

Sustainable Innovation 2021

Accelerating Sustainability in Fashion, Clothing, Sportswear & Accessories

23rd International Conference

Online Conference: 15th-21st March 2021

Business School for the Creative Industries

University for the Creative Arts

Epsom, Surrey, UK

Co-creative Value Identity in Crafts Using Remote Online Workshops

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Raising Awareness of Value (RAV): Women and Crafts in India is a pilot project that sets out to support female crafts makers, producing complex indigenous textiles in Gujarat, to improve their livelihoods through product innovation and new forms of marketing. The overarching aim of the project is to foreground the value of these women based artisanal crafts. The artisans rely primarily on selling products in bulk to wholesalers in India and internationally. RAV sets out to find methods of collaborating with, supporting, and empowering these female crafts makers to improve their livelihoods through 'learning how to learn' (Ingold, 2013) instigating a process of active participation in a broad range of opportunities and experiences in order for them to know how to market their products in the longer term.

The original, pre-lockdown plan, was for the research team to facilitate co-creation workshops in conjunction with the craftswomen. The focus of the workshops was to be on methods of exploring new design ideas for the Indian and European market, and also to instigate a separate agenda to develop a labelling system to authenticate handmade Indian goods using co-production methods of design. Exploring the collective's foray into online selling and creating a compelling social, digital identity was also proposed. However, this last point was met with some resistance. The project plan as a whole required physical involvement from the project team which was to travel to Gujarat to work with the artisans.

The lockdown not only stalled the project but more critically, it threatened the livelihoods of the women artisans. Seeing this as an opportunity, the team swiftly reworked the project approach. The project team once again proposed the idea of building a digital marketing plan, an authentic social media identity and a channel for online sales.

The project team has planned a series of workshops, to be held online, in digital marketing, narrative building, photography and image making and editing. The goal of these workshops is to empower the makers and enable them to create compelling content, and tell their own stories. The outcome of this project is a digital marketing blue print for craftspeople and crafts collectives. This paper outlines how new methods of collaboratively defining, co-designing (Facer and, K. Pahl,, K. 2017) value identity and brand identity for this group of craft producers. The research team are investigating methods of co-creating the marketing of their products by communicating the women's personal narratives to the consumer. This is an ongoing project and so any findings will be interim at this stage, the work will conclude in July 2021. This paper will report on the outcomes of the online, brand / value identity co-creation workshops. The pandemic in 2020, has acted as a catalyst for change within the world of crafts, and this project offers a marketing model which places the ownership of the creative process in the hands of the makers themselves.