

Policies, Strategies, and Practices for Sustainable Future of Pashmina Shawls

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ABSTRACT

As an outcome of Globalization markets have widened, and money and other resources are conveniently approachable. Dispersed commercialism, individualism, and homogenization are overpowering all aspects of trade and businesses. As a result, the economy is affected and its repercussions can be noted in all aspects of the trade and economy. The craft industry is no different. Most of the businesses done by MSMEs today in India revolve around the craft industry. As a consequence of globalization and especially after the pandemic a new work culture is created which is not craft sector friendly. In March 2020, when the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 as a pandemic many countries responded by taking strict actions like complete lockdowns and limiting travel even within the state to control the spread of the virus. Craftsmen generally being outside the benefits of any secured job and pension facilities, because of their nature of work, are the most vulnerable ones. This entire scenario accelerated the need for a new method of business for the artisans, a sustainable approach that is more accessible to all, easy to handle, flexible, easy to reach customers without any physical contact, less expensive, less time taking, and more profit-generating. In post globalization era it is important to understand that people like to connect with other people especially those who are at a distance. They get attracted to other people and love to share and connect. This need of the consumers if understood and tapped well then it can generate huge profits for the artisans. There are various sustainable steps that can be taken so that craft businesses flourish and regain their value and position in the market with better strategy and better scope. Through this research, the researcher aims to determine the overall impact of the new normal on the business of Pashmina craft and the sustainable policies, strategies, and practices for the sustainable future of the crafts and artisans in the Srinagar district, J&K.

Key Words : Sustainable future, Craft, Pashmina, Globalization, Craftsmen, Kashmir

INTRODUCTION

India is home to several world-famous arts and crafts. The term craft means making and designing a product by combining skill, judgment, knowledge, and passion together as an individual (Campbell, 2005). Crafts have always been home to creativity and innovation since the beginning of mankind. Indian craft sector with over 200 million artisans is the second largest employer after agriculture and has suffered tremendously because of the pandemic and subsequent lockdown. Winds of change blown by the nature like floods, droughts, earthquakes,

or deadly pandemics impact society both positively as well as adversely. This time the pandemic Covid-19 has impacted our lives immensely. In India, Covid-19 pandemic resulted in a countrywide lockdown starting on 24th March 2020 which extended from phase 1 to phase 4 lockdown. This pandemic has been more than just a crisis. Many people lost their jobs, shops were closed, demands were very low, the supply chain was completely disrupted, and many daily workers were starving for death as they had to choose between life and food. It has awakened us to change our way of life and to perceive the world in a completely new way. This

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major shift in the world situation has altered our normal way of living and has forced us to interpret the new changes as a normal way of living. This pandemic led to complete lockdown and restrictions on offline sale possibilities which led to the exploration of multiple sales channels. Pashmina artisans and craftsmen who generally have small local shops lack financial support to compensate for decreased profit caused by any natural crisis like Covid-19. The pandemic and subsequent digitalization has forced artisans and craftsmen to adapt to the new market demands. In today's unpredictable times the only predictable thing is change. We all need to change our way of life to sustain longer in this fast paced digitalized world where maintaining distance and being labeled positive is considered negative. Where virtual world is taken more care than real. We are on the brink of a new world which is in its reset mode were posting frequently on social media, maintaining distance with everyone around, spending most of our time at home, surfing the internet, everything shifting from offline to online is new normal. All this has divided the world into two parts. The one who has access to computers and the internet and the others who do not. This digital division is threatening the entire globe (Bozkurt and Sharma, 2020). In spite of mastering the skills required, the craft workers are not able to meet the expectations of the globalization as they lack to understand the nitty-gritty's of the demands of today's generation. Their talent is being eroded, diminished and they are becoming invisible and repressed. This has made them powerless, helpless and impoverished. Though some artisans tried selling their products online but did not get much response as compared to offline selling and there are various reasons behind it. The resulting consequences of the pandemic have impacted the craft sector particularly as the crafts are product-oriented which requires the customer to touch and feel the product to check its authenticity.

Objectives:

- To assess the impact of globalization and new normal on the Pashmina craft industry
- To propose policies, strategies and practices for the sustainable futuring of the Pashmina craft sector

METHODOLOGY

The present study is based on primary and secondary data. The secondary data has been collected from various sources like books, magazines, articles,

journals, newspapers, and other electronic sources. While the primary data has been collected through field visits and a Google form survey by distributing a standardized questionnaire to the focused group, structured observation and focused qualitative interviews to obtain in-depth information were recorded through smart phones which helped the researcher to get current information and helped to eliminate subjective biases.

About Kashmir:

Srinagar is the northernmost part of India in the Jammu and Kashmir territory of the country and is a place where art and craft are embedded in the history, landscape, and way of life. Kashmir, a land of beautiful roses, exotic plants, flowers, natural resources, natural and divine beauty. The region experiences major cold and snowfall for almost 6 months in the year. The weather conditions are extreme during "Chillai Kalan", a Persian term which means 'Major Cold'. The deep freezing chillaikalan is said to be the harshest winter period and is believed to be there for 40 days starting from 21st December to 31st January. One cannot explain Srinagar without its art and craft. The valley witnesses -4 to -8 degrees Celsius during the winters and is surrounded by snow for around six months a year. Because of the harsh winters and its geographical location, there is very poor rail connectivity with the rest part of India making it a remote territory as compared to other parts of the country. Because of the harsh weather and geographical condition this place produces the world's finest wool *i.e.*, Pashm wool and the world-famous Pashmina shawl.

Traditional crafts of Kashmir:

Srinagar is the summer capital and is located in the heart of the union territory Jammu and Kashmir. It is surrounded by beautiful forested Himalayas and lies along the banks of the Jhelum River. It is well known for its "floating garden" on Dal Lake, Shalimar and Nishat Mughal gardens, Jami masjid, Hazratbal mosques, Martand and Shankaracharya temple, Asia's famous beautiful tulip garden, and finally, its rich traditional art and crafts need no introduction. Kashmir is home to some of the world's renowned handicrafts like silk and wool carpets, Papier Mache products, pashminas, silver, and copperware products, Kani shawls, walnut wood carving, khatam band, and its embroidered shawls. The craftsmanship of Kashmiri art and craftsmanship is recognized worldwide for its one of its kind unique

masterpieces. Some of these crafts are very time-consuming and thus are highly prized throughout the world. The word handicraft means manually created creative pieces using various materials from paper to stone and it is an excellent way of preserving and promoting the culture and traditions of a particular place in form of beautiful products. Kashmir is famous for its beautiful nature and equally mesmerizing handicrafts. It is popularly known worldwide for its unique and fine-quality handicrafts. Kashmir pashmina products have also been a great contributor to exports from the handicraft sector. The unique craftsmanship of Kashmir involves world-famous pashmina and kani shawls, tilla work, papier-mache, crewel, sozni, chain stitch, ari, khatamband, walnut wood carving, copper and silverware, willow wicker products, woodwork, etc.

Carpets:

The world-famous wonderful handmade hand-knotted Kashmiri carpets and rugs are world-famous and are in great demand in international markets. The Kashmiri carpets are made in various colors and designs in cotton, wool, pure silk, and wool-silk blend. These carpets are made in various sizes where the astonishing narrative is infused with rich and vibrant closely related designs.



Image: Sourced by the researcher

Fig. 1 : A Kashmiri carpet

Walnut wood carving:

Due to a rich concentration of walnut trees in the Kashmir region and the availability of skilled artisans this region produces unique, delicate, and ornamental walnut wood carved products. Walnut wood has a hard, close grain and even texture which makes it perfect for fine

and detailed craft work. It has its own sheen which is highlighted when polished with wax or lacquer. Common motifs seen in walnut wood carved products are flowers and foliage found in Kashmir like chinar leaves, bunches of grapes, vine leaves, and flowers like roses and lotus, etc. final products like furniture and decorative items are made with this craft technique.

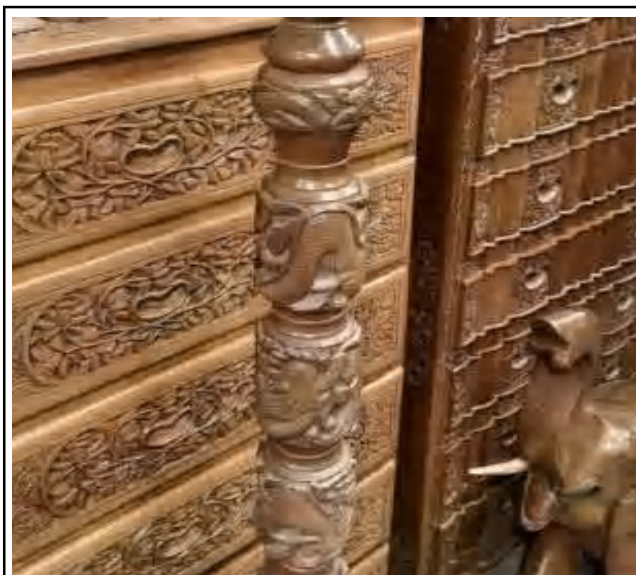


Image: Sourced by the researcher

Fig. 2 : Walnut wood carved products

Papiermache:

Papiermache name has come from a French word which means chewed paper (Yousuf, 2021). It is said papiermache because this handicraft is made using paper pulp. The entire process involves two steps: Sakhtsazi and Naquashi. The first stage to give shape of the product using paper pulp and rice water, this stage is called sakhtsazi. Once the shape is built the next stage is naquashi in which the products are decorated with several coats of paints using fine brush. Final products made are Mementos, Boxes, Toys, Gifts and decorative items etc.



Image: Sourced by the researcher

Fig. 3 : A Papier Mache Memento



Image: goldleaf (Wikimedia)

Fig. 4 : A 19th-century pen box made of papier-mache with paint

Namda:

Namda is a felted rug made traditionally by sandwiching multiple layers of wool flattened one over another. There are different types of namdas available like plain namda, embroidered namda, artwork namda, etc. In Kashmir, various types of rugs are made using this technique.



Image: Sourced by the researcher

Fig. 5 : Namda/rug

Sozni embroidery:

It is a popular hand needle embroidery technique of Kashmir valley. It is mostly done on Pashmina Cashmere shawls. It is a very intricate needle work done on pashmina to enhance its aesthetic value and increases the basic cost of the plain pashmina. This embroidery is used for Decorating shawls, stoles, garments, mufflers, sarees, etc.



Image: Sourced by the researcher

Fig. 6 : Sozni work done on pashmina shawl

Willow wicker:

It is a hand skilled craft in which baskets are made by weaving locally found willow reeds. Most commonly in Kashmir, this craft technique is used to make Kangris, which is used by local Kashmiris during harsh winters to carry clay pots filled with burning coals. These kangris are kept inside the pherans (Kashmiri costume) to protect them from the harsh climate. Final products made using this craft are Baskets, Kangris (firepots), decorative items, etc.



Image: Sourced by the researcher

Fig. 7 : Kangri (firepot)

Khatamband:

It is a hand-crafted technique of making ceiling using small geometric pieces of wood (preferably deodar or walnut wood). These small geometric pieces of wood are fitted together on the ceiling to create beautiful geometric patterns. This craft requires high skill and enough time to complete.



Image: Sourced by the researcher

Fig. 8 : A khatamband ceiling

Kani shawl:

It is a process of woolen pashmina shawl making in which the designs are made while the weaving process itself. The name kani has come from the place kanihama an area in Kashmir where these shawls originated from. The final products made using this technique are shawls, stoles, etc.



Image: Sourced by the researcher

Fig. 9 : A kani shawl hanging in the shop

Pashmina Shawl:

Pashmina shawls are made up of pashm wool derived from changthangi goat found in higher altitudes of the Himalayan region also known as Changthagi region. It takes 4 days to 1 week time to complete one plain pashmina shawl weaving. Once the shawl is woven its beauty is enhanced by some embroidery work like Sozni or tilla work depending on the market demand and the customer choice.



Image: Sourced by the researcher

Fig. 10 : Sozni work being done on the pure handwoven pashmina shawl

History and Origin of pashmina:

The art of pashmina making is considered to be as old as the Himalayas (Goldman and Goldman, 2022). As per Valmiki Ramayana, king Janaka presented his daughters especially Sita with fine and soft woolen garments probably pashmina shawls as a dowry.

The practice of producing pashmina fabric is believed to have flourished in the days of Kauravas and Pandavas as well. It is believed Lord Krishna had presented 1000 Kashmiri shawls to Dritrashttra.

Pashmina shawl weaving is an art known for ages. Pashmina shawl weaving is mentioned in various ancient texts around the world. In around 111C.E., 'The Book of Han' mentions fine shawls woven in Kashmir.

In G.M.D. Sofi's work 'KASHIR', written on Kashmir, he appreciates nature and the beauties of Kashmir. He says the variety of color and kaleidoscopic change of landscape has a great impact on the imaginative and creative Kashmiri artisans inspiring them to attain mastery and perfection in all their works (Ashraf *et al.*, 2016).

In 631A.D., a Chinese traveler, named Huien Tsang, visited Kashmir and describes Kashmiri dress as Ho-La-Li which in his language means finest wool from the wild animal. This indicates directly towards pashmina or shahtoosh weaving (Savasere, 2010).

The pashmina industry was small craft done by peasantry before medieval period. With the establishment of Muslim rules by Sayyads of Central Asia, in 13th century pashmina weaving became an organized industry. In 1541, Mirza Haider Kashgari (Duglat) brought pashm wool from ladakh and produced best pashmina shawls with the help of Naghz Bag, a Persian craft master.

During the Sultanate period (1150A.D.-1586A.D.), Sadats, who themselves were great craft masters brought specialized weavers for the upliftment of this craft. Mir Saiyyad Ali Hamdani (1314-1385 A.D.), a Sadat, put great emphasis on crafts as means of livelihood. He introduced 'Hashiya' (Border design) to the pashmina shawls which added value to the existing shawls.

Zain-Ul-Abideen (1420-70A.D.) has been credited by many for making pashmina shawls famous.

Alwan, a name for pashmina fabric, was traditionally used for making various items of clothing like socks, blankets, caps, jamas, gowns, scarves, table covers, and floor coverings.

During the Mughal period (1586A.D.-1752A.D.) the Mughal Sultans patronized this industry to suit the

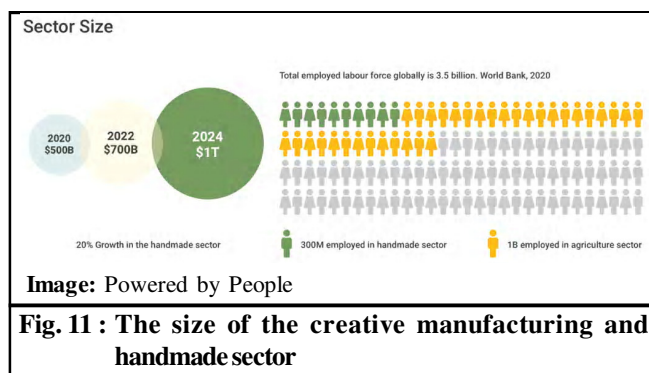
aesthetics of royalty and to present this exclusive craft as present to monarchs and rulers. During the reign of Akbar, designers and weavers were brought from Iran to improve the shawl weaving quality.

Sir Walter Lawrence writes in ‘The Valley of Kashmir’ that Napoleon Bonaparte presented one of the Kashmiri shawls to his future empress Josephine and since then this beautiful wrap made in Kashmir became fashionable item for women of Paris and elsewhere. By the 17th century it was one of the loved fashion items in Europe.

Due to industrialization and establishment of mechanized shawl industry mainly in Paris, Scot, these shawls were imitated on machines and sold in the name of Cashmere offered keen competition from various nearby countries.

Impact of globalization and new normal on the craft industry:

Covid-19 pandemic and its subsequent lockdown led to the accumulation of stocks. This pandemic has triggered responsible thinking, conscious buying, and small batch production. Customers are increasingly hunting for sustainable unique products, ethically made, which add value to their space. As a result of pandemic consumers have become more humane, who are consciously seeking sustainably produced products and brands that impact the well-being of the one at the bottom of the pyramid which when tapped properly at the right time can result in higher possibilities and incomes for artisans and craftsmen. As per a report (Anonymous, 2021)the creative manufacturing and handmade sector are likely to grow by 20% every year reaching 1 trillion \$ by 2024.



On the other hand as per the report by ‘Taking the Temperature’ jointly released by FCCI, Art X Company and British Council, 90 per cent of the handmade sector

fears long term impact of Covid 19 pandemic on the creative economy. As per the report 22 per cent of the sector has seen 75 per cent loss of their annual income.

Problems being faced by the artisans today:

- Decreased sale
- Increased unsold stock
- Cancelled orders
- Payment stuck
- Decreased demand
- Increased uncertainties
- Break in supply chain
- Lack of availability of raw materials in the vicinity
- Health issues
- Emotional breakdown
- Lack of economic opportunity
- Less market linkage

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Commercialization of ethnic crafts is interwoven with economic, Cultural, religious and political factors (Cohen, 1989; Vadgama, 2021 and Saha and Chouhan, 2021). Craft consumes most of the attention, time and energy of its producers. The artisans who spend most of their time, undivided attention towards craft production are generally less aware of the world around and thus needs to be trained regularly to update their other skills to sustain in the existing world.

Policies, Strategies and Practices for sustainable futuring:

Digitalization:

The artisans who spend most of their time and energy in craft designing and making are generally less aware of the happenings around. Today in 21st century where everyone talks about Metaverse, Augmented Reality, and Virtual Reality, it is very essential for the artisan to uplift their skills and explore different mediums to reach to the right target audience. They can take advantage of e-commerce boom to take further the legacy of traditional art and craft forms. They can be trained to be more virtual to do their business through improved use of their smartphones. As today internet and mobile banking is gaining popularity these artisans need training with internet and mobile banking.

Social media is the need of the hour as it comes with a certain structure. It can carve out a niche from the masses and can identify their specific demands. On

social media, the customers automatically come to the brand and product and connect one on one with their specific needs and allowing the seller to carve out special solutions. The biggest USP of social media is that it allows the buyer and seller to connect personally and individually. The customers are already there on social media one just needs to offer the right product or run the right campaign as per the market demand. The right customer automatically gets attracted. Social media fills the gap; it is better than traditional advertisement as customers can give feedback then and there. This two-way communication chain makes the task easier. Today Gen Z and Millennial are mainly on social media, read news digitally on the internet, they spend most of their time surfing. Thus the customers are today well read and well aware of their requirements. Due to lack of money, disruption in the supply chain, and sanitization issues, when most of the companies could not do physical business then social media was the best option. Social media influencers are also playing a major role in online business. Influencers tap into the aspirations of their followers. Popular inspirations bring aspirations to the followers. When influencers embrace a particular look or product it becomes a trend. This is how social media is bridging the gap as people to whom we aspire are easily visible on social media, they can be easily searched and tracked, and can be followed. The gap between aspiration and advertisement has decreased because of social media. Social media continuously bombarded us with lots of information and tries to influence us and motivate us to buy a particular look or product. Generating leads and nurturing those leads is also very easy through social media. It is a very convenient and smooth medium to connect with people of the same mindset. Social media also helps to segregate communities and helps to cater to them better and helps to reach specific customers with alike mindsets looking for similar products.

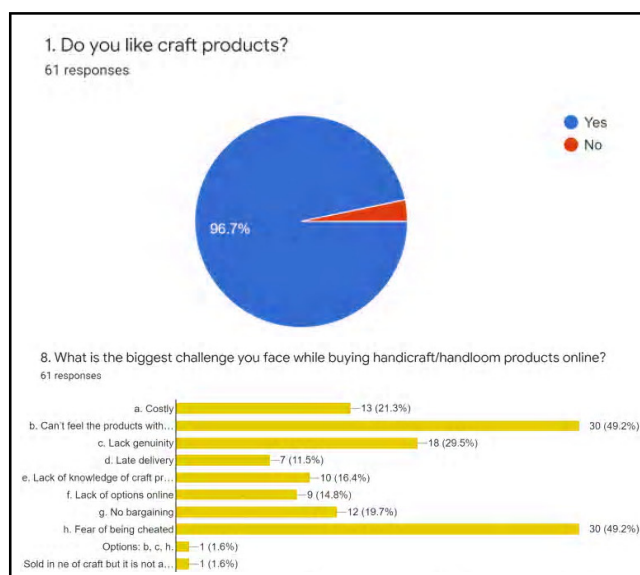
Attending shows:

Artisans attending international conferences, fashion shows & trade shows, and exhibitions will uplift their knowledge about the current trend and market demand which will eventually enhance their overall craft sales and will make them more self-dependent.

Authentic platform:

As per a survey done by the researcher and responses received from 61 craft consumers, the

researcher found out that 96.7% of consumers like craft products out of which 49.2% of the consumers are scared to buy craft products online because they fear being cheated. To overcome this Government can build one platform where authentic craft producers can register themselves and sell their products through those platforms. This will provide a business opportunity for the artisans to connect directly with the potential buyers at the same time it will also help to eliminate the fear of consumers getting cheated. They can check the authenticity of the artisans anytime through these portals.



Financial assistance :

The easy availability of microloans with minimum interest rates will make craftsmen and artisans more enterprising and independent and will help them to sustain themselves in the short term.

Policy:

Under government policy artisans and craftsmen can be given some social and medical cover which will help them in critical times. Healthy artisan and craftsmen will create healthy art and craft and will keep our traditions alive and lively.

Creative economy network:

Establishing a network of artisans where different artists can interact, share their skills, and co-learn. This peer-to-peer learning will minimize their skill gap and will help them to upgrade themselves.

Education:

The precious unmatched talent of our artisans can be enhanced by educating them with the few skills required to sell products online in today's digital world. These skills include professional photography skills to make their product look attractive and aesthetically appealing.

Improving Design and Quality of the products:

The quality of the craft products can be enhanced by improving the design and bringing innovative ideas to the table. Designing a new product or redesigning the existing products with a slight change in shape, size, color, or surface of the product will help in its revival and will bridge the gap between the designers and the craftsmen. To practically make it possible direct training method or cascade training approach can be used wherein the trainers can train other trainers of that particular area who will ultimately guide the artisans and help them to come up with innovative designs and products relevant to the contemporary market.

Conclusion:

Today digitization has impacted the human being in every possible way. It has raised a need to change our way of living by altering our day to day lives. This new changed way of life has become essential for our survival. The pandemic and the crisis associated with it have evolved us in every possible way. When two years back, before this pandemic nobody thought of online classes and digital payment in developing countries like India today every school and college have explored online platform. Today even the daily wagers and vendors of the local market prefers digital mode of payment because of the benefits associated with it. The shift from offline to online, from mass production to slow and ethical production, the need for social distancing and digital payment, and a sudden break in the supply chain because of pandemic and lockdown has triggered the need for click and mortar store in place of a brick-and-mortar store and this is the new normal. Thus, it is essential for the craftsmen to understand where their customers are, which sites they prefer to shop and how they can cater to the mass without getting bankrupt. The pandemic has hit the craftsmen even more harshly because they are mainly dependent on the middlemen and other sellers to sell their products. They don't deal with their customers directly because of a lack of time, money, and skill. The sustainable solution

to most of these problems is social media. The globalization and digital revolution have given an opportunity to the craftsmen to deal directly with the customers by selling online. They can also see online what kind of products are selling more, what is trending, and their customer preferences and they can develop products as per the demand. They can also make customized products as per the customer demands and feedback. They just need a little training and support from the government to better sustain in this digitized world.

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