

Vol.2 Issue-2 July-August, 2018

htaindoors

A publication by Home Textile Association of India

JS Institute of Design, rolling out its first academic year in September

HGH Getting Big and Bigger - connecting 500 Indian cities and 32 countries

"Small is Agile in the Home Textile Market,"
- Karan Sehgal,
CEO, Beekalene
Fabrics Pvt. Ltd.

The Renaissance Man:
Rohit Khemka,
Founder of
R R Decor



JAIPUR RUGS KNOTTED WITH LOVE



N. K. Chaudhary
Chairman

Our hand-knotted rugs and carpets once captured a whopping share of 37% of the global market. But this has been steadily wearing down, over the years. Nand Kishore Chaudhary, Chairman and MD of a social enterprise Jaipur Rugs, which he founded in 1978, blames it on the malpractices hampering our rug industry, and the lack of a strong weaver network that has made it difficult for Indian carpet manufacturers to compete on the global stage.

Q. We have a centuries-old tradition in hand-knotted carpets. Why is it disappearing?

Most people have lost touch with the rich history and tradition of handmade carpets and choose to buy cheaper machine made products. The art form has been hit hard by mechanisation and systemic malpractices plaguing this industry. The practice of working with middlemen who do not compensate the weavers fairly for their hard labour is a big reason why the next generation is abandoning its ancestral art. Little has been done to make handmade carpet weaving a sustainable art form for the existing weavers as well as the next generation.

On the other end of the spectrum, the end user has no knowledge about the skills and unique craftsmanship that go behind each hand-knotted carpet. Due

to lack of education, buyers are unable to appreciate the true value of these masterpieces thereby contributing to this decline.

Q. Is the product too premium for the market? Or has it not been segmented properly?

Hand-knotted carpets are works of art that you can walk on. They are a premium product and it is all about customer education and right positioning. The uniqueness and labour intensiveness of these carpets needs to be marketed properly to give it its rightful place.

The focus should be to make our customers understand the complex art of making handmade carpets and change their perception about their value. We try to convert this challenge into an opportunity by providing better quality rugs that last longer and



connecting the buyer with the artisan to give him an authentic experience.

Q. Who do we compete against in the same price range globally?

Jaipur Rugs quality and design is something which makes us exceptional. Along with this we treat our carpet more than just commodity, where we have different stories for our rugs. Same price, or price competition do not worry us much, as we always remain true to our core.

Q. What about the domestic demand? Is that also waning?

The domestic market is actually seeing an uptick in demand for hand-knotted carpets that match with the individuality of the buyer. Traditionally, rugs have not been very popular in Indian homes, but this is now changing and rugs are

becoming an important part of home décor for most urban Indian homes.

Q. What are some of the new and exciting innovations happening in hand-knotted carpets?

Jaipur Rugs has started a one of its kind social innovation in the hand-knotted carpet industry. Most designers, companies and exporters use only the skills in a weaver's hands, they have never thought of exploring his heart and his mind.

Through its Artisan Originals (or Manchaha) initiative Jaipur Rugs is trying to tap into the potential residing in a weaver's creativity and self-expression. This initiative taps into the untamed fashion from the villages of India. It experiments with the originality of rural craftsmen to nurture their creative potential, which is unexplored

With one masterstroke, Shantilal Shah became the pioneer of cut size upholstery business in India, armed with nothing more than a smart, attractively-designed catalogue to promote it. A brand got launched into a seller's market that offered zero size restriction on the entire range displayed in the catalogue.

at a global stage. For the first time ever, weavers get to be the designers of their own rugs. Each rug in the collection is a masterpiece for the design inspiration it weaves. It is imbued with the individuality of its artisan evident in unique artistry.

This collection has won numerous awards including the German Design Award, Elle Décor Award, Carpet Design



Award (runners up) and the European Product Design Award.

Through the Artisan Originals initiative rural men and women who have either had no education or just primary education, have stunned the world with original designs competing with professional designers and mega design houses on the global stage. It has renewed their passion for weaving, given them self-confidence and recognition from their own communities. They have discovered themselves in a way they had never imagined. The project has facilitated the economic transformation of weavers who used to work as wage earners.

Q. There is a certain perception that Indian hand-knotted carpets lack in modern design. Is this true? How do you address this design perception at Jaipur rugs?

The handmade carpet industry has moved from being a boring industry to an industry that is following in the footsteps of the fashion industry. The design language has changed dramatically over the years. Earlier designs were mostly traditional with a limited colour

Weaver turned internationally-acclaimed designer

Dhafali Devi goes emotional when she talks about the 'iF Design Award 2019' for her manchaha rug which she named 'Ujjwal'

The international iF DESIGN AWARD is one of the most important design prizes in the world. For 65 years, designers and manufacturers have strived to win the coveted iF label for design. Winning this award is a seal of quality for exceptional design and outstanding services. For both consumers and users, it is a symbol they can trust.

Dhafali Devi's Ujjwal was a part of a sustainable development initiative called Artisan Originals where weavers get to design their own rug. Using charcoal as a backdrop for her favorite colors, greens and blues, Dhafali Devi managed to tell a story of childlike free-spiritedness with her rug, Ujjwal.

She created striking diagonal stripes inspired by the leheriya pattern, a wavy motif found on saris and clothing throughout Rajasthan, and a design that constantly reminds Dhafali of her proud Rajasthani roots. She believes her leheriya saree can hold her world in it. In a show of how her everyday life has seeped into her work. She placed turnip-inspired motifs in her rug, dadaji's (grandfather) loosely hanging glasses, and Rubik's cubes onto the rug. Then surrounded them with butterflies, gifted clay pots, shakkarpara snacks, and raw mangoes – combining her love of nature, food, and family.

The rug is handmade with 222,184 individual knots using surplus yarn from the export rug industry. She is amused when she is asked if she had expected to win the accolades. "Never in my life," she says shyly on phone from her village.



Dhafali Devi won IF Design Award 2019

pallet and patterns. Now you have transitional, modern and even abstract designs in Indian hand knotted carpets. Jaipur Rugs has a large collection of modern and abstract carpet designs in the hand knotted segment. We work with over 3000 colours and our research and design experts constantly thrive to deliver unique rugs to our customers by experimenting with new ideas each day. We are also working on the right collaborations and co-creation opportunities to bring dynamism into the design language.

Recently, we tied up with Italian designer Matte Cibic to launch Jaipur

Wunderkammer, an eclectic collection of handcrafted rugs inspired by Cibic's visit to Jaipur, Rajasthan. Cibic has imbued his creative universe with the peculiar architecture and colours of the city and taken inspiration from ancient paintings and the architectonic sundial to design this collection. It's a very pop, graphical and colourful collection depicting a cool new India!

The new age customer is not just looking for a carpet, but an experience that she can share with the world. She is spending more time and money to decorate her space and hiring professionals to help her do it. She is more appreciative of home grown brands and slowly moving towards conscious luxury. We are trying to make a product that appeal to the sensibilities of a modern customer.

Q. These days, carpets are not picked as individual pieces. These have to blend in with the upholstery, the curtains and other elements of a done-up interior --- how do carpet weavers ensure this blending in?

We are trying to educate the end user as well as the architect and

interior designer community to follow international best practises and choose the rug first. Once the rug is finalised, the theme of the room appears from there and it's all downhill.

We keep an eye out for colour and pattern trends and our design teams incorporate them in upcoming collections. With a wide range of 3000 colour options we can also customise the rugs to suit the décor.

Q. What do you do in terms of skill enhancement at Jaipur rugs to keep the tradition alive and engage the new generation of weavers?

Jaipur Rugs trains and nurtures artisans in remote villages in five states across India and provides sustainable livelihood to them at their doorstep. It is a social enterprise that has worked towards eliminating the middlemen and ensuring fair wages for artisans. It has touched the lives of 40,000 rural artisans across 600 villages in some of the most impoverished parts of the country.

Reviving the dying art of carpet weaving and creating a sense of bonding and community is at the core of the

company's business philosophy. Through initiatives like the Artisan Originals (AO) collection where weavers become the designers of their own rugs and the Prison project where 80 inmates across Jaipur and Bikaner central Jails create their AO rugs and get paid to support their families – Jaipur Rugs is working towards keeping this art from alive.

To give rural artisans their due, the company endeavours to bridge the gap between the weaver at the grassroots and the urban consumers. Jaipur Rugs also provides functional skills to artisans and village community members, and brings transformation by providing an understanding of health, hygiene, family life, education and the environment through the Jaipur Rugs Foundation.

With the right push, I think we can host something like a 'Domotex' in India right now. We already have big B2B trade shows like IHGF and ICE happening in the country. The latent potential is huge.



Q. Consumers appear to be unaware of the fact that hand-knotted carpets made from natural fibres such as wool, cotton and silk are more climate-friendly than the polyester and polypropylene mock-ups made on machine. What can be done to address this issue?

Customer education through engaging content, social media, influencers and one-on-one meetings will help us take the first step towards creating a more aware customer base. Myths get burst when people experience something first hand. Facilitating customer-weaver

interaction and immersing the customer in the manufacturing process by taking her to the looms in rural India will help us clarify a lot of doubts that exist in the customers mind.

Q. When can we hope to have anything of the scale of Domotex in India to draw exhibitors to our shores and showcase our products to the world?

With the right push, I think we can host something like a Domotex in India right now. We already have big B2B trade shows like IHGF and ICE happening in the country. The latent potential is huge for this ■