REVIVING THE SINDHI CRAFT

How important is the revival of the traditional Sindhi crafts and what significance does design intervention hold for it?

By

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Abstract

As we know that sindh is rich in culture and heritage, there are many craft which are on the verge of extinction. The need of revival of craft is very important because craft is our identity. Design intervention is one the most important ways to revive a craft. To access its relevance, interviews were taken from craft organisations heads, designer and survey of local market were done to see if the design intervention is taking place the right way. While the research one found that design intervention is affected by a lot of other factors as well, which are related to the socio economical issues. We need to educate and spread awareness so that people could understand the importance of the craft. the purpose of the dissertation is to understand that who decides how to revive design intervention.
INTRODUCTION

Sindhi crafts are one of the most ethnic and profound forms of an art skill within Pakistan. People from across the country identify it as one of the many distinctive forms of craft as well as one of Sindh’s own specialty. However, due to its restricted and repetitive type of art nature, these crafts have not been getting the kind of attention needed and are with time losing their significance.

To revive a concept such as the art of Sindhi craft, design intervention can play a major part in bringing out a new side to it, and at the same time will make sure to keep it classic and maintain it’s originality. “Design Intervention” has been widely adapted to describe the process of linking craftsmen to create enterprises. The purpose of such design intervention is that basically, when a designer helps to bring a new approach forward, or creates a new idea from an artisan’s existing craft, it helps in making it up to the demand of the national market by utilizing their design capabilities. The designer does not impose but rather ‘unlocks’ the potential of the existing skills by tweaking it to make it more saleable and appealing to consumers and in doing so may transform a craft that is struggling to find a place in the market. The designer is the chain link between the market and the artisan, trying to create something innovative in order to keep the craft and its heritage alive and at the same time helping the artisan.

Being a student of art and seeking my career as becoming a designer, I conducted a lot of research involving the different types of arts and crafts that are made domestically. During this research, I visited a number of organizations and at the same time visited the rural areas of Sindh where the specialty crafts are usually made. After noticing how Sindhi crafts are no
more a major part of our art market and are slowly dying down, I realized how at this point
design intervention may be able to play an important role to revive them and their art value. I
personally think Sindhi craft is a type of art that involves a lot of intricate and ethnic work to
it, which makes it unique, and a kind of its own. All it needs is enhancement and a new look
to it, which can be conveniently done through design intervention. As an art student, I believe
it is my responsibility to understand the significance of design intervention, its application,
and the limitations that are faced through it, to fully understand the techniques and to see how
it can positively affect the revival of Sindhi crafts. I initiated my research by finding a solid
understanding of design intervention through talking to people working with arts and crafts
particularly, in which this explanation gave me a practical understanding: “Design
intervention is a complex phenomena; it is a well thought process; there are several steps and
measures one has to take while intervening with the craft. It is not an easy task; one has to go
in to the details of the market to start the process of design intervention” (Shaqeel Abro,
Regional Director of Ahan, Sindh).

The essential Sindhi crafts that can be enhanced through design intervention for their survival
include ajrak, Rilli, emboiderries, khes, Sindhi topi, Crucia products, bangles, Thari carpets,
straw work products, wood carving, Farassi rugs etc. These are some of the mainstream
crafts, which Sindh is known for historically, and are also Sindhi items that the people of
Karachi are well aware of and utilize.

While working for my majors, many problems were faced to understand what and how
design intervention takes places, what is the measure one should take so that the craft doesn’t
lose its essence. What are the importances of the crafts of sindh. Why do they need to be
revived. Many craft organisation were visited to understand who decides what are the
limitations faced while taking the craft forward in a new direction. When the library researches were done, there was not enough information available. Realisation occurred that we need information or guidance about this topic. This made me select this dissertation question to be worked on.

The focus of this paper will be on the potentials of Karachi, adapting design intervention as an art form, specifically to promote Sindhi crafts in an innovative and new manner. In addition, how successfully it has been able to increase the value and respect of this skilled heritage and product. Moreover, this dissertation will also discuss what are the effects of a metropolitan city like Karachi, on the arts and crafts from a rural heritage, like that of Sindh in particular. The main purpose of this dissertation is to find out if the traditional crafts culture from Sindh is actually being revived or is it just becoming a reason to put the heritage’s identity at stake. I will also talk about the various interviews I had conducted with some of the pioneers in the field of art working on the different ranges of Sindhi crafts, from renowned organizations of Karachi that include, Behbood, Alfalah, Aurat Foundation, A.P.W.A, and Ahan. These interviews will mainly give feedback about their perspectives regarding the threat of extinction of Sindhi crafts and how important it is to revive them through the different means of design intervention.

The purpose of this research paper is to uphold the benefits of the students venturing into design intervention. It is also to make them realize the importance of this industry and to bring them forth with their responsibilities. The impact of design intervention on today’s market; therefore, conscious efforts that really, keep the benefits of both the artisans and the organisations supporting it in urban cities are to be kept in mind simultaneously. The artisans
at their end are working really hard to make a living out their lives; this huge leap of faith for reorganization in the urban market will also be brought under consideration through this paper. Designers should keep it in mind that it is a big responsibility to work with design intervention because you have the power and impact on the market, as a designer you can bring a change in the market and spread awareness of the craft.

Introductions to the chapters

The second chapter consists of literature which we gather from libraries, and from the internet, it is the information regarding the topic. Then the third chapter which consists of what and how the information is going to be gathered is it going to be quantitative or qualitative. What kind of questions will be asked in the interviews regarding the topic. A detail way of how to conduct the research is done in this chapter. The forth chapter consists of what you found through the research and then detail discussion about the research found. The last chapter is the conclusion where the end result will be discussed which were found through the journey of my dissertation.
Creativity is usually thought of as the ability to design and sketch. However, it is not confined to just this; the ability to transform creations also requires one to be creative. The act of using a design according to one’s taste requires creativity. This is basically known as creative intervention or design intervention, which includes transforming a design or pattern without changing its essence. The original design has to remain the same no matter how many adjustments and transformations are made. In places where cultural artistic creations are export items, designs are transformed just enough so that the original form is left intact. This is the fundamental idea, and designers have to consciously work within the parameters of the original design, ensuring that they do not tamper with it and cause it to not lose its essential features.

Each culture has its own unique attributes, which tend to be ages old. These are manifest through a variety of media but are not limited to clothing design, pottery, paintings, sculpture and music. Attributes in a particular culture therefore can be expressed as cultural designs or prints, apart from a list of many others such as poetry music.

One notable form in Pakistan’s southern region, in Sindh, is the Ajrak design. This can be used as an example throughout while expressing the idea of cultural designs and how it has been used and how it can be used for proliferating a particular design or symbol. The idea of propagating has largely been restricted to its location and has hardly found its way out of its geographical origins. Though efforts have been made to break out of these barriers, there have been limitations connected to the local and personal sentimental values of the people of Sindh in particular, where as there have also been several reasons for these limitations including public interest and financing. However, on the technical level based on
how neighbouring countries like India and Bangladesh have propelled their cultural designs, it appears that enough has not been done to make use of the variety of designs in Pakistan.

One very important aspect of this idea is how the concept is implemented by using particular designs in such a manner that it could be relevant to a wider platform of society, local and foreign. In contrast to Pakistan, countries like India, standing at 4th place on the list of cultural design exports, and this is because the industry there has managed to make the designs relevant in terms of change and new trend setters. While there are definite limitations on what one can do with a particular design, creativity can go a long way with boosting its popularity without changing anything essentially (Audrey Bennett – 2006 Design studies: theory and research in graphic design - Page 458). The art of doing this is called design intervention, which basically refers to using any design in such a way to popularize it or make it current, without altering its essential make up. Perhaps the simplest example of design intervention could be the use of Ajrak or any other local design on a product that is worn by the young generation, such as a top. The tops may not be entirely covered with the design, but it may be sparingly used in order to change it from its regular outlook. In adding this design to the top, a whole print may be used. For example if there a design is in the form of a squares, the squares will not be cut, but each square with its own integral design can be printed of stitched on to the jacket (Guy Julier, Liz Moor - 2009 - Design and Creativity: Policy, Management and Practice - Page 80Berg, 2009 - Pp 70-93).

If one desires to change the shape of the design that’s going to be used, perhaps a square could be cut into triangles or even shaped into a circle, change of colour could be done, but in order to leave the original signature design one would have to make sure that it’s
not changed so much, that the originality of the design is questioned, or its difficult to understand where the design came from initially.

Another example can be to use an entire print, in the case of an Ajrak shawl and produce another shawl with different colours other than the ones that have been used traditionally. The new shawl made might be one of the thicker qualities that is used in other parts of the world, and the idea would be to give it a touch of the local cultural design that could become a signature mark. When more of these designed products are marketed and are available outside Pakistan, people can identify them easily. One of the best examples is Japanese design. Their form of art is a great example; it may not necessarily have a Japanese person printed on it. There may be an image of Caucasians wearing traditional Japanese attire on a vertical portrait hanging. The attire is more than enough for people to identify it with Japan. Another example is Chinese art that has red used in abundance, and iconic symbols such as the dragon will easily tell people where the art or clothing or even decoration is from (Monika Büscher, John Urry, Katian Witchger – 2010 Mobile Methods - Taylor & Francis, Page 130-145).

Over the years countries Japan and China have become well known for their signature designs that speak a language of their own and reflect their cultural heritage. It even tells tales of whom these people are and what their ideology is. The same thing applies to Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and many other countries. These countries can promote and export goods they create with their local designs. The idea is to use the designs for promoting products in order to achieve the objectives. It should reflect the culture it emerges from and it should of course be commercially viable (Monika Büscher, John Urry, Katian Witchger – 2010 Mobile Methods - Taylor & Francis, Page 130-145).
As it stands currently, there are certain amount of goods being exported that carry local designs, these are mainly on clothing and items such as bedroom and drawing room décor. Lamps, shades, hand-held fans, carpets, rugs, curtains and cushions are just some of the items. These often carry a dense amount of design that reflects a culture effectively. However there’s great scope for marketing these kinds of items. As described earlier, there are many items that can be decorated this way or given a local touch so that its recognized as a product outside of Pakistan. For example, there are can be cushion covers exported that have tassels or finishing’s on them with some mediocre local design. These can be confused with products out of Mexico, as they too tend to have a lot of tassel-work on their products. Therefore, it is important to then accentuate the form of local design from Pakistan, whether it is Ajrak, Sindhi embroidery or any other design or technique (Georgia Butina Watson, Ian Bentley – 2007 - Identity by design – Elsevier - Pp 127).

In order to use local design effectively, as mentioned earlier, it is a must to make them relevant, and especially cater to the young generation. Look at the items and clothing that younger people wear abroad. To name a few, these would include caps, hats, jackets, jeans and t-shirts. Each of these items can be easily used to promote a cultural design. Since one may not want to overdo the influence of the design on the product itself due to its powerful colour and design, it may be restricted to certain parts of the products used. For shirts, it can be used on the cuffs of sleeves and on the collar. It may also be incorporated on the shoulders. With t-shirts, it may simply be added to the front and back. Jeans could have the design along the pockets or around the belt line. Hats can have them added sparingly too. Besides clothing that people wear, items such as lamp shades could use complete designs. Curtains too with a variety of shades and colours would be able to best utilize these designs. Wall hangings and carpets too would serve as a great medium to convey a cultural message
The market abroad is open and waiting for new items to be introduced, and they are willing to allow new ideas in. There is immense scope as people are willing to spend on new ideas for their homes (David Whitbread – 2009. The Design Manual - UNSW Press, Page 11).

The idea of using a local design for marketing products abroad is often tempting enough to change the design itself. It is an extremely conflicting and debatable issue to change the design in such a way that its origin can’t be recognized as the word identity will completely be eliminated. For example, if there is a square with red and yellow colours used, and carries circles and triangles in it, this would not remain recognizable if the square was changed to a triangle and the colours were changed to green and brown along with the internal design specifics being changed to stars. The entire design would have changed. Instead a better approach would be to use the same print in a manner that it can be palatable to other regions without touching the essential design. There are particular ways of doing this (Georgia Butina Watson, Ian Bentley – 2007 - Identity by design – Elsevier - Pp 115-138).

It is often thought that local designs in Pakistan are quite bright and colourful, similar to the designs and colours in places like Mexico. People in the US are familiar with those designs, meaning that designers from here would have to make the products from here more palatable for the market outside. A basic strategy employed by other designers is to first of all reduce the design and print to a black and white image, which means stripping off the original colours. There is often very little need to change anything in the design itself, and so, a more placid colour combination can be implemented that would suit the eyes of people abroad. They are known for using a lot of pastel shades, and this is something that can be
experimented with. Designers may also use the original colours but reduce the colour intensity to match pastel shades (Guy Julier, Liz Moor - 2009 - Design and Creativity: Policy, Management and Practice - Page 80Berg, 2009 - Pp 70-93). By reducing the colour schemes to suit the public abroad, it is not necessary that all products should be redesigned this way; instead, a variety can be created and made available for people to choose from.

There is indeed a lot that can be achieved through toning the designs in Pakistan for product export. In each form of broad design known throughout the country, there are subcategories that are hardly even heard about within Pakistan itself. These must be explored further in order to have a better understanding of the types of products that can be produced. An example of this is Ajrak itself that has subcategories. Aside from just Ajrak in its broad term to decorate items, one needs to consider the fact that there are subcategories too. The broad form for example includes the following:

1. Teli Ajrak
2. Sabuni Ajrak
3. Do Rangi Ajrak
4. Kori Ajrak
5. Natural dyes/ Vegetable dyes Ajrak

As seen above, there is immense room for exploration locally, and designers have their work cut out for them in terms of exploration alone. Being creative with the design is another avenue itself.

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While many experts, especially in Pakistan are keen to hold on to the entire designs as a whole, there are others that believe in some flexibility. Being flexible is seen as a risk as designs might be changed for good, and cultural importance will not be valued any longer. This is why one has to be very careful when handling designs. There needs to be careful consideration in what one does so that the alteration is not too much (Bennett, Pp 45-58). The implications of design intervention can certainly be far reaching, and one must not be allowed a free hand when dealing with it. In fact, when designs on products are being circulated around the world under the banner of Pakistani exports, great care needs to be taken simply because of the fact that once a completely altered design becomes popular, it will negate the value of what is originally being done within the country’s cultural centres, which includes the villages where people put in unique efforts to make their design and fabrics. The manner in which they create the original products is actually miles apart from what is done in factories and technological design hubs (.Monika Büscher, John Urry, Katian Witchger – 2010 Mobile Methods - Taylor & Francis, Page 130-145)

It must be realized that the value of the original work must not be forgotten. All that is produced painstakingly must not be forgotten. When designers possess knowledge of the tedious manner in which fabric and print such as Ajrak is created, they realize the true value of this work. The efforts put in with original creativity and hard work part of what one’s identity is, and this must never be forgotten. Therefore, when using these designs, one always has to keep these facts in the back of his or her mind and not lose sight of it (Georgia Butina Watson, Ian Bentley – 2007 - Identity by design – Elsevier - Pp 115-138)

While designers today may use software in order to experiment with designs and layouts, they must be careful not to tread too far and tamper with the original design to an extent that
it loses its visible roots. However, the idea of using software can be truly advantageous, as it can give one many ideas to try out. In doing so, designers believe that one way of not falling away from an original design is to simply gauge it by how it looks against the original print. They often keep original pieces around them and glance at them frequently in order to compare them with new designs generated. Sometimes a new design may look entirely different, built when tweaked according to the original, it can look just as original and impressive (Monika Büscher, John Urry, Katian Witchger – 2010 Mobile Methods - Taylor & Francis, Page 130-145).

In countries like India, with the computerized technological advancements, they are able to produce thousands of designs to creating a huge variety in the export market. While the trend is somewhat followed in other countries and an increasing amount of attention is being paid towards it, care must be taken in this exercise. It’s fine to have all the technological help available, but the basic demarcations in terms of maintaining original designs has to stay the same. Otherwise design intervention will go beyond what has been originally intended. One designer may follow another and before one knows it, local designs will no longer be the same (David Whitbread – 2009. The Design Manual - UNSW Press, Page 11). An abyss created between exported designs and original designs in a culture will mean that there will be a false identity created. Furthermore, true historic value will no long be represented, and the authentic designs produced within regional cultures like Sindh will be once again confined. As opposed to the dangers that can result through this type of situation, it is important to stay connected through local design. The people in these regions automatically take pride to know that the work their forefathers taught them is being used to market Pakistani goods and promote their cultural heritage. This helps to develop a bond that makes them feel proud as Pakistanis. It is worth even asserting that in view of the ethnic
divides that exist, it is surprising how fields such as entertainment, sorts, arts, crafts, etc. are able to bring people together. Using the design of local producers is a matter of pride for them, and can help ease ethnic tensions.
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research is undertaken to explain how important design intervention is and what importance does it hold in the urban market. How the crafts of Sindh are being intervened in the market and by whom are they been intervened, is the crafts identity at a stake?. While looking at the previous chapters, books, articles and reviews it shows that the craft intervention plays a very important role in the urban city, therefore there is a lot of demand for design intervention nationally and internationally, the main stream designers and the mills are helping revive the crafts by incorporating their work in to their collection, Which increases the market value of the craft and creates a regular way of income for the artisans. It is also important to take the interviews from the designers working with the craft and the people who are directly linked to the artisans to know what problems they face during craft intervention. This is how the research methodology is going to take place.

The research requires both quantitative and qualitative way of approach to it. The reason for quantitative is that it will include all the research and reports from the organisations working with the craft, including fact and figure about the craft for example what makes them select a certain craft to work with, what is the role of market and what changes have the craft organisations brought with time according to the market.

The reason for qualitative research is to know what and how the market is taking the craft, so the requirement was to take interviews from the craft organisations head and designer, the
designers working with the craft, the people selling crafts in the local market and the general public’s opinion about the demand and craft changes.

Methods of data collection

Research started off with the library to document the history of a craft, NGO’s and government organisations are also surveyed to know what is the importance of the craft, and how important is to bring new designs for the crafts and to see the reports on how much work with crafts have increased with time, result and outcome, with what designers have the organisations worked with. Internet has also been an important source regarding the articles and interviews from the designers already working with the crafts. The research also includes the designers work experience including the issues faced during the process of design intervention.

The primary research is going to take place through qualitative research. The qualitative research will include the surveys and the interviews of the people from the designers, heads of organisations, people who arrange exhibitions for the crafts, local market and the general public.
After completing the research from the libraries and article, interviews were taken from different designers, NGOs and government organisation. The questions will be related to the crafts, that what are the measures taken to preserve the crafts, what and who plays an important role in revitalisations of crafts. How has the demand brought a change in the market. The questions were open ended to get the maximum information.

After collecting all the interviews from the designers and the organisations, then the detailed market survey was done, to see how the craft intervention is happening without any help of the designers in the market. Interviews were taken by the local market sellers to know what brought a change to a craft. What is the demand for the crafts. The local people were interviewed as well to know what exactly is their opinion about the craft, what attracts them more the original piece or the intervened piece by the craftsmen himself. The questions are going to be open ended to have an interesting discussion and to get the maximum output from them.

In data analysis comparison was done to see what is selling in the local markets. What was selling in different organisation and at designers outlet. The comparison was done in design, saleability keeping both the local market and the designers, organisations.

Limitations are when the organisations don’t share their personal information. Another problem faced was to interview designers, not all of them were keen in giving interviews. And most of them were out of reach due to their work appointments. Not many books were found in the libraries concerning the crafts.
Organisations like AHAN, Behbood were very helpful, they shared a lot of information. They were keen to help and gave interviews. Interviews taken in the local market were also very successful. People were open to interviews in the market and general public’s response was of great help to come up with a conclusion.
Findings and discussions

Historically, Sindh has always been famous for its diversity in crafts, culture and their traditions and is till this date. Traces of Sindhi crafts have been found from the pre-historic site of Mohenjo-Daro which goes back up to the 5th millennium B.C. Since then, the craftsmen who are found in Sindh, have a significant importance to the evolution, growth and expansion of the traditional crafts.

The characteristics of the Sindhi crafts and the artisan have survived all these years. Modern technology and the new market demands have replaced the traditions and hence the crafts are declining really fast, due to which the skilled craftsmen have shifted their business and trade. This change in the market has affected a lot of people. From past years government has taken measures by making organisations, to work with the craft and generate incomes for the craftsmen and at the same time promote our traditional crafts nationally and internationally which in turn would not only help the Sindh’s craftsmen, but also the government by bringing foreign exchange into the country. The Non-Government Organisations and designers also play an important role to bring the tradition crafts in the market and make it part of the trends so that the craft does not die.

Pakistan’s crafts are extremely diverse and are a potent expression of the skill and the artisans belonging to various parts of the country. Efforts have been taken by the public and private sectors to promote craft, but still there is a need to make a catalogue and a map of crafts and where they are situated so that it is easier to rejuvenate and promote the craft. A study on development potential of crafts by women in Pakistan published by UNIDO in the early 2000s, confirmed that Sindh has been extremely rich in handicrafts and thus pointing out that

its textiles are very famous. However, due to various drawbacks and non-existence of supportive environment, it is clear that there has been a decline in artisanship in the entire province of Sindh.³

Sindh is the second largest province of Pakistan. There are numerous sindhi crafts on the verge of extinction because of the lack of attention and appreciation they are getting and for that, the process of their revival is extremely essential. While taking an interview with Mehreen Qureshi, the chair person of Behbud Association, she explained that to achieve sustainability, you have to alter the craft by increasing the range of products and by changing the colour palette, so that more choices are available for the consumers to select from. To support her answer she gave the example of Ajrak, that how with time changes were brought in ajrak. New colour palette was introduced, different fabrics were tried and variations of blocks were used. This mixture of traditional and modern in turn makes an Ajrak a hybrid. She said that the other important reason for intervention is that the craftsmen is not educated and doesn’t have an exposure to the market in the city. He is not aware of the consumer needs and wants. If he does make something good, he is unable to market it, which leaves him unsatisfied with his work. So, we as educated people should give them awareness on how to sustain their work by communicating coordinating with what the market wants accordingly. Mehreens point of view about the revival of craft is that with the passage of time, the craft needs to change according to the markets needs and demands. For her design intervention is when she picks up an existing product and brings a change or designs something completely new out of the same product. While taking another interview from Mohammad Ahmed Iqbal, product designer of Ahan, Ahmed explained that design intervention is when u select a craft while maintaining it’s essence, but at the same time not destroying its characteristics or personality but by giving it a new shape, form, mood or a new look, keeping its originality

intact. Design intervention has a lot of meanings to itself. While reading Princeton Architectural Press, Pp 45-58 (Bennett) says “There needs to be careful consideration with what one does so that the alteration of design is not too much.”

While taking an interview with the Craft Project manager of Alfalah, he discussed that there is no one to judge what exactly design intervention is. Every one has their own understanding on where to stop. In his opinion, the line which takes away from the original essence of the craft is the point where we have to stop. In his view design intervention is when you select a craft, take it in a direction where it changes through colour and form but at the same time, the essence or originality is not lost in the process. He explained that design intervention is not only about designing, it is about the craftsmen, his surroundings, his work environment, accessibility of the things which are needed for intervention and what is the reaction to the change in craft. Shaqeel Abro, Regional Director of Ahan Sindh on the other hand explained that design intervention is a very complex phenomenon. He said that it is not easy to understand design intervention as there are a lot of things to keep in mind and it is not an easy task. One has to understand the market dynamics; you have to start with the market research, and then the purchasing pattern. The demand of market is an important component, keeping in mind the market segments. Then one becomes a part of design business. A craftsman has an important role as their issues of understanding the design is very important and the issue of raw material availability. All these things together make design intervention possible.

Design intervention is no doubt a complex phenomena in which you have to come up with different variations of designs, keeping the craft in mind in which the craft dictates how many changes the craft needs to come to the market of the cosmopolitan city. But why is the revival of Sindhi craft related to design intervention and why is it important to revive our crafts? Shaqeel Abro gave the answer to this question while his interview, that Sindh is enriched with craft and culture. Due to lack of interest towards crafts, these people and the crafts are
suffering. Revival of the crafts is important due to a lot of reasons. It is to save the crafts from declining, to make the craft products useful and contemporary for daily use purposes. This will also help the product to become marketable, which will soon be the necessity of the consumer. This will not only revive the craft but at the same time will improve the economic status of the craft people. According to Mehreen, the chair person from Behbud association, the craft needs revival due to the circumstances we are going through in our country. Our economy is going down day by day and through crafts revival we can create an international market as they really appreciate the crafts and know the importance. Her focus of discussion was not only the economy growth of our country but to educate our people to understand the importance of our craft.

Design intervention is a serious business because it plays an important role not only in concerning the craft but it also affects the living of the craftsmen. Mohammad Ahmed Iqbal from Ahan thinks that there is a need to generate a cycle in which the craft stays alive and the craftsmen can earn bread and butter continuously. He explained that the government is playing an important role. SITCO (Sindh Indigenous and Traditional Craft Company) is playing an important role in reviving the craft and AHAN (Aik Hunar Aik nagar) revitalise the craft. So the steps are being taken by the government to make sure the craft stays alive and dominant in the country. At the same time it is not only governments’ role to promote the craft, but everyone living in the country should be a part of the cycle, to promote and create awareness about the importance of the craft and the culture it represents.

According to Shaqueel Abro, there is a lack of awareness, but with the passage of time people understand the role and importance of crafts. The designers are also trying from there end to incorporate crafts in to the market through their work. There are many names related to Ahan. There are many famous names like Noor Jehan Bilgrami, Rizwan Beyg, Aamir Adnan, Deepak Perwani etc, which incorporated craft in their respective work, to increase the
awareness of the craft and to bring acceptability of the craft in the market. Noor Jehan Bilgrami is famous for her craft intervention with Ajrak. While going through Noor Jehan Bilgrami’s profile on her website [www.koel.com.pk](http://www.koel.com.pk) one realises that the true essence of design intervention is served by her. KOEL earlier started the use of natural dyes, including natural indigo and madder, for all its yarn and fabric dyeing. Now it is the first and only production house in Pakistan to have exclusively switched to the eco-friendly, non-carcinogen dyes, which are all produced locally. She introduced this age-old craft to home furnishing and women’s apparel. She popularized it to such an extent that within ten years, scores of block-printing karkhanas (workshops) were set up by entrepreneurs in Karachi alone, providing jobs to hundreds of craftsmen. 4

Rizwan Beyg on the other hand has worked with embroideries, Aamir Adnan worked with Thari embroidery bangles and Deepak worked with Rilli. These designers play an important role in the market as they educate and make the consumer understand the worth of our heritage. They also make the craft relevant to the markets needs. One understands from this that not only the government is responsible for the revival, everyone has to work together if we want to create a difference in the international and national urban market. While looking at the archives of Ahan, a very interesting fact came across, that India is the 4th largest exporter of crafts internationally and Bangladesh on the 11th number. Realisation struck ones mind that why is Pakistan not close in the competition. Mehreen the Chair person from Bebud answered this by saying that the political scenario is also plays a very important part and how stable the economy is. The state of our country is not stable and everything is interlinked. People are so poor that they cannot afford to eat three times a day, so it is out of question for the craft to be taken seriously. People who belong to higher middle class or upper class also think twice before they invest in anything. The socio economical factors also

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affect the export. Her point was to make us understand that there are external factors which affect and influence any business or any work in a country. In early times young girls used to be taught embroideries and other crafts as a hobby, that hobbies use to make the people understand that how much painstaking this work is.

Craft is when any skilled person uses his hand to create an art piece or form. Is the use of computer in our life a threat to the craft or is the craft so expensive that to decrease the price technology is being used? Is the computer a threat to design intervention or is it helping in any possible way to speed up the process? Mohammad Ahmed Iqbal gave the answer by explaining that craft is when a craftsman uses his hand to create a piece. For example, he does all the work by his hand but to contemporize his work, he uses Adobe Photoshop to set the repeat and understand how the end product is going to look, then the use is right because at the end of the day the artisan will use only his hand to make the end product. But only to see the impact or design he used the aid computer.

But on the other hand when Gul Ahmed printed Ajrak on lawn prints, was that craft revival? Ahmed Iqbal from Ahan answered that there was no craft used. Lawn prints are for commercial use only while the craft is not, because no craftsmen are involved in making those lawn print designs. This means that no one can take any pictures or designs from the craft and place the design according to their wish. Craftsmen and the craft have an important role to play when thinking of reviving or intervening in a craft.

While doing a research on any craft the first question which comes to mind is that who are the people working with that particular craft, where are they situated and how to get in contact with them? If the craft is a tree, artisans are the roots. They are the ones to start and take the craft forward. According to Shaqeel Abro, to have a good craftsman is half work done. Mehreen, while in her interview explained that if the craftsmen you are working is keen
and eager to learn new things regarding his craft then that means you have achieved success in your task to take the craft in a new direction. Usually the designers have to face a lot of problems concerning the artisan’s attitude and behaviour. According to Mehreen Qureshi from behbud, artisans are not serious with their work due to which the craft suffers. She complained about the fact that they do not take the ownership in their work anymore. They will come on time and will want to leave before time. According to Ahans Product Designer (Mohammad Ahmed Iqbal), it takes a huge amount of time to make the artisans accept a change in their craft. Slowly and gradually you will have to give them the confidence that they can take the craft in a new direction. With gradual time they gain the confidence and then accept the changes. Through this discussion one finds that you have to take small steps in order to get to the destination. Not only take it gradually but also give the artisan’s incentive on their work so they take ownership in their work and they have something to stake and be proud of if their work becomes success.

There are so many crafts which are being worked upon, but how do a certain craft come in the market and through what procedure do the craft have to go through to come to the main stream? According to Shaqeel Abro, the first step is the most difficult and the most important one. The designer selects a craft, does a complete survey and comes up with a different range of designs. For training, the designer has to go to the village and start of his training according to his designs. First step is also very important and complicated because you have to make the craftsmen understand your design and most of the times they are hesitant or reluctant to a new thing. With the passage of time when they start picking up the understanding of the new product, they get excited and motivated in making that product. Then comes the other part where you have to test that product by keeping that product in an exhibition. The responses of the people are recorded. The records and demands tell the markets response and according to the results the production starts and different range of
products come in to the market keeping in mind revival of crafts and its significance. So the significance of craft revival is that it updates the craft in the market and brings a whole new range of products for the buyer. It also generates a cycle where the artisans get their bread and butter on a regular base.

Market survey of different markets was also done to see what kind of work is happening in the market. Initially the person realises that most of the work you see at the craft shops are similar to the original craft, but once a person starts paying attention to the detail one realise that there is a huge difference in the work. It is not at all close to the original craft. While taking an interview with Hashem the owner of the craft shop, he said that the variety of product changes through the artisans and their surroundings. Alteration of crafts is being done from ages due to the environment, and the need or demand of the market. Does this mean that crafts person is intervening in his/her craft? Who and what decides that this is the right way of intervention. Shaqeel Abro explained in his interview that design intervention is happening in every where around you, but there are some set standards (which have been discussed earlier in the dissertation) to follow while handling a craft. He explained that there are a lot of places where design intervention is happening but not all the people are aware of the standards. Not everyone is literate enough to understand the point where the craft’s identity is lost. Everyone tries to enhance their skills but do not really know where to stop.

The product range available in these craft shops are being designed by the artisans themselves. Another interview with the owner of the craft shop, the owner explained that there is no more market for all these products. People come, look and leave without buying anything. There are several reasons due to which people do not buy crafts anymore. Foreigners used to shop initially but due to the political situation of Pakistan, foreigners do not come to Pakistan anymore. The other reason is poverty. People are so poor now that now these crafts come in luxury, and they do not have enough money have that luxury.
Most of the people who were interviewed had the same thing to say that due to poverty and political instability of Pakistan, nobody comes to buy traditional things from them. Pakistanis settled abroad come one in a blue moon to get souvenirs. What are other ways to promote our craft and our heritage? Mehreen (behbud) answered that internationally our crafts are appreciated and have a huge market. Shaqeel Abro also said that once you are in the market than the flow of the market makes your own place with time.

Design intervention approach is very important. While taking interviews in the local market, questions were asked about what is design intervention. There were 30 people asked this questioned and 64% of them didn’t had any idea about design intervention, 36% answered correctly. The other question which was related to craft was that would you want to buy a craft. 45% people said yes they would want to buy the craft, 30% said that depends on the price and 15 % said that craft is not there type. Is this due to the non serious attitude towards our culture, or is this due to the lack of awareness. Shaqeel abro thinks that the importance of craft is growing slowly and eventually, we just to spread awareness through different mediums as discussed earlier.
CONCLUSION

During the course of this dissertation we have found that there is not much significance given to the sindhi crafts, other than the people working with craft organisation and the people who have knowledge for crafts. There is a lot to be done to increase the role and importance of design intervention when reviving the crafts as discussed in the previous chapters.

We all know at the back of our minds that sindh is enriched with craft and culture but we never understand the importance of it. The problem with us as a nation is that we don’t take ownership of our culture. Spreading of education plays an important role. “student from only few art school come, try and work with the crafts” (Shaqeel Abro). Crafts revival does not only save our heritage but also increase the economical conditions of our country. A country is known by its heritage. India and Bangladesh are the top most exporters of craft all over the world, because they know their craft and they respect it.

Design intervention is happening everywhere in the cosmopolitan city. It is basically divided in to two main categorizes. The two categorize are local market design intervention and craft organisations and designers. When you look at the local market you will see that they don’t have proper knowledge of what they are doing with the craft. But still they are bringing changes according to the market demands and their consumers demand. According to Mohammad Ahmed Iqbal the designer from Ahan, there is no right and wrong in design On the other hand craft organisations are more organised and they do design intervention through proper market research and demand of the product. They start off with test market to get the results of their product. There is an essential need to promote our craft and for that we need more craft organisations. We need to spread awareness and educate people about the importance of craft but at the sample time there are a lot factors which affect the growth.
Some of the major factors are poverty, the political scenario of our country which affects our lives directly or indirectly. The other important factor is the decrease in our economy. Craft is a luxury now, it is not affordable for the poor and rich thinks twice before they invest in the craft (Mehreen Qureshi).

My findings explain the statements made by different people about the revival of crafts and what can be done to revive the craft and bring it in the main market. People firstly need to get educated (Mehreen Qureshi). We need to educate the consumer by incorporating the craft with different designers work. We can also bring a change in the product range to make it more appealing. Another important point which was realised was that there is no right and wrong concerning design intervention. What is right for me can be wrong for someone else.

The other concern was to know where and how does the craft end up in the market and who decides what’s been done is right or wrong, firstly as I discussed earlier that there is no right and wrong but crafts identity is at stake at the end of the day. The organisations are trying to play an important role here, but sadly they can’t stop anyone. What they can do is educate the people.

In my opinion we should have more craft centres, craft organisations and designers to educate the people around us so that they know the importance of the craft revival. It is crucial to keep the craft alive as its the identity and heritage of our country. I would like to conclude by saying that we need to revive our craft because many of the crafts are dying with time and there is an urgent need to rescue them.
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INTERVIEWER: When did Ahan started?

INTERVIEWEE: When talking practically, it’s been three years this organisation started but if you look at the paper you get to know it’s been four years. Initial time was given for the paper work and research, but you can see that we have been implementing on project since past three years. When you look at design intervention through Ahan, it is mainly through by professional designers, who are also the leading designers. Rizwan beyg, Deepak Perwani, Aamir Adnan, Noor Jehan Bilgrami, Taneez were the people Ahan started their work with. These names are already established in the market, the reasons to select these designers were that apparel design field was not worked with at that time and we wanted to incorporate apparel with our crafts. There were fashion designers at that time but no designers had worked with crafts. So the main point was to get the craft intervention in the main stream. Not to use labour to work for you but you understanding the craft and designing according to craft was the purpose behind it. The first time the designers came to work with Ahan and they really liked the experience, the test marketing also went really smoothly, the response from expo exhibition was really good and which made us take the craft forward. Then we even added work from the other art institutes and the marketing. Initially people were working
with crafts but not with the detail study like us, we studied the market properly to start off with our research, we researched that for what market are these products, what’s the particular demand for the craft, what the purchasing power of that market is and how to do the placement of the product. These were all the research done before we started. We decided on our target clientele and wanted to make these products for the elite and international market, so these were all the steps taken for the international market. So our strategy was completely different. We started off by aligning our work with different brands so that we could know the response of the market. The response was coming good and the artisans were getting a good amount from the work. One of our motives was to help reduce poverty from the society and we were successful.

Interviewer: what is design intervention?

Interviewee: design intervention is a complex phenomena, its not like how everyone tries to do design intervention in our country, its a very technical thing not everyone can do this task. One has to understand the market dynamics, basically you have to go with top down approach. You have to start with the market survey, study the purchasing patterns of clients and have to understand the market segments. Then only you can come in design business. Then once you are in design business you have to understand the complexity of the artisans. Raw material issues and challenges are also faced, then you produce the designs. You have to look at the whole process to get the design produced its not a simple task. If a designer is sending his work through Ahan then that means the design have been through well thought process. Comparatively if you look at the market they do not go through the well though process and shows most of the time. You have to understand design intervention you cannot take terracotta and change its khasshi and say its design intervention. You donnot have to see
it ethically, you have to see the whole craft. You have to see the whole process and then come up with the designs.

Every field has its complexities and requirements, if for example you are a textile designer, you can easily make any craft detailed and intricate but when the technicalities come it's totally different. One has to go to the fields to see the practical work or else that result cannot be attained. So you have to give your technical input also. There are lots of things that one has to keep in mind, the colours, clientele, chemistry, body.

Interviewer: how do you select a craft?

Interviewee: selection of craft is always independent on the demand, there are certain craft which are dying are in emergency situations so obviously we pick the dying crafts more and try to incorporate them in every years project. For example ajrak block making, we knew a person was working with that craft we took his help and started working with him. There are some other crafts where the numbers of craftsmen are tremendous, like Rilli and ajrak. In that craft we try and make it a continuous cycle so that a regular cycle starts. You can easily interact with them and make them understand your design, so that they can make a prototype which can be replicated afterwards. Then we also have to see if that craft has a market, if does exist its fine and if it doesn’t then we have to get to the root cause and understand what is lacking, and make it work. Thats how we select a project. There are certain crafts which are not being touched at all, one example is mirror work and why because there are some limitations. We can't work in every sector, for that we will have to expand our operations, resources. We have limited source at the moment and we have to work while keeping in mind the boundaries. It is there in our wish list but we need lot more to start that with. We need finance we need human resource which is limited at the moment. This is because the
priorities of government keep on changing with time. So at the moment it doesn’t have that important in the government sector at the moment.

Interviewer: how long has it been working on these crafts?

Interviewee: embroideries have been a part of this organisation from the initial stages, but we went in the accessories more by using the embroideries. We started making bangles, jewellery items which was a success. Bangles are still getting exported to the international market. At the moment we don’t want to create a market for apparel so we are mainly focusing on bangles and accessories.

Interviewer: who decides what the right way of doing design intervention is?

Interviewer: we have an in house product developer, in which we have different designers. The designers working under the product designer gets continuos guidance, and while working on a project it is viewed by us on every stage. So we give the designers a continuous feed back on their work and what ever we have learned up till now is implied. The originality of the craft should be intact while doing design intervention, so we also focus on that. There are few designer whom we can seek help and in some cases there are institutes like Indus Valley, Mrs Shenaz Ismail has also guide us through different occasion.

For example for Ajra we took help from Noor Jehan Bilgrami. She is a renowned name. We are working with khes at the moment but what we are doing is that we are using their existing designs to incorporate in different range, for example in a clutch bag, keeping in mind the different colours palette.

Interviewer: what are the issues /problems while dealing with the artisans?

Interviewee: while working on the field you have to face a lot of problem. Its a real world out there, and we are not under a control situation, nobody can tell what will happen next. There
is a difference in working while you are in an industrial setup and when you are at a village. If the designer is going to the village and god forbid any death happens there then it creates a big problem, because they don’t work if someone dies. So we have to work keeping in mind the socio- environment issues. The first problem our designer has to face is that he has to adjust according to the environment and people. The second problem faced is communication problem, language barrier is the biggest challenge.

Interviewer: what is the most difficult stage when starting a new project?

Interviewee: It depends on what your product is, but usually the initial stage is the difficult most stage. So basically first stage is the most challenging step because you are starting with a new product, the artisans reactions are also very different. Some of them accept it some of them hesitate to work on new products. But once the product is done and infront of them, they get really excited to start their work in that product.

Interviewer: are people accepting design intervention?

Interviewee: they are accepting it with time, because it shows from the response of the product. So the product is growing with time, and people do appreciate design intervention, but i still think there is a need of awareness which is lacking and is important at the same time. With time they are understanding how to access a craft. With awareness and time people will understand the difference between the proper design intervened product and a local design intervened product.

Interviewer: how much more time do you think people will take to accept the importance of design intervention?

Interviewee: it depends on the person implementing and the policy makers. Its the attitude which brings a change with time,if for eg you give an years time and provide me with
 artisans. I can come up with the range of products, you just have to start the cycle, and flows itself in the market. Once you are in the market, the market drives you itself. But to get to that satge you need a start up, if for that start up your first step is small, then the journey is long. If the initial start is a big step, the easier and shorter the journey is.

Interviewee: Iqbal, Ahmed

Product designer of Ahan

Semi structured interview held at AHAN( Aik Hunar Aik Nagar) craft organisation.

Interviewer: what is design intervention?

Interviewee: design intervention is divided in to two words, design is basically an example of individual dot which are connected to make a line and then it is going to be repeated in a million possibilities to create different designs out of it and intervention is something you pick up craft and change it in a way that you don’t destroy the personality but giving it a new shape, form, mood or new look, keeping the originality intact.

Interviewer: there is a whole range of product in ahan, what makes you select a certain craft?

Interviewee: what makes select a certain craft is by the training that we already have initiated and being successful with in terms of training the artisans, according to the right standards and through quality control.

By conducting a TOT procedures, TOTs are test of trainings. If we do a general survey by going to different places we get to know there potential, by looking at their existing work. If
there work is good and up to standards of the market we start with the tests and then make them part of our design team accordingly.

Interviewer: how can a person know if the design intervention is done properly?

Interviewee: by any normal persons response, for example if we are using Thari embroidery or may be if i make suit from Rilli , automatically the person is going to view it for the first time and if the person says that wow look at the appliquéd suit. My point gets clear then and then only. For example the people who are working in zainab market are not wrong with their intervention. There is no right and wrong in the design intervention. Everyone have their own opinion, and what we think is not good , can be great for the market they are catheering.

Interviewer: Mehreen qureshi

Working since 11 years

Chairperson of Behbud Association

Interviewed on the phone.

Interviewer:What is design intervention to you?

Interviewee:Design intervention to me is when I pick up a product, which we are already making, and make changes within that product.

Interviewer:Up to what extent do you think revival of Sindhi craft is important and why is it important?
Interviewee: The product range is increased but there is no change in the craft if we compare it with actual craft. As the product range is increased the craft is forced to be kept alive as it is needed in various products. If the craft was kept to the original product range than it was not possible to sustain it as the demand for variation in products is increasing.

Interviewer: Is design intervention important for the revival of craft?

Interviewee: For revival of Sindhi culture it is very important for design intervention because old products, like Ajrak, had only two color patterns and used only linear patterns in design were made by rural craftsman who are not educated and are not exposed to urban market and do not know about consumer wants. So it is important to coordinate between the market requirement and what the craftsman is able to do so that there is a fit between demand and supply. So intervention is important in every craft, whether it is block print or an embroidery.

In old days Sindhi craftsman did not used to use wide range of colors. Now due to availability of synthetic colors we are able to use wide range of color schemes.

Interviewer: What are the crafts you are working with?

Interviewee: I am working with block print and I also work using embroidery with some work made by hand and the other by machine.

Interviewer: So does Bahbud handles hand work like hand stitching and Sindhi embroidery?

Interviewee: Yes it most certainly does handle. We have a joint venture CTALC (craft training and literacy center), which is located in korangi.
Interviewer: What is the value of your craft work nationally and internationally? If yes than how have you developed this value?

Interviewee: International we do not have such but if you consider people who visit Pakistan and buy our products, our reputation increases, and our brand name is known by people. Nationally I know that we have value and the reputation than spreads through consumers. We have recently launched a website and through that we want to be well known internationally. On the other hand, the kids wear that are made in our company are well known nationally and internationally and we get high sales on this product line.

Interviewer: Are the kids wear embroidered?

Interviewee: There is little embroidery done on kids wear. Here intervention has also taken place as chori daar pajama is replaced by trousers, and so on.

Interviewer: In your point of view do you think our craft is taken seriously as it should be?

Interviewee: Locally we do not give importance to our craft, but internationally there is lot of importance and appreciation given to our crafts.

Interviewer: Why don’t we have importance of our crafts locally and how can we increase it?

Interviewee: We do not have knowledge of our own crafts. Outside of an arts class there is a lack of knowledge about the crafts. In the old days people used to be taught about crafts like basic embroidery (which was part of the curriculum) is also finished now. I think that most of
the girls and boys today cannot pick up a needle and stitch a simple button. Once you learn
how embroidery or stitching is done, one can than understand how painstaking is the job. A
lot of the craft has moved to a certain segment of the society. Not all of them practice it. In
old days boys girls used to do some of the craft work, no matter what their financial
background. Duppattaas used to be stitched and colored at home and even the work of ZARI
used to be done at home, and people were interested in learning and doing this work. This
does not happen any more, and because of this people do not know about it. Another reason
is that craft has become expensive. Our cost of living has gone up but the incomes have not.
So if a person does not even have to eat than these things come under the umbrella of luxury
items.

Interviewer: So you think that craft is now left for the riches because lower class cannot afford
it?

Interviewee: It has become expensive for every one as cost of living has risen up. If a person
wants it, than he must have the income to support it. There are a lot of factors contributing to
it. Hand crafted products which come from Multan costs minimum of seven hundred which is
expensive for a middle class income group to afford it. I make a table cloth for eighteen
thousand rupees, and I have a shop at zamzama. Although we get a lot of customers with
deep pockets, they would not spend on that. Even if we make a cheapest craft, the material
and labor cost has gone so much high that the total cost becomes an issue. If you read old
books you will find that somewhere they have mentioned about embroidered table cloth. This
shows that craft has been there for a long time and people have been using it.

Interviewer: Do you think designers should incorporate craft so that its importance increases?
Interviewee: We have handful designers, considering millions of people. Although, it would affect, but not that much. First of all the designers should lower their prices. We need a craft revival by using the craft in different ways and in different products. This is where the design intervention comes in. Till the time you do not give multiple uses to craft the craft cannot revive. Though designers the craft is revived, but through some extent. Only if you bring it the mainstream, the craft cannot revive. One way of doing it is though exporting, but you need a strong market share internationally for this.

Interviewer: India is 5th in craft industry. Why do you think they give importance and we do not, although we are from the same origin?

Interviewee: In India the economic well being is much greater if compared here, it is almost six times more. We also had cultural centers, but as our economy felt, the demand for luxury items sunk. Today if there is a war in India, than this importance for craft products would all end. When England and other nations were in war, no industry was able to survive. Here the craftsman comes at 12pm and wants to leave at 6pm. He only works for 3 hours, and also has a lunch break, so how come we can revive craft. So we have to correct every thing, like in an assembly where one thing passes on to another if it is complete and in order. We are not willing to work towards anything and we lock for shortcuts and quick fixes. Nothing happens quickly, it takes time. It has to be done right from the scratch till the end.

Interviewer: Have you seen Ahan’s work

Interviewee: No, I do not know what they are doing. I am not familiar with them that is why I cannot make any comments. Although if you want to export you need young people who are
sitting here and working hard. Like our designers who have gained named internationally but by working hard.

Surveys were done in different markets to see if general people

A) understand the importance of design intervention and

B) would they want to buy crafts

There were 30 people asked this questioned and 64% of them didn’t had any idea about design intervention, 36% said answered correctly. The answer to the other question related to craft was 45% people said yes they would want to buy the craft, 30% said that depends on the price and 15 % said that craft is not there type.

Interviews were taken in the local market from the craft shop owners to see what are the factors which affect the craft, the answer was catagorised in three part. The first and far most repeated answer was that craft is a luxury now a days, because of poverty most of the people can’t buy crafts anymore. The second most repeated answer was that due to the political scenario the tourism is dead , and the third point was the socio_economical unstability of our country.