

Women Weave Daily

“Artisan Fashion” as “Sustainable Fashion”

David Goldsmith

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
at the University of Borås to be publicly defended on
7 November 2018, 10 a.m. in Vestindien B

Faculty Opponent

Dr. Kate Fletcher

Professor Sustainability, Design, Fashion
University of the Arts London

The Swedish School of Textiles

Textile Fashion Center, Skaraborgvägen 3, Borås, Sweden



THE SWEDISH SCHOOL
OF TEXTILES
UNIVERSITY OF BORÅS

This research is primarily concerned with the social sustainability, or human development aspects, of *artisan fashion*, in the context of textile management. Artisan fashion is defined here as both product (such as a handwoven shawl), and as an evolving contemporary fashion system that typically employs rural artisans in the “developing world” to make products that are generally sold to urban, “developed world” consumers. Artisan fashion, which attempts to bridge old ways of producing with new ways of consuming, is positioned in this research as it has come to be viewed in the fashion marketplace: a subset of so-called slow and sustainable fashion.

Though artisan fashion is emblematic of many slow and sustainable ideals, there is little academic questioning or understanding of how “slow” and how “sustainable” the stuff and the system that makes it actually are.

This case study centers on WomenWeave, a medium-sized handloomed-textile making social enterprise in a quickly-changing small town in rural India. This producer, employing more than 200 individuals, mostly women with low-education and little privilege, specializes in *naya khadi*, a type of apparel or furnishings fabric whose antecedent, *khadi*, is an integral part of the grand narrative of India’s independence movement. Founded by a “social entrepreneur” with deep and privileged roots in the community, the case is idiosyncratic, yet representative of a common market-based ideological approach to human development.

Key Words: Artisan Fashion, Artisan Textiles, Slow Fashion, Handloom, Heritage Craft, Artisan Economy, Social Enterprise, Khadi, Design Management, Fashion Management, Textile Management, Activity Theory, Business Model Canvas.