INTEGRATION OF SOCIAL DESIGN PRINCIPLES AND DESIGN THINKING APPROACH IN THE HANDLOOM AND HANDICRAFT SECTORS OF INDIA

[1]**Bindoo Maheshwari** [2]**Ranganath M Singari** [3]**Charu Gupta**

[1]University School of Design and Innovation, GGSIPU, Delhi, India

[2]Department of Design, Delhi Technological University, Delhi, India

[3]Department of Home Science (FAS), University of Delhi, India Email: ranganath@dce.ac.in , bindooranjan7@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The Indian handloom and handicraft sectors are integral to the country's cultural heritage and economic framework, providing livelihoods to millions of artisans, particularly in rural and semi-urban regions. However, these sectors face significant challenges, including declining artisan participation, limited technological advancements, diminishing global competitiveness, and increasing market disruptions due to industrial mass production. While government initiatives and non-governmental interventions have attempted to address these issues, a more holistic, human-centered, and innovation-driven approach is essential to ensure the long-term sustainability and economic viability of these traditional industries.

This study proposes integrating Social Design Principles and the Design Thinking Approach as a strategic framework for revitalizing India's handloom and handicraft sectors. Social Design focuses on community empowerment, participatory design, environmental sustainability, and ethical production, ensuring that development is inclusive and culturally sensitive. Meanwhile, the Design Thinking Approach—comprising the five iterative stages of Empathize, Define, Ideate, Prototype, and Test—provides a structured methodology to drive creative problem- solving, foster innovation, and enhance user-centric product development. By examining the role of Social Design in artisan empowerment, sustainability, and cultural preservation, this paper highlights strategies for integrating traditional craftsmanship with contemporary market demands.

Case studies of successful interventions—such as Loin Loom Weaving in Manipur, Barabanki Stoles & Jaipur Rugs (participatory design model), Pochampally Ikat's sustainable textile production, and the revival of indigenous weaving techniques in Kala Cotton and Bhadohi Baskets—demonstrate how these principles can improve artisan livelihoods, facilitate market adaptation, and strengthen global brand positioning. Furthermore, this research explores the potential of digital transformation in the craft sector and proposes policy recommendations, including design innovation grants, government-supported technology incubation centers, and industry-academia collaborations, to ensure sustained growth and modernization of the sector.

Findings from this study indicate that a well-structured integration of Social Design and Design Thinking can provide a scalable, sustainable, and inclusive model for rejuvenating India's handloom and handicraft industries. By fostering innovation while preserving traditional

knowledge, this approach has the potential to unlock new market opportunities, enhance artisan resilience, and position India as a global leader in handmade textiles and crafts. This research serves as a foundation for future studies on the urgent need for a multidisciplinary, technology-

enabled, and human-environment-centered intervention to ensure the survival, growth, and prosperity of India's rich handloom and handicraft heritage in the modern era.

Keywords: Social Design, Design Thinking, Handloom and Handicrafts, Artisan Empowerment, Sustainable Craft Practices, Digital Transformation in Handicrafts, Cultural Preservation, Market Innovation in Traditional Crafts.

1.   INTRODUCTION

India's handloom and handicraft industries embody a rich tapestry of traditional craftsmanship, cultural expression, and economic sustenance for millions of artisans. These sectors are deeply intertwined with the cultural identity of various communities across the country, showcasing regional diversity in weaving techniques, materials, and aesthetic values (Sharma et al., 2020). Beyond their artistic and cultural significance, these industries play a crucial role in rural employment and global cultural diplomacy. The handloom sector alone employs over 4.3 million people, primarily in rural and semi-urban regions, with women constituting a significant portion of the workforce (Fletcher & Grose, 2012). Similarly, handicrafts significantly contribute to India's export market, with the sector valued at approximately USD 3.5 billion annually (Patel et al., 2021). Despite their historical significance and economic contributions, these industries face numerous challenges that threaten their sustainability and growth.

The rise of industrial mass production and globalization has severely disrupted traditional artisanal economies. Mechanized textile production offers cost-effective alternatives, leading to a decline in consumer demand for handcrafted products (Brown, 2019). Additionally, the proliferation of synthetic fibers and machine-made replicas has resulted in a loss of authenticity and a devaluation of traditional crafts. Many artisans struggle to compete in a rapidly changing market, where consumer preferences are increasingly shaped by fast fashion and mass-produced goods (Bhatia, 2022). The lack of market access and inadequate distribution channels further exacerbate these challenges, leaving artisans dependent on intermediaries who often take a large share of their earnings (Gupta, 2022).

Another pressing concern is the declining participation of younger generations in traditional craftsmanship. Many artisans' children are reluctant to pursue their family's craft due to low financial returns, limited innovation, and the perception of handicrafts as an unviable career choice (Moorhouse, 2020). Consequently, invaluable traditional knowledge and skills are at risk of being lost, leading to the gradual erosion of indigenous art forms and textile traditions. The need for sustainable interventions that make these industries attractive and financially viable for future generations is more urgent than ever.

Sustainability concerns also pose significant challenges to the handloom and handicraft sectors. Production processes in these industries often rely on natural resources, such as cotton, silk, and dyes, which are vulnerable to environmental changes and market fluctuations (Singh, 2021). In some regions, the introduction of chemical-based dyes and synthetic materials has had negative impacts on both the environment and artisans' health. There is a growing need for eco-friendly practices that align with principles of sustainability and ethical production while maintaining the integrity of traditional craftsmanship (Li et al., 2021).

The Indian government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have made significant efforts to address these issues. Initiatives such as the National Handloom/Handicrafts Development Programme (NHDP), Ambedkar Hastshilp Vikas Yojana (AHVY), the Comprehensive Handicrafts Cluster Development Scheme, and the Handloom Weavers' Comprehensive Welfare Scheme aim to provide financial assistance, skill development, design intervention, and market exposure to artisans (Kimbell, 2011). Additionally, the introduction of the Geographical Indication (GI) tagging system seeks to protect the authenticity of traditional handicrafts and prevent counterfeit products from undermining the market (Brown, 2009). However, these initiatives alone are insufficient in tackling the structural and systemic issues affecting the sector. A more holistic, innovation-driven approach is necessary to ensure long-term sustainability and economic viability.

This study explores the integration of Social Design Principles and the Design Thinking Approach as a strategic framework for revitalizing these industries. Social Design, often described as Design for Social Innovation and Sustainability, focuses on socio-economic, environmental, and ethical production practices (Veiga, 2014). It emphasizes community participation, ethical production, and sustainable development (Manzini, 2015). Meanwhile, the Design Thinking Approach provides a structured, iterative methodology that fosters problem-solving, creativity, and user-centric innovation (Brown, 2019). Its five stages— Empathize, Define, Ideate, Prototype, and Test— offer a robust framework for addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by the handloom and handicraft sectors (Sharma et al., 2020).

By fostering artisan engagement in the design process and incorporating socially responsible practices alongside Design Thinking's structured innovation process, this research aims to propose sustainable solutions to the challenges outlined above (Fletcher & Grose, 2012). The study will examine case studies of successful interventions, including:

, Manipur
1.   Loin Loom Weaving (Manipur)

3. Jaipur Rugs

2.   Barabanki Stoles & Jaipur Rugs (Participatory Design Model)

4. 3.   Pochampally Ikat (Sustainable Textile Production)

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4.   Kala Cotton & Bhadohi Baskets (Revival of Indigenous Weaving Techniques)
5.   Bhadohi Baskets

Furthermore, the research will explore the role of digital transformation, including AI-driven design tools, blockchain-based authenticity verification, and virtual reality-enabled craft exhibitions, in modernizing the sector (Gupta, 2022).

Through a multi-disciplinary, technology-enabled, and human-environment-centered intervention, this paper argues that a well-structured integration of Social Design and Design Thinking can provide a scalable and inclusive model for rejuvenating India's handloom and handicraft industries. By fostering innovation while preserving traditional knowledge, such an approach has the potential to unlock new market opportunities, enhance artisan resilience, and position India as a global leader in handmade textiles and crafts (Li et al., 2021).

This research underscores the urgent need for policy reforms, industry collaborations, and digital innovations to safeguard the survival and growth of India's rich handloom and handicraft heritage in the modern era.

2.   DESIGN THINKING AND SOCIAL INNOVATION

. Design thinking has emerged as a transformative methodology in addressing social challenges, particularly in fostering sustainability and innovation. the design actions and outputs could be socially responsible, successful, and sustainable (Shedroff, 2009; Erlhoff & Marshall, 2008). Bason's four credos of design thinking, as discussed by Piller (2021), emphasize the role of user-centered design in creating sustainable solutions, particularly within the fashion industry. Manzini (2015) extends this discussion by illustrating how design has evolved towards inclusivity, focusing on co-design and social innovation. This aligns with the work of Singh, Singari, and Bholey (2024), who analyze design's role in cognitive and behavioral processes, highlighting its applications in social and economic development. In fact, from the era of Arts and Crafts Movement to modern times of Socio-technological utopianism there are various examples of Design engagement in the social sector,

However, a critical perspective on design's ethical implications emerges in Monteiro's Ruined by Design (2019), where he critiques the profession for contributing to unsustainable and unethical practices. This resonates with Balaram (1998), who argues for a human-centric and ethical approach to design thinking, particularly in the Indian context. Further reinforcing this, Nusem, Wrigley, and Matthews (2017) highlight the importance of building design capabilities in nonprofit organizations, emphasizing the necessity of social innovation-driven solutions. Social Design is a new area addressing problems or issues related with human injustice, poverty, cohesion, inequality, lack of basic living conditions, health issues, marginalization,

education, etcetera, and making design closer and widely accessible to individuals and organizations who otherwise couldn't attain or afford it (Margolin & Margolin 2002).

Social Design and Community Engagement
Arthur J. Pulos, President, International Council of Societies of Industrial Design (ICSID), at at the organization's congress titled Design for Development, ICSID & UNIDO in Mexico City, 14 October 1979, made explicit reference to the design profession's overlap with a social development. Social Design is Design for the Base/Bottom of the Pyramid (BoP), A significant body of research focuses on social design principles and community engagement. Some authors speak concretely about designers who are actively working, proposing and testing in collaboration with all disciplines, actors, stakeholders and beneficiaries, create solutions that effectively transform difficult, complex and critical situations into more preferred and desired ones (Simon, 1996; Sachetti, 2011;Thackara, 2005, Nussbaum 2005).

Veiga and Almendra (2023) investigate social design practices, proposing a framework to align design processes with social needs. Tewari (2021) revisits the Ahmedabad Declaration (1979), linking it to contemporary discourses on design for development. Nold et al. (2022) introduce Twelve Potluck Principles for Social Design, advocating for participatory design processes that empower marginalized communities. Singh, Singari, and Bholey (2023) further emphasize social design's role in integrating Indian cultural heritage, particularly through color applications in handicrafts and fine art. Their research highlights the interplay between traditional craft practices and contemporary consumer preferences, reinforcing the potential of social design to sustain traditional livelihoods.

Sustainable Livelihoods and Handicrafts

The Indian handicraft sector remains a critical domain for the application of design thinking toward sustainable economic models. Saha and Mahasamudram (2024) provide an overview of the sector's export potential and challenges, while Dalal, Bhattacharya, and Chattopadhyay (2024) propose a framework for sustainable livelihoods, emphasizing design-led interventions that enhance income security.

Singh, Singari, and Maheshwari (2023) explore the impact of color perception in Indian handicrafts, demonstrating its significance in cultural identity, consumer engagement, and economic viability. Their findings support Sinha's (2017) argument for bottom-up design approaches that empower artisans instead of imposing industry-driven models. Similarly, Ciftci and Walker (2017, 2021) document revitalization efforts in Turkey's handicraft sector, illustrating how traditional crafts can integrate with contemporary markets through design-based innovations.

Design for Sustainability and Social Ecosystems

Design's role in sustainability is a recurring theme in the literature. Banerjee, Upadhyay, and Punekar (2019) present case studies on teaching sustainability in design education, focusing on socioeconomic ecosystems that rely on cultural and environmental sustainability. Singh, Singari, and Bholey (2024) reinforce this perspective by providing a historical analysis of design education, highlighting challenges and future trends in integrating sustainability.

Similarly, Chudasri, Walker, and Evans (2020) explore weaving practices in Thailand, demonstrating how design interventions can preserve traditional knowledge while adapting to modern economic demands. Sultan and Qaed (2020) argue that service design thinking is critical for sustainability, particularly in developing regions where design-based solutions optimize local economic models.

Challenges and Future Trends in Social Innovation
Social innovation research predicts a shift toward participatory, demand-driven models. The Social Innovation Trends 2020–2030 Report (2020) outlines co-creation and systemic change as central to the future of social innovation. Mehta (2020) explores grassroots participation in Indian social innovations, demonstrating how community-driven models enhance sustainability efforts.

The Design Council's Eleven Lessons (2007) synthesizes insights from global brands, offering a corporate perspective on design innovation. However, the contrast between corporate and grassroots innovation models remains unresolved, with many scholars advocating for greater social responsibility in design practices.

The interdisciplinary nature of design research demonstrates how design thinking and social design principles can foster sustainable innovation in the Indian handloom and handicraft sectors. Key findings include:

•   Social design and participatory approaches are essential for community empowerment, ensuring that artisans have agency in shaping their craft futures (Sinha, 2017).

•   Color perception profoundly influences consumer behavior and emotional engagement, making it a crucial factor in handicraft sustainability (Singh, Singari, & Maheshwari, 2023).
•   Traditional art forms and cultural heritage can benefit from modern design thinking, facilitating economic viability and sustainability (Dalal et al., 2024; Ciftci & Walker, 2021).
•   Future design education must integrate cognitive and visual psychology principles, preparing designers for ethical, sustainable, and socially responsible innovation (Singh, Singari, & Bholey, 2024).

As design thinking continues to evolve, future research should focus on scalable, data-driven solutions that integrate cognitive science, sustainability, and community-driven innovation. Digital interventions and co-design frameworks will be critical in bridging tradition with modern market demands, ensuring a sustainable future for India's handloom and handicraft sectors.

Case Studies of Social Design in Handicrafts

Successful implementations of social design principles highlight the intersection of participatory approaches, sustainability, and market-driven innovation. Examples include: Author's project for Design intervention for Loin Loom Weaving

• Loin loom weaving: The most primitive loom, dates back to pre-Hispanic times create fabrics primarily for their respective consumption and each tribe has it's own strong identity through patterns and colour. For socio-economic development, the project aimed at creating diversified product range retaining it's core identity. The participatory

Author's project for Design intervention at Baraban•ki

model was adopted.
Barabanki Stoles: The handloom weaving cluster of 5000 weavers weaving low-priced

under project fundedO.O DC sdtaondlekosomwith the help of consistent social design intervention, created better finished & quality stoles, tapped alternate markets and thus better price for themselves, (author's self-project 2012—17)

• Jaipur Rugs: This social enterprise employs a participatory model that integrates artisan feedback into the design process, ensuring fair wages and cultural preservation. Jaipur Rugs exemplifies how community-driven approaches can create economic opportunities while preserving traditional craft techniques (Singh, 2021).

• Pochampally Ikat: The handloom weaving industry in Telangana has embraced sustainable textile production methods, balancing traditional weaving with modern environmental standards (Bhatia, 2022).

• Kala Cotton: The revival of Kala Cotton in Gujarat promotes sustainable, indigenous textile production, supporting both environmental conservation and artisan livelihoods (Patel et al., 2021).

• Bhadohi Baskets: The alternate income source for Bhadohi Carpet weavers who were gravely hit financially co-created with Designer (author) a range of baskets for alternate markets under a project by Dastakari Haat Samiti (NGO) 2009.The social design project today has engaged several villages giving them financial sustainability.

These case studies illustrate that integrating social design principles leads to economic, social, and environmental benefits for the handloom and handicraft sectors. By embedding participatory approaches, sustainability, and ethical production into design processes, the industry can navigate modern challenges while preserving its rich cultural heritage.

Fig1. Barabanki Stoles – weaver weaving yardage to be used as Curtain, - diversified product for the market.

Fig 2. Prototyping the ideated Design at Loin Loom Weaving, Manipur. Participatory design intervention.

'katha' dye,
Fig3.Basket dyed in natural katha and woven in square shape as per market requirement.

Fig 4 Ideating/ Concept development for Aipan craft, Uttarakhand.

3.   DESIGN THINKING IN THE HANDLOOM AND HANDICRAFT SECTORS

Design Thinking is a problem-solving methodology that emphasizes user-centric innovation through five iterative stages: Empathize, Define, Ideate, Prototype, and Test (Brown, 2009). This approach has been widely adopted in various industries to foster creativity, problem-solving, and user-centered solutions. In the handloom and handicraft sectors, Design Thinking provides a structured framework to address complex challenges faced by artisans, such as dwindling market demand, lack of technological integration, and difficulties in scaling their businesses (Kimbell, 2011). By implementing Design Thinking principles, stakeholders—including designers, artisans, policymakers, and consumers—can collaboratively develop innovative solutions that bridge traditional craftsmanship with contemporary market expectations (Design Council, 2023).

Application of Design Thinking in Craft Sectors

The five stages of Design Thinking—Empathize, Define, Ideate, Prototype, and Test—offer a structured methodology that can be effectively utilized to transform the craft sector. Each stage ensures that the artisan community remains at the center of the innovation process, leading to sustainable and scalable solutions (Piller, 2021).

Empathize: Understanding the challenges of the Artisan and the requirements of the consumers through Ethnographic Research and Direct Community Engagement
The first stage of Design Thinking involves understanding the perspectives, experiences, and pain points of artisans. Researchers and designers engage with artisans in their local environments to understand their workflow, material constraints, Skill capacities, and socioeconomic-cultural challenges (Aggarwal, 2020). For example, studies on Indian handloom cooperatives have demonstrated that deeply engaging with artisans enables a more authentic understanding of the cultural and economic factors influencing their work (Dalal, Bhattacharya, & Chattopadhyay, 2024). By developing empathy with artisans and consumers, designers can craft truly relevant solutions that are beneficial (Amatullo, 2015). This can be achieved through ethnographic research methods such as interviews, observations, and community immersion (Manzini, 2015)

Define: Identifying Core Problems such as Declining Market Demand or Lack of Digital Literacy

Once the initial research is conducted, the next step is to define the core challenges faced by artisans. Key issues include a lack of access to global markets, the dominance of mass-produced goods, insufficient financial support, and limited digital literacy (Ciftci & Walker, 2021). In many cases, artisans struggle to keep up with modern market trends, leading to reduced demand for traditional crafts (Datta & Bhattacharyya, 2016). The defining phase ensures that these problems are clearly articulated, enabling the development of targeted solutions that address specific gaps in the sector (Mehta, 2020).

Ideate: Brainstorming Potential Solutions, from Innovative Product Designs to Digital Marketing Strategies

In the ideation phase, stakeholders brainstorm potential solutions based on insights gathered during the first two stages. This stage involves co-creation workshops where artisans,

designers, and industry experts collaborate to develop new product ideas, marketing approaches, and sustainable business models (Calvo & Sclater, 2020). For example, the adoption of e-commerce platforms has enabled artisans to reach global markets, bypassing traditional intermediaries (Gupta, 2022). Additionally, integrating AI-driven design tools can help artisans create innovative patterns and motifs that appeal to modern consumers while preserving traditional aesthetics (Shende, Rane, & Joshi, 2023).

Prototype: Developing Small-Scale Models, Including AI-Driven Designs or 3D- Printed Craft Components

The prototyping stage involves the creation of tangible models or digital simulations to test proposed ideas. Small-scale experiments with materials, production techniques, or digital technologies help validate the feasibility of proposed solutions (Chudasri, Walker, & Evans, 2020). For instance, AI-generated textile designs have been used to enhance traditional handloom patterns, offering artisans new creative possibilities while maintaining cultural integrity (Saha & Mahasamudram, 2024). Similarly, 3D printing technologies have been explored to develop innovative craft products that merge traditional craftsmanship with modern design trends (Walia, Datt, & Brar, 2024).

Test: Gathering Artisan and Consumer Feedback for Refinement

The final stage of Design Thinking involves testing prototypes and gathering feedback from both artisans and consumers. Iterative testing ensures that the final product or solution meets the needs of end users while remaining viable for large-scale adoption (Design Council, 2023). By incorporating consumer preferences, artisans can refine their craft offerings to better align with market expectations (Monteiro, 2019). The success of participatory models, such as Jaipur Rugs and Pochampally Ikat, highlights the effectiveness of incorporating iterative testing in the design process (Singh, Bhalla, & Singari, 2023).

The application of Design Thinking in the handloom and handicraft sectors offers a promising pathway to sustainability and growth. By centering artisans in the innovation process, this

approach fosters solutions that are culturally authentic, economically viable, and environmentally sustainable. Through ethnographic research, problem identification, collaborative ideation, prototyping, and iterative testing, Design Thinking provides a robust framework to revitalize traditional crafts in an increasingly digital and globalized marketplace. Future research should explore the potential of advanced digital tools, AI integration, and cross-sector collaborations to further enhance the effectiveness of Design Thinking in the craft sector

(Nusem, Wrigley, & Matthews, 2017).

The design intervention project funded by MEETAC a Manipur state development organisation initiated to increase the market acceptance. The Loin loom weaving has a very strong identity. so to creat a

To effectively gain the benefits of the Design Thinking dfirvaemrsifeiewd oprrokd,uctht reanaguetwhaosraecxhaplleernigminge.nted in her project in 2018 for Loin Loom weaving, in Manipur. Using the five stages bothsiomnultathneeously artisans and the consumers who would later be using the products designed by the designer in
a participatory method with the weavers as per the feedback and requirements of the consumers. The experiment revolved around these central points.
i.   Keeping the cultural ethnicity of the Loin loom weaving- patterns and style
ii.   Use of eco-friendly- natural dyes and raw materials.
iii.   Diversified product range for tapping alternate markets Results:
i.   Various natural dyes that are locally available were used in dyeing the yarns used for new product range.

ii.   A diversified product range of Table mats and Cushion covers was created as per the requirements studied of the user.
iii.   The weavers learned the process of Design thinking steps and ability to adapt in their future works.

extra space can be reduced

Fig 5: Design Thinking for Loin Loom products

4.   CONCLUSION
The Indian handloom and handicraft sectors stand as pillars of the nation's rich cultural heritage, employing millions while reflecting the diversity of its traditional artistry. However, these industries are currently facing multifaceted challenges, including declining artisan participation, the impact of industrial mass production, reduced global competitiveness, and limited access to modern technology. While governmental and non-governmental interventions have attempted to address these issues, the need for a more holistic and sustainable approach is

evident. This study has explored the integration of Social Design Principles and the Design Thinking Approach as a strategic framework for revitalizing India's traditional crafts. By combining human-environment-centered innovation, participatory design, and sustainable business models, these approaches present a comprehensive pathway to ensuring long-term artisan empowerment, cultural preservation, and market adaptability.

Social Design Principles and the Design Thinking Approach for revitalizing India's traditional Handlooms and Handicrafts   sentence looks incomplete

One of the critical takeaways from this study is that Social Design emphasizes community-driven and ethical production, ensuring that artisans are not only participants but also co-creators in shaping their future. Social Design fosters empowerment through participatory design practices, cultural sensitivity, and sustainability, ensuring that traditional craftsmanship is preserved while adapting to contemporary needs. The study has showcased several case studies, including the participatory model in Barbanki Stoles, and Jaipur Rugs, sustainable textile initiatives in Loin loom weaving, and Pochampally Ikat, and revival of indigenous weaving techniques in Kala Cotton, and Bhadohi Baskets. All of which demonstrates the effectiveness of Social Design in enhancing artisan livelihoods, improving global brand positioning, and reinforcing traditional heritage in a modern context.

Parallelly, the Design Thinking Approach provides a structured, iterative methodology for solving complex challenges in the handloom and handicraft sectors. The five stages of Design Thinking—Empathize, Define, Ideate, Prototype, and Test—offer a framework that fosters creativity, user-centric problem-solving, and sustainable product development. By integrating these stages into the craft sector, designers, artisans, policymakers, and industry stakeholders can collaboratively develop innovative solutions that enhance economic viability and scalability. This research has demonstrated that adopting Design Thinking in the handicraft sector allows for data-driven, insight-based decision-making, making it easier to bridge the gap between traditional craftsmanship and modern market demands.

Preserving Cultural Heritage and Ensuring Sustainability
A key aspect of this study was examining how the integration of Social Design and Design Thinking can contribute to cultural preservation while ensuring sustainability. India's craft traditions are at risk due to industrial competition and mass production, which have led to the devaluation of handmade products. As seen in the case of Loin Loom weaving, Barabanki Stoles, and Jaipur Rugs, safeguarding cultural heritage requires active artisan participation, ensuring that their indigenous knowledge and skills are valued and passed down to future generations.

Sustainability is another pressing concern. The introduction of chemical-based dyes, synthetic materials, and exploitative production practices has had negative environmental and social consequences. This research advocates for the promotion of eco-friendly production methods, ethical sourcing, and circular economy practices as seen in Loin Loom Weaving and Bhadohi Baskets to align with global sustainability standards. Design Thinking facilitates this transition

by enabling artisans and designers to prototype sustainable materials, test innovative dyeing techniques, and develop market-friendly, eco-conscious designs that appeal to contemporary consumers.

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Policy Recommendations and Future Directions

This study has underscored the need for policy reforms, industry-academia collaborations, and financial incentives to support artisans and promote innovation. Some key recommendations include:

•   Government Grants and Funding for Design Innovation: Dedicated grants should be introduced to support design-led interventions, digital adoption, and market expansion for traditional artisans.
•   Technology Incubation Centers: The establishment of craft innovation hubs equipped with advanced design tools, marketing platforms, and sustainability research labs can foster interdisciplinary collaboration between artisans, designers, and technology experts.
•   Industry-Academia Collaborations: Design institutions, universities, and industry leaders should collaborate to integrate Social Design and Design Thinking methodologies into craft education and training programs, ensuring the next generation of artisans is equipped with both traditional knowledge and modern design skills.
•   Strengthening Global Branding and Export Market Strategies: India must leverage its cultural heritage to create strong branding strategies that position Indian handicrafts in the premium global market. This can be achieved through storytelling, provenance marketing, and certification mechanisms.
•   Consumer Awareness and Ethical Sourcing: Promoting fair trade initiatives, sustainable craft certifications, and direct-to-consumer e-commerce platforms can ensure artisans receive fair compensation for their work.

The integration of Social Design and Design Thinking presents an opportunity to rejuvenate India's handloom and handicraft sectors while maintaining their cultural authenticity, economic viability, and environmental sustainability. By fostering innovation through participatory models, leveraging emerging technologies, and advocating for ethical production, India can position itself as a global leader in handmade textiles and crafts. The future of these industries hinges on collaborative, human-centered, and innovation-driven approaches that balance tradition with contemporary market demands, ensuring the survival, growth, and prosperity of India's rich artisanal heritage in the digital age.

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