



IJEAST

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL
OF ENGINEERING APPLIED SCIENCE
AND TECHNOLOGY



VOLUME : 2 ISSUE : 12 Print / Issue Publication Date: 06-Jul-2018



ISSN : 2455-2143



Indexed In



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A STUDY ON TRADITIONAL HAND KNITTED ARTICLES AND ITS MODERNISATION BY FEMALE CRAFTSMAN OF MANALI VILLAGE AT HIMACHAL PRADESH

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of this research paper is to identify about female knitters and the involvement of those who working in this field of knitting with their tremendous skills, and they are spending valuable time on this profession every day to help and support their family to live comfortable life by earning extra money. However, there is little research focused to understand the hand knitting process and their knit patterns, structures, motifs, designs etc. are practicing traditionally since long back.

The hand knitting products are unique and popular especially in Kullu & Manali because of these knitted products are highly 'demandable' by the Indian and foreign tourists. As here due to low temperature in the area of mountain valley the types of woolen products are always in trend, and materials used in the products like Angora wool and Pashmina wool mainly. These materials are very warm in nature that is why keep the human body cozy especially in this winter season. The angora wool is obtained from angora rabbits and pashmina wool is obtained from pashmina goat which is also easily available locally in Himachal state.

The Questionnaire were framed for those who all are working under an association or organizations to know the current scenario of this craft. Qualitative data were collected from 16 in-depth interviews as well. The interviews were analyzed with a constant comparative approach. There are many schemes and other facilities are being provided for this craftsman to financially help them in setup small medium business in producing good knitted quality products and sale in the right market place.

Keywords: Female Knitters, Angora & Pashmina wool, Small-medium business, Knitted products etc.

I. INTRODUCTION:

The handloom and handicraft industries of Manali form the backbone of the economic structure of the region. Crafts on Manali portrays the rich artistic caliber and creative imaginative skills of the local indigenous inhabitants of the region. The skilled craftsmen of the region are adept in knitting colorful and attractive traditional woolen garments, hand globes, mufflers, woolen caps and socks etc. The exclusive design patterns and the attractive color combination displays the rich craftsmanship of the local people of Manali. The beautiful blend of bright colors coupled with the fine knitted pattern imparts an attractive look to the knitted products of the area of Manali.¹

The women are the ones who are mostly available to make these woolens in winter. This is a source of pleasure as well as economic empowerment of these farmhand women. They spend most of the time in knitting different woolen products during the winter season as they are generally free from the agricultural work, thus having another source of income.

These woolens are not made of the fine processed wool but the course kind found in hills, where they process the wool in their crude contraptions. These products primarily belong to some tribal areas like Lahual and Spiti. The products include woolen socks, sweaters, caps, gloves, pullovers etc. The woolen socks primarily have geometrical designs and are quite sturdy and less liable to wear and tear. The woolen sweaters are hand knitted and have floral



motifs or geometrical designs. These sweaters are worn by the local populace as well and are quite useful in keeping out the cold. The wool used, once again, is home-processed.²

I.I. OBJECTIVES:

The demography and culture of the region Manali in Kullu district was studied in detail and are discussed in the following objectives.

- To study the existing handicrafts of Manali.
- To study the hand knitting process of the craft in that region and the motif, color, form etc.
- To study the craft cluster organizations and artisans of that region.
- To identify the gap area and ways for the contribution of revival of the craft.
- Design an innovative product line to promote the handicrafts of Manali.

I.II. PROBLEMS OF INDUSTRY:

Marketing of Products: The most vital problem faced by the handicraft industry is that of marketing their products. There is no definite organization or co-operative society or body occupied in supporting craftsman to promoting their products. They set out their products as domestic consumption or against customary orders or in the local market.

Direct Purchase: Organizations as Himachal Handloom Handicrafts Development Corporation, CCIC and Marketing organizations may perhaps be given work in assisting the artisans in marketing their products as per holding meetings for the purchase of handicraft products directly from the artisans.

Finance: The rural artisans are poor and are unable to arrange the required investment. Consequently, they cannot purchase new tools and equipment and they can not avail to training facilities. The financial institutes may be advised to provide loans on concession rate of interest with easy terms and conditions.

Raw Material: Procurement of raw- material is another major problem of the artisans. Non-availability of raw material at suitable time and in ample quantity and quality. Opening raw- material depots in craft concentration areas can solve this problem.

I.III. LIMITATIONS:

Every research has its own limitations. There is Always a feeling that more could have been done. Any lacuna is suggestive of scope for more improvement. Some of the limitations encountered by us are stated below. The research was conducted in the month of June 2017. Different organizations were visited and artisans were interviewed to gather information on the present condition of the existing hand knitting of Manali. During the field visit it was observed that few of the organizations were closed during that time and the artisans were not working full-time in the manufacturing of hand knitted products. As the month of June is the peak time for tourism. It has become a flourishing business in the region as people from all over India and even the people from other countries visit this place during this season. Hence most of the people are involved in the business of tourism as they earn a better living as compared to what they earn under craftsmanship. The month of June are the agricultural month, and apart from knitting artisans do some others work to earn a living. So it was quite difficult to find out more craftsman.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

A Research study was done in Kullu district of Himachal Pradesh, to study the existing hand knitting of that region. A research was done in Manali to study the hand knitting manufacturing organizations and promoting the craft and artisans of the region. The region Manali was selected on basis of number of manufacturing organizations and promoting the craft of the region, this region was also assigned by NIFT Kangra for the students to study the knitted craft cluster development.

This analysis will help us to know about the raw materials and manufacturing process of the craft, motif design and knitted structures etc. are used by artisans working. Personal interviews, observations, websites, books were used for mode of data collection. In the last phase of the project a design collection is developed which is inspired and promotes hand knitting of Manali.

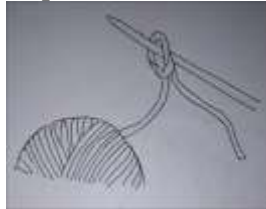
III. HAND KNITTING METHOD:

The main two basic stitches used in knitting called knit and purl. To begin stitch usually start by making a slip knot on one needle and casting on the number of stitches need for the product. The basic stitches are created using both needles, wrapping the yarn over one needle and drawing by the wrapped yarn through loops on the other needle. At the end finishes by



binding off the stitches. The various hand knitting steps are shown by drawings below in fig.1.

Step 1:



Make a slip knot on the shaft of one needle. This counts as your first stitch.

Step 2:



Place this needle in left hand. Hold other needle in right hand to control the yarn. Insert point of right needle, from front to back, into the slip knot and under the left needle.

Step 3:



Hold left needle still in left hand, and move left fingers over to brace right needle.

Step 4:



With right index finger, pick up the yarn from the ball.

Step 5:



Release right hand's grip on the needle, and use index finger to bring yarn under and over the point of right needle.

Step 6:



Return right fingers to right needle, and draw yarn through stitch with point of right needle.

Step 7:



Slide point of left needle into back of new stitch,

Step 8:



Pull ball yarn gently to make the stitch fit

then remove right snugly on needle. You have now made one stitch.

Step 9: Continue



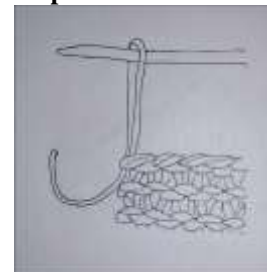
Repeat step 8 and continue as much as you want to be your sample.

Step 1: Binding Off

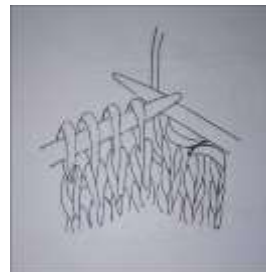


Knit the first 2 stitches; insert left needle into stitch you knitted first, and pull it over the second stitch and completely off the needle.

Step 2:



Knit one more stitch, insert left needle into first stitch on right needle, and pull it over the new stitch and completely off the needle. Another stitch is bound off; don't work too tightly, and repeat.



One stitch is now bound off.

Fig.1. Hand knitting technique

IV. ABOUT THE CLUSTER:

Gahar cluster falls under Himachal Pradesh state in Kullu district. The gahar cluster is able to form 250 plus artisans & 22 self-help groups supporting the strong work. In gahar cluster, wool is collected every spring season for spinning and dyeing which is done by hand using natural and vegetable dyes. The following points mentioned about product capacity, types, technical structures, materials and pricing etc. details are as under;

- **Production**-Each day 1 product/person.
- **Products** -Gloves, muffler, cap, sweater and socks.

- **Stitches used**-Knit, purl, rib, chain.
- **Wool used**- Marino, pashmina, angora, local sheep wools are in use.
- **Pricing**- Rs. 100 starting price of socks.
- **Marketing**-Design, motif, and types of wool are according to the demand of the market, products are sold manually in shop, or given to organization.

V. TRADITIONAL PRODUCTS:

As per the history of Manali knitting as cluster, craftsman are practicing the knitted goods from long back by generation to generation. The women craftsman are being followed by the old traditional methods to use of pattern, color forms etc. in their products design. Traditional products are given below in the fig. 2.



Fig. 2. Traditional Knitted Products

VI. DESIGN BRIEF:

The theme is inspired from the trend to being UNIQUE: An invitation to being classy-in all refinement. This theme takes inspiration from Accessories. The theme selected for the development of knitted products as per current fashion. It incorporates product which we all use in our daily life to look good. Keeping in mind the revival of hand knitting without changing its key element and process of Manali Hand Knitting, we have made a range of fashion accessories which is more attractive for the present generation while buying all these as well knitting them. Our product range promotes the traditional colours and motifs. They are more affordable and more usable as compared to others.

Client profile: She is fashion conscious and love to explore and experiment with her looks. She is confident and sensitive to the charm of hand-knitted materials worn. The client age group is selected between 18-30 years and by profession clients are college going girl’s students and working women’s. The hobbies of the clients are being stylish, trendy and love to experiment.

Colour story: Winter types should wear colors that are sharp and clear. White, black, navy blue, red and shocking pink all go well with winter complexions. For lighter colors, wear icy tones rather than pastels. Avoid subdued tones like beige, orange and gold. To consider getting a full set of best colors type use them for shopping and the convenient “Winter Color Palette” It includes all your winter type color samples in one convenient wallet.³

Product development: These are the final knitted products developed by the artisan working women artisan of under Gahar group. Initial sketches was provided to artisans for design development of the products with final colored yarns.

The collection of knitted products:



Knitted Earrings

Knitted Neck band

Knitted Wrist band

Fig. 3. Contemporary knitted products made by NIFT students

VII. CURRENT SCENARIO OF HAND KNITTED CRAFT:

Handicrafts of the valley form an indispensable part of the lifestyle of the Kullu cites. Kullu caps, shawls and pattus, sweater, mufflers, socks, caps and gloves are articles of everyday wear. The tradition of handicrafts is precedent, though it arose as inevitability and artist’s devotion for nature, these days it



has taken the form of a fashion. With passing times variations in designs have occurred, the motifs have changed and so have the modes of processing altered.

People involved in hand knitting monthly earn from Rs.1500 to Rs.3300. 2000 artisans in Kullu district of which 50% to 60% are regular craftsman. The rest work independently at home. Organized sector as knitting co-operatives and big societies employ nearly 1000 craftsman directly or indirectly. At present there are thousands artisans involved in hand knitting in village areas of Kullu city. With year by year more and more people are getting employment in this field. Government implements schemes for the upliftment of handicraft industry and the artisans as following;

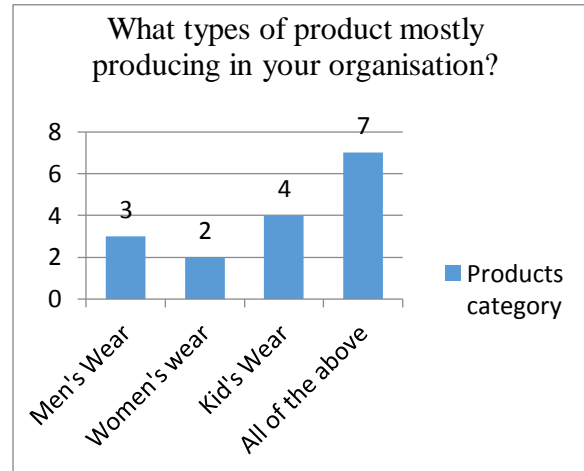
- It imparts training to artisans for their skill up gradation.
- Development of marketing infrastructure (exhibitions in fairs and festivals).
- Provides financial help to artisans in buying Raw materials.
- Helps the artisans financially in making showrooms.
- Provides designers from NID, NIFT, etc. from improving designs.

VIII. RESULT AND DISCUSSION:

By assessing the secondary data from different books, magazines, journals etc. researcher has gathered information's and was able to discover the main knowledge areas related to this topic. This knowledge helps us to identify the present scenario of this craft and information that should be imparted to the areas of handcrafted woolen articles and related accessories i.e. motifs, designs and raw materials etc. We have conducted the primary research through questionnaires. The analysis of questionnaires is done by us is on the basis of information that we have collected artisans working at Manali. After receiving the responses from all different respondents who all are involved directly and indirectly in this hand knitting field. The analysis of questioners are done on the basis of information that have collected during the visits of craft cluster and visit was made by the student of National Institute of Fashion Technology to study about local hand knitted craft of Manali.

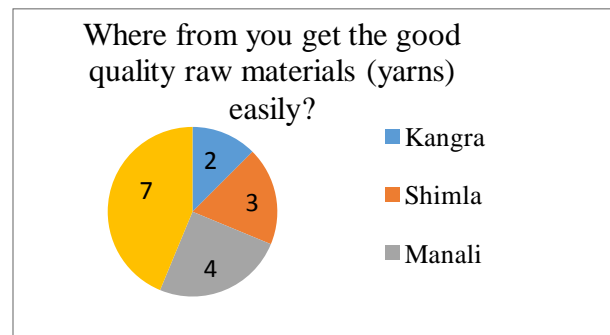
1. The question one deals with production of woolen products which are making currently by the women artisans mostly for all type of products category. Out of 15 respondents 7 respondents have ranked for all men's,

women's and kid's woolen products, 4 respondents have ranked for kid's products, 3 respondents have ranked for men's products and 2 respondents have agreed for women's products.



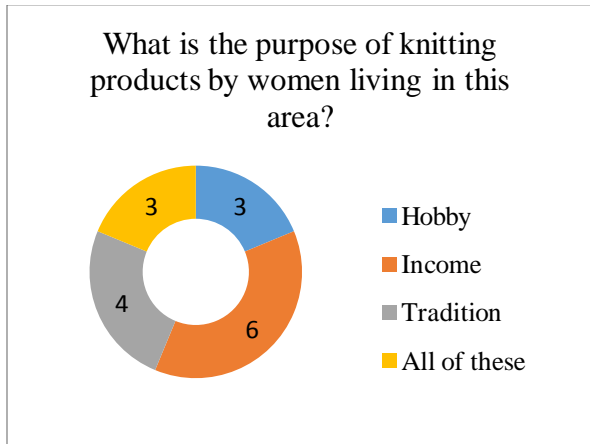
Graph-1. Result for question one of the survey.

2. The question two deals about the sourcing cities of (yarns) raw materials mainly. Out of 16 respondents mostly 7 respondents have ranked for Lahool & Spiti city, respectively 4 respondents have ranked for Manali city, 3 respondents have ranked for Shimla and 2 respondents have ranked Kangra city for sourcing the raw materials.



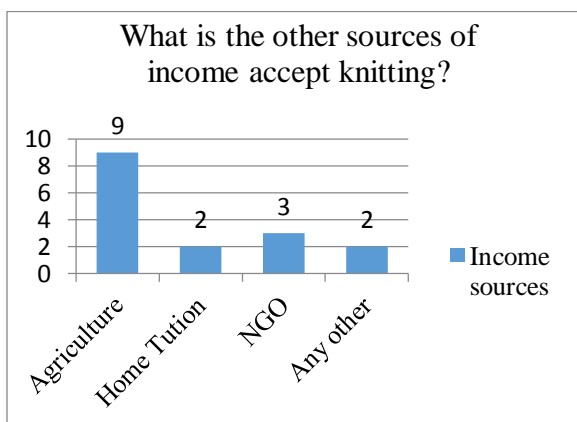
Graph-2. Result for question two of the survey.

3. The question three deals about the main purpose of knitting by the women artisans in this area. Out of 16 respondents 6 respondents have shown interest because it is their main source of income to survive their family, 4 respondents have ranked for its traditional practice and 3-3 respondents have equally agreed for hobby & all mentioned reasons.



Graph-3. Result for question three of the survey.

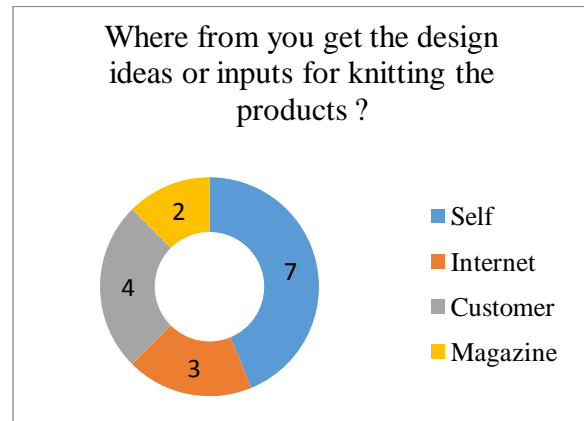
- The question four deals with other source of income accept above mentioned reason in the question no. 3. According to the craftsman, the main other sources to live their life are agriculture, home tuition, NGO etc. Majority of the respondents have ranked that agriculture is the main source of income. Also, they earn money by NGO, home tuition and many other less income sources as well. Apart from these, out of 16 respondents 9 respondents have ranked that agriculture is the only income sourcing medium for them. Then 3 respondents have ranked for NGO, 2-2 respondents have ranked home tuition & through other opportunities.



Graph-4. Result for question four of the survey.

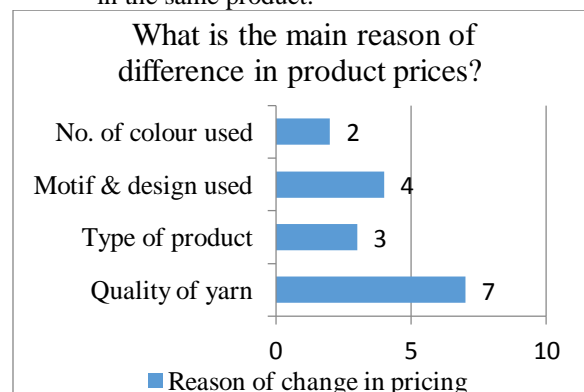
- Question five deals about the source of design ideas or design inputs. Out of 16 respondents 7 respondents have ranked that craftsman usage self-motif designs mostly mean they usage traditional design more in knitting. The 4 respondents have ranked that

craftsman usage hand knit design structures as per customer's choice. The 3 respondents have ranked that some design ideas usage from the help of internet facility. And 2 respondents have agreed that few designs are used from magazines.



Graph-5. Result for question five of the survey.

- Question six deals the reason of change in product cost. There are many ways depends upon changing price of the products, which are quality of yarn, type of products, motifs & designs variation and no. of colour used in the products. The 7 respondents have ranked due to better quality of yarns used in the products sold in higher price. And rest of the respondents have ranked respectively like 4 said it depends upon motif and design, 3 said it depends upon types of product category and 2 said it depends upon no. of colour used in the same product.

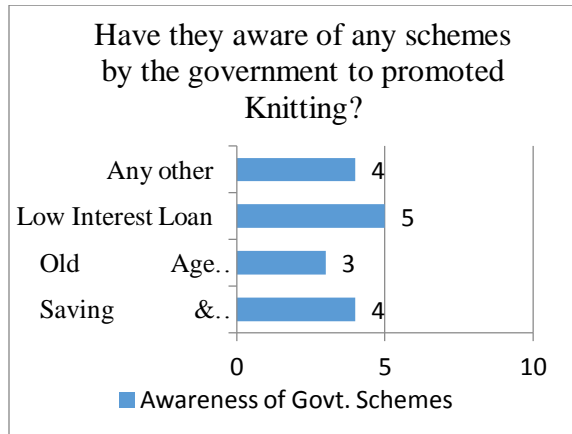


Graph-6. Result for question six of the survey.

- Question seven deals about awareness of government schemes to promote knitting as

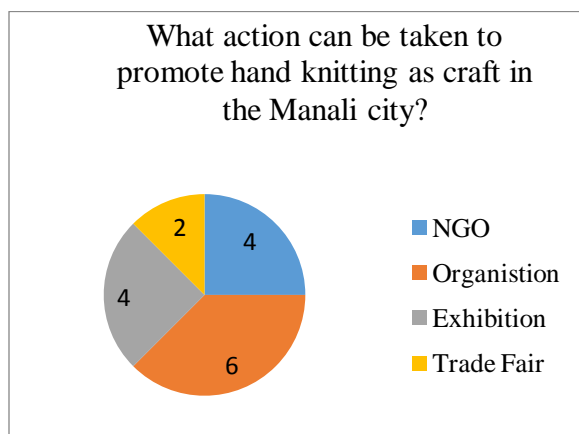


craft. Out of 16 respondents 5 respondents have ranked for awareness of low interest loan facility which is provided by the govt., 4-4 respondents have ranked for saving & security scheme & other schemes and 3 respondents have ranked for old age pension scheme.



Graph-7. Result for question seven of the survey.

- Question eight deals about what action can be taken to promote hand knitting as craft in this Manali city. Out of 16 respondents 6 respondents have ranked that this craft can be promoted through affiliated with many organizations like Bhuttico and Himbunkar, 4-4 respondents have ranked for NGO & exhibition and 2 respondents have ranked for trade fair as it can be promoted by attending and putting hand knitted stall in the various state all over India with minimum cost and sometime free of stall cost.



Graph-8. Result for question eight of the survey.

IX. CONCLUSION:

Financial assistance is provided in the form of margin money to avail credit facilities from the financial institutions to facilitate craftsman to switch over from low value added items to high value added products, assistance for training is provided.

This assistance is provided to Primary Cooperative Societies / Self Help Group etc., having a turnover of more than 25 lakhs and National level Organizations/ State Handicraft Corporation etc. having a sales turnover of Rs. 1cr or more. Keeping in view the changing market scenario within the country and abroad, assistance towards provision of design and installation of Computer Aided Design System to improve the design quality of the hand knitted products is provided.

Assistance in the form of grant is provided to avail services of National Institute of Design (NID), National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT), Design Consultants/Freelance Designers etc. Financial assistance is provided to handicraft organizations for projects involving expenditure towards publicity, advertisement, printing of brochures/catalogues, market research as well as production of films for promotion of sales of hand knitted products.

Financial assistance is provided to prepare conditions which are conducive for marketing of hand knitted products. The organization is expected to use this assistance towards activities which would attract consumers in order to gear up the overall sales of hand knitted goods. Assistance towards subsidizing the cost of transportation of finished goods to the approved outlets of the state to which it is transported to the approved site of exhibition & fairs organized by Development Commissioner Handicraft is provided. This assistance is provided on condition that the place to which it is transported has a minimum of 10 lakh population.

Acknowledgement: My special thanks to few students (Kalpana, Rakhi, Shveta Yadav, Mahima, Sonali Priya, Sumit and Navneet,Prakash) currently studding at NIFT Kangra in Textile Design Department. During their craft cluster research they have interacted with many Artisans engaged professionally and therefore this research has been successfully completed.



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2455-2143