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## **Khadi-sustaining the Change in Generation Gap**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Apart from its rich culture and heritage India is also known as the home of Mahatma Gandhi, who gave us freedom. He is also the creator of khadi, a clothing which transformed our nation. This study is about the degradation of the image of khadi clothes in the customers minds. This study analyses the change in the attitude of three generations-Baby boomers, Gen X and Gen Y and their preferences and liking in clothes. The attributes that influence the respondents have been pondered upon and strategies have been suggested by the author to KVIC and other marketers of khadi to make it not only a national symbol but a global one.

**Key words:** Attitude, consumer preference, generation study, consumer decision making, khadi

### **INTRODUCTION**

Marketing is one of the very crucial elements when it comes to products like Khadi. Further, it is observed that Khadi has a limited market catering to few consumers who either believe in Khadi ideology or in the comfort of wearing cotton clothes. Khadi has been known to originate in the year 1922 (Anjum, 2011). For more than sixty years, khadi has been linked with India's fight for freedom, but today it is perceived as one of the major agents in our fight against global warming and climate change. However, designers do not just see the garment as being merely eco-friendly but luxurious-defining it as 'haute couture'. We humans are truly a rare species. We are fighting a war that we ourselves have triggered. For years, we have unscrupulously destroyed the environment, depleted our resources and have pushed animals towards extinction. Global warming is the consequence of man's greed and avarice; it is nature's answer to the dastardly acts of man. Sustainable development is the new buzz word created to curb global warming. Energy is a critical requisite for economic growth, especially in a developing country like India. It is one of the most important resources of any industrial activity. However, its availability is not infinite. The textile industry is known to be one of the most polluting and energy intensive industries. It comprises a large number of plants, which consume a significant amount of energy (Lobo, 2013).

Countries around the world are looking for ways and means to reduce the carbon footprint within textile industries and are spending heavily towards less energy intensive technology. India, too, is following this trend but many of us have overlooked low energy alternatives like khadi, which is eco-friendly and handmade.

### **OVERVIEW**

Unlike other fabrics, khadi has stood as a testament of India's past and is proof that 'old is truly gold'. Despite the competition from other fabrics, khadi has survived. There is often an erroneous assumption that links khadi with other handloom products. What distinguishes khadi from handloom is that khadi is hand-spun with the help of a charkha (spinning wheel), whereas

handloom yarn, on the other hand, is processed in the mill. This is what makes khadi so unique and resilient as it keeps the wearer warm in winter and cool in summer. The production of khadi is an extremely judicious process, taking the environment into consideration, right from the spinning to the weaving. Mahatma Gandhi's premise for promoting khadi was to increase employment in the non-farm sector. However, according to reports, between 1997 and 2000, "The sale of khadi plunged by more than Rs 100 crores to Rs 631.79 crores. If it employed 14 lakh people in 1997, it employs only 12 lakh today". Khadi has a lot of advantages over other textiles which are discussed further.

### **LOW CARBON FOOTPRINT**

All textile processes have an impact on the environment. The industry uses large amounts of natural resources such as water, while many operations use chemical sand solvents. All companies use energy, produce solid, discharge effluent and emit dust and toxic gases into the atmosphere. In modern times, the clothes we wear, like everything else we use-from the making of the thread or yarn, the cloth, packaging, marketing to the merchandising until, it reaches the consumer-consumes power or electricity and energy. That would mean, use of gas and coal for making electricity to run the machines, making plastic for packaging and use of petrol for transportation, which in turn means more coal mining, oil drilling, thermal power plants or nuclear power. In India, the textile industry is one of the major energy consuming industries and retains a record of the lowest efficiency in energy utilization. About 23% energy is consumed in weaving, 34% in spinning, 38% in chemical processing and another 5% for miscellaneous purposes. In general, energy in the textile industry is mostly used in the form of electricity as a common power source for machinery, cooling and temperature control systems, lighting, equipment etc., oil as fuel for boilers, which generate steam, liquefied petroleum gas and coal (Sharma, 2012). Thus, the need of energy management has assumed paramount importance due to the rapid growth of process industries causing substantial energy consumptions in textile operations.

With global warming becoming a serious concern, energy conservation has become crucial. Today in India, the words 'green' and 'eco-friendly' have become quite dominant in a world plagued by pollution and GHGs. India is constantly looking for 'green solutions', which can help mitigate global warming. The irony of it all is that India has the most sustainable and eco-friendly product-khadi. As khadi is made from cotton, silk and wool and is spun and woven manually, i.e., without any electrical support, it becomes the only activity that is not utilizing fossil fuel. If dyed with natural dye it becomes a green fabric.

The greatest advantage of khadi is that it carries the lowest carbon footprint. Production of one metre khadi fabric consumes just three litres of water against 55 litres consumed in a conventional textile mill. Many question the ecological impact of khadi, citing reasons such as transportation and packaging as extremely carbon intensive. However, the hand woven fabric has a much smaller carbon footprint, 28% less, even when shipping is factored into the equation. The making of khadi is eco-friendly since, it does not rely on electric units and the manufacturing processes do not generate any toxic waste products. In fact, in some states like Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh, organic khadi is produced by avoiding all chemicals involved in the farming of cotton and during weaving and dyeing of fabric.

### **ENERGY EFFICIENCY**

Out of one kilo of cotton, considering 10% wastage, one hand of 1,000 yarns can be produced on the ambar charkha with two spindles with human energy, which would take 50 min. On the

other hand, to weave one metre of khadi, six to seven hands are required that would take 1.33 human hours. In all, it takes 2.25 human hours to produce one metre of khadi. If we apply human work output in agriculture, that is equal to 0.1 HP (Horse Power) or 0.074 kWh to khadi production, we would get 0.225 HP or 0.17 kWh energy-equivalent for producing one metre of khadi. Hence, assuming that a labour uses only one/one hundredth of power, the estimate would give us 11.1 million metre of charkha yarn production from population employed only in agriculture. As against khadi, to produce one metre mill cloth, 0.45-0.55 kWh electrical energy is required. This means that khadi is approximately 3.24 times energy efficient than mill cloth (Shukla and Iyengar, 2011).

Presently, the production of cotton slivers from ambar charkha uses electricity. Yarn production from the ambar charkha, therefore, cannot be said to be entirely energy conserving. In 2007, the Khadi and Village Industry Commission introduced the 'e-charkha' which enables a spinner to spin yarn and also generate enough power to light up his/her home and listen to a transistor.

## **DECLINE OF KHADI**

Khadi, which Jawaharlal Nehru called the "livery of our freedom", is in tatters today. The material that symbolized self-reliance and emancipation during the freedom struggle has lost its sheen over the years. And there are several reasons for the same. Post-1947, India opted for state-led large scale industrialization. With many Indian industrialists setting up huge textile mills, the mass production of fine cloth led to the availability of cloth at lower prices. People began to buy machine made textiles and thus khadi began losing out to the mill fabric. Its importance diminished and it was relegated to the background by the more svelte and 'fashionable' garments such as silk, denim, leather and fur. The competition from mill-made textiles and imported fabrics are one of the reasons for the declining khadi sales.

Also, the saleability of any textile depends on its USP and performance. For many years, the promotion of khadi had been on emotional and political grounds while its quality and variety had been ignored completely. And unlike other fabrics, khadi has very little to offer in terms of fabric performance or versatility, which is why consumers and designers prefer to patronize other fabrics. Also, it looks attractive when starched and kept in a showroom, but it does not remain the same after washing. Khadi requires maintenance. Even finer counts and blends of khadi cannot withstand many washes and is thus not conducive for day-to-day purposes. This is a significant though hotly debated issue. A typical middle class Indian would opt for synthetic materials over khadi since, the latter requires careful laundering and looking after, believe designers.

Another factor that is threatening the existence of khadi is the cost. Most handloom products are expensive because the manufacturing process is extremely laborious and physically demanding. Farmers pick out cotton from fields. These cotton balls are very coarse in nature and the fibres have to be separated from the seeds by hand using a sharp comb-like object. A process called 'carding' removes the final traces of waste from the cotton to produce what are called 'slivers'. These are then spun into a yarn on a spinning wheel or a charkha, which thins out the slivers and twists them at the same time, thereby strengthening them. It's a long and completely manual process. Hand-made fabrics are going to become more and more expensive because their production capability is low. Regular fabrics are being produced at the drop of a hat through technology; a fabric that takes so much man-made labour is obviously going to be expensive.

For designers like Wendell Rodricks, "Wearing khadi is not just about being fashionable and trendy; it is about having a conscience and living that belief. As long as people are conscious about the environment, khadi will always have a market and price won't be a factor".

### **MIDDLEMAN BLUES**

Considering the amount of effort involved in the manufacturing of khadi, if weavers spend hours spinning and weaving and receive little returns, they will eventually migrate to other occupations. To add to this, middlemen exploit weavers by pocketing profits earned on sale of khadi cloth. The middlemen quote a much higher price than its actual cost and pay the weavers inadequately.

The art and skill of weaving is passed down from generation-to-generation. And if weavers are not receiving enough remuneration, the next generation would discontinue with the legacy and pursue other professions. The declining workforce strength in the khadi industry is making the productions of khadi seem very challenging and without skilled weavers, the future of khadi may be on the decline.

### **VALUING OUR LEGACY**

Indians, today live in a westernized society that takes pride in everything that is foreign. We are constantly looking towards the west for inspiration in terms of design and innovation. India has a rich culture and heritage which unfortunately is under-valued by people. Indian garments that are exceptionally rich and beautiful, replete with intricate embroideries and designs-defining the myriad cultures of different states are often not acknowledged by Indian designers who want to find favour with the rest of the world. The necessity of bringing khadi to the fore is essential not only because it is sustainable, but also because it is inherent to our history and culture.

### **DESIGNERS' TAKE**

The government needs to take cognizance of the soaring prices. However, fashion designer Rahul Mishra feels differently. "The softest cotton to ever be produced is khadi. The reason being, it is hand spun and hand woven. The soft texture of khadi cannot be produced in a machine. So, khadi is sheer luxury and that's what consumers need to understand; it is 100% couture. For e.g., in China, one machine produces 10,000 metres of regular cloth a day; but, when someone is using khadi yarn, we are producing just three metres a day". So should the price of khadi be reduced? "No!" he replied vehemently. "If people are willing to spend money on luxury items why should they have a problem with khadi?" Sunaina Suneja, a fashion designer, is of the same opinion. "For something that is handmade, I personally do not think it is expensive, considering how much effort it takes to spin the yarn".

### **VISION OF A SUSTAINABLE INDUSTRY**

Khadi is sustainable not only because it doesn't harm the environment, but also because it provides employment. The logic of shifting to khadi may be convincing, but its adoption has not been easy due to the reasons cited earlier.

### **MARKETING STRATEGIES OF KHADI INSTITUTIONS**

It is found that the common marketing strategy adopted by institutions are opening up of new sales bhandars, putting up advertisements and banners and distributing pamphlets during the rebate period. The primary survey data of the institutions revealed quite a dismal picture about the native marketing practices adopted by the institutions compared to today's Hi-tech marketing strategies.

Table 1: SWOT analysis of khadi clothing

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SWOT analysis of khadi market

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**Strength**  
Eco-friendly  
Reflects Indian culture  
Versatility of khadi  
Economic growth  
Low cost  
Employment generation  
Fashion

**Weakness**  
Lack of appreciation  
Labour-intensive  
Lack of infrastructure  
Lack of training in business methodologies  
Lack of awareness  
Lack of promotion

**Opportunity**  
Potentiality for exports  
Emerging trends  
Capturing an untapped market  
Generation of employment

**Threat**  
Competition from handloom and other textiles  
Survival in fast growing technology  
Entry barriers to other countries

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Primary survey

### **Reasons for decrease in khadi productivity:**

- Production of khadi not according to market demands
- No new technical inputs
- No new design inputs
- Not attracting the school and college going younger generation of boys and girls for wearing khadi
- Old generation who were firm on khadi wearing is decreasing
- Marketing of khadi on professional basis rather than sentimental basis
- Many khadi institutions are closing down
- KVIC has stopped issuing certificates for new khadi institutions
- Decrease in productivity means decrease in employability

Table 1 shows the analysis of khadi clothing on the basis of answers from experts and respondents taken for the survey. As shown khadi represents Indian clothing but is not able to create its market due to lack of promotion and awareness.

### **GENERATION TYPES**

Generation is the act of producing offspring. In kinship terminology, it is a structural term designating the parent-child relationship. It is also known as biogenesis, reproduction or

procreation in the biological sciences. The term is also often used synonymously with cohort in social science, under this formulation the term means "people within a delineated population who experience the same significant events within a given period of time." Generation in this sense of birth cohort also known as a "social generation," is widely used in popular culture and has been the basis for much social analysis. Serious analysis of generations began in the century, emerging from an increasing awareness of the possibility of permanent social change and the idea of youthful rebellion against the established social order. Some analysts believe that a generation is one of the fundamental social categories in a society, while others view its importance as being overshadowed by other factors such as class, gender, race, education and so on.

**Baby boomers (born between 1946-64):** Baby boomers are associated with a rejection or redefinition of traditional values; however, many commentators have disputed the extent of that rejection, noting the widespread continuity of values with older and younger generations. In Europe and North America boomers are widely associated with privilege as many grew up in a time of affluence.

**Generation X (1965-76):** Generation X commonly abbreviated to Gen X is the generation born after the Western Post-World War II baby boom. Demographers, historians and commentators use beginning birth dates from the early 1965s to the early 1976s.

**Generation Y (1977-94):** Generation Y also known as the "Millennial Generation" or the "Millennials" are the demographic cohort following Generation X. Commentators use birth dates ranging from the early 1977s to the early 1994s.

**Generation Z:** Generation Z is a name used for the cohort of people born from the early 2000s to the present day who are distinct from the preceding Millennial Generation (Kotler, 2013).

## **ATTITUDES**

Attitudes are evaluative statement favorable or unfavorable related to person, object or event. They reflect that how one feel about something. For example, if someone says that i like my job. This statement expresses his attitude towards his job. Each and every person has different attitude at different conditions. There are three components of attitude.

**Cognitive component:** It refers that's a part of attitude which is related in general know how of a person, for example, he says smoking is injurious to health. Such type of idea of a person is called 'cognitive component' of attitude.

**Effective component:** This part of attitude is related to the statement which affects another person. For example, in an organization a personal report is given to the general manager. In report he point out that the sale staff is not performing their due responsibilities. The general manager forwards a written notice to the marketing manager to negotiate with the sale staff.

**Behavioral component:** The behavioral component refers to that part of attitude which reflects the intension of a person in short run or in long run. For example, before the production and

launching process the product. Report is prepared by the production department which consists of there intention in near future and long run and this report is handed over to top management for the decision (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2007).

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in the twin cities of Cuttack and Bhubaneswar. The sample size was 720 with respondents within the age group of 20-70. Three generations were taken for the study; baby boomers, generation X and generation Y. The sampling procedure was quota sampling as respondents aged between 20-70 who have used khadi clothes were chosen for the survey. The survey was conducted by a structured questionnaire with 15 questions.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The respondents were surveyed and the data collected was analysed as follows.

**Demographics of the respondents:** Table 2 shows the demographics of the respondents in regards to age, gender, qualification, profession and income. The age was differentiated basing on the generations taken for the study. The 40% of respondents belonged to Gen Y aged between 20-37, basically the youth, 33% of Gen X aged between 38-49 and the rest 27% belonged to Baby boomers aged between 50-68 years. These three generations were chosen out of the seven U.S generations as they represent the youth, middle aged and the senior citizens of India. The data collected included the response of all the generations. The gender ratio was almost equal with male 48% and female 52%. Majority of the respondents were graduates and service holders. The minimum monthly income taken was Rs. 10,000 per month. The 30% of respondents had an income between 20-30 k and 10% did not have any income as they were students.

Table 2: Demographics of the sample surveyed

Sample surveyed	(%)
<b>Age</b>	
Gen Y : 20-37	40
Gen X : 38-49	33
Baby boomers : 50-68	27
<b>Gender</b>	
Male	48
Female	52
<b>Education</b>	
Graduate	56
PG/Professional degree	25
Others	19
<b>Profession</b>	
Student	27
Service holder	40
Housewife	15
Business men/women	18
<b>Income/month</b>	
Nil	10
10-20 k	20
20-30 k	30
30-40 k	24
40 k and above	26



Table 3: Purchase rate of clothing

Time	Value (%)
Weekly	7
Monthly	9
Occasionally	27
During festival	48
Any other time	9

Table 4: Amount spent on buying clothes per month

Amount (Rs.)	(%)
Up to 500	16
500-1000	15
1000-1500	35
1500-2000	27
2000 to above	7

Table 5: Material of clothing used

Clothing materials	Values
Khadi	14
Synthetic	29
Handloom	17
Cotton	21
Silk	12
Linen	7

The respondents were asked questions on their attitude towards buying and using khadi clothes in their lives. The following Table 3-13 show the results of the survey.

It was seen from Table 3 that 48% of the respondents buy clothes only during festivals which shows that people wear new clothes in occasions and festivals. In India, there are many festivals and it is a tradition to wear new clothes during these festivals. People still follow these traditions and buy new clothes during these festivals and occasions.

Table 4 revealed that 35% respondents spent an amount between 1000-1500 per month upon clothes. This is because most of the respondents were service holders, who stay most of the time in their place of work and require more clothes since they go out of home every day. Since, most of the respondents earn between 20-30 k per month, so their spending capacity cannot be very high in case of clothes.

The material preferred by the respondents mostly was synthetic which includes chiffon, crepe, polyester and the same. It was because of easy maintenance as life has become busy and people don't have time to spent on maintaining clothes. As shown in Table 5, khadi was bought by 14% and most of the respondents confused it with cotton and handloom.

The results in Table 6 show that khadi was preferred by respondents due to its high quality (37%), comfortable to wear (21%) and sweat absorbent capacity (15%). Since, Cuttack and Bhubaneswar has a hot and humid climate so comfort and sweat absorbent capacity were important factors apart from quality. Availability of khadi clothes and price were factors which had negative influence on khadi buyers.

Table 6: Factors that influence the purchase of khadi

Attributes	Values (%)
Price	7
Quality	37
Availability	4
Comfort wearing	21
Easy to maintain	5
Colour fast	5
Sweat absorbing capacity	15
Customer service	2
Depicting indian culture	4

Table 7: Sources of information about khadi

Source of information	Values
Peers	23
Family members	48
TV ads	3
Web sites	3
Exhibitions	19
Others	4

Table 8: Reasons why people use khadi clothes

Reasons	Values
Gandhi principles	6
Price	4
Quality	21
Availability	4
Wearing comfort	16
Easy to maintain	9
Colour fast	6
Sweat absorbing capacity	12
Customer service	3
Durability	14
Wear it any time	5

Since, the parents and grandparents of Gen X, Y and Baby boomers lived in khadi era, information about khadi has been passed on between the family members. Table 7 shows that 23% knew about khadi from peers and 19% from exhibitions. TV and internet till now donot contribute much to the awareness of khadi.

There are basically four major reasons of respondents choosing khadi shown in Table 8 quality (21%), wearing comfort (16%), durability (14%) and sweat absorbing capacity (12%). This shows that khadi has an image of clothing of quality.

Most of the respondents opined that khadi suited best to senior citizens (37%) followed by politicians (27%) and teachers (13%) shown in Table 9.

Khadi lacked variety in design (23%) in its clothing which was the main reason for people not using khadi according to the respondents. It is also expensive (19%), not trendy (19%) difficult to maintain (18%), has less variety in colours (16%) and not easily available (13%) in Table 10.

Table 9: Target market for khadi

Target market	(%)
Politician	27
Teachers	13
Doctors	4
Lawyers	3
Corporate people	5
Married couples	4
College going students	3
Senior citizens	37
Others	4

Table 10: Reasons for people not using khadi clothes

Reasons	(%)
Expensive	19
Less variety in colours	16
Less variety in design	23
Difficult to maintain	18
Not easily available	13
Not trendy	19
Others	2

Table 11: Occasion of wearing khadi

Occasions	(%)
On job	41
During meetings	16
During festivals	29
Marriages	9
Other events	5

Table 12: Generation that prefer to buy and wear khadi

Generation	(%)
Baby boomers (born between 1946-64)	49
Gen X (1965-76)	39
Gen Y (1977-94)	12

Most of the respondents wore khadi clothes to office (41%), some of them also used it during festivals (29%) and very few during meetings (16%) and marriages (9%) as shown in Table 11. This result depicts the formal wear of khadi. Khadi is preferred by the respondents as clothing which can be wore to the office. As ladies basically wear sarees to festivals the women respondents chose khadi silk as a part of their wardrobe for festivals. Even male respondents who wear kurtas during festivals chose khadi.

In Table 12 out of the three generations taken for the study it was found that baby boomers (49%) born between 1946-1964 are the most khadi users. It was followed by Gen X (39%) and the least users are the youngsters with only 12%. This shows that khadi hasn't been popular with the Gen Y, as it is with baby boomers. This is because baby boomers knew about khadi when they were kids and have an association with the fabric as their parents have used it. Gen X are also aware

Table 13: Attributes that influence generations' choice to wear khadi

Attributes	Baby boomers (%)	Gen X (%)	Gen Y (%)
Gandhi principle	53	34	13
Durability	29	49	22
Wearing comfort	46	34	20
Price	20	34	46
Availability	18	33	49
Quality	35	48	17
Fashionable	43	36	21
Customer service	63	29	8
Easy to maintain	44	34	22
Online shopping	31	34	35

about khadi and prefer to buy it because of the same reason. But Gen Y, which constitute the youngsters are more fashion oriented and variety seeking which they get from other fabrics.

Table 13 shows the attributes that influence the generations' choice to wear khadi. Customer service was the most preferred attribute by baby boomers (63%), followed by Gandhi principle (53%) and wearing comfort (46%). For Gen X, the most preferred attribute was durability (49%) and quality (48%). For Gen Y, it was availability (49%) and price (46%). Since, Gen Y respondents are internet survey so availability is not an issue for them nor is price as they generally wear branded clothes which are high priced.

## MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The above discussions can frame the following implications for managers and researchers. The Gen Y can be the most valuable customers for khadi as they are not price conscious but brand conscious. New and trendy designs in apparels like jeans, tops, tees, dresses, caps, bags and other accessories can attract this generation. Marketers and Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) have to create awareness about the advantages of wearing khadi over other materials. Mass production needs to be done to meet the consumer demands. Twenty women spinners appointed by KVIC produce the same amount of khadi yarn which as equal to the production of one power spinning wheel (Sivaiah, 2013). The employment has to be more for mass production. The KVIC can adopt selective, exclusive and intensive distribution. It can have an exclusive outlet in all major cities, selective in some outlets and intensively in all apparel stores. Khadi can also be made available in retail organisations like pantaloons, big bazaar, reliance trends and others. Designers and brands can use the khadi material for creating dresses. Variety, quality, wearing comfort, ease in maintenance and trend along with price are the main attributes which are important as found from the attitude survey of respondents. For baby boomers, maintaining their requirements is most important and for gen X, its durability and wearing comfort. Apart from KVIC other non govt. organisations, companies creating brands can use khadi so that customers would know and feel the benefits of wearing the material.

This study concludes that there is a difference in the attitudes of the three generations-Baby boomers, Gen X and Y taken for the study. Marketers can use this study to formulate marketing strategies for all the generations separately.

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