

**“SOCIAL INITIATIVES THROUGH TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL SECTION OF SELECT HIMACHAL REGION”-**

*AN EFFECT OF INFLUENCE OF FASHION ON RURAL INDIA*

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*Keywords: Fashion, Social Perspective, Economically Weaker sections, Skill Up gradation, Sourcing units*

**Abstract**

The overall perspective of Fashion is to symbolize cultures, traditions, fusion of regions and religion and to depict groups and masses for their uniqueness. The Power of Fashion originates from various contemporaneous changes, alongside changing state of mind; therefore, instigating the responsiveness and novelty in society and promoting the intensification of thought processes for further outcomes. In this paper, Fashion has taken a different perspective by an endeavor towards the empowerment of self dependence of certain women section of the society and a step towards the revival of the vanishing craft of handloom weavers of the Himachal region of India. The study gives a close understanding of fashion as it is based on the effort put up by the researches in the upliftment of the economic status of weaker sections comprising of the women of a select region of rural Kangra, Himachal Pradesh, India. These women were identified and motivated for training in upgrading their skills for the Needle Industry. Simultaneously, an effort was laid for the revival of the local handloom weavers for their craft, as sourcing units for these identified and trained section of Society.

The methodology followed throughout the study was questionnaires to identify the needs and requirements of the entire association. Housewives with no employment except working on the fields were identified for this purpose and gathered as Groups to help themselves. At the same time, local weavers with failing business were identified for the revival of their craft. These

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weavers were motivated to restore their skills and provide raw material to the identified women section. A forward step, thereby, was taken in the direction of relevant local market for the sale of the products (handbags) manufactured by these women.

The study concludes with identification of market for these products and putting an effort to create an association between the manufacturer, sourcing unit and relevant market for the products manufactured by the rural women of the region helping in gaining their self dependence.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION:

The purpose of this research paper is to demonstrate Fashion from the perspective of production. Production is one of the most imperative functions of Fashion. It includes manufacturing of Fashion clothing/accessories, Designer Labels, thereby, supporting Merchandising and Marketing and similar areas. This paper explores the possibility of generating income for the unemployed women by upgrading their product manufacturing skills so as to enable them to manufacture products saleable in the market. The paper presents an endeavor of the researchers towards the empowerment of self dependence of weaker section of the society.

For the elimination of poverty and to uplift the financial status of mankind, employment is essential.

However, Employment is beneficial only if it helps in the skill development and at the same time provides livelihood. The women of select Kangra region, H.P, India were identified and trained for this purpose. Simultaneously, an effort was also laid for the revival of the local handloom weavers for their craft, as sourcing units for these identified and trained section of women.

The paper has been divided into four main sections: 1) Identification of the women Trainees from Nuther and Halerkalan regions of Kangra Distt, Himachal Pradesh, 2) Preparation of the Training module for the identified Trainees, 3) Identification of the weavers as Sourcing units, 4) Identification of the local market vendors as prospective buyers.

## 2.0 BACKGROUND:

As per the Census report of India 2011, out of total population of Himachal Pradesh, 6,556,509 male and female constituted 3,473,892 and 3,382,617 respectively. Himachal Pradesh is also one of the states where entrepreneurial activities and empowerment of women are increasing. The literacy rate among women is 76.60 %. The sex ratio of Himachal Pradesh is 974 that is more than India's average sex ratio i.e., 940 (Census of India Report, 2011). The participation of female workforce in Himachal Pradesh is 48.9 per cent, that is higher than other major states and much higher than India's average (26.0%). In Himachal Pradesh, 21.94% women have BPL card. Majority of the women are at home and do not contribute to the household income.

As per 2011 census, 94.29 % population of Kangra districts lives in rural areas of villages.

The Handloom sector has been contributing nearly 19% of the total cloth produced in the country and also adds substantially to export earnings. Handloom is unparalleled in its flexibility and versatility, permitting experimentation and encouraging innovations. In India, there are many workers who are engaged in handloom sector, close to four-fifths of the workforce, is in the rural sector. Only 16% of these are in the urban sector. However, the sector is beset with manifold problems such as obsolete technologies, unorganized production system, low productivity, inadequate working capital, conventional product range, weak marketing link, overall stagnation of production and sales and, above all, competition from power loom and mill sector. As a result of effective Government intervention through financial assistance and implementation of various developmental and welfare schemes, the handloom sector, to some extent, has been able to tide over these disadvantages. (Usha, 2012) Joseph Katherine (2010) has observed that a significant percent of the population earns a living spinning, weaving and embellishing textiles, the majority of which are sold within India, at prices comparable to those of their machine-made competitors.

As per Nisha Srivastava et al, 2010, within rural areas, work may be classified along two dimensions: (1) by sector, viz, agriculture or non-agriculture, and (2) by employment status, that is whether a person is in regular employment, is self-employed or is casually employed. While economic factors principally determine a man's participation in employment, the forces that influence a woman's participation in work are diverse and include demographic, reproductive, Social, Religious and Cultural factors. Workforce participation shows a consistently declining

trend with rising economic status for rural women, reflecting that economic distress is a factor that compels poor rural women to work.

The World Bank has suggested that empowerment of women should be a key aspect of all social development programs (World Bank, 2001)

Since the 1980's the Government of India has shown increasing concern for women's Issues through a variety of legislation promoting the education and political participation of Women (Collier, 1998) International organizations like the World Bank and United Nations have focused on women's issues especially the empowerment of poor women in rural areas. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have also taken on an increased role in the area of women's empowerment (Sadik, 1988).

(Archana Jetti, 2006) says the notion of empowerment has had significant coverage in the social sciences, especially feminist literature albeit in varying degrees. In its minimalist version, it was defined as "bringing about equality between women and men in the control of production factors and the control of distribution of the benefits of development" (Sarah H. Longwe as cited in Osirim, 2001, p. 168). Since women were mostly confined to the private sphere of the home, with childcare and management of the household as their primary function, they had limited entry into the labor market resulting in limited financial independence. It was assumed that greater financial independence would change the status quo of poor women in the southern hemisphere.

### 3.0 METHODOLOGY:

The objective of this research paper is:

- 1) To upgrade the Sewing skills of select rural women of Nuthur and Halerkalan regions of Kangra Distt, H.P by giving them hands on Training.
- 2) To develop a Training Module as per their skills for further development
- 3) To help them in exploring Sourcing Units for raw material i.e handlooms and also employability for these weavers.
- 4) To explore employment opportunities for the products manufactured by these women in the local market.

**Research and Sample Design:** The research in this paper is Qualitative in nature with Data collection tools being Primary and Secondary data. The Nuthar and Halerkalan regions were selected solely on the basis of accessibility. As per the Gram Panchayat records of these regions, the regions have 2346 as male population and 2216 as female population. Out of this population of females, a small group of 20 was selected for further Training.

The Primary Data was collected based on Questionnaires, Field visits, participant observation, Face to Face Interviews, Individual Interactive sessions, Focus Group interviews etc. Sample Selection was based on *Non- Probability Sampling* with select region based on accessibility being chosen as the work area. The study was carried out with the help of Questionnaires comprising of a combination of close and open ended questions. *Convenience sampling* was used in selecting the sample for identification of trainee i.e. the survey was only on women nearby Kangra region because of convenience. *Cluster Sampling* was used in case of identification of sourcing unit to reduce cost by concentrating Survey in selected cluster.

For the Purpose of supplementing, and supporting adequately the collected primary data, a special reference of various journals, Annual Reports and financial statements of selected Textile and Clothing Organizations, Journals and Magazines records, Articles and Reports submitted by Governmental and Nongovernmental organization were taken to have a basic understanding of economic status of people living in Kangra region, to know about the previous works done in this area, the percentage of women contributing financially to their family and also about the present scenario of Handloom industry in Himachal Pradesh

#### **4.0 FIELD WORK AND DATA COLLECTION:**

**4.1 Identification of Trainees:** The trainees were asked the basic questions as listed in *Annexure 1* about education level, family members, and monthly income etc. A total of 50 women were there for whom the questionnaire was filled for Training on basic Sewing skills. These Trainees were chosen based on their Monthly Income and Basic Skill level. Care was taken so that the females' having their own Sewing machine were selected to cut down infrastructure cost. The trainees once identified were motivated for their enrolment in the Program.

**4.2 Developing and Organizing the Technical Training Module for the Skill Development of Identified Women Trainees:**



The training of the identified members required a Training module which was formulated based on their skill level. As the trainees had basic knowledge of sewing their skill up gradation was necessary in order to make them self-sufficient in making the Bags. The Training module (*Annexure I*) was designed based on the skill levels of the Trainees. It was based on handling of Machine, Basic Stitches in Stitching Practice. The other part of the Module was the advanced Training Module with Training on sewing different components of bag, Quilting and Patchwork and Pocket and Lining of Bags.

**4.3 Identification of Sourcing Unit:** The Sourcing unit was identified based on the Economic Status of the Weavers and also based on the proximity of Location near by Kangra. The owners of the handloom were identified as sourcing unit and were motivated for their involvement in this study as they had lost their faith in the handloom Industry. There were Interactive Sessions to make them believe about the profits of handloom related business. However, the Raw material was to be provided to the weavers for fabric sample. The Raw material for production of handloom fabric was identified on the basis of availability in the local market and on the basis of low price of the raw material. After finalization of raw material, sample fabric was produced from handloom to observe the Quality and to get Feedback from Market.

**4.4 Identification of Buyer:** The buyers and the products in demand in the local market were identified based on interviews, willingness of the local vendors, local survey, one to one communication etc. The product selected here as Bags as per the discussion with the vendors.

## 5.0 FINDINGS and DISCUSSION:

**5.1 Identification of women trainees** The women trainees were questioned for various parameters based on their education level, income level, skill level and availability of sewing machine etc. The analyzed data is as follows:

**Table 5.1** shows that most 27 of the respondents have either primary level of education or are illiterate. Lack of awareness of education among the population of sample frame is the main reason of the low education level of the women group. 11 had intermediate level of education and 12 were illiterate. None of them had education till the Graduation Level.

Education level	No. of women
Illiterate	12
Primary	27
Intermediate	11
Graduate	0

**Table 5.2** presents the financial status of the respondents' families. Understanding of the income would help in identifying women for the purpose of study.

Monthly income	No. of women
> Rs.3000	33
Rs.3000 - Rs.6000	15
Rs.6000 - Rs.9000	2
< Rs.9000	0

It can be seen that the highest number of families (33) were having monthly income less than Rs.3000 per month. 15 families were having in the income bracket less than Rs. 6000 and greater than Rs. 3000. And only 2 families were having a monthly income of Rs 6000 – Rs.9000.

To analyse the **skill level** of the identified women group was extremely important for the purpose of the study as this is the basis of Development of Training Module and also the needs and requirements of Training.

Skill level	No. of women
Unskilled	33
Semi skilled	16
Master	1

**Table 5.3** presents the skill level of the women to be trained and it can be seen that 33 women were unskilled, 16 were semi skilled and only one could be taken as the master in the entire group.

The next finding was to recognise the age group of Respondents of the sample frame. 19 women were in the age range of 26-30yrs.It can be observed from **Table 5.4** that 16 women from the sample were within age group of 20 – 25, 10 were in the age range of 36 – 40 and 5 women were in the age range of 31 – 35.

Age group	No. of women
20 - 25	16
26 - 30	19
31 - 35	5
36 - 40	10

and 19 women did not have the sewing machine.

**Table 5.5** presents the number of women who had the availability of the sewing machine. This became an important factor as the women having a sewing machine were preferred for the sake of cutting down infrastructure costs. Among the sample size 31 women had the availability of sewing machine

Availability of sewing machine	No. of women
Available	31
Not available	19

Based on their income level, skill level and the availability of sewing machines 20 of the women were identified to impart the training. The Training module (*Annexure I*) was conducted to make them self sufficient in the sewing. The product with which these women started was bags based on the local demand of the market and the skill and confidence level of these women attained post training.

### 5.1.1: Problems and Issues with Women Trainees

- 1) Lack of education and awareness was the main hindrance in the study. These women were motivated to be a part of Training Workshop so that they can understand the importance of self dependence.
- 2) As the families of the women were not very comfortable in letting the women leave their houses and be self dependent, it was difficult convincing them.
- 3) Procurement of raw material was a difficult task for the trainees, therefore, they were facilitated by having an association with local weavers. Further, the products made by them needed a market to be sold resulting in Buyer Identification.
- 4) The product with which these women started was bags based on the skill and confidence level of these women attained post training and the local demand of the market.



## 5.2 Identification of Weavers as Sourcing units

As per **Table 5.6**, the age of the weavers was analysed. From the data analysis, it can be observed that:

**13** of weavers were in the age group of 25 – 35 years.**09** of weavers were in the age group of 36 – 45 years.**03** of weavers were in the age group of 46 – 55 years and only one weaver who was interviewed was of 56 and more years.

Age range	People
25-35	13
36-45	9
46-55	3
56-65	1
66+	0

**Table 5.7** talks about the gender of the weavers. It was analysed that out of the sample of 26 weavers, 21 were males and 5 were the only Females. As per the observations, in this particular region, the concentration of male workers is far more than female workers.

Gender	Number
Male	21
Female	5

As per **Table 5.8**, there were 5weavers who were illiterate, 07 of them had primary education. The number of weavers who had completed their intermediate was more than every other category. The number of weavers who were educated was far less. The low level of education among the weavers is due to unawareness of the gains of education amongst the weavers. Low income level is the major effect of this ignorance towards education.

Educational qualification	Number of people
Illiterate	5
Primary	7
Intermediate	10
Graduate	4

**Table 5.9** gives the time period for which weavers are involved in handloom related activity. The findings revealed that there only few months when these weavers have work. The understanding about the time period would give a fair idea about the regular income of weavers which would help in the study. It is observed that only 16 of the weavers were involved in handloom related activity for 3 to 6 months in a year. 6 weavers had work for 6– 9 months. Only 4 of them had regular work throughout the year.

Working months/yr.	No. of weavers
3 months- 6 months	16
6months - 9 months	6
12 months	4

From the above data analysis, it can be seen that very few weavers are working or involved in handloom sector throughout the year. Most of the weavers are involved for 6 months or less. Reason behind this factor is again the less order or decreased order for handloom product among local mass. Major portion of weavers manufacture handloom products in the months around winter as that is the only time when woollen shawls, stoles and other products in the winter wear are in demand.

As per **Table 5.10**, most of the weavers have monthly income less than Rs 5000, **16** of them were earning below Rs 5000, **09** of the weavers were earning in the range of Rs 5000-7500 and there was only one weaver who was earning in more than Rs 7500 and less than 10000. The reason for low income level was observed as the absence of relevant market in the area and less approachability of the weavers to proper market and buyers.

**Table5.10: Monthly income of respondents**

Income per month	No. of weavers
2500-5000	16
5000-7500	9
7500-10000	1

**Table 5.11** depicts the designs used by the respondents for weaving their products.

It was observed that **14** weavers were working for traditional designs of Himachal Pradesh. **7** weavers were working for new Designs. And 12 among the 26 were working according to demand of the buyer.

Since the weavers have lack of awareness towards the changing trends of fashion and also they have limited means to approach to relevant market, therefore, very less weavers are working on new designs.

**Table5.11: Designs used by respondents**

Concept of design	Number of handlooms
Traditional	14
New	7
Acc. To demand	12

**Table 5.12** represents the Costing parameters of the products manufactured by weavers. The purpose was to understand the factors which decide pricing of handloom products. The knowledge of pricing would help in finalising product price manufactured by trainees. It was observed that for 23 weavers, labour was the main factor and for another 19, raw material was the concern. Since most of the weavers of the region sell their goods in local market and most of the time local customers themselves provide raw material for their goods; “labour” is an important factor for the pricing

**Table5.12: Costing parameters of their products**

Costing parameters	Number of handlooms
Labour	23
Raw material	19
Any other	0

**Table 5.13** presents the data for the major sourcing places of raw material. This would help to understand about sourcing place for raw material.

It can be seen that 18 weavers were sourcing from the local market. 06 were sourcing from the agents, 07 of them were sourcing from the nearby market and 04 of them were sourcing from the far away markets.

The table clearly shows that most of the weavers are involved in selling goods to local market. Lack of proper means and inapproachability to relevant market are the major reasons.

Sourcing area	Number of handlooms
Local market	18
Agent	6
Nearby market	7
Far away market	4

A total of 10 weavers were ready from 26 to work for providing the raw material to the trained women to manufacture bags. These weavers were funded under the study and the raw material that is yarns were supplied to them for the manufacture of fabrics. The fabrics were then given to the female trainees to work on them and manufacture bags.

**5.2.1: Problems and Issues with weavers:**

- 1) The owners of the handlooms were motivated for their involvement in this study as they had lost their faith in the handloom products because of declining incomes.
- 2) Major portion of weavers manufacture handloom products is seasonal that is winter when woollen shawls, stoles and other products are in demand. Reason behind this factor is again the less order or decreased order for handloom product among local mass.
- 3) Lack of awareness of current market trends, innovative designs, absence of relevant market in the area and less approachability of the weavers to proper market and buyers is also another reason for their declining incomes.

**6.0 CONCLUSION**

The research in this paper was an effort towards the self sufficiency of **trainee women, employment and work** to the **handloom weavers** and **locating a market** for the products manufactured. A total of 20 women were identified and were imparted Training on the basis of

their skill level, income level and availability of the sewing machine. A total of 10 weavers were identified and were provided yarns to manufacture fabrics as per the need of the local market. These fabrics were converted by women in to bags. The weavers were also segregated based on their income level, and their ability to design innovatively. The buyers for these bags were further chosen based on the willingness of the vendors in the local market and demand for the product. At the end of the study, the women were able to produce bags as products, the fabrics for which were woven by the weavers who were identified for this purpose. The process of selling these bags in the local market is ongoing. The entire findings presented here was an effort to create an association between the **manufacturer, sourcing unit** and **relevant market** for the products manufactured by the rural women of the region helping in gaining their self dependence.

## 7.0 FURTHER SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY:

- The study can be continued in identifying and train more number of such women and making SHGs, by imparting Design education and market consciousness to the weavers. There is an ample opportunity for handloom products for the market but identification of markets and buyers is a difficult task for these rural people.
- The entire research is based on the production side of fashion, however, the same study can be extended from the Design perspective as well, wherein, the Weavers and the Trainee women can be provided with innovative and saleable designs to increase the market value of their products.
- Identification of appropriate market where the products can get better value is another scope of study.
- The study was focused in a small region of Kangra Distt,H.P. The Geographical limitation of the study could give results with a small group of people.
- As it was a self funded study, the scope and results were limited to a small region and a small group of people.
- The objective of the study was fulfilled by facilitating an association of Trainees, and identifying the Weavers and Buyers in the local market. However, the reports on the market sales of the bags are further scope of study.



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## ANNEXURE I (Training Module)

The Training Module developed as per the skill availability of the identified women. The Module has two phases: *Basic Module* and *Advance Module*.

### **Basic Training Module** (Time Period: 4 Weeks)

The Training module was developed considering the skill level of the women and was therefore, divided in to two phases “Basic and “Advanced”. The basic training comprised of the following sub topics:

**A) Handling of Machine (one week):** Handling of sewing machine consists of many steps that were demonstrated to the Trainees. The Trainees further practiced on the steps:

- Threading of lockstitch machine.
- SPI Setting of lockstitch machine
- Tension Setting of lockstitch machine
- Needle fitting of lockstitch machine
- Choice of Needle as per fabric requirement

The machines used here were the machines run by hade and available in most of the households.

These activities were practiced by:

- Unbalanced and balanced Needle/Bobbin threads samples.
- Different stitches on different types of fabric.

### **Stitching Practice (3 weeks):**

- Different types of stitch practice
  - What is a Straight stitch and how to make it
  - Basic Stitching at an angle.
  - Circular stitches
- Setting of SPI as per Stitch requirement
- Edge finishing techniques.

These activities were practiced by:

- A sample having stitching on curves, lines, circles.

- Samples of different edge finishing. A development of prototype samples like small bags and coin wallet

The Practice of the entire module was on Paper as well as different kinds of fabrics

### **B. Advanced Training Module** (Time Period: 3 Weeks)

Advanced training module was consisted of the sub module topics:-

- Different kinds of Seam Types
- Sewing different component of bags
- Introduction to Quilting
- Introduction to Patch work
- Decorating the products with top stitch.
- Assembling different components of bag.

These were carried out by developing:

- Different types of seam samples.
- Pockets and lining of bags.
- Quilted samples.

## ANNEXURE II

### (Questionnaire for the Identification of Women Trainees)

The objective of this questionnaire was to segregate the women for whom the Training can be beneficial in terms of employability and income generation.

1) Name

2) Address

3) Contact number

4) Education Level of trainees

- a) *Illiterate* ( )                      b) *Primary* ( )  
c) *Secondary* ( )                      d) *College* ( )

5) Monthly Income at Present

- a) *Rs. 3000 or below 3000* ( )      b) *Rs. 3000- 6000* ( )  
c) *Rs. 6000 – 9000* ( )              d) *above 9000* ( )

6) Skill level (with respect to sewing)

- a) *Unskilled* ( )                      b) *Semi-skilled* ( )  
c) *Skilled* ( )

7) Age

- a) *20-25* ( )                              b) *26-30* ( )  
c) *31-35* ( )                              d) *36-40* ( )

8) Do you have a sewing machine?    a) Yes ( )                                      b) No ( )



### ANNEXURE III

#### (Questionnaire for the Identification of Handloom weavers)

The objective of this questionnaire was to segregate the handloom weavers who would like to work as Sourcing Agents for the women who had been trained by the research team.

1. Age

- a) 25-35 ( )    b) 36-45 ( )    c) 46-55 ( )    d) 56-65 ( )    e) 66+

2. Sex

- a) *Male* ( )    b) *Female* ( )

3. Education level of Artisan's

- a) *Illiterate* ( )    b) *Primary* ( )    c) *Secondary* ( )    d) *College* ( )

4.No. of months for which artisan is involved in weaving

- a) *Months* ( )    b) *06-09 months* ( )    c) *throughout the year* ( )

5.Monthly Income of the family

- a) *Less than 3000*( )    b) *Rs 3000-6000* ( )    c) *Rs 6000-9000* ( )

6) Are you working on

- a) *Traditional design* ( )    b) *Latest design* ( )    c) *Market demand design* ( )

7. What decide the pricing of your products?

- a) *Raw material* ( )    b) *labor cost* ( )

8) Where do you procure raw material from?

- a) *Local market* ( )    b) *Agent* ( )    c) *Nearby market* ( )  
d) *Far away market* ( )