

E-Commerce: A key platform to promote Khadi

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ABSTRACT

Khadi is a unique product of India and has enormous business potential within the country and even globally. It has been a source of living for many people who are engaged in the activity as spinners, weavers, and artisans spread across the nation. The Government of India has been promoting the Khadi sector through a number of programs and policies. A large segment of this sector is still unorganized and witnessing several problems for survival. An emerging need has been felt to facilitate, empower and enable Khadi artisans for sustainable growth, income generation, and better work environment thus they are able to get a better price for their work, can carry forward this art to their upcoming generations and can preserve this national heritage. To achieve these goals there is a need of promoting Khadi among the people of the country and outside. The youth has the potential to empower Khadi with new ideas, creations, and new vision and promoting it worldwide. To make Khadi popular and in reach of everyone e-commerce can be able to play a significant role. As easily approachable platform e-commerce can fulfill the needs of both Khadi workers as well as buyers. The article throws light on the ways of empowering Khadi through e-commerce.

1. Introduction

Khadi is the proud heritage of our national freedom movement and the father of the nation. Khadi is a national heritage of India (Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises). Handspun and hand-woven cloth Khadi is not only a cloth, but it is an ideology of being independent as well as self-dependent. Mahatma Gandhi started promoting the spinning of Khadi for rural self-employment in the 1920s in India. During the Freedom movement, the development of Khadi and Village Industries was a medium to meet the objectives of self-reliance through local production and by the active participation of the poor in the struggle for Independence through the elimination of unemployment. After independence, the Government of India took the responsibility of bringing the development of Khadi and Village Industries under the Five Year Plans. Consequently, the Government of India set up the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC), which is a constitutional organization by an Act of Parliament. This organization came up in 1956 and it plays a key role in the strengthening of the rural economy by developing and promoting Khadi and Village Industries.

The Khadi and Village Industries program plays a very important role in providing employment opportunities to rural artisans especially for the socio-economic weaker section of the society. As agriculture sector has been losing its ability to generate extra employment opportunities for the fast increasing workforce in rural areas, the importance of Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) has increased to find an appropriate and alternative employment for rural people. Despite all this, a little attention is paid to this sector but it deserves much more. The roles of the KVIC are general to promote, plan, organize and assist in the implementation of programs for the development of Khadi and village industries. With the globalization and liberalization of the economy, the small units of the Khadi and village industry sector are facing

tough competition. (Report: Planning Commission Government of India)

2. Role of Khadi in Indian society

A huge portion of India's population lives in the villages where illiteracy still exists and large industry is not in a condition to take up the work force from rural areas. In view of this, it is essential to generate more employment opportunities in villages by utilizing local skills and resources so that rural people can get work in the villages itself (Jain, N. G. K., 2015). Khadi industry has the potential to provide the employment to this large segment of the population and utilize this workforce as it is based on the locally available raw material. Initially, Khadi term was used for handspun fabric only but now these days it includes a range of several handmade products like handmade paper, beauty & skin care products, household products etc. These Khadi products are produced in cottage industries in Indian villages and the main source of villager's livelihood.

3. Khadi for sustainable life

Khadi can play a very important role in achieving 'United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals: Responsible Consumption and Production' as well as 'No Poverty' goal. Sustainable consumption and production aims "doing more and better with less," increasing net welfare gains from economic activities by reducing resource use, degradation and pollution along the whole lifecycle, while increasing the quality of life (United Nations). At the Millennium Summit held in September 2000, the largest meeting of world leaders in history adopted the UN Millennium Declaration, committing nations to a new global partnership to reduce extreme poverty known as the Millennium Development Goals. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are the world's quantified and time-bound targets for addressing extreme poverty in its many dimensions-income poverty, disease, hunger, lack of adequate

shelter, and exclusion while promoting education, gender equality, and environmental sustainability.

By promoting Khadi India can achieve the goals of "Eradicate Extreme Hunger and Poverty", "Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women" and "Ensure Environmental Sustainability"(Unicef,2003).In primitive society villages have a self-sufficient economy; they produce almost each and every thing of their need including clothes. At that period handspun and hand-woven cloths were produced to fulfill their own needs only. Later as society developed people become dependent on other when the barter system was evolved. People have been started manufacturing clothes for others for livelihood. Khadi, the handspun and hand-woven cloth gained much fame when it was institutionalized by Mahatma Gandhi as a symbol "Swadeshi" to battle against the British rule (N.Goel & K. Jain, 2015).

4. The social & economic importance of Khadi

As being a source of livelihood, self-reliance and independence Khadi is a lifeline for Indian cottage industry. Possibly it has the second biggest population engaged in this craft after agriculture in India. Actual data is not easy to obtain as agricultural workers are engaged in it during offseason and also due to the unorganized and non-institutional form of this sector. In several parts of India, families are engaged in this work including children. Women and children help part-time in several tasks like spinning, weaving or dyeing etc. Women usually do the embellishment work. Khadi is not only a way of earning but it is a lifestyle of several rural people. It plays many roles in their lives like:

1. Reduce poverty and unemployment in villages.
2. It can reduce the migration of unemployed rural youths to cities in search of jobs.
3. Use of locally produced raw material can help to make money for the rural economy.
4. Sustainable and green way of production.
5. Improves health level by using organic and safe material.

5. Problems faced by Khadi industry

High cost of raw material:

A large number of unorganized cottage industries of Khadi are bound to buy raw material available locally at high cost.

Stiff competition:

High manufacturing cost is a major problem which increases the cost of the product and can't compete with low-cost counterparts. Low-speed hand operated tools and equipment take lots of time to complete a Khadi product which makes it costly which is unable to compete with other branded or low-cost products, whereas machines work faster and reduce the manufacturing cost of the products. Today fashion changes with seasons and customers demand latest and unique. Traditional Khadi products are unable to fulfill the demand of the modern generation. So there is a need for adopting new technology and design invention in Khadi to meet the market demand.

Poor marketing:

Marketing is the key to the success of any product. Advertising and marketing are helpful to make a product popular and it needs lots of resources. Lack of funds and other resources like infrastructure (workplace) and lack of new technology are hurdles in the growth of Khadi products. Although KVIC is doing this job since independence a large segment of it is still unorganized and far from these reforms. People engaged in making Khadi products are not aware of facilities and policies established by government agencies and can't reach to the market to get good prices of their products.

6. Solution of problems

1. Establishing Khadi as a brand and making it popular among consumers by advertising its goodness. To promote Khadi products with their USP of being produced in the traditional style hand-spun and hand woven, the government of India is trying to raise it to the status of an international product. The government is trying to create a brand out of Khadi. This branding, to be done under the name of 'Harit Vastra', is to launch the fabric in the market as green, an organic fabric.

A proposal has been submitted by Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) to the government to collaborate with private textile mills to produce and market this brand. MSME is trying if they can get 'Harit Vastra' commercially produced and marketed just as other ready-made garments. MSME has collaborated with a private partner regarding this. Arvind Mills and Levi's are using khadi fabric to make jeans.

For now, MSME is also trying to build on the international demand of khadi and will be targeting the 2.5 crores NRI's worldwide. The MSME has also planned to restore the 7,000 Khadi and Village Industries Commission stores spread across the country. The market potential for khadi goods in India stands at a whopping Rs 40,000 crore.

While the government is considering introducing khadi uniforms in schools, the market possible for this endeavor alone stands at Rs 18,000 crore. (Siddhartha Rai, Jan 26, 2016)

2. Improving quality: KVIC undertook a few steps to improve the quality of Khadi products. Anti-crease finish for khadi cloth would be achieved by technology tie-up with well-known laboratories and research institutions. In order to increase the earnings of Khadi workers' attention would need to be given on ensuring higher productivity by introducing improved tools and equipment. Programmes to upgrade skills through training for Khadi workers would be taken up. Use of improved tools and techniques would promote workers to produce value-added Khadi cloth items, decorative, etc. Khadi is distinguished for its unique manufacturing like uneven weaving, defects which enhance its beauty and fading of colors by every wash. But today's customer wants fine quality and attractive features, to fulfill this demand Khadi should adopt new technology like color fastening techniques, high thread count for fine cloth variety of spinning and weaving techniques. New and various weaves should be tried to create something new and attractive which can compete for the market.

3. Promoting through responsible sources like institutes, famous personalities etc. The National Institute of Design (NID), Ahmedabad, has been entrusted with a project to introduce new and trendy designs in Khadi. New designs developed by the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT), New Delhi, would be taken up for manufacture by Khadi industries. These initiatives are likely to improve the demand for Khadi and to improve production and employment. Recently, in March 2016 Ritu Beri has been appointed an advisor to the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) for the promotion of Khadi. KVIC has appointed the ace fashion designer for a period of one year during which she will advise to promote Khadi (March 20, 2016. The Hindu). The Indian Navy recently included khadi uniform for one of its batches, Uttarakhand's postal department opted khadi cotton and woolen garments for its employees. Air India decided to use khadi products for amenity kits in its international flights. It can be used in uniforms for the staff of hotels to hospitals and corporate. It would be interesting to declare one day a year as 'Khadi Day' to motivate everyone to wear the fabric (Vidya. S, Mar 21, 2016, Hindustan Times.).

Many Indian designers are redefining and reviving Khadi and other Indian textiles and handloom crafts. Once a symbol of India's freedom movement popularized by Mahatma Gandhi; khadi has got a revolution and become a style statement. It's no longer seen as a poor man's cloth, designers are giving it a modern touch. The famous Indian designers like Ritu Kumar, Rahul Mishra, Anand Kabra, and Sabyasaachi Mukherjee, are using khadi extensively. Designer Deepika Gehani, Wendell Rodricks, Rahul Mishra, and Parul Jain showcased a successful Khadi collection at Lakme Fashion Week (LFW) and the Wills Lifestyle India Fashion Week (WIFW). IIT-Bombay chooses Khadi as convocation robe (The Economic Times, 11 July)

There are few high street fashion labels that are bringing khadi back. There are several brands that are determined to give khadi a makeover by blending textures, silhouettes, and patterns to create garments with effortless style and global demand.

Nature Alley, Malkha, Metaphor Racha, Cotton Rack, Red Sister Blue, Fayakun Design Studio, Upasana, Avani Kumaon, Tula India, Heeya, Malyada Goverdhan are few of many names of designers and labels who have discovered its strong organic character and natural appeal and they are sharing it with us in new, stylish ways. Khadi proved it no poorer's cloth; it's coming out from huts to the high street.

7. Promoting Khadi through e-commerce

Using the Internet is the norm for today's youth (Levin D. & Arafeh S., 2014). Over the last two decades, society witnessed the turbulent transformation in the area of communication and information technology. The internet and mobile phones with their apps have become everyday communication tools. E-commerce in the present day is swiftly on the rise all across the world and India is not untouched. The Indian youth's curiosity about online shopping is escalating day by day. The youth's perception of online shopping is different; they see in it ease of time, comfortable, variety and with more interest. This

introduction and execution of internet technologies has created a new market for manufacturers and service providers and also has provided a new field for innovative marketing strategies by the professionals. Empowerment of Khadi is can be done with several ways few are suggested as above and many more may be possible.

With an eye on emerging a niche market for Khadi, it is necessary to restructure and strengthen the marketing strategy. In the current scenario when the whole retail format is going online, it would be very important to market and sell the Khadi online. The share of online retail is increasing in multiple in overall retail, almost everything is available online. Online retailing is gaining the trust of customers in developing countries. Online shopping is very popular in developed countries and becoming popular rapidly in developing countries. This indigenous craft can be saved and nurtured by promoting and selling online.

Wydr, a leading online wholesale marketplace in India to facilitate the Indian artisans' community to connect with big distributors and retailers across the country have tied up with the National Handloom Development Corporation (NHDC). Through this venture, Wydr is tasked to assist in online B2B e-commerce for products certified under the 'India Handloom Brand' by NHDC (YarnsandFibers News Bureau.). The Wydr platform will facilitate the weaver community to empower technology to reach out to new bulk customers across India. Helping the weavers in mass sales to direct retailers will help them obtain higher recognition for their products. Its venture in this partnership will be to broaden the market reach of the artisan community and to make quality Khadi products more accessible to the consumer. This national level effort by the Union Ministry of Textiles is proposed to educate, train and facilitate cooperatives and weavers to directly sell their products online. On National Handloom Day on August 07, Amazon.in announced the launch of new selection it's "Crafted in India store", a committed store front for authentic traditional selection crafted by hand in India. "Crafted in India store" now offers regional selection source directly from handloom clusters under a joint venture with Development Commissioner of Handloom, large organized brands like Fabindia, Jaypore, Indusdiva & Unnati Silks, State entities such as Tantuja (West Bengal), APCO (Telangana), and Khadi from various brands. Amazon.in, under its partnership with DC Handloom, has enabled cooperatives and master weavers across Kota in Rajasthan, Nadia in West Bengal and Bargarh in Odisha to launch over 1,000 selections in the store.

All products are authenticated either with government certifications like Handloom Mark/India Handloom Brand or by retailers, ensuring availability of authentically hand-crafted products to shoppers. Weavers across regions can get the right value by selling their products directly to customers, thereby benefitting from the growing digital economy. (Business Standard, New Delhi August 6, 2016). KhadiIndia an e-resource exclusively for Khadi & Gramodyog & kviconline.gov.in are the government website which provides an e-commerce platform to manufacturers, designers, sellers, and buyers. Several other private e-commerce portals like khadinatural.com, fabindia.com, amazon.in, khaadi,

fabindia.com and thekhadishop.com are selling an exclusive range of authentic Khadi products online along with this snapdeal.com, jabong.com, indianhandloom.com, nykaa.com, vidyarthikhadi.com are also selling Khadi products in India and worldwide. People want to purchase Khadi items but genuine Khadi products are not easily available in the market due to a lack of retail stores or there is a risk of unauthentic and duplicate products to be sold. So this is an opportunity for Youth who want to do the something social responsible job, they can start up with Khadi e-commerce websites.

Past 10-15 years, e-commerce has been one of the fastest developing sections of the trade business. The fame of the online market demonstrates no signs of slowing, so now possibly the perfect time to start selling on the web. There are more options for building an e-commerce site than ever before. One can work with an e-commerce platform to set up an online store or make their own with the help of website professionals.

8. The advantage of using e-commerce business for Khadi

- An e-commerce website can be created with a small investment in comparison to a brick mortar store.
- There are wide ranges of free extensions that are available easily which make e-commerce web site robust and easy to navigate.
- There is large no. of online communities can assist a developer in case of any issue.
- Advertising and promotions can be done easily through several social media and internet communities.

9. Step by step development of e-commerce website for Khadi

First of all study and research demand and supply of the product, you want to sell. Discuss with experts, follow the news, events, and media for updates. There are many websites which help to establish e-commerce websites. They also do promotions and all other technical help for conducting business smoothly. Like- Go, daddy , Wix, Shopify, Bigcommerce, Zepo, EcoGren, BuildaBazaar Volusion, Squarespace, Highwire, etc. any many more.

I. Decide the products to be sold.

There is a range of Khadi products that can be sold like dress material, readymade garments, home décor items, organic products like skin care and beauty product and some handmade food items like papad-mangori etc. for selecting survey the field. Maker contacts with workers and local suppliers. Try to contact Khadi workers directly as they can find the true value of their art as well as you can get items at a reasonable price. The products should be selected which are available locally. The raw material of these items should be available locally in low coast. The antigens' can supply these items as demanded.

II. Select a shopping cart-

The shopping cart software allows setting up your products and services for sale on the Internet. There are many commercially offer shopping carts available to choose from.

Services of professional website designer can be taken for this work.

III. Choose e-commerce platform-

There are a ton of options out there, so before you choose you should decide exactly what features you do and do not want in an online store. There are 3 main types of sites you can choose from:

- If you're looking for something more low maintenance and don't want to deal with the hassle of supplying and shipping your own inventory there are numerous large websites (such as Amazon .com) that will allow you set up a more specialized store selling their products for a commission.
- If you want to earn more profit and want to make your own identity; build your own website with the help of professionals. Although it needs expertise and you have to do some extra efforts i.e. get registered your business, naming your business, creating a logo and understanding search engine optimization.

IV. Set up Your Store-

This is where the work comes in. You'll need to get all of your details together and fill out all of the necessary information. Enter all your products, payment options, shipping options, applicable taxes, etc first. Obviously, you need to make sure it is professional and aesthetically pleasing, however, you also want to make sure it is easy to navigate and find products.

V. Set up your payment gateway-

The payment gateway is an application that connects your website shopping cart to your merchant account. The work of the payment gateway is to collect the credit card information from the customer, encrypt it and sent it to the merchant account for processing.

VI. Select a merchant account.

The merchant account's job is to approve the card that is being used for payment and then deposit those certified transactions into your bank account. It's important to choose a merchant account that offers good rates on processing, has a 24 hour turn around on complete transactions, offers live customer support, and has high approval rates and low merchant attrition.

VII. Market Your Store-

There are a lot of stores out there, so make sure to market or advertise your store through print and electronic media. An online store is not like a physical store where people will just pass by on their way to other things even if you aren't advertising.

VIII. Maintain Your Site-

Now you have your store all set up and a steady stream of customers, make sure to keep it maintained. You want your customers to keep coming back, so update your stock and featured products frequently. You'll also want to bring up to date your keywords to make them more effective. Building an own e-commerce business is no easy task. It requires lots of expertise and formalities. After building a good e-commerce

website it is a challenge to maintain its popularity and competing with counterparts. It requires updated product categories, meeting demand with the latest products and understanding customer's needs is must. By supplying quality Khadi product one can gain name and fame in world e-market.

10. Conclusion

Khadi, over the decades, has moved from a freedom fighter's identity to a fashion garment. Today's Khadi has many faces, which are not just limited to cotton. The precise technology implicated in the production of Khadi varies from region to region, as do the techniques used for its adornment (dyeing, embroidery, printing etc). People who have been using Khadi cloth for years say emphatically it is very healthy for skin, providing comfort in all weathers. With growing health awareness, this can help to increase the demand for Khadi in India as well as abroad. The consciousness for sustainable and

green ways of manufacturing is increasing. The eco-worth of these products can be increased further by the increasing use of vegetable colours. Such traditional sustainable livelihoods based on beautiful skills need to be protected and promoted in a big way. Mobilization and organization of Khadi weavers and related workers can play a big role in creating conducive conditions for better implementation of promotional schemes. Although an infrastructure has been created for the promotion of Khadi and several schemes are in place, the condition of Khadi workers is not good; they are paid poorly and not getting true worth of their work. Promotion of Khadi is the need of the hour because it has social, economic, ecological and health benefits for mankind. **E-commerce** is a rapidly rising way of business can be used to promote and expand the popularity and reach of Khadi. Alike Khadi e-commerce is also a green way of retailing, can serve as an eco-friendly way of business.

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