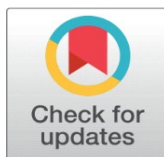
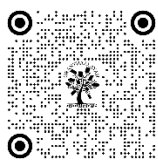


KOTA DORIA WEAVERS PLEADING FOR NEW DESIGNS!

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ABSTRACT

Apart from agriculture, India's handloom industry has existed for ages and is the country's largest cottage industry in terms of employment opportunities. Despite having a glorious past, this ancient craft is now known for its dire situation and for slowly fading into obscurity as the industry struggles to survive due to numerous issues. The main causes of this include a large number of substituted products, insufficient training for skill upgrades, an unorganized structure, low wages, the reluctance of the younger generation to choose weaving as a means of subsistence, a small domestic market, the lack of creative designs and color combinations, fierce competition from power looms, the fast-fashion industry, poor marketing, shifting consumer preferences, and the availability of alternative employment opportunities. However, the handloom industry can still be revitalized as evidenced by the tenacity that handloom weavers continue to display in terms of survival and capacity for innovation. In order to contribute to the sustainability of traditional craft heritage and ensure continuous transmission of craft skills and knowledge from generation to generation, the current investigation aims to explore, identify, and address issues faced by traditional craftsmanship. This study offers Kota Doria Cluster insights at Kaithoon, Kota in order to help us better understand the cluster's current situation and offers recommendations for future development.

Keywords: Handloom, Kota- Doria, Weavers

1. INTRODUCTION

The handloom cloth reflects the aesthetic attitude and way of life of the weavers and is a product of long-standing Indian tradition. Handwoven fabrics in India range widely and uniquely, reflecting the geography and culture of each region from Kashmir to Kanyakumari. Each handloom design communicates uniquely without using words. The origin tales of handlooms are enduring, with each one containing a unique tale of inspiration, a fact from history, or a folklore. Handloom saris, which have always been distinctive and one-of-a-kind in their approach, are a timeless representation of Indian culture and heritage. Our traditional handlooms are currently struggling to survive, and the challenges faced by weaving communities

have gotten worse because of government benefits rarely reaching traditional weavers, a rise in fast fashion, and fierce competition from power looms. [Sundari \(2017\)](#)

As a result, the younger generations of these weavers are compelled to abandon this tradition and look for alternative employment opportunities. Thus, it is imperative that all stakeholders work together to transform the handloom industry through improved market access, creative marketing campaigns, improved production facilities, innovation in existing products and resolute technologies [Saha \(2021\)](#). Let's consider the Kota Doria cluster for this study because it is one of the most well-known handloom clusters in [Agarwal \(2012\)](#) Rajasthan. Over 1,000 weaver families are reportedly employed in the production of Kota Doria fabric, which is used to make saris, other types of clothing, and some home furnishings. The Kota Doria is primarily produced in a small town 'Kaithoon', which is located, 20 kilometers from Kota District of Rajasthan, India. Its geographical coordinates are 25° 7' 26" N and 75° 58' 19" E. Bundi, Baran, and Kota also have few more clusters, but Kaithoon is the main centre of production for this product. Most of the weavers in this cluster are Muslims of the Ansari sect. [Hada & Chaturvedi \(2018\)](#)

Figure 1



Figure 1 Kota Doria Saree
Source Talethi Maholla, Kaithoon

The origin of the craft is implied by the name Kota Doria. The Hindi word 'Dori' literally translates to 'thread'. Another common name for it is *Masuria Malmal*. [Agarwal \(2012\)](#) A fine checkered pattern is produced by using a 5:1 ratio of cotton to silk yarn, where cotton offers strength and suppleness. While silk adds delicacy and transparency to the fabric. Checks are commonly referred to as 'khats'. The most common Kota Doria is a square made of 14 yarns; eight of which are cotton and rest six are silk. The standard width of fabric that can be woven on the loom is between 300 and 350 khats [Hada & Chaturvedi \(2018\)](#). The traditional Kota Doria sarees that are most well-known have a base colour that is cream and unbleached. Golden zari is frequently used, especially for the borders, which adds richness. A single Kota Doria sari with the standard length of 6.2 metres can be woven using 300 to 350 g of cotton and 70 to 100 g of silk [Agarwal \(2012\)](#). Kota Doria has also been recognised as a Geographical Indication (GI) due to its distinction and connection to regional traditions and customs [Suhag & Sharma \(2022\)](#).

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

In order to ensure that craft traditions are preserved; the knowledge and skills can be passed down through generations, the goal of this research is to analyze, evaluate, and resolve issues of the cluster by offering few recommendations. The following are the study's primary goals:

- To look into the current state and organizational structure of the Kota Doria cluster.
- To identify the key difficulties and issues that Kota Doria weavers encounter from the standpoint of a designer.
- To assess Doria weavers' satisfaction with the designs, color themes and motifs they are currently weaving.
- Determine consumer satisfaction with regard to the designs and product variety accessible in the market from the weaver's perspective, depending on demand from their clients.
- To assess weavers' willingness to try new colours schemes, techniques, design motifs, and so on in order to meet their clients' rising needs, if any.
- To suggest unique motifs, colour schemes and new commodities in order to increase Kota Doria weavers' sales and so extend the consumer base.

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review discusses the contributions made by various researchers in respective field. Research articles, case studies, blogs, handloom reports/census, working papers, etc. have been used as the basis for the literature review:

- [Gera \(2019\)](#) According to Master Weaver, Hussain at Kaithoon, Kota (2010) the focus should be on the domestic market rather than the international market as there are fewer weavers and they are unable to meet demand due to strict quality requirements and time constraints.
- [Kapil \(2010\)](#) claimed that because weavers earn much low wages, the younger members of these weaver families don't wish to pursue careers in weaving and instead choose to pursue opportunities provided by the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS).
- [Economics \(2019\)](#). Master Weaver, Asgar Ali, Kaithoon, emphasized that Kota Doria weavers need a larger and more accessible market to sell their goods. He urged the state government to make significant efforts to protect genuine Kota Doria from power loom products in order to maintain and preserve this long-standing custom.
- [Malik \(2018\)](#) investigated the nature of the issues in Kota Doria and looked at Kaithoon's socioeconomic, financial, and marketing situation.
- [Suhag & Sharma \(2022\)](#) concluded in her study that GI certification is still in its infancy since producers are not aware of its socioeconomic benefits and importance.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology for this study encompassed a multi-faceted approach, employing both primary and secondary sources to gather comprehensive

insights into the Kota Doria saree weaving industry within the Ansari community residing in, and Talethi Maholla, Kaithoon, Kota, Rajasthan.

Secondary Data: Secondary data was extensively gathered from a wide array of sources, including publications, scholarly journals, books, and research reports. This literature review aimed to establish a strong theoretical foundation and provide context for the primary research.

Primary Data: Primary data collection was focused on the weavers situated in the Kota Doria cluster, particularly targeting the Talethi Maholla. A simple random sampling technique was employed to ensure the selection of a representative sample that accurately reflects the diversity of the weaver population.

Data Collection Instrument: A structured questionnaire was designed to facilitate the primary data collection process. This questionnaire was carefully crafted to include a combination of closed-ended and open-ended questions, allowing for both quantitative and qualitative responses. The questionnaire was distributed among three key segments of the weaver community:

- **Master Weavers:** Those with extensive experience and expertise in Kota Doria saree weaving.
- **Small Weavers:** Artisans with smaller-scale operations within the cluster; usually weave for master weavers on fixed wages.
- **Designers:** Individuals involved in the creative aspects of saree design. They are also known as 'Grapher', because they supply the saree designs to master weavers on graph papers only.

Data Collected: After conducting a comprehensive literature review, the researchers noted that existing studies on Kota Doria primarily concentrate on aspects such as the socio-economic conditions of weavers, marketing challenges encountered, and issues related to counterfeits. However, there is a noticeable gap in research regarding the design elements of the sarees, which warrants attention and investigation. Consequently, the researchers have chosen to emphasize the design aspects and associated concerns in their study. The questionnaire was designed to gather a diverse range of information, encompassing but not restricted to: Demographic information about the weavers, Ownership and utilization of looms, Monthly income and economic aspects of weaving, Challenges and difficulties encountered, Satisfaction levels regarding market motifs, patterns, color schemes, and advertising strategies, Assessing the weavers' capacity to meet consumer demands, Exploring the willingness of weavers to experiment with new motifs and design recommendations.

5. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Quantitative data obtained from closed-ended questions underwent rigorous statistical analysis, while qualitative responses from open-ended questions were meticulously analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. In achieving research objectives, the researcher effectively synthesized insights gleaned from both primary and secondary sources. The data-driven conclusions provided valuable insights into the current state of the Kota Doria saree weaving cluster, elucidating the challenges confronting weavers and their preparedness to meet evolving consumer preferences. To gather this information, the researcher administered a questionnaire to a randomly selected sample of thirty respondents. The resulting data was subjected to analysis through the use of bar diagrams and pie charts, visually represented below:

Table 1, shows that the respondents' ages ranged from 15 to over 65. The age groups above 15–25 years and 36–45 years, are 23% each, represent the largest groups of respondents. 20% of the total respondents are between the ages of 56 and 65, 17% are between the ages of 46 and 55, and 14% are between the ages of 26 and 35. Only three percent of the population are over 65 years old, making up the age group with the fewest respondents.

Figure 2

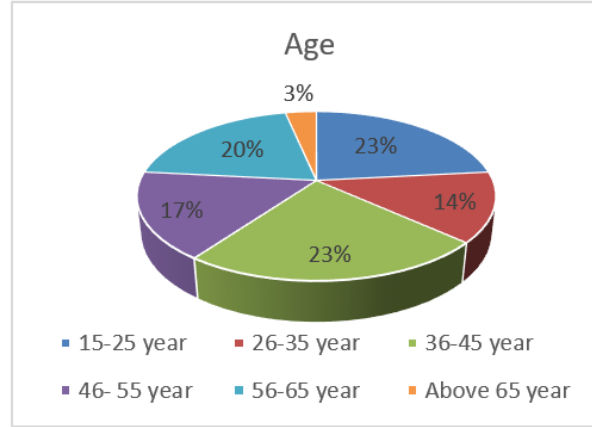


Figure 2 Age of Respondents

Table 2 reflects that, respondents with a primary education made up 17% of the sample size; respondents with a secondary education and a senior secondary education make up an equal number of respondents and each account for 20% of the whole. Two graduates, or 6% of the population, completed a degree programme, while three respondents, or 10% of the population, completed a diploma programme in 'textile design'. The analysis reveals that the majority of the population has some level of education between primary and senior secondary.

Figure 3

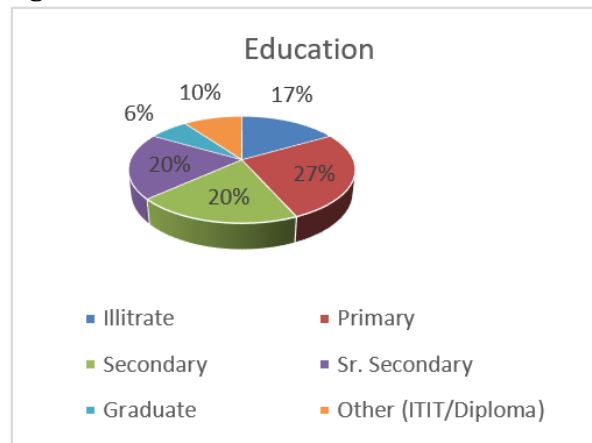


Figure 3 Level of Education of Respondents

Table 3 shows that 23 % of respondents are the only ones in their family who weave; 34 % of weavers claim that 2-4 family members besides themselves are also involved in weaving; and rest 43 % of weavers reported that more than 5 family members are carrying on the traditional legacy. Hence, it can be said that the primary source of income for the Ansari community is weaving.

Figure 4

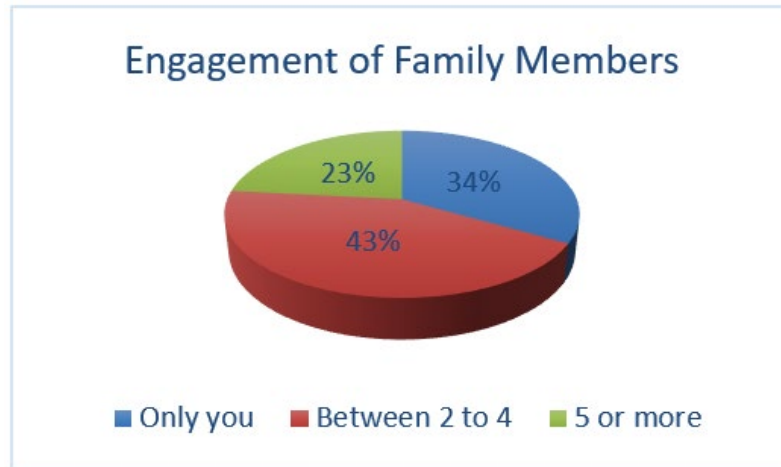


Figure 4 Number of Family Members Engaged in Weaving

Current [Table 4](#), states that, 93 % of the population learnt the skill from their elders as a customary tradition that is passed down from generation to generation; however, only 2 respondents i.e., 7 % of the total population, learned the skill somewhere else. One respondent learned it from one of her neighbours, while the other learned it from Bunkar Seva Kendra, Kaithoon, under three-month weaving certificate programme.

Figure 5

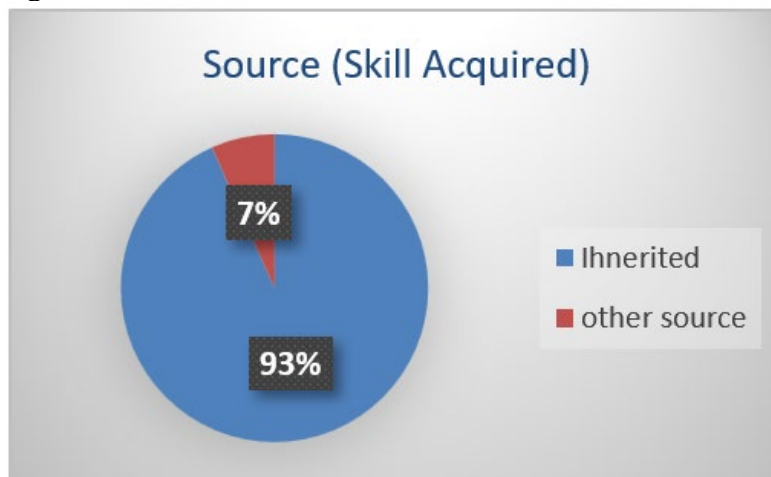


Figure 5 Sources from Which the Respondents Learned to Weave

[Table 5](#), represents that majority of the respondents i.e., 83 % gets continuous work in this profession while rest of the 17 % denied. And, 67 % of the sample's respondents were found to be extremely dissatisfied with their wages they, while only 33 % of respondents reported being content with their pay. With the exception of a few, the respondents' monthly income ranged between Rs. 5,000 and Rs. 12,000. It can be stated that in Kaithoon, the issue with labour wages is quite pervasive. The master weavers' subordinate handloom weavers do not receive a daily, weekly, or monthly wage. Instead, they receive payment for each saree they weave.

Figure 6



Figure 6 Respondent's Job Satisfaction

As per [Table 6](#), a majority of weavers—93% of the total respondents—agreed that it takes less than 15 days to weave a basic saree. Some of them also asserted that they could weave a simple saree in 5-7 days. On the other hand, 7% of the population concurred that it takes at least 15 days and up to a month to weave a basic saree. Therefore, it can be said that 15 days are sufficient to weave a basic saree.

Figure 7

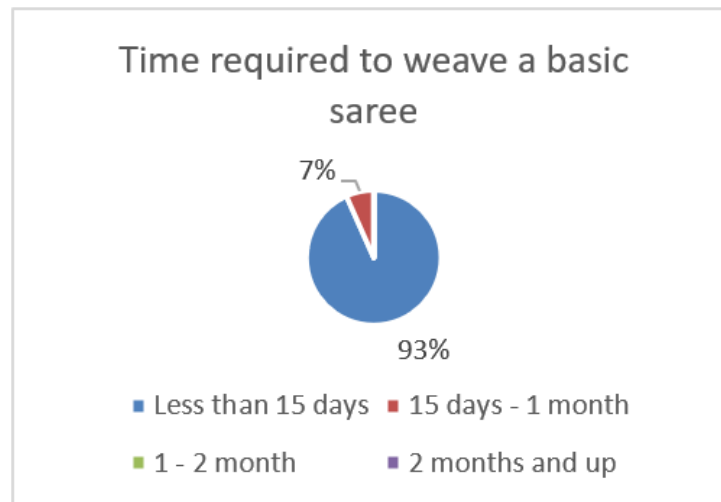


Figure 7 Time Required to Weave a Simple Saree

The findings for [Table 7](#), reveal that the amount of time needed to weave intricate & complex sarees depends on a variety of factors, including the type of motif, the number of colours used in the saree, weaver's skill and capacity, style of saree, and many more. Out of the 30 respondents, the majority—representing 58 % of the population overall—agreed that it takes 2-3 months to weave a complex

saree; 19 % claim to be able to do so in about 1-2 months; 16 % say it takes almost 3-4 months; and only 7 % said it may take almost 4 months if a double tissue saree or Jamawar saree is woven.

Figure 8

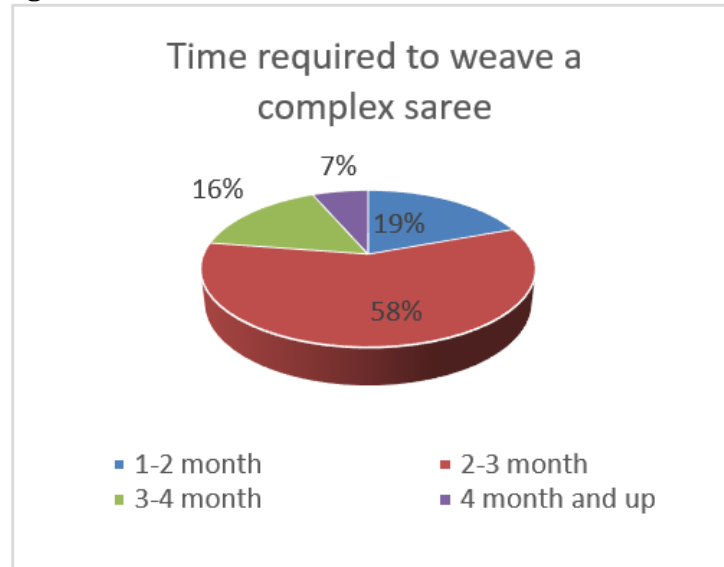


Figure 8 Time Required to Weave a Complex Saree

According to [Table 8](#), a significant portion of respondents, represents 77%, perceive Power Loom Counterfits as their main threat and competitor, followed by Designer Sarees (13%), and Other Handloom Sarees (10%). Site observations revealed that Power looms and dwindling earnings have forced the weavers into a corner, causing many of them to quit their jobs and others to remain perpetually in debt.

Figure 9

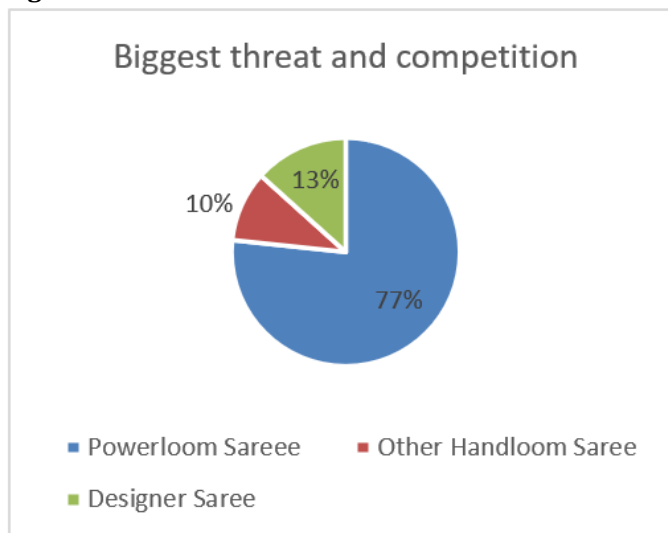


Figure 9 No of Respondents Sees Power Loom as Biggest Threat & Competition

According to [Table 9](#), 47% of respondents cited the high cost of Kota doria as the biggest obstacle to their sales, followed by 14% who blamed poor marketing and

cataloguing, 14% who believed that the fast processing of power loom fabric was hindering kota doria sales, and 7% who thought that the lack of availability of kota doria (online platform/physical storefront) could also be a factor. However, 18% of respondents believed that all factors were to blame. The fact that there was not a single response for "Unawareness" indicates that the weavers are confident in the acceptance and awareness of their product in society.

Figure 10

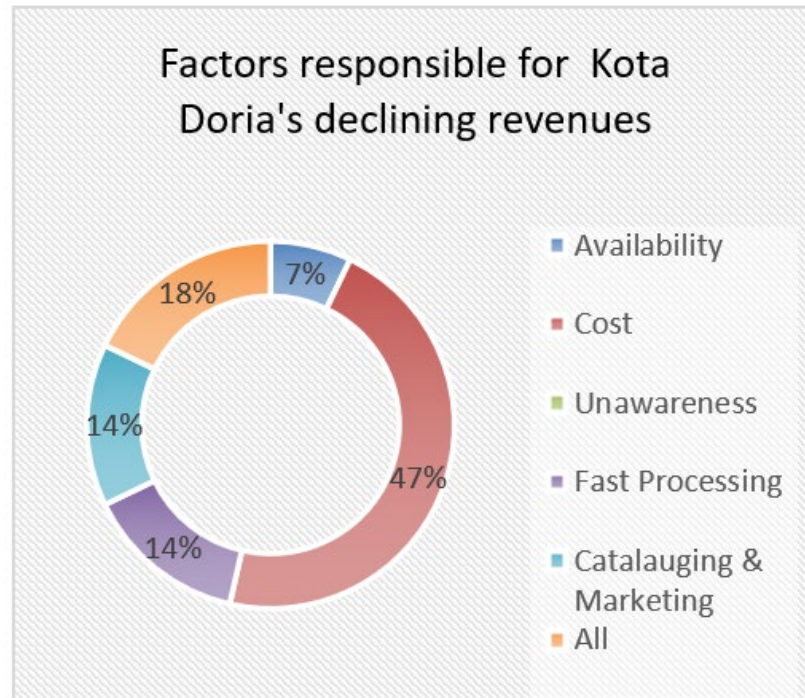


Figure 10 Respondents Opinion About Factors Responsible Declining Sales of Kota Doria

Only 7% of survey respondents create their own designs, according to [Table 10](#), while 93% of respondents state they didn't. It was noted during the field visit that the majority of the responders adapt designs from other textiles such as sarees, dress material, bed sheets, etc. Nowadays, the following motifs are found in Kota Doria sarees:

- Animals: Deer, Cow
- Birds: Peacock, Parrot
- Flora: Flowers, Leaves, Creepers
- Religious: Swastik, Om
- Figurative: Goddess Laxmi ji
- Geometric: rarely used, limited to borders
- Other: Ginni, Buti, Paisley, Leheriya, Laddo (yellow & red color)
- Choti chokadi & Badi chokadi (Chokadi indicates 'check')
- Bangla motifs (representing buildings)
- Jaal motifs (Lotus & Rose)

Figure 11

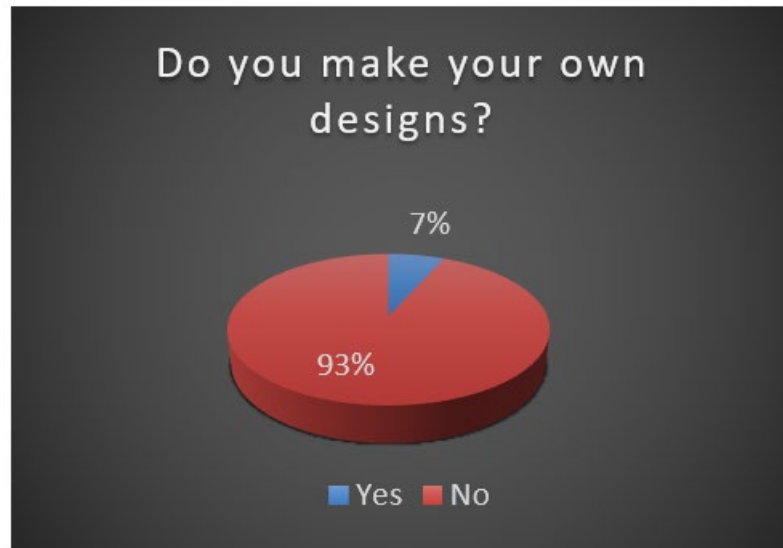


Figure 11 Number of Respondents Make their Own Designs

According to Table 11, 97% of weavers concur that their customers demand new and creative patterns because the same types of themes have been in market for the past 5–6 years. While the remaining 3% of respondents disagreed. Additionally, 12% of them disagreed with the 88% of them who claimed that their customers wanted entirely new products in addition to sarees, dupattas, and dress materials. The graph demonstrates that there is a good opportunity to expand Kota Doria's product line and introduce new themes in order to meet consumer demand.

Figure 12

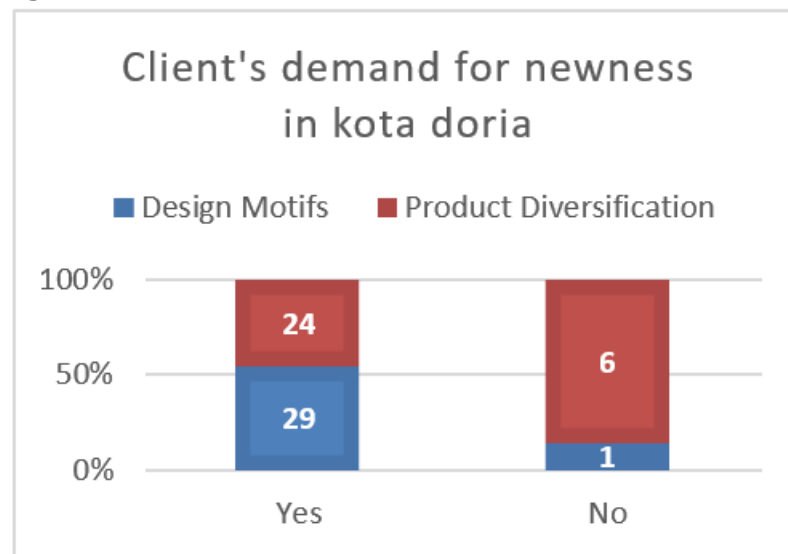


Figure 12 No. of Clients Demanding New Designs & Products

Table 12 shows that the motifs have no cultural ties to the area and community. During field visit, it was discovered that Hindus from south India, and particularly the Marwari group, are the main consumers of these sarees. The sarees are therefore designed with more Hindu motifs rather than Muslim motifs.

Figure 13



Figure 13 Cultural Ties of Motifs to Ansari Community

Mr. Asgar Ali Kachara (State Award Winner) remarked that once a scholar from NID tried experimenting with a small calligraphy motif (aayat) and a ginni (coin), (shown in Figure 2); the clients strongly disapproved the design and refused to place an order for it because they associated it with snakes & an egg. This suggests that, in order to appeal to a wider audience, Hindu motifs should be utilized.

Figure 14



Figure 14 Saree Representing Calligraphic Motif (Aayat)

Source Talethi Maholla, Kaithoon

According to Table 13, 77% respondents denied having any form of affiliations with designers/ retailers for the latest trends and motifs, while the remaining 13% stated that they did. During the field study, it was found that the cluster has 5–6 local designers from Ansari community itself, referred to as "grapher," who provide the entire cluster with designs that are drawn on graph paper. Master Weavers (Seth) provide these patterns to small weavers in addition to the supplies needed to make sarees.

Figure 15

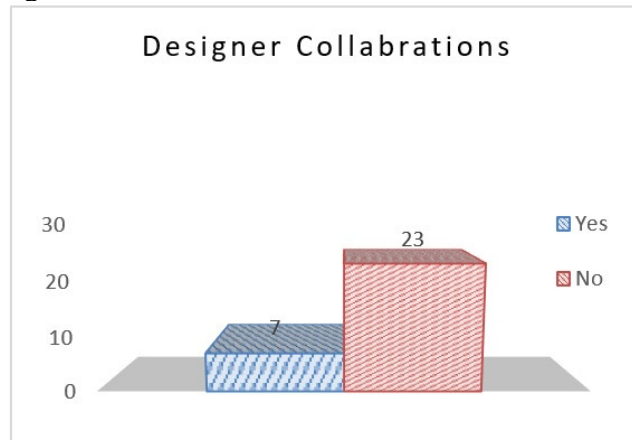


Figure 15 Respondents Collaborations and Connections with Designers and Retailers for Marketing and Market

The researcher also discovered that the community just once, in 2015, worked with renowned Bangladeshi designer Bibi Russell, through Govt.'s initiative and the weavers called it the "Golden Period". They anticipate that the government will set up such collaboration in the near future too.

According to Table 14, 60% of respondents have never attended any sort of trade shows or exhibitions, while the remaining 40%, who primarily represent Master weavers /independent weavers, have only visited Suraj Kund Craft Mela and Hyderabad Craft Mela a few times. The lone exception is Mr. Nashruddin Ansari (National Award Winner), who has attended fashion shows and had the chance to travel overseas four times at the government's expense.

Figure 16

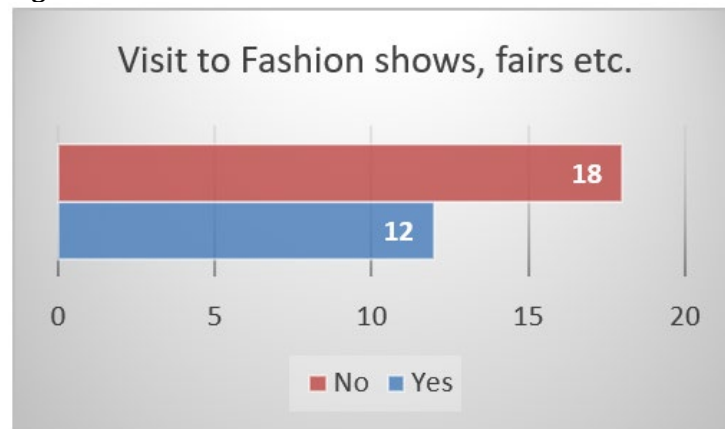


Figure 16 No. of Times the Respondents Visited Craft Fair, Trade Shows, Exhibitions Etc.

According to the Table 15, 97% of respondents don't have a website to sell kota doria, whereas just 3% of them do. An example of one such website is "tana-bana" by Asgar Ali Kachara (Master Weaver, State Award Winner). Although a few of them said that they sell their products on Instagram, Amazon, Wish Mart etc. Although, 63% of respondents wanted their own website, compared to 37% who didn't. The researcher noticed during the field visit that there were roughly 30-40 master weavers in the cluster, and that only about 7-8 of them had websites.

Figure 17

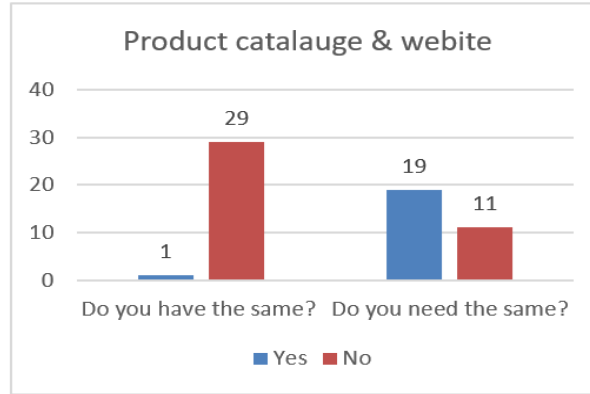


Figure 17 Product Catalogues and Websites

Table 16, reveals that 89% of respondents think their designs are on the brink of becoming obsolete and need innovation, while 11% think their designs are up to date and don't require any changes.

Figure 18

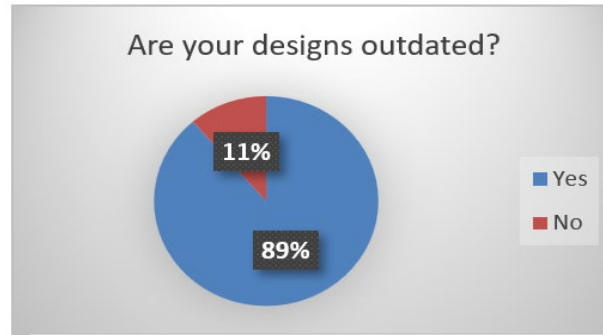


Figure 18 Respondents Views on Present Designs

According to the following data in Table 17, 80% of respondents are looking for new designs, while the remaining 20% don't feel the need to use innovative motifs and patterns. In addition, 73% of respondents said they were prepared for and agreed that product diversity may increase sales, while the remaining 27% said they didn't want to.

Figure 19

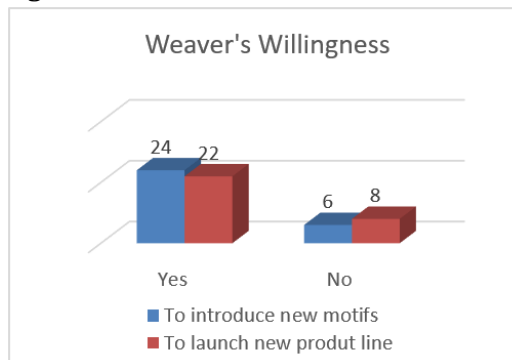


Figure 19 Willingness to Experiment with Kota Doria

6. OTHER MAJOR FINDINGS

- The majority of wearers in the cluster make their living mostly from Kota Doria weaving. Since it is a home-based occupation, almost every family member is involved, whether directly or indirectly.
- Nowadays, the cluster only has 40–50 Master weavers, very few independent weavers, and all of the other weavers are small weavers that work for the Master weavers (Seth).
- On average, most weavers spend between 4-8 hours for weaving.
- They experience health problems, where joint pain and vision problems ranking first and second respectively in terms of severity.
- Just a small percentage of weavers possess their own looms; in the majority of homes, pit looms have been installed by master weavers. Furthermore, it was discovered that a few of the looms were outdated. After speaking with the respondents, it was discovered that there are roughly 20 to 25 jacquard looms in the cluster.
- The weavers have developed a novel weaving method called ‘Tissue Saree’, which cannot be created on a power loom since the weft is comprised entirely of pure silver and it is getting good response in market too.
- Superstitions don't influence the colour of a saree, but black is the lone exception. This isn't because of some cultural belief; rather, it's because working with black strains the weaver's eyes and is challenging. Because of this, the weavers prefer not to weave something in black.
- Muslim women are choosing this occupation since it is a household-based business and they are not permitted to work outside the home. In contrast, male weavers are quitting this profession and choosing others because they find the pay in those other professions to be more gratifying.
- Diwali is regarded as the time of year when Kota Doria weavers make the most money due to highest sales. On the field visit, it was discovered that small weavers do not receive the compensation they deserve for their hard work, although master weavers appeared to be rather content with their earnings.
- It was noted that the weavers of Kota Doria do not record any of their work for future generations; only two of the selected respondents, Asgar Ali and Sohail Ansari, had designs made by their elders in photographic form only.
- Majority of the respondents admit that their designs are similar to the Banarasi, Patola, Kanjeevaram and Maharashtrian Paithani saree. The grapher (local designer) usually draws designs on graph paper, which are supplied to the master weaver and then to small weavers to weave.
- The grapher admitted that they don't follow the fashion forecast to come up with new color schemes, motifs etc.
- The grapher's assistant basically sets up the loom in accordance with the design and demonstrates it to the small weavers.
- Over 50% of the surveyed individuals indicated that their entire product range exclusively caters to female customers, with no offerings tailored for men. Simultaneously, they acknowledged that introducing fresh

themes and expanding product lines could potentially rekindle the past glory of Kota Doria sarees.

- Weavers stated that however they are able to sell all of their things, if they fail to sale, they sale it at lower prices as stock clearance sale. The weavers refrain from reviving unsold stock.
- The weavers use trade shows, exhibitions and a bit of social media as the only advertising venues to promote Kota Doria. Kota Doria is sold in a clear envelop without any packaging efforts made; it lacks care instructions and material composition. Presently, the cluster relies on word of mouth and close relationships with some of the shops to function.
- Master weavers expressed their concern about being unable to expand their market in other regions of India except Hyderabad, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra and few states in south India which are currently their main centres for selling Kota Doria.
- Some of the weavers had some knowledge about government programmes for the welfare of weavers, but reliable information was lacking, and they were also unaware about the procedure to get benefited from those programmes. They were primarily small weavers (who work for 'seth' or master weaver and being paid per saree). However, only a small number of master weavers and independent weavers were aware of the programmes and had previously benefited from them.

Figure 20



Figure 20 Researcher's Interacting with Grapher

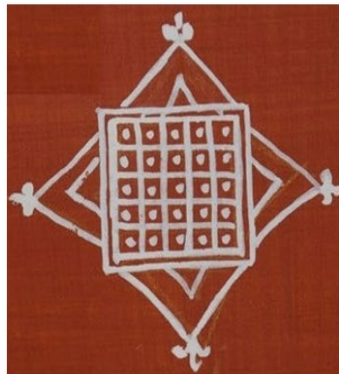
7. CONCLUSION

Every industry worldwide faces its own set of challenges, and the handloom sector is no exception. In the case of Kota Doria handloom weaving, which once thrived, it now grapples with a multitude of issues. These challenges include low wages, reduced productivity, outdated patterns, a lack of attention to fashion trends, insufficient marketing efforts, limited exposure to modern technology, weak institutional connections, and most notably, fierce competition from power looms, which is poised to intensify in the future. The most significant and pressing problems include a dearth of creative designs, innovative color schemes, freshness in design concepts, a lack of product diversification, and weak branding. In line with current market dynamics, it is imperative for any craft to evolve in order to flourish. Innovation and creativity are paramount for sustainability in the ever-evolving

textile industry. To attract customers from diverse cultural backgrounds, the handloom sector must adapt, transform, and stay current while preserving its distinctiveness and authenticity. Doria weavers must embrace a modern approach, which involves crafting new patterns, introducing fresh color palettes, launching products tailored to male consumers in response to market demands, establishing a unique local brand, enhancing the quality of their existing offerings, creating new ones, and employing cutting-edge marketing strategies to appeal to a broad consumer base. Given the prevailing market trends, a wide range of products and innovative design concepts are essential for achieving consistent and improved profitability.

8. SUGGESTIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- Doria weavers should consider producing exclusive fabrics tailored for the luxury segment commonly referred to as 'haute couture' or 'high fashion'.
- Additionally, it is essential for them to diversify their product offerings to cater to both male and teenage customers, thereby expanding their market reach.
- Furthermore, there is an untapped opportunity to experiment with geometrical motifs, abstract motifs and stylized motifs in Kota Doria weaving, potentially giving the traditional sarees a fresh and appealing aesthetic to attract a broader clientele.
- Kota Doria weavers should explore the idea of blending Kota Doria weaving techniques with traditional craft practices from Rajasthan and other regions in India. This innovative approach has the potential to effectively promote both Kota Doria and the broader craft industry. For Example, Mandana (a declining folk art form of Rajasthan) motifs can be incorporated to Kota Doria ensembles, in order to give a brand-new look and many more in similar way.



Mandana Motif (Geometrical)



Adaptive motif designed using photoshop



Print pattern developed by using Adobe Photoshop

Source <https://www.memeraki.com/products/mandana-art-masterclass-on-demand-pre-recorded-self-paced>



Scarf and Dupatta Developed for Men and Women Using the Developed Pattern on CLO3D Software

- Moreover, it was observed during field research that the packaging and promotion of these sarees were not optimized. Therefore, it is crucial to take initiatives in this aspect as well. Effective marketing and packaging strategies can help these silk sarees find a niche among clients who appreciate premium luxury goods.

9. LIMITATIONS

- Study's outcomes are based on the accuracy of the information provided by the respondents.
- Field visit was done only at Kaithoon region of Kota.
- The data was gathered from a limited number of weavers.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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None.

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