

AI-Driven Prediction And Roc

Objectives

The over-arching aim of the project was to develop and pilot an enhanced way of communicating with Traidcraft's artisan suppliers to transfer design principles and practice. The objective being to support the development of design skills within an identified supplier group and through the project to pilot a model for developing design expertise, and approaches that might be transferable to other suppliers.

The objectives of the project were to:

- Evaluate existing products, skills and productivity in relation to current market / sales and scope opportunities
- Identify repertoire of existing skills and abilities; establish and prioritize developmental needs
- Improve, innovate and diversify the range of products in response to identified market opportunities, in order to sustain and increase market share.
- Deliver original 'added value' product to the Traidcraft product range which meets market requirements of trend, quality and price
- Develop, transfer and embed sustainable design and product development processes in Traidcraft and their suppliers to enable the business to undertake cyclical product innovation, range development and renewal in future.
- Deliver experiential learning, informed by case studies of comparative projects / enterprise, and model that supports innovative design practice and cyclical range renewal
- Cascade project methodologies and interventions via the production of learning packs, evaluation reports and seminar presentations

Project Methodology

The initial planning between the partners (Traidcraft / NU) was carried out through email and face-to-face discussion. Traidcraft provided an analysis of their customer profile and particular characteristics of their market that distinguish it from the mainstream commercial marketplace. This provided an understanding of the target market and constraints with regard to a certain element of conservatism in customer preferences and perceptions of 'value for money' in the purchase of a handcrafted product.

Traidcraft identified St. Mary's Mahila Shikshan Kendra in Ahmedabad, India as an appropriate group within which the project activities would take place. The NU consultant undertook an initial scoping visit to this supplier group in June 2010 to:

- Evaluate existing products, skills and markets
- Identify the types of crafts produced/by volume (capacity) and value (production costs, price point and sales),
- Assess and prioritise learning and business needs
- Frame the staged objectives for the project informed by evaluation of existing skills-base, products and market penetration, identifying opportunities (global, regional and local trends)

Two interventions in the form of co-collaboration between the NU consultant and SMSK's 'designer' were devised and implemented, aimed at delivering **design innovation and product renewal**.

Co-collaboration 1: 'Inspiration, invention and lateral thinking: design methods and creative approaches to product development' (3 days) December 2010

- Reinforce and enhance existing creative capacity
- Transfer design knowledge, process and creative practices to the supplier enterpriser in order to improve on their products and business competitiveness
- Design / product development /innovation / diversification and range development, **Co-collaboration 2: 'Design Realisation and Prototyping'** (5 days) February 2011, supported by student collaboration¹

- Internal leadership, 'local ownership' of design and product development process
- Range development and 'added value', quality enhancement, complementary products and / or alternative markets
- Co-collaboration, communication, consultation, negotiation and inclusion, strategic decision making, risk management

St. Mary's Mahila Shikshan Kendra (SMSK)

St. Mary's Mahila Shikshan Kendra in the Gomtipur district of Ahmedabad in North-west India was founded by a group of Dominican nuns in 1970. With the support of an initial grant from OXFAM it was set up to provide stitching classes to women from the surrounding slums, and went on to establish itself as a sewing and embroidery centre. The centre employs indigenous craftsmanship to create the distinctive Gujarati style of embroidery featuring mirror-work and embroidered motifs of birds, elephants, flowers and foliage. Using locally produced thread and hand-loom cotton the centre makes products ranging from bags, cushions, tablecloths, bedspreads and hangings to Christmas decorations and to a lesser extent simple items of clothing.

SMSK supports the livelihoods of approximately 475 women, the majority working in their homes to produce the embroideries on the cloth. A core group of workers are employed full-time at the centre, undertaking stamping designs, sampling, washing and ironing the embroideries, storekeeping, product manufacture & finishing and packaging for delivery. The women outworkers come to the centre twice a week to pick up supplies and working

from home enables them to take care of their household duties and children and earn a living – nearly 40% of the women are the major wage earners for their families.

SMSK aims to provide employment at just wages to these women and Traidcraft has a longstanding and valued relationship with SMSK that stretches back over thirty years.

The Existing Position

SMSK is heavily dependent on export orders, which constitutes 95% of its' business. The major markets for SMSK's products are in North America (Ten Thousand Villages USA & Canada) and Italy (CTM Altromercato), but orders placed by Traidcraft in 2009-11 accounted for 11% of SMSK turnover.

Sales within the Indian market are more limited. Although sales to Fabindia represented 5% of turnover in 2009-10, the products are branded with the Fabindia label and the consumer would be unaware that the embroidered garments were produced by SMSK.

¹ 2nd Year Fashion students were offered the opportunity to collaborate in the development of design concepts appropriate to Traidcraft's customer profile, utilising the technical / creative skills and materials available within the supplier enterprise in response to identified market opportunities.



