

Revitalization of Nakshi Kantha through Modern Stitching Technology

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ABSTRACT

Nakshi Kantha is a traditional cloth most widely used in Bangladesh. User of these cloths feels a divine pleasure during use. If modern stitching technology can be used keeping the traditional value intact and variation in design can be introduced than this cloth type may be marketed around the globe. Local NGOs and Bangladesh Government is pursuing for a wide range of marketing. There are not much of researches carried out as to how best this product can be marketed around the globe. The researchers tried to identify the possibilities about how best the Nakshi Kantha can be produced using modern stitching technology, variation in the design and use of the concept in modern fashion.

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Introduction

The most common traditional stitch of Bangladesh is the Nakshi Kantha (Bengali) which relates to quilt with beautiful threaded embroidery. Nakshi is a Bengali word derived from Nakshi which signify art or drawings and Kantha means a rag or a quilt. Nakshi kantha represents the lifestyle of Bangladeshi people through the various colorful embroidery which upholds the cultural diversity, geological features, climatic conditions as well as the socio-economic aspects of the people who knit them, (Zaman and Stevulak, 2014). The study on traditional stitches and its implementation on modern textile will significantly contribute to the development of socio-economic standard of millions of people in Bangladesh. Nakshi kantha can be a good revenue generating source if it gets the recognition in the international market. This study is likely to unveil the various problems regarding the fall of traditional handicrafts production and also provide the effective solution to overcome the situation through innovative promotions and implementations. Commercialization of the product in the local and foreign market will uphold a competitive potential sector where young generation can involve themselves with new technologies and ideas. Moreover, demanding markets for traditional handicrafts can be a great tool for poverty reduction in Bangladesh. Application of traditional stitches in variety of modern products like dresses, interior decorative, bags and even using it for website designing is the sole purpose of this paper. In this research paper, the term modernization of handicrafts pattern such as Nakshi Kantha will be discussed in the view of preserving through application in modern textiles so is to gain the popularity among the new generation consumers.

Problem Statement

Nakshi Kantha which was once available among the basic household items has now become a piece of art, exhibited during special occasions. Many use the handicrafts as decorative element rather than understanding the cultural and traditional value.

In addition, the declining interest of the new generation towards traditional stitches results in loss of the professional skills and creativity. Moreover, the skilled men and women have shifted their profession towards different sources of income for not having enough earning on the production and trading of this traditional cloth. The incorporation of modern stitching technology has escalated the use of household items in Bangladesh.

It is of no denying fact that more modern stitching technology will be introduced in future days also. If Nakshi Kantha can be produced using modern stitching technology than there are possibilities of increased production, design variation, express marketing, raise public interest and invite new entrepreneurs. There might be scope of exploring international market for this traditional cloth of Bangladesh. The craftsmen of Nakshi Kantha are deprived from proper resources and access to international market which also caused the downfall of this prosperous industry. Skill development, infrastructure and machinery development etc. and most importantly international recognition are keys to successfully establish the Nakshi Kantha industry globally.

Aim/objectives

This study basically aims to evaluate how best the traditional Nakshi Kantha of Bangladesh can best be introduced globally using modern stitch facilities available in Bangladesh. However, in the process following objectives are set to be followed precisely:

1. To assess the possibilities of transformation of Nakshi Kantha stitching technology
2. To identify the variation that can be brought in Nakshi Kantha design
3. To identify the marketing strategy globally.
4. To explore the Nakshi Kantha stitches in contemporary fashion.

Methodology

For primary data there were visit to some famous Nakshi Kantha production firms in Jessore District of Bangladesh to get the field level feedback, questionnaire survey of

small and medium sized entrepreneurs to get their view on trading and interviewing corporate business heads for getting their views on international market of Nakshi Kantha. For secondary data books, journals and periodicals were consulted. Renowned data processing software were used to process data.

Research Design Framework

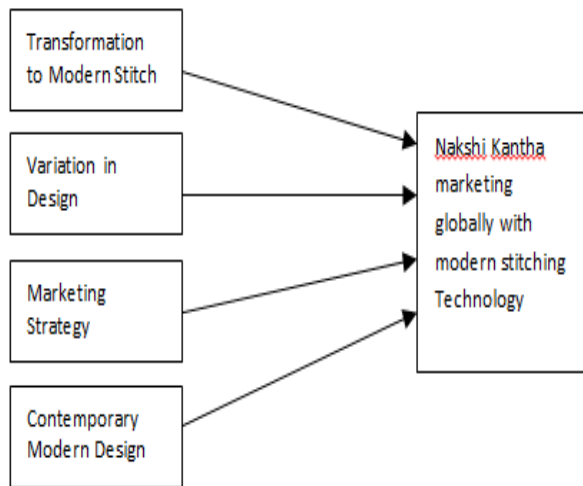


Figure 1. Research Design.

Limitations

There are some limitations to this research paper mainly due to the availability of authentic data.

- The scarcity of previous records about the traditional stitches in Bangladesh.
- Different districts have different patterns of Nakshi Kantha motifs.
- Discontinued chain of skilled artisans in the current century.

Literature Review

Although Nakshi Kantha is an age old traditional cloth of Bangladesh, but the recent exploration of gigantic garments industry has become a demanding place for the researcher to carry out professional research. As such there are very less effort taken by researcher to explore the subject matter. Whatever the researchers could manage from different sources is stated below:

The kantha or, as it is increasingly referred to now, the nakshi kantha, is an important domestic household item in Bangladesh. Bangladeshies have special emotion built over centuries on this traditional cloth. It is produced all over the country except the hilly district where they have separate type of handmade clothings. Borders and motifs are embroidered with variations in colour and thread, traditionally drawn from the borders of old saris. The empty spaces are stitched with white yarn to create an effect of ripples. In most Bengladeshi families, small kanthas made of soft, old cloth, and are used to wrap babies. Family members who leave home to work on land, water or sea almost always carry with them a kantha made by their female counter part. The kantha symbolizes the affection of the maker for the recipient and, being made of rags, is also believed to grant protection from the evil eye. Kanthas form part of the dowry of brides in certain parts of Bangladesh (Zaman and Stevulak, 2014).

Traditionally at least 5-7 saris were needed to make a full-length kantha. Today old saris are being replaced by new cotton material. As this material is thicker than the material of fine old saris, two layers of cloths is sufficient, one for the top, one for the bottom. Full-size kanthas, generally 5 feet by

6 feet, necessitate that pieces of cloth be joined to give the required width. In Rajshahi, lohari kanthas, one often finds a narrow red or blue border running down the length of the kantha, testifying to the kapas that have been joined to make the kantha, (Bangla Academy, 1985). At present traditional stitching techniques are being used in most cases, however there are some entrepreneurs who have already started utilizing modern techniques. But the number of this user is quite negligible, (Thakur and Roy, 2016).

Nakshi Kantha's typical design is most attractive and carries the emotion, ethics and value of the manufacturer. But due to commercialization of this product, now days the emotional attachments is gone and eye catching colorful design are being introduced, (Afroj, 2012). The design of Nakshi Kantha also being transferred to regular clothing in commercial clothing industries like pant, panjabi, dhuti, shari and shal etc, (Zaman and Stevulak, 2014).

Modern fashion designers also tried to copy the Nakshi Kantha design in other traditional dress and it is being observed that customers' likes this type of cloths and trading is satisfactory. Although this attitude of the fashion designers have increased their business but on the other hand it is demised the traditional value of the product itself, (Ahmadi, 2014)

Nakshi Kantha and the manufacturer of this product are being mostly patronized by NGOs widely. The Bangladesh Government, through its various public trading organizations also tries to patronize Nakshi Kantha. Marketing of the original product is mostly done by them. However there are some self-motivated entrepreneurs who also in the process of making profit carry out trading of Nakshi Kantha. Due to heavy commercialization of the product, the traditional value is eliminated could not gain much of publicity in international market. Efforts are taken by some individual businessman to introduce the Nakshi Kantha around the globe did not saw significant light. Although Bangladesh Commerce and Industries Organization often organize and also participate in international trade fare to promote the product but not much market is made, (Palit, 2017)

Today's modern fashion industries have started using Nakshi Kantha design in generalized clothing. Although traditional values are not given much important but customers at all ages are have cordially accepted the idea. Nakshi Kantha designs are symbolized and used as a token of to bring variety in dress design (Kadnikova *et al.*, 2017).

Result and Discussion

Cronbach's Alpha model (Figure 1) says that there are negative benchmarks for Contemporary Fashion Design of Nakshi Kantha in to modern fashion. Statistics revealed that 90% respondent do not want a shorter version of Nakshi Kantha to be used in different regular garments.

The respondents are grouped together in four categories and after analyzing the data it is revealed that maximum respondent expressed their view to undertake more effort to change the marketing strategy. Nakshi Kantha may be exported globally keeping the traditional value intact.

To bring Nakshi Kantha in regular use and to have better marketing opportunity, there may be a variety in Nakshi Kantha stitch design. Modern swing machine may be configured or developed to produce Nakshi Kantha stitching facility. Some of the remarkable stitching pattern that symbolizes traditional Nakshi Kantha is shown in figure 3.



Figure 1. Cronbach's Alpha Model.

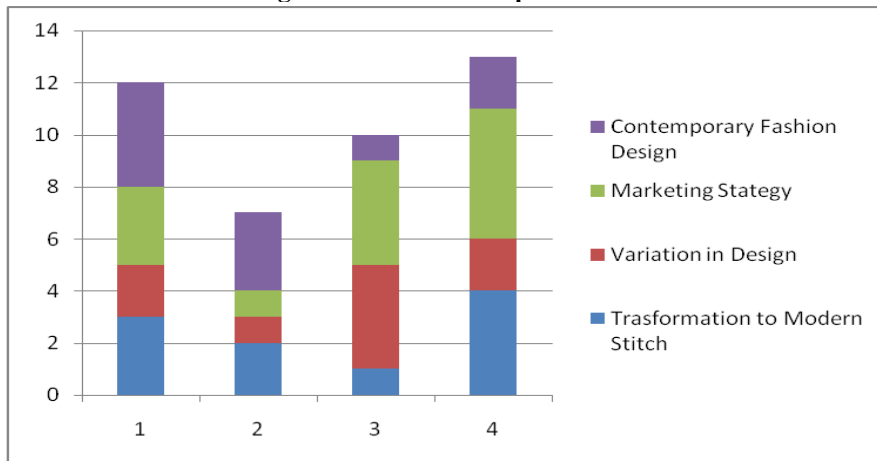


Figure 2. Comparison of Response for design variation.

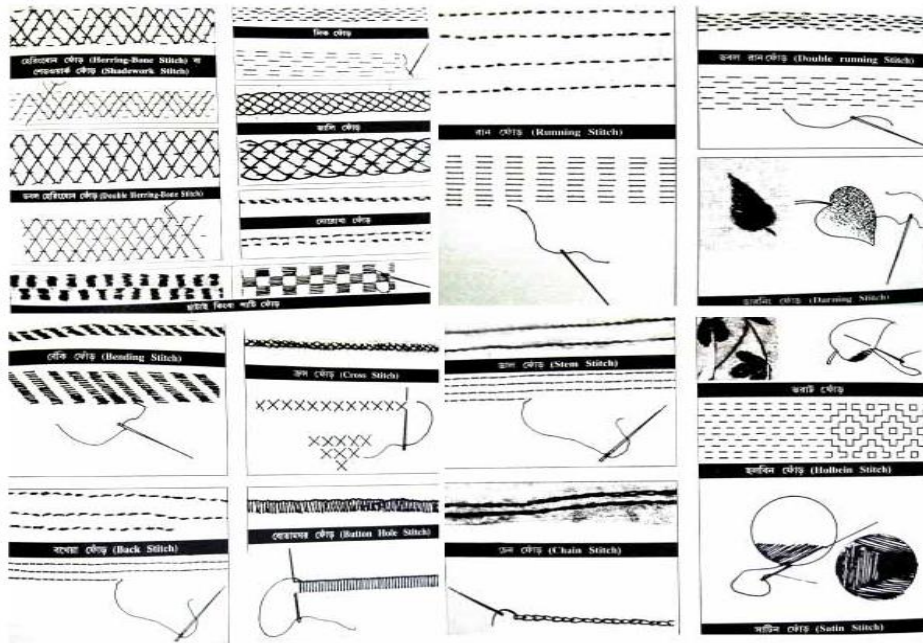


Figure 3. Nakshi Kantha Stitches Design.

Conclusion

Nakshi Kantha is a traditional cloth of Bangladesh. The users believe that it brings divine peace in mind. Bangladeshis take pride to have such a traditional cloth. The study clearly identifies that if the traditional stitch can be transformed in to modern stitching technology than production process may become easier and comfortable for the manufacturer as well mass production is possible. Using modern technology will assist to have more variety in design. More exceptional design may be introduced keeping the

traditional value intact. At present, Nakshi Kantha is being widely marketed and used in Bangladesh. Consumers have a separate emotional feelings for the production. However not much of marketing strategy is adopted to export Nakshi Kantha product globally. Local NGOs are performing a brilliant job to market the products. Established and recognized clothing producer and traders may come forward and take some effort to market the Nakshi Kantha product in international market. Bangladesh being one of the largest producer and exporter of readymade garments in the world

may introduce use of Nakshi Kantha design in regular fashion. Fashion designers in the country may also try to use the Nakshi Kantha design in regular cloths like shirt, Panjabi, share, shawl, fatua and household items. The researchers tried to take some effort to give some light on the traditional clothing. The researchers also hope that in future more experts will come forward and carry out more detail research on the Nakshi Kantha: The traditional cloth of Bangladesh.

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