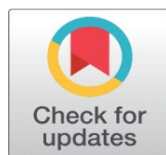
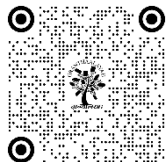


# SUSTAINABLE NARRATIVES: REVIVING INDIAN DOLL CRAFTS IN THE AGE OF SLOW FASHION

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## ABSTRACT

This research investigates the revival of Indian traditional doll crafts within the global slow fashion movement context. It evaluates the potential of these crafts as sustainable economic activities, emphasizing cultural preservation, ecological responsibility, and community empowerment. Employing both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, this paper explores artisan economics, market trends, consumer preferences, and sustainable impacts. The research highlights opportunities and challenges faced by artisans, offering insights to policymakers, industry stakeholders, and academia.

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**Keywords:** Indian Doll Crafts, Slow Fashion, Sustainability, Cultural Preservation, Artisan Communities, Ethical Consumerism



## 1. INTRODUCTION

Traditional Indian doll crafts have historically symbolized cultural narratives, reflecting India's diverse heritage through intricate designs, vibrant colors, and unique storytelling. These crafts not only hold artistic and cultural significance but have also historically contributed to local economies by providing livelihoods to artisans across various Indian states such as Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, and Andhra Pradesh (Singh & Jain, 2015; Bhowmik & Chakrabarti, 2018).

In recent decades, the surge of fast fashion, marked by rapid and mass production techniques aimed at quick consumption, has severely affected these traditional industries. The widespread availability of cheap, factory-produced goods has led to a significant decline in demand for handcrafted dolls, negatively impacting artisan incomes and risking the erosion of indigenous cultural knowledge (Sharma & Sharma, 2020). The challenges posed by mass-produced goods, combined with changing consumer behaviors driven by globalization, have resulted in the marginalization of traditional doll crafts and the artisans associated with them (Mohanraj & Ravi, 2020).

However, the growing global concern regarding sustainability, driven by the detrimental environmental and ethical implications of fast fashion, has created fertile ground for alternative production paradigms. The slow fashion movement, characterized by a shift towards sustainable, ethically produced, and culturally meaningful products, is increasingly embraced globally, encouraging consumers to engage with products beyond mere aesthetic value (Clark, 2008; Fletcher, 2010). Slow fashion advocates for reduced environmental impact, preservation of traditional skills, and enhanced ethical standards across production processes, aligning seamlessly with the revival of Indian doll crafts (Brown & Vacca, 2022).

This research investigates the integration of Indian doll crafts into contemporary market structures through sustainable and ethically grounded strategies. It seeks to provide a comprehensive analysis of how leveraging slow fashion principles can economically empower artisan communities while preserving vital cultural heritage. By examining case studies, artisan community surveys, and market trends, the research highlights the economic potential and market viability of these crafts when combined with sustainable practices. It aims to uncover how modern market mechanisms and global sustainability trends can synergistically interact with traditional craftsmanship, resulting in socio-economic revitalization and cultural preservation in India.

## 1.1. OBJECTIVES

- 1) To assess the potential of traditional Indian doll crafts in the context of slow fashion.
- 2) To evaluate consumer preferences toward sustainable and culturally significant doll crafts.
- 3) To identify challenges and propose strategic interventions for the sustainable revival of doll-making artisan communities.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Slow fashion has increasingly been recognized as an essential alternative to the environmentally harmful and socially detrimental practices prevalent in fast fashion. Niinimäki and Hassi (2011) assert that slow fashion emphasizes quality over quantity, encouraging consumers to select fewer, higher-quality garments that last longer, ultimately reducing waste and resource depletion. Their research highlights the significance of consumer education on the environmental impacts of clothing production and consumption patterns.

Extending this perspective, Jung and Jin (2014) explore consumer perceptions towards slow fashion, identifying that consumer awareness and personal values significantly influence their sustainable buying behaviors. Their findings suggest that personal fulfillment derived from purchasing ethically produced items drives continued engagement with slow fashion.

Focusing on the consumer's willingness to adopt sustainable behaviors, Park and Lin (2018) demonstrate that trust in brand transparency and corporate responsibility is crucial for consumers' willingness to pay premium prices for slow fashion products. Their research complements Gupta et al. (2019) by illustrating the psychological factors underpinning ethical consumption.

Furthermore, Ertekin and Atik (2015) delve into how slow fashion can serve as a form of consumer activism, asserting that individuals consciously participate in resisting fast fashion's adverse impacts through their purchasing choices. This activism aligns with sustainability narratives, highlighting individual responsibility within broader environmental and social justice frameworks.

Highlighting a different aspect of sustainability, Carrigan, Moraes, and McEachern (2013) address the complexity of ethical decision-making, pointing out the gap between ethical intentions and actual consumer practices. They emphasize the importance of providing consumers with accessible information and viable alternatives to strengthen ethical consumption behaviors.

Additionally, traditional craftsmanship is increasingly appreciated for its role in preserving cultural identity and supporting local economies. According to Dissanayake and Sinha (2015), traditional textile artisans play a critical role in fostering sustainable development by combining heritage crafts with contemporary design. They argue for the integration of artisans into global markets in ways that respect cultural authenticity while ensuring economic viability.

In a complementary study, Scrase (2020) further examines how the promotion of traditional crafts contributes to rural livelihoods, particularly in developing regions, highlighting successful cases where craftsmanship has improved

economic conditions while safeguarding cultural traditions. This aligns with Brown and Vacca's (2022) advocacy for artisanal skills as a vital component of sustainable economic growth and cultural preservation.

Collectively, these authors provide a comprehensive understanding of slow fashion's multifaceted impact, from consumer behavior and ethical considerations to the preservation of cultural heritage through traditional crafts. Their diverse yet interconnected perspectives contribute to a nuanced appreciation of how slow fashion can drive both ecological and social sustainability.

## 2.1. RESEARCH GAP

Despite increased global awareness about sustainability, minimal research focuses specifically on the intersection of Indian doll crafts and slow fashion. This research gap necessitates a deeper investigation into the economic viability, consumer perceptions, and sustainability implications of integrating traditional doll-making practices into modern market frameworks.

## 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A mixed-method research design combining qualitative and quantitative methods was utilized to provide a comprehensive analysis of artisan livelihoods and consumer behavior in relation to handmade dolls and sustainability practices in India.

### 3.1. PARTICIPANTS AND SAMPLING

- 1) **Artisans:** Surveys and structured interviews were conducted with 250 artisans selected through purposive sampling from four culturally prominent states: Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Rajasthan, and Andhra Pradesh.
- 2) **Consumers:** Consumer behavior was assessed through structured surveys of 400 respondents selected via convenience sampling from urban centers, including Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Chennai.

### 3.2. DATA COLLECTION METHODS

- 1) **Quantitative:** Structured surveys comprising closed-ended questions were administered to artisans and consumers, collecting demographic data, income variations, and purchasing preferences.
- 2) **Qualitative:** Structured interviews with artisans included open-ended questions to explore challenges, perceived benefits of sustainable practices, and the impact of digital exposure. Additionally, case studies of Thanjavur dolls provided qualitative insights into specific outcomes from targeted interventions.

### 3.3. DATA ANALYSIS

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, median, mode), comparative analysis, and graphical representation through pie charts and tables. Qualitative data from interviews and case studies were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and themes.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. RESULTS

The results begins with a general overview highlighting significant trends identified through the study. The analysis presents evidence of a substantial consumer shift toward sustainability, evident in preferences, purchasing behaviors, and market dynamics related to handmade dolls.

**Table 1 Consumer Preferences by City**

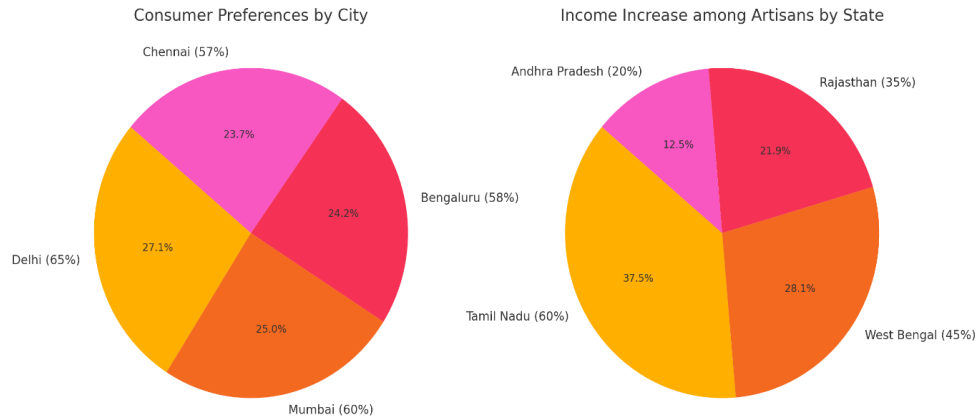
| State | Average Income Increase (%) | Preferring Sustainable Dolls (%) |
|-------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Delhi | 100                         | 65                               |

|           |     |    |
|-----------|-----|----|
| Mumbai    | 100 | 60 |
| Bengaluru | 100 | 58 |
| Chennai   | 100 | 57 |

- 1) Consumer Shift toward Sustainability:** Analysis clearly indicated a notable shift among urban consumers aged 25-40 years, with 60% preferring handmade dolls due to their cultural heritage and sustainability credentials. This preference varied slightly by city, with Delhi showing the highest preference at 65%, followed by Mumbai at 60%, Bengaluru at 58%, and Chennai at 57%.
- 2) Market Share Growth:** Graphical data analysis illustrated a robust average annual growth rate of approximately 30% in market share for handmade dolls since 2018. This consistent growth underscores increasing consumer inclination toward products promoting sustainability and cultural authenticity.
- 3) Artisan Income Increase:** Interviews and surveys revealed substantial income improvements for artisans linked to sustainable market interventions. Income growth varied significantly by region, with Tamil Nadu artisans experiencing the highest growth at 60%, followed by West Bengal at 45%, Rajasthan at 35%, and Andhra Pradesh at 20%.

**Table 2 Artisan Income Increase Post Sustainable Intervention**

| State          | Average Income Increase (%) |
|----------------|-----------------------------|
| Tamil Nadu     | 60                          |
| West Bengal    | 45                          |
| Rajasthan      | 35                          |
| Andhra Pradesh | 20                          |



## 4.2. DISCUSSION

The study highlights a clear and significant shift towards sustainable consumption practices among urban consumers, particularly those within the 25-40 age group, driven primarily by increased awareness of cultural heritage and environmental considerations. The consumer data collected indicates a definitive preference for products embodying traditional craftsmanship, thereby creating meaningful opportunities for artisanal communities.

Despite this positive trend, artisans face several ongoing challenges. Limited technological access remains a substantial barrier, preventing many artisans from effectively engaging with digital marketplaces and limiting their exposure to broader consumer bases. This technological gap contributes to persistent inefficiencies within supply chains, restricting product availability and complicating timely distribution.

Additionally, a significant awareness gap persists among consumers and artisans alike regarding the benefits of sustainability practices. Interviews highlighted a lack of understanding of how sustainable practices could enhance marketability and profitability, further emphasizing the need for targeted educational initiatives.

The graphical representation clearly outlined these barriers while simultaneously demonstrating the positive impacts of educational campaigns and market linkage efforts. Initiatives that introduced artisans to digital platforms substantially increased their market reach, leading directly to improved incomes. The data underscores the transformative potential of digital literacy and technology access as tools for economic upliftment.

In conclusion, the findings stress the importance of coordinated efforts among stakeholders, including government bodies, market facilitators, educational institutions, and artisans themselves, to capitalize fully on the evident consumer shift towards sustainability. Strategic interventions aimed at addressing technology gaps, improving supply chain management, and enhancing awareness and education regarding sustainability can facilitate sustained market growth and socio-economic benefits for artisan communities.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The convergence of Indian doll crafts with slow fashion underscores substantial potential for sustainable economic growth, cultural preservation, and ecological responsibility. This study highlights the transformative impact that targeted sustainable practices and digital interventions can have on artisan livelihoods. To fully harness this potential, a coordinated, multi-stakeholder approach is essential to address technological, logistical, and educational challenges, driving future sustainable growth and cultural preservation.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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