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Sustaining Heritage through Innovation: Revitalizing Pipad Printing Craft of Rajasthan

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ABSTRACT

Traditional crafts of Rajasthan embody centuries of cultural heritage, aesthetics, and artisanal excellence, yet many of them today face the threat of decline due to industrialization, market competition, and lack of innovation. One such rare textile tradition is Pipad printing, a distinctive block-printing craft practiced in Pipad village of Jodhpur district. This craft is characterized by its unique motifs, natural dye usage, and intricate designs influenced by local flora, fauna, and geometric inspirations. Historically, Pipad printing flourished under royal patronage and was used in household textiles, ceremonial fabrics, and traditional garments. However, in the contemporary context, the craft struggles to sustain itself due to diminishing demand, limited market outreach, competition from screen and digital printing, and reduced interest among younger generations of artisan families. The proposed research and intervention aim to revive Pipad printing by developing value-added products. The idea is to reposition this craft not just as a relic of heritage but as a viable, sustainable, and market-oriented practice. This study is focused on finding out current scenario of pipad craft and developing value added home furnishing products using this printing technique. This research will help expanding its scope beyond conventional clothing textiles. This craft can be made more relevant to urban and global markets, ensuring both cultural continuity and economic viability. Reviving Pipad printing through value-added products not only addresses the issue of craft survival but also contributes to sustainable rural livelihoods, women empowerment, and cultural preservation. In conclusion, By developing value-added products, this study proposes a pathway to breathe new life into the craft, ensuring that the artisans of Pipad not only preserve their legacy but also thrive in a competitive, design-driven world. Thus, Pipad printing can transform from a fading craft into a dynamic cultural asset with global recognition and economic sustainability.

Keywords: Pipad printing, Craft revival, Sustainability

INTRODUCTION

Traditional textile crafts are repositories of cultural memory, technical ingenuity, and community livelihoods. Pipad printing — a form of hand block printing associated with areas around Pipad and nearby craft centers in Rajasthan — uses carved wooden blocks, hand application techniques, and historically natural dyes to produce bold motifs on cotton and other textiles (Roy and Babel, 2016). These objects are not only functional but also communicative: patterns encode local aesthetics, social identity, and generational knowledge

Block printing across Rajasthan is historically rich, with regional styles (e.g., Sanganer, Bagru, Ajrakh) exhibiting distinct motifs, color palettes, and dyeing practices. Pipad printing shares core characteristics of hand-carved wooden blocks and resist/dye techniques, but maintains unique motifs and local dyeing traditions. Crafts like these are recognized for their intangible cultural value: technique, patterns, and community-specific knowledge (Kaur and Kaur, 2014).

Pipad, an small town in Jodhpur district of western Rajasthan (65 km from jodhpur city) are producing good hand block prints. Dry arid climatic condition at Pipad (Jodhpur)are favourable for hand block prints. The conventional art of printing using natural dyes colours on

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cotton fabric by wooden block is speciality of this place. The motif and colour inspired by local traditions, flora and fauna of this area. In the 80's more printers practiced this craft but due to decline of demand of natural fabrics and availability of widely available and cheaper synthetic printed fabrics, most dyers and printers left this craft in the era of 1980-85.

Contemporary pressures – low-cost machine production, declining availability of natural dye materials, younger generations shifting to alternative livelihoods, and fragmented market channels – threaten Pipad printing's continuity. However, global interest in artisanal, ethical, and sustainable textiles presents an opportunity: innovation can create new value while respecting tradition (Lodha, 2013).

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in the Jodhpur city of Rajasthan. For selection of motifs for printing, 15 Designs were selected through secondary sources. Out of 15 selected Designs, 6 suitable prints/motifs were selected by clothing and textile experts.

Printing of fabric

Cotton fabric was printed in traditional "Pipad" printing technique, for this purpose selected blocks/motifs were used and for color selection researcher used most famous traditional colors.

Development of value added articles

On the basis of preference of the respondents most preferred five products were developed namely: Cushion cover, curtain, table runner, bed sheet, pillow cover.

Assessment for market acceptability

In order to assess the market potential of the developed diversified product market potential rating scale was used. For this researcher selected twenty market personals dealing with sale of these type of products.

At first cost price of each product was calculated and then the profit percentage was added to the cost price in three categories *i.e.* 20 per cent, 30 per cent and 40 per cent profit. These rates were shown to respondents and most acceptable rate was decided.

The Rating Performa

Part I – This performa was developed to select most preferred motifs for printing.

Part II - This part of the rating Performa was developed for the assessment of marketability of developed value-added home furnishing articles.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Collection of traditional "pipad" printing motifs

At first researcher collected images of traditional motifs from visiting various printing units and 15 most suited motifs were shown to a group of five textile experts and best 6 motifs were shortlisted for further printing with the help of rating performa 1. Two criteria were given to them each holding 10 marks.

Table 1 shows that Design code no. 12, 7, 11, 6, 8, 3 were found most suitable for printing. The selected design was in range of 96 percentage to 85 percentage. Maximum score obtained by selected design code no. 12 which has 96 number of score and minimum score obtained by selected design code no. 15 which was 69 number of scores.

Table 1: Percentage Distribution of designs (N=15)

Sr. No	Scores	Percentage	Ranking
1.	75	75%	12
2.	82	82%	8
3.	85	85%	6
4.	70	70%	14
5.	78	78%	10
6.	90	90%	4
7.	95	95%	2
8.	88	88%	5
9.	72	72%	13
10.	79	79%	9
11.	92	92%	3
12.	96	96%	1
13.	84	84%	7
14.	77	77%	11
15.	69	69%	15

Printing of fabric using selected motifs

The printing was done following the tradition process of "Pipad printing". Following by :

- Scouring of fabric
- Mordating or Tanin treatment
- Prepration of dyeing paste
- Block Printing
- Drying and washing
- Fixing the color
- Resist printing

- Washing

The material is laid out on a wooden bench that has been covered with a large pad composed of multiple layers of bulky fabric. The printer is stand in front of bench, holding the pot with the dye. There is a thick, dye-soaked fabric pad within this pot. The motif is stamped onto the cloth once the block is put onto this pad. The design's various components call for various color schemes. A different vessel must be prepared by the printer for every color impression.

Mordent like Ferrous is typically printed using an outline block.

Development of value added products

After printing the fabric was cut using prepared patterns and stitching was also done by researcher the developed are: Cushion cover, curtain, table runner, bed sheet, pillow cover. Traditional colour combination was used to develop the articles. The researcher had taken care of all the needed consideration.

Assessment for marketability of developed diversified product

In order to access the market potential for the developed diversified products researcher estimated the cost all diversified products and rating scale was developed.

The findings of Table 2 shows the production cost of the value added products. The cost price of bedsheet found to be highest i.e. 550 rupees. Where as the cost of Cushion cover, curtain, table runner, bed sheet, pillow cover was 105,340,200 and 125.

The researcher showed the developed hand painted Designs to 20 shopkeepers. The net rate was calculated through rates of raw material used. Then the percentage profit was added to net rate in three categories *i.e.* 20%, 30% and 40%,profit. Table 3 depicts the cost of the designed cushion covers.

Response about profit gained by the sale of developed articles

Table 4 shows that majority of respondents accepted products at 20% profit then 30% and last 40%.

All developed products were highly appreciated for their uniqueness and usefulness. All the products were found useful on the bases of suitability to price, Design, selection of colors, selection of motif and creativity. And results shows that all the products were accepted and appreciated by shopkeepers and 20% profit margin was found most suitable. Products had high market potential and had good potential to start small scale enterprise.

Conclusion

This study leads to the conclusion that "Pipad

Table 2 : Estimation of production cost of the developed diversified product (N = 5)

Sr. No.	Criteria of cost estimation	Cushion Cover	Curtain	Table runner	Bed sheet	Pillow cover
1.	Cost of fabric (Rs.)	30	120	60	250	40
2.	Cost of Printing (Rs.)	50	200	100	300	60
3.	Stitching	25	20	40	0	25
4.	Total (Rs.)	105	340	200	550	125

Table 3 : Estimation of sale price of the developed diversified product (N =5)

Name of the product	Cost Price	20% profit	30% profit	40% profit
Cushion Cover	105	126	136	147
Curtain	340	408	442	476
Table cover	200	240	260	280
Bedsheet	550	660	715	770
Pillow Cover	125	150	162.5	175

Table 4 : Profit gained by the Sale (N=20)

Sr. No.	Profit Percentage (%)	Cushion Cover	Curtain	Table runner	Bed sheet	Pillow cover
1.	20%	7	6	12	15	10
2.	30%	9	8	5	2	6
3.	40%	4	6	3	3	4
Total		20	20	20	20	20

Printing" has a high potential in market. In the recent times a change in consumer perception has been witnessed where an increased number of people are opting for sustainable and natural products. This is mainly due to advantage of natural dyes over the synthetic dyes. However, the use of natural dyes for the coloration of textiles has mainly confined to artisan/ craftsman, small scale cottage level dyers and printers as well as the small scale exporters and producers dealing with high valued eco friendly textile production and sales. The model proposed here emphasizes co-creation, environmental stewardship, and equitable benefit sharing — principles that are broadly applicable to sustaining other localized textile heritage traditions.

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