

# INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY AND ITS IMPACT ON INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE SAFEGUARDING: A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN HAND WEAVING IN AKHMIM (EGYPT) AND POCHAMPALLY (INDIA)

BY

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## ABSTRACT

**[AR]** الملكية الفكرية و أثرها في الحفاظ على التراث الثقافي غير المادي: دراسة مقارنة بين حرفة النسيج اليدوي بأخميم مصر وبوشامبالي الهند تعتبر الحرف اليدوية التقليدية أحد عناصر التراث الثقافي غير المادي وفقاً لاتفاقية اليونسكو لعام 2003 مما تتطلب العمل على الحفاظ عليها وصونها . يهدف البحث من خلال استخدام المنهج الوصفي التحليلي إلى تحليل الدور الذي يمكن أن تلعبه أدوات الملكية الفكرية في صون وحماية حرفة النسيج اليدوي، وذلك من خلال اجراء دراسة مقارنة بين أخميم (مصر) ومدينة بوشامبالي (الهند) حيث تشتهر كلا منها بحرفة النسيج اليدوي. أظهرت النتائج أن أدوات الملكية الفكرية قد لعبت دوراً هاماً للغاية في صون واستدامة حرفة النسيج اليدوي بمدينة بوشامبالي بالهند، كما أشارت النتائج إلى الدور الهام الذي يمكن لأدوات الملكية الفكرية أن تلعبه في صون واستدامة حرفة النسيج اليدوي في مصر عامة وأخميم بصورة خاصة، حيث اوضحت الدراسة أن هناك تسع مجالات رئيسية مرتبطة بحرفة النسيج اليدوي يمكن لأدوات الملكية الفكرية تطويرها وتحولها من نقاط ضعف إلى نقاط القوة، مما سوف يؤثر بشكل إيجابي على حماية وصون حرفة النسيج اليدوي بأخميم. تم تصنيف هذه المجالات التسع إلى ثلاث مجموعات رئيسية المجموعة الأولى وهي تلك المرتبطة بالمنتج، أما المجموعة الثانية فتضم تلك المجالات المتعلقة بالحرفيين، أما المجموعة الثالثة فهي تلك المرتبطة بالعملاء.

**[EN]** Traditional crafts are one of the elements of intangible cultural heritage that all countries of the world seek to preserve and protect and Being currently enlisted in the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding, the traditional hand weaving in southern Egypt faces the danger of extinction. This article aims to explore the potential impact of Intellectual Property (IP) in safeguarding the traditional hand weaving in Akhmim and elevating its status from the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding into the representative list. To achieve this objective, a comparative study was conducted between Akhmim city in Egypt and Pochampally village in India, considering their shared cultural heritage but different approaches in utilizing IP tools to preserve their respective weaving traditions. Intellectual Property (IP) tools have been effectively utilized in Pochampally to safeguard their traditional hand weaving, whereas in Akhmim, the utilization of such tools has been lacking. The study employed a qualitative research approach by conducting four semi-structured interviews with four Egyptian experts from public, private, and non-governmental organizations, all focused on the sustainable development of Egyptian handicraft clusters. The study revealed that traditional hand weaving in Akhmim is significantly underperforming, leading to its inclusion in the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding. Previous interventions by international and local organizations primarily focused on product quality enhancement and diversification, overlooking the crucial role that IP tools can play in safeguarding Akhmim's traditional hand weaving. Furthermore, the study highlighted that making full use of IP tools is the most needed intervention for the safeguarding of Akhmim's traditional hand weaving at this time. It emphasized that IP tools can turn the main challenges faced by Akhmim hand-weavers into opportunities for growth. The study identified nine areas where IP tools can play a significant role in the development of traditional hand-weaving. These areas were classified into three main themes: product-related, craftsmen-related, and customer-related.

**KEYWORDS:** Akhmim, cultural heritage safeguarding, hand weaving, intangible heritage, intellectual property, Pochampally, traditional handicrafts.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The term Handicrafts refer to «products produced by artisans, either completely by hand, or with the help of hand-tools or even mechanical means, as long as the direct manual contribution of the artisan remains the most substantial component of the finished product»<sup>1</sup>. As per the 2003 UNESCO Convention on the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH), traditional craftsmanship is recognized as one of the five domains comprising Intangible Heritage<sup>2</sup>.

Hand-Weaving is one of the deep rooted Egyptian traditional handicrafts, as it has been practiced since ancient Egyptian era, it is said that the ancient Egyptian were the inventors of the loom as they used two kinds of looms: horizontal and vertical<sup>3</sup>. However, in 2020, traditional hand-weaving in Upper Egypt was added to the UNESCO list of ICH in Need of Urgent Safeguarding due to numerous challenges<sup>4</sup>, these obstacles have demotivated existing weavers from pursuing their craft and discouraged younger generations from entering the field due to its perceived lack of profitability<sup>5</sup>.

Akhmim, which is considered one of the most important hand weaving centers in southern Egypt, has been chosen as a case study due to its notable reputation for its vibrant tradition of hand weaving. Since ancient times, Akhmim has been acknowledged as a significant center for Egyptian hand weaving<sup>6</sup>.

Pochampally, on the other hand, was selected due to its similarities with Akhmim as a renowned hand-weaving center that faced a range of challenges similar to those currently faced by Akhmim's hand-weaving industry. However, through the effective utilization of IP tools, Pochampally experienced significant improvements in the hand-weaving profession and successfully safeguarded its weaving heritage.

By conducting a comparative study between Akhmim Hand weaving cluster in Egypt and Pochampally Hand weaving cluster in India, this study aims to examine how IP tools can be effectively employed to transform these challenges into opportunities for growth and revitalization.

To achieve its goal, the study investigates how Intellectual Property (IP) tools can influence the protection and enhancement of traditional hand weaving in Akhmim. It also explores how these tools can effectively tackle challenges faced by hand weavers in Akhmim including issues such as unfair competition with ready made products, limited market access, high turnover of artisans, and insufficient remuneration. Furthermore, how can the effective utilization of IP tools contribute to sustainable development and innovation in the hand weaving industry?.

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<sup>1</sup> UNCTAD 2010: 140.

<sup>2</sup> UNESCO 2003: 4.

<sup>3</sup> TODD 1902: 14-15.

<sup>4</sup> UNESCO «Handmade Weaving in Upper Egypt (Sa'eed)», <https://ich.unesco.org/en/USL/handmade-weaving-in-upper-egypt-sa-eed-01605>, accessed on (01/05/2023).

<sup>5</sup> ELGAMMAL & REFAAT 2013: 400; SOLIMAN 2022: 25.

<sup>6</sup> ABDELAZIZ & BREISINGER 2018: 14.

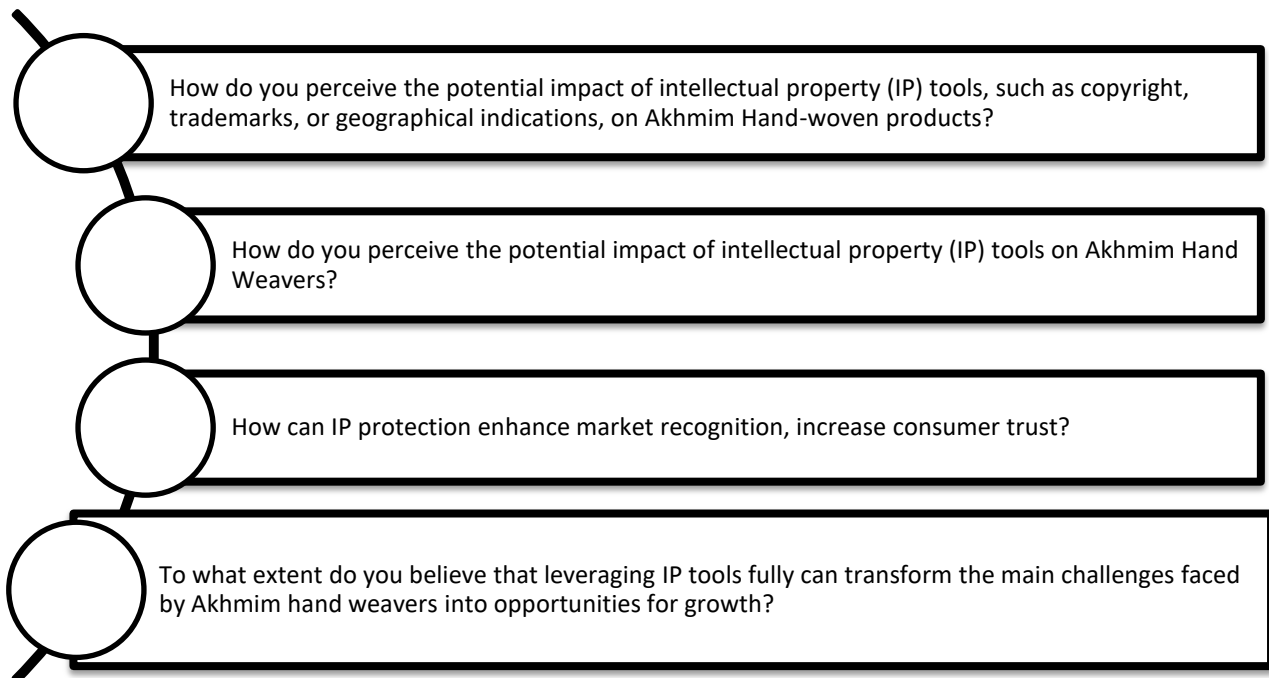
The importance of this study lies in its potential to contribute to the efforts of safeguarding and revitalizing Akhmim's traditional hand weaving. The findings of this study will be valuable not only to scholars and researchers but also to policymakers, cultural institutions, and communities involved in the preservation and development of Akhmim's hand weaving craft. Ultimately, this research aims to support the sustainable growth and recognition of Akhmim's hand weaving as an integral part of Egypt's cultural heritage.

## II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research adopted a qualitative methodology, through conducting four semi-structured interviews with experts in handicrafts sector. These experts, affiliated with public, private, and non-governmental organizations committed to fostering sustainable development in Egyptian handicraft clusters, these organizations are the Egyptian Chamber of Handcrafts, the Handicrafts Export Council, and a private company specialized in handicrafts marketing. The experts were selected based on their knowledge and prior experience with Akhmim hand-weaving.

The interviews were conducted to explore the potential role of intellectual property (IP) in safeguarding the traditional hand weaving in Akhmim and elevating its status from the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding to the representative list.

The interviews were conducted between 2022- 2023, they were conducted in Arabic and then translated into English. In order to keep the Anonymity of the interviewees, each interviewee's identity was anonymized by using the initial letter of their first names along with their age. The gathered data from these interviews was subsequently subjected to thematic analysis.



Research tool used

The data and information employed in this comparative study were sourced from a diverse range of sources, encompassing secondary sources, literature reviews, and two separate field visits. The first field visit took place in September 2022 to the village of the weavers in Akhmim, where observations and interactions with the local community were carried out. The second field visit occurred in 2021 to Pochampally village in India, where an in-depth examination of the manufacturing process was carried out, including taking notes and photography to document the procedures.

### III. LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)

Intellectual Property refers to «the legal rights which result from intellectual activity in the industrial, scientific, literary and artistic fields» The primary goal of intellectual property law is to protect creators and producers of intellectual goods and services by giving them a certain time period of control over their creations.

Intellectual property is divided into two main types: industrial property and copyright. Industrial property comprises patents for inventions, integrated circuit layout designs, trademarks, geographical indications, utility models, industrial designs, and models. On the other hand, copyright covers literary and artistic works, including plays, poems, novels, musical compositions such as songs and melodies, as well as artistic creations like drawings, paintings, photographs, and statues<sup>7</sup>.

#### Intellectual Property and Traditional Handcraft

According to Torsen M. and Anderson J. Intellectual Property (IP) can play a crucial role in the preservation, promotion, and safeguarding of both tangible and intangible cultural heritage<sup>8</sup>. Traditional handcraft, as one of the elements of intangible heritage, can be broadly categorized into three key components:

- **Reputation:** This pertains to the style, origin, and quality of the handcrafted products.
- **External appearance:** This refers to the shape and design of the handcraft.
- **Know-how:** This encompasses the intangible skills and knowledge employed in creating the handcrafted items.

According to WIPO, various intellectual property tools can be employed to protect each of the above-mentioned elements.<sup>9</sup> For instance, the reputation aspect can be safeguarded using tools such as trademarks, collective or certification marks, geographical indications, or unfair competition law. Know-how can be preserved through patents, and the external appearance can be protected through copyright or industrial designs.

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<sup>7</sup> WIPO 2004: 3-4.

<sup>8</sup> TORSSEN & ANDERSON 2010: 18.

<sup>9</sup> WIPO 2016: 2.

## Akhmim

Akhmim, situated in the Sohag governorate in Southern Egypt, has been recognized as one of the most prominent centers for Egyptian hand weaving, tracing its roots back to the ancient Egyptian era<sup>10</sup>. Throughout its history, Akhmim has been a prolific producer of hand-woven textiles, many of which are now on display in museums worldwide. Notably, a significant number of these textiles, known as Coptic textiles, were made between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>11</sup>.

To preserve this invaluable intangible heritage and simultaneously develop a tourist attraction, Sohag governorate took a significant step by establishing the «Village of the Weavers» [FIGURE 1] in al-Kawthar city, a mere 17 kilometers from the present-day city of Akhmim. This purpose-built village, established in 1995, comprises 272 houses. Each house has two rooms, with one room serving as a bedroom and the other specifically allocated as a dedicated space for the wooden loom. These houses were offered to weavers at a nominal rent, facilitating the continuation of the hand weaving tradition<sup>12</sup> [FIGURE 2].



[FIGURE 1]: The Hand weaver's Village in Sohag governorate © Photo taken by HASSAN BADAWY



[FIGURE 2]: A Handloom inside one of the houses in the Hand weaver's village © Photo taken by HASSAN BADAWY

<sup>10</sup> ABDELAZIZ & BREISINGER 2018: 14.

<sup>11</sup> HANN & THOMAS 2005: 58.

<sup>12</sup> ELGAMMAL & REFAAT 2013: 396.

Despite the dedicated efforts of the Egyptian government and various development projects aimed at ensuring the sustainability of Akhmim hand weaving craft, current figures and previous studies indicate that the craft is perilously close to extinction, as the craft faces numerous serious challenges including<sup>13</sup>:

- Inadequate coordination among the organizations responsible for the development of the handcraft sector in Egypt.
- Limited availability and high cost of raw materials.
- Substandard working conditions.
- Insufficient remuneration for hand weavers.
- High turnover rates and a lack of interest among younger generations in joining the sector.
- Difficulties in accessing local and international markets.
- Lack of certain skills among weavers, such as marketing, costing, and pricing.
- Competition with imported and factory-made products.
- Absence of branding initiatives.

The current state of the hand-weaving craft has had a detrimental impact on artisans, leading to a significant number of them abandoning the craft in favor of alternative professions, primary because of the negative impact on their earnings. Moreover, the precarious condition of the craft has also discouraged the younger generation from pursuing it as a viable career option<sup>14</sup>.

For all the above-mentioned reasons the hand-weaving in Upper Egypt was inscribed in the UNESCO list of ICH in Need of Urgent Safeguarding in 2020, highlighting the imminent risk of its permanent loss<sup>15</sup>.

### **Pochampally**

A village located in Nalgonda district in India, around 50 km. from Hyderabad, capital city of Telengana. It consists of 48 smaller villages.

Pochampally is renowned as one of the famous centers for hand-weaving, particularly known for its Ikat style silk sarees that are crafted using pit Handlooms<sup>16</sup>. The term «Ikat» derives its meaning from «to bind», signifying an ancient technique of generating intricate designs in fabric by resist-dyeing the threads prior to weaving. In this process, weavers tie strips of rubber tube onto the threads, creating areas that resist the dye and result in captivating patterns once the ties are removed<sup>17</sup>. The Ikat style of hand-weaving in Pochampally involves a process consisting of 18 steps, which include tying and dyeing bundles of yarn with precision to achieve a sophisticated color pattern before the actual weaving takes place<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> ELGAMMAL & REFAAT 2013: 400-401; SOLIMAN 2022: 18.

<sup>14</sup> ELGAMMAL & REFAAT 2013: 402.

<sup>15</sup> SOLIMAN 2022: 52; UNESCO «HANDMADE WEAVING IN UPPER EGYPT (SA'EED)», <https://ich.unesco.org/en/USL/handmade-weaving-in-upper-egypt-sa-eed-01605>, accessed on (01/05/2023).

<sup>16</sup> GOURI 2017: 481.

<sup>17</sup> GLOBAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP SUMMIT 2017: 2.

<sup>18</sup> GOURI 2017: 482.



[FIGURE 3]: Pit Handloom in Pochampally, <https://www.pmgovtscheme.com/telangana-nethanna-bima-scheme/>, accessed on (23/03/2023).

The hand weaving craft attracted great number of skillful Indian men and women who value their profession, the numbers show that there are around 5000 artisans and around 2000 pit looms in the village, which show that a great number of people depend on hand weaving as their main source of income. Most of the houses in Pochampally contain a place dedicated for Hand-weaving<sup>19</sup>.

### **The Performance of Pochampally Hand Weaving Craft before Making Use of IP Tools**

According to the published articles, the hand weaving craft in Pochampally was facing significant challenges. These challenges included: a deficiency in the marketing skills of the crafters, a limited range of product offerings, inadequate compensation for hand weavers, and reduced demand for authentic products due to competition with inexpensive products produced by mechanical looms<sup>20</sup>. As a result of all of these challenges, many artisans were forced to depart the village to search for alternative employment opportunities that would offer them better income<sup>21</sup>.

To tackle the challenges confronted by the Pochampally hand weaving craft and ensure its preservation, as well as to establish a unique identity for Pochampally hand-woven products, a number of intellectual property (IP) tools have been effectively utilized. These tools played a crucial role in enhancing the marketability of Pochampally hand-woven products and safeguarding them against unauthorized competition from producers who replicate Pochampally designs using low-cost mechanical looms, deceptively marketing their products as genuine handmade items. These IP tools include:

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<sup>19</sup> GOURI 2017: 481; UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE CENTRE: «Iconic Saree Weaving Clusters of India - UNESCO World Heritage Centre, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/5890/>, accessed on (17/04/ 2023).

<sup>20</sup> ROUT 2021, TEXTILE VALUE CHAIN «GI as an Instrument for Sustainable Development: A Case of Pochampally», <https://textilevaluechain.in/in-depth-analysis/articles/traditional-textiles/gi-as-an-instrument-for-sustainable-development-a-case-of-pochampally-ikat/>, accessed on (23/11/2023).

<sup>21</sup> GOURI 2017: 485; GOPALAKRISHNAN & BABU 2017:15.



## Geographical Indication

As defined by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), a Geographical Indication (GI) is «a sign used on products that have a specific geographical origin and possess qualities or a reputation that are due to that origin»<sup>22</sup>. It identifies a product as originating in a specific place<sup>23</sup>. This allows producers of the product to protect it from imitation, as it gives the right holders the power to restrict others from using the indication if their product doesn't meet the defined standards<sup>24</sup>. Pochampally hand-woven Sarees was successfully received GI certification in 2005, making it the first Indian handicraft to receive this award<sup>25</sup>.

## Trademark

A trademark is defined as «a sign that identifies and distinguishes in the marketplace the products of one enterprise from those of other enterprises». It can consist of various elements such as letters, drawings, distinctive words, colors, labels, numerals, shapes, logos, pictures, or combinations thereof. The primary purpose of a trademark is to enable customers to recognize a specific company's product or service and differentiate it from similar offerings provided by competitors. Additionally, trademarks help prevent consumer deception by ensuring that customers are not misled into purchasing counterfeit or fake products<sup>26</sup>. Pochampally handloom products have been granted trademark protection since 2018. The trademark includes letters and lines<sup>27</sup>.



[FIGURE 4]: Trademark of Pochampally handloom products, <http://bit.ly/41HTfHB>, accessed on (23/03/2023)

## The Performance of Pochampally Hand Weaving Craft after the Utilization of IP Tools

It is believed that after being granted the GI certification as well as trademark registration which resulted in the protection of the Pochampally products against the cheap products, the marketability of these products in the local and international market increased<sup>28</sup> and the products started to be sold for high prices as it became a well-known brand<sup>29</sup> [TABLE 1].

<sup>22</sup> WIPO 2021: 6.

<sup>23</sup> WIPO «Geographical Indications», [https://www.wipo.int/geo\\_indications/en/](https://www.wipo.int/geo_indications/en/), accessed on (20/09/2023).

<sup>24</sup> WIPO 2021: 23

<sup>25</sup> SAVITHRI & KUMAR 2014: 421; GOURI 2017: 481.

<sup>26</sup> WIPO 2006: 8, 34.

<sup>27</sup> *Global Brand Database*, <http://bit.ly/41HTfHB>, accessed on (24/12/2023).

<sup>28</sup> ROUT 2021, <https://textilevaluechain.in/in-depth-analysis/articles/traditional-textiles/gi-as-an-instrument-for-sustainable-development-a-case-of-pochampally-ikat>, accessed on (23/03/2023)

<sup>29</sup> GOURI 2017: 475-494.



Products	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Growth rate
Silk Saree (Rs/pc)	1443.15	1505.51	1600.23	2000.29	2500.36	3125.45	17.38
Cotton Saree (Rs/pc)	360.50	380.00	380.00	456.00	547.20	656.64	12.99
Cotton LDM (Rs/pc)	233.75	236.25	242.50	291.00	349.20	419.04	12.99
Cotton Fabrics (Rs/mtr)	66.00	68.00	68.00	81.60	97.92	117.50	12.62
All	1405.68	1466.12	1558.01	1946.38	2431.62	3037.89	17.33

[TABLE 1]: Prices of Pochampally products before and after GI certification. ROUT 2021, <https://textilevaluechain.in/in-depth-analysis/articles/traditional-textiles/gi-as-an-instrument-for-sustainable-development-a-case-of-pochampally-ikat>, accessed on (23/03/2023)

The high demand for Pochampally products has resulted in significant improvements in various aspects, including the overall income of the artisans, their employability prospects, and the quality of the products<sup>30</sup>. While silk sarees remain the most renowned Pochampally product, producers have expanded their offerings to meet consumer demand [FIGURE 5]. They now create a diverse range of products such as ladies' dresses, bed covers, curtains, pillow covers, bedspreads, and wall hangings<sup>31</sup> additionally, artisans have started customizing their products based on special design requests received from consumers. This personalized approach enhances the value of the products and contributes to customer satisfaction. In line with the growing focus on sustainability, Pochampally artisans have also begun incorporating organic raw materials like cotton, silk, and natural dyes into their weaving processes<sup>32</sup>.



[FIGURE 5]: Samples of Pochampally Sarees, <https://pochampally.com/>, accessed on (23/03/2023)

In response to the strong demand for Pochampally products, employers have undertaken significant initiatives to retain their skilled craftsmen. Their efforts focus on enhancing the overall working conditions, prioritizing safety, and ensuring a secure environment. Through a carefully designed workplace layout, weavers can now benefit from abundant fresh air and natural light. The use of specifically chosen construction materials further ensures a consistently cool temperature within the workshop, even in

<sup>30</sup> ROUT 2021.

<sup>31</sup> GOPALAKRISHNAN et Al. 2017: 25

<sup>32</sup> AIACA 2009: 49

the sweltering heat of summer. Furthermore, a fan has been strategically installed over each loom to elevate comfort for the weavers during their intricate work. This thoughtful approach extends to comprehensive medical insurance coverage<sup>33</sup>.

Obtaining a geographical indication certification, and the consequent increase in the demand for purchasing Pochampally products have had positively affected the productivity of the weavers who got motivated by the enhanced income<sup>34</sup> [TABLE 2].

Parameters	Year						Growth Rates
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	
Production (value) (in Rs. crore)	11.98	12.89	13.27	15.93	19.12	22.94	14.09
Employment (No)	452	456	464	614	619	628	8.46
Productivity (in mtr)	190.53	210.54	217.22	238.94	262.83	289.11	8.47
Sales Turnover (in Rs. crore)	9.61	11.44	11.68	14.37	17.68	21.74	17.33

[TABLE 2]: key indications of Pochampally Hand-Weaving before and after GI certification. Rout 2021, <https://textilevaluechain.in/in-depth-analysis/articles/traditional-textiles/gi-as-an-instrument-for-sustainable-development-a-case-of-pochampally-ikat>, accessed on (23/03/2023)

With the grant of Intellectual Property Rights protection through receiving Geographical Indication (GI) certification, the hand-weaving craft in Pochampally has emerged as a prominent tourist attraction. Visitors, both local and international, are drawn to the village to witness the intricate manufacturing process of hand-woven products and engage in conversations with the skilled weavers to deepen their understanding of this craft. Their visits often end by purchasing hand-woven products, thereby contributing to the sustainable development of the village. Recognizing its significant cultural and tourism value, Pochampally was selected as the best tourism village by the UNWTO in 2021<sup>35</sup>.

The recognition and popularity gained after receiving the geographical indication certificate have inspired the Telangana State Tourism Development Corporation (TSTDC), a governmental agency responsible for promoting tourism in Telangana, to establish a museum dedicated to documenting the tools and aspects of the hand weaving craft in Pochampally. The museum exhibits a variety of wooden spinning wheels, different types of handlooms, and displays samples of hand-woven fabrics. Visitors often start their visit by exploring the museum and then proceed to visit the workshops of the weavers, where they can witness the weaving process firsthand<sup>36</sup> [FIGURE 6].

<sup>33</sup> AIACA 2009: 49.

<sup>34</sup> ROUT 2021.

<sup>35</sup> UNWTO «POCHAMPALLY TOURISM VILLAGE», <https://www.unwto.org/tourism-villages/en/villages/pochampally/>, accessed on (2/4/2023).

<sup>36</sup> SAVITHRI & KUMAR 2014: 421.



[FIGURE 6]: The Museum of Hand weaving in Pochampally © Photos taken by HASSAN BADAWY

## Discussion

After reviewing relevant literature and conducting semi-structured interviews to evaluate the impact of intellectual property (IP) tools on protecting the traditional hand-weaving cluster in Akhmim and addressing obstacles hindering its sustainable development, nine key areas have been identified. These are the primary areas where intellectual property tools can enhance and transform weaknesses into strengths. This transformation is expected to have a positive impact on safeguarding and sustaining the hand-weaving craft in Akhmim. These areas have been classified into three main themes namely the product, the crafters, the customers.

### Product related areas:

#### ▪ Branding

Branding stands out as a crucial element in marketing, encompassing a range of tangible and intangible features like name, symbols, designs, logos, and customer experience. These elements are crafted to enhance recognition and build the image and reputation of a company or product. In a market saturated with numerous products, fostering intense competition, branding is widely acknowledged as a powerful tool. It serves as an effective means to distinguish a product, allowing customers to identify and connect with a specific product or service<sup>37</sup>.

M45 has claimed that *«Despite its great reputation in the field of hand weaving, Akhmim products lack any kind of branding, it is difficult for the customers to distinguish between all showcased hand-woven products, we need to create a brand that will help in*

<sup>37</sup> WIPO 2006: 11.

enhancing the awareness and the loyalty of the customers towards the Akhmim hand woven products»<sup>38</sup>.

A42 indicated that «there are many cheap ready made products are being marketed under the name of Akhmim handmade products which resulted in reducing the demand on the original products which made a great number of skillful hand weavers to search for any other profitable profession»<sup>39</sup>.

M45 and A42 comments revealed that the lack of branding of Akhmim Hand weaving products has resulted in misleading of the customers, unfair completion with the cheap products, reduction of the marketability of the products, minimization of the artisans profit, and the unwillingness of the artisans to remain in this field.

#### ▪ **Product Marketing**

Marketing has been regarded as the most serious challenge that face the handcraft sector in Egypt, such problem caused by many reasons including: the limited accesses to the local and international markets, The craftsmen's lack of electronic marketing skills<sup>40</sup> also identifies marketing as the primary obstacle facing the hand weaving craft in Akhmim.

H49 mentioned «using a trademark and/or geographical indication tools will enhance the marketability of the Akhmim hand-weaving products as the customers will became sure that the products are original and made by Akhmim Hand weavers, they also will be able to trust the quality and the information written on the label of the products»<sup>41</sup>.

The observation made by H49 highlights the role of IP tools in enhancing brand credibility, which in turn increases customers' motivation to purchase the product. This finding aligns with the research conducted by the International Trade Centre and WIPO<sup>42</sup> that indicates the crucial role of trademarks in facilitating customers' decision-making process by confirming the source of a particular product, ultimately leading to increased sales promotion.

#### ▪ **Product Diversification**

One of the problems that confront the Egyptian handicrafts sector is limited diversity in final products and designs<sup>43</sup>. In Akhmim, hand weavers primarily focus on producing a restricted range of hand woven items, such as bed covers, cushion covers, and shawls<sup>44</sup> [FIGURE 7].

<sup>38</sup> M45, OWNER OF A HANDMADE PRODUCT MARKETING COMPANY, 2022.

<sup>39</sup> A42, AN OFFICIAL AT EGYPTIAN CHAMBER OF HANDICRAFTS, 2022.

<sup>40</sup> THE GOVERNMENT OF SOHAJ, 2013, QAREET ELNASEEG(unpublished report); SOLIMAN 2022: 54.

<sup>41</sup> H49, AN OFFICIAL AT HANDICRAFTS EXPORT COUNCIL, 2022.

<sup>42</sup> INTERNATIONAL TRADE CENTRE & WIPO 2003: 32

<sup>43</sup> SOLIMAN 2022: 62

<sup>44</sup> ELGAMMAL & REFAAT 2013: 401.



[FIGURE 7]: Samples of Akhmim hand woven items, <https://www.dandarah.ca/collections/>, accessed on (2/4/2023).

R50 said «*all the hand weaving workshops in Akhmim produce the same products which they are trained to produce, this because they believe that there is no need to produce a new designs as long as there is no demand for it, but sometimes the bazar owners in Cairo, Hurghada, Luxor and Aswan provide the hand weavers with a certain design and ask them to create it, in this case craftsmen do not oppose making new designs. Using IP tools will increase the demand on Akhmim products and of course will increase the tendency of the crafters to diversify their products to satisfy such growing demand*»<sup>45</sup>.

What was mentioned by R50 is supported by the findings of the International Trade Centre and WIPO<sup>46</sup> which noted that using IP tools like trademarks will enable artisans to maintain the current customers and acquire new customers who will ask for new designs and colors, for that reason the artisans will adapt their products to meet such demand and increase their earnings, as well as to offer customers an assortment of products to buy.

#### ▪ **Product Quality**

The lack of quality control is considered one of the problems that face the hand weaving products in Akhmim<sup>47</sup>.

In this context R50 has stated that «*sometimes the low quality of Akhmim hand woven products is due to using low quality raw materials, also there are no quality standards that the artisans have to adhere to, the matter which resulted in the inability of the products to compete in the local and international markets. The registration of the craft under IP tools will require the crafters to produce high quality products in order to enhance the reputation of the business and to ensure that their products deserve to be granted with the intellectual property protection as they will do their best to maintain the image of the brand to increase the sales volume of the products and increase their income*» (R50, CEO of a non-governmental organization, 2022)

The World Trade Organization and the WIPO<sup>48</sup> report that consumers often purchase products based on the trademark associated with them, which assure a

<sup>45</sup> R50, CEO OF A NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION, 2022.

<sup>46</sup> INTERNATIONAL TRADE CENTRE & WIPO 2003: 32

<sup>47</sup> ELGAMMAL & REFAAT 2013: 400

<sup>48</sup> INTERNATIONAL TRADE CENTRE & WIPO 2003: 52



specific level of quality or certain attributes. If the consumers fail to receive the expected quality, they are likely to be discouraged from buying that brand again.

### **Crafters- Related Areas**

#### **▪ Income**

Low remuneration is acknowledged as one of the major problems that face Akhmim Hand Weavers, therefore many artisans shifted to any other profitable source of income<sup>49</sup>. In this regard M45 and A42 stated that *«the Hand weavers have families that they have to take care of, the income which is generated from Hand weaving craft is insufficient to make them able to meet their family needs and this pushes them to search for any other job opportunity with a higher income»*.

R50 also stated that *«in case of being granted one the tools of IP like trademark or GI, I believe that this will cause a significant positive change in the price of products compared to the cheap products which tries to imitate Akhmim original handmade products, and will also increase the marketing opportunities of the hand woven products, Thus, the craftsman's income will improve significantly»*<sup>50</sup>.

The aforementioned statements go in line with Bhat and Singh<sup>51</sup> who have indicated that IP tools like GI can enhance profits for artisans through premium pricing as consumers are willing to pay up to 30 % more for GI labeled products. Also, According to the World Trade Organization and WIPO<sup>52</sup> IP tools will generate higher income for the artisans as a result of increased demand for products which will lower per unit overhead costs.

#### **▪ Crafters Retention**

One of the problems that sand the Hand-Weaving craft in Akhmim is the high rate of artisan's turnover and the unwillingness of the new generations to join this sector<sup>53</sup>

A42 said *«the low remuneration of the artisans and the other challenges that face craft made them search for other job opportunities that can provide them with higher income to meet the needs of their families, even the new generations are not motivated to join this sector because they noticed that current crafters are leaving the sector in search of other jobs, and sometimes the workshop owners depend on a small number of artisans as they don't have the capacity to hire an additional number of artisans»*<sup>54</sup>.

H49 noted that *«I think that the registration of Akhmim Hand weaving under the IP tools will increase the marketing opportunities of the products and thus the artisan's income, so there will be no need to search for another job, also the motivation of new generations and their desire to join this sector will increase»*<sup>55</sup>.

The above mentioned statement revealed that IP tools can play an essential role in reducing the high rates of artisan's turnover through increasing the demand on the

<sup>49</sup> ELGAMMAL& REFAAT 2013: 401.

<sup>50</sup> R50, CEO of a non-governmental organization, 2022.

<sup>51</sup> BHAT & SINGH 2019: 14.

<sup>52</sup> INTERNATIONAL TRADE CENTRE & WIPO 2003: 46.

<sup>53</sup> ELGAMMAL& REFAAT 2013: 402.

<sup>54</sup> A42, AN OFFICIAL AT EGYPTIAN CHAMBER OF HANDICRAFTS, 2022.

<sup>55</sup>H49, AN OFFICIAL AT HANDICRAFTS EXPORT COUNCIL, 2022.

hand woven products which will result in increasing the income of the artisans, the matter which will increase the tendency of the younger generations to join the sector.

The finding is compatible with Bhat and Singh<sup>56</sup> and WIPO<sup>57</sup> which indicated that the IP tools like for example GI can play a vital role in increasing the job opportunities especially in the handicraft sector.

#### ▪ Crafter Productivity

Both A42 and M45 said *«The low demand for Akhmim hand-woven products has resulted in the low productivity of the weaver, as he will not make new products unless being able to market the products that were previously produced. The expected high demand for the hand-woven products after being granted one of the tools of intellectual property rights will motivate the weavers to increase their productivity to meet the demand and raise their income».*

R50 said *«the high demand on hand-woven products will motivate the workshop owners to hire an additional number of artisans to enhance the production volume»<sup>58</sup>.*

What was mentioned by the interviewees is compatible with the findings of Xiaotian & Xiaopeng<sup>59</sup> who noted that the IPR enhance the productivity of the business.

#### ▪ Working Environment

Working environment has been mentioned as one of the challenges that face the Hand weaving artisans as most of the workshops lack good ventilation and natural lightening, there are no fans to make the weather cooler in the summer no heaters to make the weather warmer in the winter<sup>60</sup>.

H49 said *«the current marketing volume of the products doesn't allow workshop owners to enhance the working environment of the artisans, as they have to pay the wages of the artisans, buy raw materials as well as pay taxes. The expected high demands on the products after being registered under IP tools will increase the profit of the workshops owners who will be motivated to enhance the satisfaction of artisans to boost their retention»<sup>61</sup>.*

### Customers- Related Areas

#### ▪ Product Identification

The original handmade products usually face unfair competition against cheap products that try to imitate the original products to mislead the customers who don't know how to differentiate between the fake lower quality products and original handmade products<sup>62</sup>.

A42 added that *«many fake low quality products are being sold under the name of Akhmim Handmade products with cheaper prices, in this case the customer who cannot distinguish between the original and fake products will go for the cheaper prices the matter that created a profound negative impact on the marketability of the original handmade woven*

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<sup>56</sup> BHAT & SINGH 2019: 15.

<sup>57</sup> WIPO 2021: 15.

<sup>58</sup> R50, CEO OF A NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION, 2022.

<sup>59</sup> XIAOTIAN & XIAOPENG 2022: 14.

<sup>60</sup> ELGAMMAL& REFAAT 2013: 404.

<sup>61</sup> H49, AN OFFICIAL AT HANDICRAFTS EXPORT COUNCIL, 2022.

<sup>62</sup> WIPO 2006: 12.



*products. The IP tools will be valuable assets as it will help the customers to identify the original products»<sup>63</sup>.*

A42 note goes in line with the International Trade Centre and WIPO, both of which indicate that IP tools help the customers to distinguish between original products made by an artisan or a group or in a certain geographical location and those similar products<sup>64</sup>.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study highlights the importance of intellectual property as a tool for safeguarding traditional handicrafts, as demonstrated by the successful use of IP in the Pochampally hand-weaving craft. By utilizing IP tools, the Akhmim Hand Weaving Cluster has the potential to overcome various challenges and improve the sustainability and efficiency of the hand-weaving craft.

Utilizing intellectual property is anticipated to boost artisans' motivation to safeguard their skills and transmit them to succeeding generations. It is expected to improve the market appeal of hand-woven products, elevate the income of weavers, decrease the turnover rate among artisans, safeguard original products from counterfeit competition, inspire craftspeople to diversify their final offerings and incentivize employers to offer improved working conditions for the artisans. The implementation of IP tools can bring about positive impacts for the hand-weaving craft in Akhmim, contributing to its brand building, product diversification, and environmental and safety standards.

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<sup>63</sup> A42, an official at Egyptian chamber of Handicrafts, 2022.

<sup>64</sup> INTERNATIONAL TRADE CENTRE & WIPO 2003: 73.

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