment for herself long-term if she put together a comprehensive marketing strategy. To achieve this, she was eager to implement a plan.

EXHIBIT #1

EXAMPLES OF POPULAR PRODUCT LINES

"The Anxiety Collection"



Apparel Examples



## EXHIBIT #2

## PRODUCT COSTING INFORMATION

ITEM	Avg. Price	RawMaterial Cost	Supply Cost	Time to Make
<b>Clothing</b>				
Standard T-Shirt	\$25	\$5	-	2 mins.
Specialty T-Shirt	\$30	\$5	\$5	10 mins.
Long-Sleeve T-Shirt	\$45	\$12	-	5 mins.
Hoodie Sweatshirt	\$75	\$21	-	5 mins.
Sweatpants	\$80	\$35	-	5 mins.
Tank Top	\$30	\$12	-	2 mins.
<b>Beadwork</b>				
Diamond Beadwork	\$110	\$10	-	3 hours
Regular Beadwork	\$140	\$10	-	3 hours
<b>Miscellaneous</b>				
Stickers	\$4	\$0.50	-	-
Patches	\$8	\$1	-	2 mins.
Bandana	\$15	\$3	-	2 mins.
Digital Print	\$8	\$1	-	2 mins.



**EXHIBIT #3**

**SALES PROPORTION INFORMATION**

<b>Sales Proportion</b>	
Clothing	60%
Beadwork	30%
Miscellaneous	10%

**EXHIBIT #4**

**POP-UP MARKET DATA**

<b>Average Pop-up Market Data</b>			
<b>Length of Time</b>	<b>Cost for Booth</b>	<b>Foot Traffic</b>	<b>Conversion %</b>
8 hours	\$50 - \$100	50 - 500	2% - 8%