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# Review on Consumer Opinions and Preferences Regarding Interior Design Products Made from Handlooms

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### Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between all authors. Author MMP designed the study, framed the objectives, collected the relevant literature and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Authors PRR and DRK suggested the necessary modifications. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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## ABSTRACT

Handloom products are traditional consumer products. India has a rich and exclusive collection of Handloom products made in different states. There is a lot of fame for Indian handlooms all over the world. Their history dates long back and one can consider handlooms as a heritage of our country. Around ninety-five per cent of the handloom products seen in different parts of the world are from India. The Indian handloom products are one of the oldest on the planet and have a distinct place in the world of fabrics. But from the past few years; consumers are not buying or preferring handlooms due to various reasons. Some of the potential reasons include the changes in their trends, tastes and preferences; a feeling of lack of innovations in designs and materials; and ease of use of other fabrics which are brought out from organized textile sector. This is creating a huge loss to the weavers and the industry. Hence, the consumers should be educated to buy handlooms as they are beneficial to them (as they are not in more contact to the chemicals). This act of the consumers can help the weavers, country's economy and also to the environment (as handlooms are natural

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products). Based on these insights, this paper tried to analyze the consumer opinions and preferences towards the handloom products, with a special focus on interior design products. The interior design products include Rugs, Carpets, Bed sheets, Curtains, Pillow and Cushion Covers, Table Linen, Towels, Napkins, Gloves, Mittens, Aprons, Accessories etc.

*Keywords: Handloom; consumer; preference; opinion; interior design; product.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Handlooms are the looms or weaving devices operated wholly or partly by hand or foot power. Handloom weaving is an ancient art and it contributes a lot to the Indian cultural heritage. India has a rich and exclusive collection of Handloom products. The Government of India stated that the Handloom sector is one of the largest and unorganized economic activities after agriculture [1]. This sector is an essential part of the rural and semi-rural livelihood, as it provides employment to a large number of people. The sector is eco-friendly and a productive asset at the cottage level.

The sector is sustaining and growing by the transfer of skill from one generation to the other. But this scenario is changing entirely from the past few years. For instance, as per the 3rd Handlooms Census carried out in 2009-10, around 43 lakh people are engaged in weaving and allied activities which is much less than the 65.5 lakh people as per the 2nd Handloom census conducted during 1995-96. The weavers who are still a part of this industry are trying their maximum to keep this traditional art alive. The level of creativity, skill and complexity seen in making the handloom fabrics is supreme and some weaves/designs are still beyond the scope of modern machines.

The other point to consider is the decrease of consumer demand towards the Handloom Products. Though there are many advantages of the handloom products (like their eco-friendly nature, skin friendliness, durability and artistry), the consumers demand for them is decreasing. These advantages can also be the motivational factors for purchase of handloom products rather than the machine-made products. But, the young and modern-day consumers are most interested towards branded and trendy products. Hence, the consumer's perceptions towards the handloom products have to be changed. This can be done by educating and motivating the consumers to buy the handloom products. This act will help the weavers in a fruitful manner as they will be able to get orders from consumers.

This paper tries to analyze the consumer opinions and preferences of handloom products through review of information from different sources, with a special focus on interior design products. The interior design products include the Interior Furnishings and Interior Accessories. Interior Furnishings include Rugs, Carpets, Durries, Bed sheets, Bed spreads, Upholstery, Curtains, Pillow covers, Cushion Covers, Table Linen, Towels, Napkins, Gloves, Mittens, Aprons, etc. Interior Accessories include items like Wall hangings, Photo frames, Napkin Rings, Coasters, Plate mats, Curtain Tie backs, Cushions etc.



**Fig. 1. Double-cloth bed sheet figure**



**Fig. 2. Door curtain made from handloom**



**Fig. 3. Durrrie (a type of floor covering) made from handloom**

## **2. OBJECTIVES OF THE PAPER**

1. To conduct a review on the consumer opinions regarding interior design products made from handlooms.
2. To analyse their awareness levels, preferences and satisfaction regarding the interior design products made from handlooms.

## **3. METHODOLOGY**

As this is a review paper, the literature related for this paper is collected from various secondary sources of information like journals, books, websites, reports and market surveys. Depending on the information available in papers referred, qualitative or quantitative data available is presented in this paper. The literature collected is gathered from researches or studies done in the past 12 years i.e. from the year 2005.

## **4. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The review of literature is presented according to the objectives framed for the paper:

### **4.1 Consumer Opinions and Consumer Inviting Strategies towards the Interior Design Products Made from Handlooms**

A Report on Market research for promotion of India Handloom brand emphasized that the young Indians (18-30 years) appreciate handloom products because of its excellent

fabric quality and a different overall look. But they are bought only for special occasions and not for regular usage thereby reducing the frequency of purchase. Home furnishing products are the most preferred Handloom products for purchase and they are generally preferred if they are of a reputed brand as these are expected to last long, and also act as a status symbol for the household. Curtains, sofa covers, bed sheets, bed covers, table cloths, pillow /cushion covers, curtains, carpets, bottle cover, small home décor cloths are the commonly purchased products. Fabric is not important as much as in apparels, but a thick fabric is preferred for furnishings. Colour options and designs were the most important factors considered while choosing a product. As the handloom products are unique and expensive, consumers preferred to use them for themselves rather than to gift others. The products are generally purchased from Khadi Bhawan, stores, Fab India stores, State Handloom showrooms and Exhibitions / Fairs. The frequency of purchasing the handloom products is limited to once a year or once in two years as they usually last for about 2-3 years. The purchase was generally during the festival seasons. The respondents had different perceptions about handloom products like the thread and weave pattern can be seen, the cloth surface is slightly rough and thick compared to the normal cloth, lesser colour options and the colours are slightly dull, Simple designs with unique embroidery but not gaudy, more expensive than mill made, repetitive designs and not available at all places, seasonal and only available at Exhibitions. They also feel that the handloom products have more disadvantages due to their heavy maintenance, design and aesthetic issues [2].

Kalyani and Acharyulu [3] expressed that the increased level of westernization, higher educational achievements which reflect a social status are making consumers think low about traditional customs. On the other side, consumers are not fully aware of the handloom industry. Hence awareness must be created by designing strategies for an effective penetration of handlooms to all types of consumers. The younger generation must be made aware of the traditional handlooms which can lead to increase their liking towards the handloom products.

Govindasamy and Balasubramanian [4] studied the consumer preference of handloom products at the Co-optex store. The results showed that

price and reputation of the shop, high performing products and reliable shops which will increase their brand image are the important factors considered by consumers while selecting handloom products. The number of male respondents who were using handlooms was more compared to women and majority belonged to the age group of 45-54 years.

Patra and Dey [5] stated that the handloom industry started to decline since the industrial revolution and with subsequent technological changes. But the industry is still surviving only because of the consumers' preference towards the handloom products. The researchers suggested that promotions/ advertisements, availability/ accessibility and increasing number of outlets, exhibitions, developing new designs, awareness, reducing prices, proper marketing, more customization of products, linking the products with brand India, improving the quality, providing consumer friendly services, improving durability, providing machinery to weavers, removing middleman from chain and fashion orientation etc. are important to make handloom more popular among consumers.

Rani and Bains [6] in their study about the consumer behaviour towards handloom products in the state of Punjab and Haryana found that consumers prefer handloom brands irrespective of current fashion trends as they give recognition to our native industry. They also have a perception that the handloom products are medically good for skin and have an aesthetic sense. The use and purchase of handloom products effect swadeshi feelings and satisfy them.

Narzary [7] conducted a consumer survey to find out the problems and prospects of the handlooms and handicrafts industry in Boro Tribal area. Maximum respondents in the feedback for customer survey replied that they go for handloom because of comfort, touch and feeling that it gives to the body.

IANS [8] has noted that Indian consumers need to change the thinking; they need to think 'swadeshi' rather than 'videshi'. The greatest problem weavers' face is being ignored not just by people, but by the designers as well. The fashion industry is a very powerful platform to convey the message across the masses that fashion is more than chic dressing and there must be an essence to it.

## **4.2 Consumer Awareness, Preferences and Satisfaction Regarding the Interior Design Products Made from Handlooms**

Enright designed interior design products using cultural textiles from Guatemala and Peru. Artisan textiles were co-designed with contemporary colour palettes and layouts for back strap weaving and patterns for hand embroidery. Co-designed textiles were constructed into modern profiles for apparel, accessories and home décor products with the intent to meet consumer preferences and to assess the consumer preferences for the products. Participants' preferences for products selected as 'most like to own' were apparel, furniture, home décor pillows, fashion accessories, home framed textiles and tabletop home décor respectively. Preferences for most unique products positively correlated with product preferences for colour, function, and quality [9].

Anusuya and Chinnadorai [10] studied on the consumer awareness and satisfaction of consumers regarding handloom products. The results regarding the sources of awareness showed that majority of the respondents were aware of the products from sales representatives, friends and relatives, advertisements and exhibitions respectively. The media sources for awareness was mostly television, followed by radio, internet, posters and banners, newspapers and magazines and very few from notices, leaflets and pamphlets. A high level of awareness regarding bedspreads, curtains, towels and mats was seen. Nearly half of the respondents had very high level of satisfaction respectively towards durability, availability and quality.

Kumudha and Rizwana [11] studied on the consumer awareness about Handloom products with special reference to Erode District, Tamil Nadu. The respondents were aware of the handloom interior furnishings like bedsheets, Towels, Bed spreads, curtains, pillow covers, Jamakkalam/ Carpet and Baniyan mat. Majority of the respondents were aware about the handloom products for more than 10 years. Handloom exhibition is the main source of awareness for Handloom Products followed by friends and relatives. Majority of the respondents were aware about Handloom mark a logo to identify genuine handloom goods. Requirement,

festivals, special rebate, handloom expos and salesman's approach is the most important occasion which encourage the customers to buy Handloom products. The results showed that majority of the customers were male and there is more scope to attract female population.

Pappeswari and Rajalakshmi [12] studied on the consumer satisfaction towards the role of VOC Co-optex in Tuticorin. The findings revealed that majority of the respondent consumer's level of satisfaction were medium independent of age, sex, educational qualification, occupation and monthly income.

Gautam and Bahl [13] highlighted on the importance of Geographical Indication (GI) status for the products to benefit the consumers as the products having this indication will assure them of quality and give them a confidence for purchase. Their policy brief on GI status awarded for Pochampally cluster products says that majority of the consumers are not aware of the GI status given to products. As they are unaware, they are sometimes getting cheated by duped products which are not of good quality. Hence consumer awareness must be created regarding GI status to benefit the consumers. Savithri et al. (2014) also reported the similar scenario.

Prachi [14] said that Indian handlooms are growing in its popularity not only among the consumers in India, but also among the consumers admiring Indian handloom and Indian handicrafts from all around the world. Despite having distinct styles and ways of weaving, there is a lot of exchange of styles that happened among the diverse Indian handloom styles.

Vaddi and Balakrishnaiah [15] tried to analyse the consumer awareness and consumer behaviour towards Khadi and Handloom products. The results showed that about 65 percent of respondent consumers in Andhra Pradesh were aware about Khadi and Handloom fabrics. Irrespective of the religion, communication and education levels most of the exhibitions, melas and rebate seasons were popularly utilized by all classes of consumers who get attracted by publicity and advertisements, interested by new designs and bright colours.

Malmarugan [16] in his study analysed how word of mouth has control in making purchase decisions of the handloom products. It was found that word of mouth is the most influential power

as compared to magazine, banner, TV, newspaper and it is two times efficient as radio advertising, four times as efficient as personal selling, and seven times as efficient as newspapers and magazines.

Maitreyi [17] weaves and crafts Private Limited carried out a market survey in the selected cities of India, regarding the handloom furnishings. Females were the major decision makers as far as the buying of handloom products is concerned. Quality and Branding has emerged out to be an important parameter. Upper middle class was the major consumer segment that buys the handloom products. Middle class is still not attracted towards handloom products, because the price and maintenance of the handloom products was high as compared to the mill products. Well-educated consumers who have the purchasing power and a taste for quality and design preferred handloom products. Bright colours were popular throughout the country. Young married consumers (25+) and the middle-aged consumers (45+) showed a higher buying frequency. It was observed that in this class also, double income families who have larger disposable income at their hand did exhibit a higher buying behaviour.

## 5. CONCLUSION

A good amount of research has been conducted to study the consumer's awareness, preferences and opinions regarding the handlooms products made for interior design. Few researchers also suggested some measures on how to make handloom products popular among the consumers. The results of the research studies show that the consumers are the ones who have been encouraging the use of handloom products from a long time and this is helping the weavers to produce new products. But, the younger generation at present are not much attracted towards the handloom products, as they have many misconceptions and false beliefs. Some of the misconceptions are lesser colour options and dull colours, simple designs but not gaudy, more expensive than milled products, same repetitive designs, not available at all places, seasonal and only available at exhibitions etc. In order to remove these misconceptions, weavers have to develop new designs which will suit the preferences of the younger generation and this can help to attract them. Attracting the younger generation or the youth would be beneficial to the weavers as they form a huge consumer base in India. The benefits of handloom products like

their eco-friendliness, skin friendliness and 'swadeshi' goods have to be educated among the consumers in order to motivate/ encourage them to buy the products. Another segment of consumers to focus are the women. Women are the ones who take decisions regarding the purchase of household products. Hence, women consumers should not be ignored and their needs should be catered in order to attract them towards the interior furnishings made from handlooms.

Research also shows that not many people are really aware of the type of handloom products available and the benefits associated with them. Hence, proper advertising campaigns have to be taken up by the government in order to make the consumers more aware of the handloom products.

The knowledge regarding the Geographical Indications and Handloom Marks on products have to be given to the consumers. As these marks and indications make the consumers feel more assured of the quality and genuineness of the handloom products, this can motivate them in buying.

Product diversification, Innovative Product Development and New design development by the weavers will attract the consumers to buy the handloom products. Not only the apparel, the interior design products should be produced by the weavers. As interior design products are used for a longer period of time and also on a daily basis, these products should not be ignored.

In spite of so many adverse conditions in the handloom industry, a larger support is being given from consumers as they are buying the handloom products due to their awareness about the good qualities of handlooms. Due to this act of consumers, the weavers are also getting their livelihood. Handloom sector is surviving and has the potential to be so. More researches have to be taken up to understand the consumer's awareness levels, their product requirements, their opinions and preferences; mainly regarding the interior design handloom products. As research conducted earlier focussed more on the apparels, now the research can focus on the prospects of interior design products. The data gained from the research can be used to develop innovative - interior design - handloom products based on the consumers requirements and this will surely motivate the consumers to purchase the handloom products.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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