

# Exploring Traditional Handloom Value Chain and Its Sustainability Constraints in Bangladesh: A Qualitative Study on Tangail Handloom Industries

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## ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** In this paper, we tried to explore the traditional handloom value chain and its constraints which are threatening the sustainability of this sector in Bangladesh.

**Methodology:** The study followed phenomenological and grounded theory approaches of qualitative research. Data has been collected through in-direct observations, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions. Thematic analysis technique has been adopted to analyze data.

**Findings:** The traditional handloom value chain operates through the activities of raw materials suppliers, dyers, designers, weavers, local marketers, wholesalers, and retailers. Competition with power loom products, lack of financial assistance, long producing hours, high price, and changes in taste and normative patterns of the consumers are identified as the major threats to the sustainability of this sector.

**Limitations:** This study couldn't include all the handloom industry areas and personals of the country. To get more depth insight, it has focused on qualitative methods of investigation. But quantitative insight on the same problem could have provided a wider picture.

**Practical Implications:** At present, approximately 316,315 peoples are directly earning their livelihoods from this sector. The findings and recommendations of this study will be helpful to understand and eradicate the current constraints of the value chain of this sector.

**Originality:** Series of quantitative studies has taken place on handloom industries in South-Asian countries. But very little is known about the traditional handloom value chain and problems in the context of Bangladesh. This paper has addressed the gap by exploring the traditional handloom value chain and its constraints based on primary qualitative data.

## 1. Introduction

Handloom products are the heritage of Bangladesh which has a history of thousand years. The country has significant fame for handloom products, especially for handloom sarees in International Market. Jamdani, Benarasi, Katan, Muslin Silk, Tant, etc. are some of the famous sarees which mainly bear the heritage of different areas of Bangladesh. These sarees come with various designs, colors, patterns, and each of them is prepared and woven using different forms and patterns and each has a different process of making. Handloom Industries are located mainly in three districts of Bangladesh. But the Tangail handloom industry is age-old, among others. Total 510 handlooms industries are currently operating in Tangail (Numan, 2019). Sarees from Tangail are delivered to different parts of the country and it is also famous in neighboring countries like India, Nepal, Bhutan, Singapore, etc. According to Bangladesh Labor Foundation, there are 1 million handloom weavers in Bangladesh (BLF, 2019). The huge participation of people indicates its relative importance in generating livelihood for rural people. But this industry faces various challenges, hampering the progress and reducing the number of stakeholders.

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The history of Tangail handloom sarees can be traced back to ancient times. In 1906, Mahatma Gandhi called for the "Swadeshi Movement" which aimed to boycott all types of foreign products and use local products only. This led to the use and flourishing of local cotton sarees, which were then used to produce in Tangail. That was the establishment of the handloom industry in Tangail, which was a part of East Bengal at that time. In 1923-24, designs and motifs were introduced in handloom sarees (Banarjee, Mujib & Sharmin, 2014). The weavers working in Tangail in the ancient period used to weave muslin sarees. Men and women used "Chorka" or spinning wheels to spin thread from cotton and make clothes from them. The Hindu weavers in Tangail have a basic title in their name Bashak. Tangail, Bajitpur, Pathrail, and Nalshoda are the villages where most of the weavers reside.

Nowadays, the handloom industry is facing great challenges to sustain itself in the marketplace due to the technological advancement and digitalization of the apparel sector. The number of handloom industries and handloom professionals is gradually decreasing in the country. This pressing issue has fostered to formulate the primary motive of this study as to explore the traditional handloom value chain in Bangladesh. Previous studies have focused on quantitative techniques to identify the handloom value chain in other manufacturing sectors. But identifying the handloom value chain through the qualitative lens is necessary to gain depth knowledge about its operation and its constraints. In doing so, we used Porter's framework of value chain analysis. In 1985, Michael Porter used the term 'value chain' in his book 'Competitive Advantage: Creating and Sustaining Superior Performance. According to Porter's value chain framework (1985), there is a full range of activities that a product goes through, from production till final disposal; while moving from one player of the chain to another, the product is assumed to gain more value (Hellin and Meijer, 2006). The value chain helps to identify sources of competitive advantage in businesses (Brown, 1997) and plays important role in identifying the constraints of existing production and distribution systems (Abecassis-Moedas, 2006).

Apart from it, the study is dedicated to assessing the sustainability of the sector, more specifically sorting out existing problems of the handloom industry. The term 'sustainability' has a wide range of use in academia. In a general sense, sustainability means meeting our own needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs Parker (2011) whereas Business use of the term sustainability refers to the ability of one farm to pass through one generation to another without compromising its size and profitability (Wanniarachchi, Dissanayake & Downs, 2020). 'Sustainability constraint' means the factors hampering the successful transfer of the farm to the next generation (Vyshnavi & Nair, 2017; Rabiul, Tahmidul, & Subrata, 2016). In the handloom sector, different authors have used the term 'sustainability constraint' in various manners. Some have focused on the migration of handloom worker to other countries, like India (Islam & Hossain, 2018; Khairul & Elias, 2012), others have focused on the pressing problems of the handloom value chain which are hampering the cultural reproduction of new workers (Subrata et al., 2014; Rabiul, Tahmidul & Subrata, 2016). In this paper, the authors have accepted the second type of explanation of sustainability constraints; because the demand for handloom sarees is decreasing day by day. Several factors are contributing to this gradual decrease in the demand for Handloom products in the market. At the same time, they are affecting the value chain of this industry too. The sustainability of the handloom value chain not only affects few people, rather it affects the structure of the villages and communities, who earn their livelihood from this industry. Along with the communities, the country will face a great loss if the handloom industry disappears. The fame, the pride, the heritage will be lost if it is not saved soon. So, the problem of the handloom value chain's sustainability is a social problem that must be solved as early as possible. Thus, this study is dedicated to exploring the traditional handloom value chain, identifies the factors harming the value chain, and to recommends some ways to solve existing problems.

## 2. Literature Review

Handloom is a centuries-old weaving technique used by generations of artisans to create beautiful textile designs (Dissanayake, Perera & Wanniarachchi, 2017). Vyshnavi & Nair (2017) defined handloom as any loom other than a power loom. Because main devices used in weaving here are run mainly by hand and sometimes partially by using the foot. Historically, a large number of people in the north-western part of Bangladesh are engaged in this profession. Bangladesh Labour Foundation (2019) states that there are 1 million handloom weavers in Bangladesh. Whereas, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (2017) claimed, 3 lakh 16 thousand 315 workers work in tant unit of Bangladesh. This number has reduced from 10 lakh 27 thousand 407 in 1990 to 3 lac 16 thousand 315 in 2018 (Prothom Alo, 2019). Among them, more than 70,000 workers have been working in different Upazila of Tangail, including weavers of handloom and other looms (The Daily Star, 2008).

The country's handloom sector is deteriorating because of several factors, including lack of education and skill among the workers, lack of organization among weavers, and smuggling of cloth from other countries, especially India (Islam & Hossain, 2018). A study conducted in 2010 states that nearly 0.2 million looms have been closed due to a lack of working capital (Raihan, 2010). Quality handloom raw materials are hard to come by at the right time and the right price (Islam & Hossain, 2018). Another key problem of Bangladesh's handloom industry can be considered as the lack of technical expertise and skills, as well as the financial severity of the weavers (Latif, 1997). Weavers' younger generation has been migrating to other professions due to lower pay and insecure jobs. As a result, the weaver population has shrunk. The industry is afflicted by poor marketing and a lack of market linkage outside of the country, which prevents it from expanding and gaining more revenues (Liton, Islam & Saha, 2016). Besides, the migration of weavers in Tangail District is a major concern and reason behind the huge loss this industry is facing (Banerjee, Muzib & Sharmin, 2014). Since independence, communal violence in Bangladesh and a lack of business stability have driven many Hindu weavers to migrate to India. The lack of government loans and other funding didn't let the industry grow rapidly (Banerjee et al., 2014). Yarn is one of the major raw materials used for weaving tant, lack of sufficient yarn is also a major drawback for this handloom industry (Islam & Hossain, 2012). Moreover, Bangladeshi yarn isn't smooth (Raihan, 2010). As a result, weavers manufacture polished fabric with foreign yarn. India's smuggled yarn is silky and inexpensive (Islam & Hossain, 2012). Furthermore, poor weavers have the choice of purchasing it on credit from the sellers. Bangladesh's yarn market is not competitive at all. Smuggled yarn and cloth, particularly from India, is a major hindrance to the Bangladeshi handloom industry's growth (Banerjee, Muzib & Sharmin, 2014). The current declining condition of this sector is also due to a lack of proper government initiative (Raihan, 2010).

Different authors defined the sustainability of handloom in different manners by following different methodologies. According to Parker (2011), sustainability indicates 'environmental protection, social justice, economic fairness, and cultural validity. The core drivers of sustainability in the handloom sector are environmentally sustainable manufacturing processes and social inclusion within weaving societies (Wanniarachchi, Dissanayake, & Downs, 2020). It depends on the measurements of loss, profit, challenges of their daily professional and family lives, their safety and security, and so on. (Vyshnavi & Nair, 2017). Islam and Hossain (2018) analyzed the sustainability of the handloom sector from a socioeconomic lens. He suggested the changes in socio-economic conditions, usage of modern technology, monetary help, dyeing, and chemical supply, and different sorts of assistance to get rid of these problems to ensure the sustainability of the handloom value chain. Vyshnavi & Nair (2017) identified production problems; marketing problems, financial problems as well as adverse policy responses are responsible for shaking the sustainability of the handloom value chain. Khairul and Elias (2012) have discussed the sustainability of the handloom value chain considering its costs, revenue, and profits of different handloom units. Subrata, Moniruzzaman, and Shumona (2014) highlighted different causes that mainly hampering the sustainability of the handloom value chain. They identified different causes of migration of handloom weavers such as communal victimization, absence of government loan schemes, lack of security, increased price of raw materials, and better opportunities in India. Rabiul, Tahmidul, and Subrata (2016) in their article have as well identified different Challenges faced by the handloom sector of Bangladesh where different governmental and non-governmental cooperation is highly required to overcome these problems. Rahman and Noman (2019) identified different problems faced by the handloom weavers in Bangladesh that compel them to leave the profession and occupy other working sources. Raihan (2010) sort out that though the handloom industry is participating in the poverty reduction in the rural areas still some factors are working behind the decline of the handloom industry like lack of capital, scarcity and high price of yarn, marketing policies, lack of technical knowledge and education, smuggling of cloth and yarn and so on.

### **3. Porter's Framework of Value Chain Analysis**

The primary motive of this study was to identify the traditional handloom value chain and the problems faced by the stakeholders to sustain in the marketplace. For this purpose, Michael Porter's (1985) framework of value chain analysis is used here as the theoretical framework of the study. A value chain analyses the competitive strength of an organization by relating to the analysis of activities done within and around it (Recklies, 2001). According to World Business Council for Sustainable Development, "A value chain refers to the full life cycle of a product or process, including material sourcing, production, consumption, and disposal/recycling processes" (WBCSD, 2011). The value chain describes the full range of activities that are required to bring a product or service from conception, through the different phases of production (involving a combination of physical transformation and the input of various producer services), delivery to final consumers, and final disposal after use (Kaplinisky & Morris, 2001).

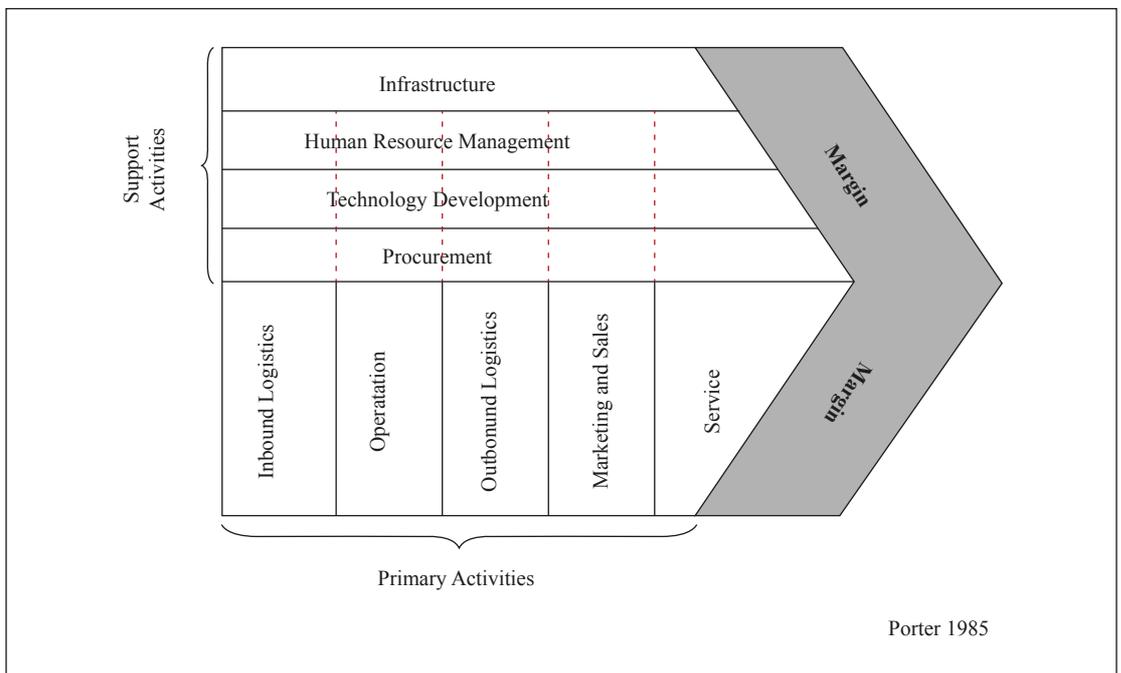
Porter's framework of value chain analysis is a widely used structure in academia. Porter's value chain model is considered very useful to provide a 'crucial understanding of value creation in supply chain relationship' (Zamora, 2016). Porter's framework is also considered an essential element in grasping focus on firm-level activities (Faße, Grote, & Winter, 2009). According to Porter, a value chain is a system, which consists of subsystems and which includes inputs, transformation process, and outputs (Porter, 1985). He has divided the process into two parts; primary activities and supporting activities.

The primary value chain activities of a company according to Porter (1985) include:

- **Inbound Logistics:** Raw material collection and distribution for further actions or processing is the inbound logistics.
- **Operations:** Operations include the activities which transform the raw materials into a final product.
- **Outbound Logistics:** Collecting and distributing the final products.
- **Marketing and Sales:** Identifying choices, preferences, and needs of customers. Advertising, sales promotions, etc. are included in this. Stakeholders should be more concerned about these activities to increase their sales.
- **Service:** After-sales service is needed in many cases.

These primary activities are supported by some support activities:

- Infrastructure
- Human Resource Management
- Technology Development
- Procurement



**Figure 1.** Porter's Model of Value Chain (1985), Source: Recklies, 2001

#### 4. Methodology

The researchers have adopted Porter's model of value chain analysis as the theoretical framework of the study. By following grounded theory and phenomenological tradition of qualitative research empirical evidence have been gathered employing direct or indirect observation, In-depth interviews, and Focus group discussions. The grounded theory method has been applied to explore how does handloom value chain works, and the phenomenological approach is used to identify the most pressing problems experiencing by the personnel of this industry. A short survey has been conducted to identify the socio-demographic profile of the respondent before the qualitative interviews.

This research is done on the handloom weavers of Tangail. A total number of twenty-seven (27) persons were interviewed for this research. Quota sampling of non-probability sampling techniques is used to find respondents of the study. These 27 people include Mahajan, weavers, dyers, and designers. Maximum of the Mahajan are possessing showrooms in Pathrail, Tangail. Moreover, they also sell their handloom products in Karotia Hat. Mahajan, who usually weave their handloom products for some famous retailer brands, are also included in the sample frame.

Twenty (20) In-depth interviews and 7 FGDs with weavers, Mahajan, designers, dyers, and raw materials producers have been conducted and recorded to collect necessary data for the study. After that, content analysis and grounded theory methods of analyzing qualitative data have used to gather the answer to the research questions.

**Table 1. Sample Characteristics of Respondents (N=27)**

Types of the respondents	Number of the respondents	Percentage%
Weavers	12	43.48%
Mahajans	8	34.78%
Designers	4	8.69%
Yarn sellers	3	13.03%
Total	27	100

Source: Authors' developed

#### 5. Findings

##### 5.1 Socio-Demographic Profile

**Table 2. Socio-Demographic Profile of the Respondent**

Variables	Percentage
Age	
16-25	23
26-35	36
36-45	27
46-55	10
56+	4
Total	100
Education	
Illiterate	20
Primary	63
Secondary	11
Higher Secondary	6
Total	100
Marital Status	
Married	79
Unmarried	19
Widowed	2
Total	100

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Monthly Income	
5,000-14,000	60
15,000- 24,000	15
25,000-34,000	19
35,000-44,000	5
45,000+	1
Total	100

Source: Authors' developed

The table is showing that most of the respondent of this study belongs to 26-35 years of age. After that 36-45 is the second major category. 20% of the respondent did not attend formal schooling in their lifetime. But the majority of them have obtained primary education. Approximately 80% of them are married and the majority of them earn 5000 to 14000 taka in a month as their salary. There are few exceptions also, 6% reported their income is more than 35,000 taka in a month. They are exactly the Mahajans who have their industries.

## 5.2 Traditional Handloom Value Chain

The chain activities of this handloom value chain are identified using porter's model. According to data, internal divisions of the chain are as follows:

### 5.2.1 Inbound Logistics

In the handloom industry, yarn is the main raw material, which is collected from the yarn sellers. Usually, Mahajan collects raw materials and distributes that to the weavers.

### 5.2.2 Operations

Operations include the activities of dyers (scouring, dyeing, drying), designers (designing, Jori threads), and weavers (weaving).

- *Dyeing Procedure:* Dyeing is needed because the yarn which is mainly collected is white in color. This white-colored yarn is collected by the owner or master. The white yarn has different qualities and different price ranges. The dyeing process has few steps. The dyers are provided with white yarns, essential natural dyes, and chemicals by their master. Then according to the requirement, dyers color the white yarns.

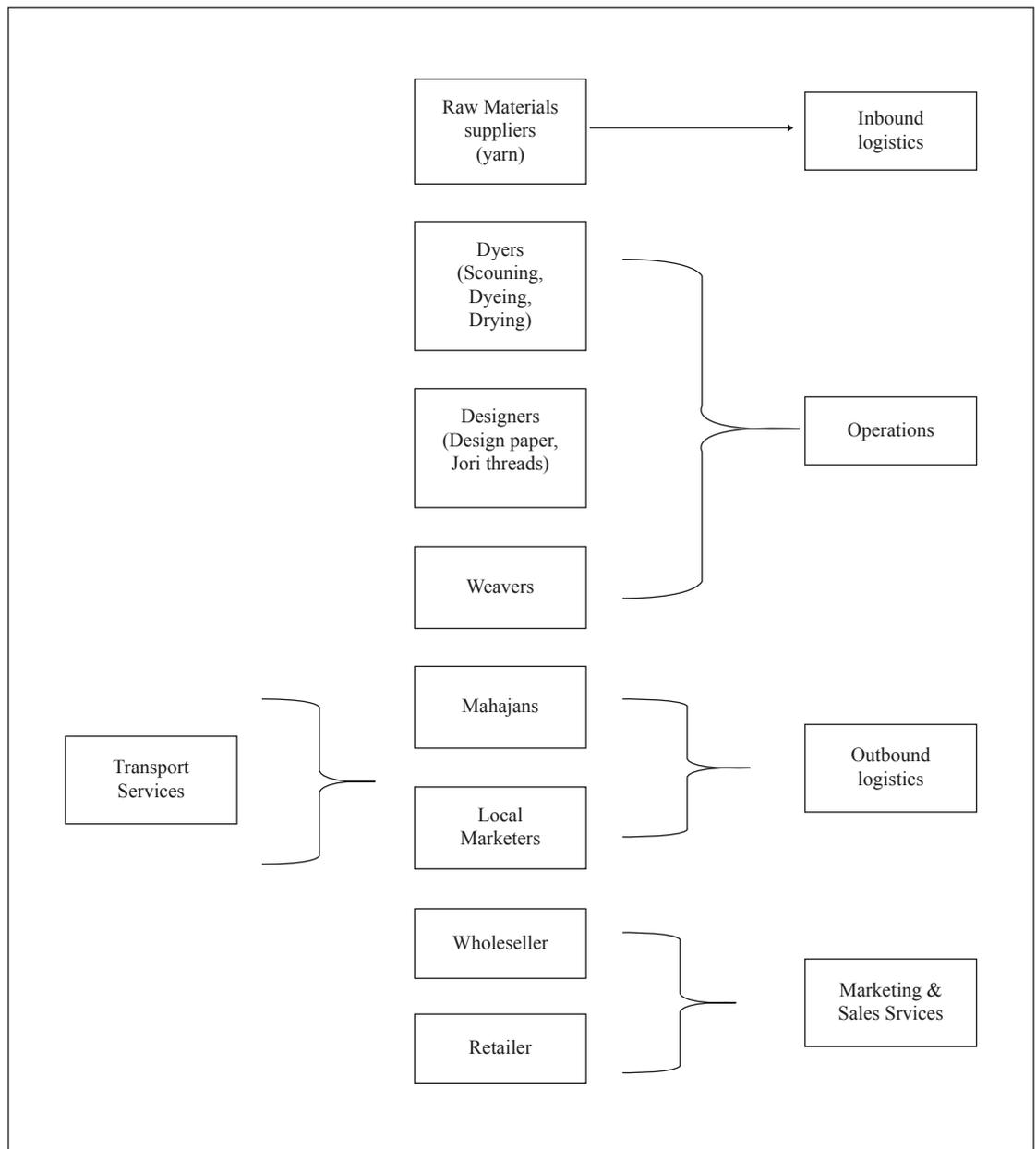


Figure 2. Handloom Value Chain Tree, Source: Authors Developed

- *Scouring*: Firstly, the ‘scouring’ process is used to remove any kind of dirt, waste, or natural oils from the yarn. It cleans the yarn so that the dye can set nicely. The beauty and perfection of the handloom saree mostly depend on this step of the total procedures. If the yarn is not cleaned up properly, the dyeing will not set and ultimately it will result in a poor look.
- *Dyeing*: Natural and chemical dyes are used to color the yarns. The yarns are sunk into the dyes for few hours while the dyes make the white yarn colorful. The beautiful colors we witnessed in various sarees are the ultimate reflection of this proper dyeing procedure. It is just an amazing scenario when one white yarn is turning into a colorful one.

- *Drying:* After taking the yarns out from dyes, yarns are squeezed and fixed in a heavy bamboo stick and then put under the sun for drying. The sun is very important for dyeing the yarns because sunlight makes the yarn more lasting and colorful. Dyer is assigned the task of collecting white yarns and coloring them. In the dyers' place, there is also one owner and other workers working under him. Dyers are the workers. The owner of a yarn shop is the master, who collects yarns from various places. He collects white yarns which are of various categories. He then gives these white yarns along with the required materials to color them to his workers. The workers color the yarns using the provided colors and dry them. The dried yarn is then collected and sold by the owner or master.
- *Designing:* The designer also works in the same pattern as dyers. There are owners or masters and workers in a designer house. The master designer makes the design on a computer, prints it, and gives it to the worker to work accordingly. He sometimes gets the design from the Mahajan and sometimes makes them himself. The workers under him cut the specifically shaped papers according to the printed design. They use specifically shaped papers to fit into the handloom machine by using a scale and some tools made of metal. Then they join the papers with one another, making a long chain of the cut papers that consists of the whole design of a saree.
- *Weaver:* The weavers get all the raw materials from his Mahajan and then start weaving in handloom machines. Weavers have their wooden handloom machines. After getting the yarns and designs from the Mahajan, a weaver starts working. The first work is to set the threads and designs to the frames or two machines of the loom. Setting this is a difficult job; it takes seven to fifteen days sometimes. Then he starts weaving a saree, using hand and foot. With their hands, he pulls and sets thread, and he presses a part of the loom. According to weaver Ajay Basak, "Mostly I weave 20 to 30 sarees with one design. To set the yarns and design, it takes 7 or more days, then according to the design, I need 2 to 4 days to weave a single saree," after weaving, weavers deliver the sarees to the Mahajan.
- *Weaving Procedure:* For making or weaving the handloom sarees, the loom or wooden machine is a prerequisite. Tana-Poren is the wooden structure used by weavers for handloom weaving, according to the local language. The 'Tana' is warp and 'Poren' is the weft. The wooden structure also includes tools like "Phaisel", "machine's bow", "narod", "nata", "BiswakarmaFota", "maku", "sita/noli", "hatem", "moron", "fanel" etc. All these names are according to the local language of the weavers.

According to weaver Narendra Boshak, "3maku is needed and there are two machines. We set the tana-poren, add the design papers, then make several sarees according to that specific design. Then again for another design, we have to set the tana-poren again." Weaver needs to set the yarn and design into the machines to weave clothes according to them. Then, weavers use both hands and legs to use the wooden structure or "tanaporen". The "tana" or warp threads move vertically entwining the "poren" or weft threads, that move horizontally. In between the horizontal and vertical threads, "jori" threads or brocade are used through "maku", which is a needle-like tool but bigger in size. This brocade makes designs on clothes.

### 5.2.3 Outbound Logistics

Mahajan collects the final products from the weavers and follows various ways to sell them or to ensure that the products reach the customers.

- *Mahajan:* Some are working there as Mahajan, who contact with the weaver, handing over the design to the weaver and then the weaver manages the rest of the procedures. In the selected area, Mahajan is having their weaving materials, where under them many handloom weavers are working daily. After the sarees being ready weaver hand them over to the Mahajan.
- *Local Market:* Maximum owners of weaver community or Mahajan have their showroom in the Pathrailarea and their products are being sent to bigger brands or retailer shops like Aarong, Kay Kraft, Foring, Benarashipolli, etc. and also to local 'Karotia Hat'.

- *Marketing and Sales:* Identifying choices, preferences of sarees and needs of customers, advertising, sales promotions, etc. are included in this procedure. Mahajan and retailers are the stakeholders who take part in these activities. They are conducting maximum of their business as a wholesaler.
- *Service:* After-sales service is needed in many cases. Retailers provide this kind of service. Mahajan might also provide service if any faulty product is delivered to retailers.

These are the primary activities done to prepare a handloom product. Along with these rudimentary tasks, some support activities have also come into effect. Those are-

- *Infrastructure:* The most important infrastructure needed for weaving is “tana-poren”. Prerequisite “Tana-Poren” is the wooden structure used by weavers for handloom weaving, according to the local language. The “Tana” is warped and “Poren” is the weft. The wooden structure also includes tools like “Phaisel”, “machine’s bow”, “narod”, “nata”, “BiswakarmaFota”, “maku”, “sita/noli”, “hatem”, “moron”, “fanel” etc. All these names are according to the local language of the weavers.
- *Human Resource Management:* Mahajan set the weavers who will work for them. They also set the wages and other requirements and facilities.
- *Technology Development:* Mahajan takes care of technological development and newer innovations for their profits. Technological development has brought power loom to the scenario, which is one of the major obstacles for handloom. On the other hand, technology has made transportation, designing, etc. easier.
- *Procurement:* Mahajan is involved in procurement activities.

### 5.3 Handloom Processing Actors

Handloom is one of the world’s heritages being used from ancient times. It is quite a long process from the raw materials collecting to the delivery to retailers. Raw materials suppliers, dyers, designers, weavers, Mahajan, local marketers, wholesalers, and retailers are the stakeholders or actors here. But still, the entire handloom production can be described in three sectors.

#### 5.3.1 Primary Sector

Raw materials suppliers, dyers, designers, and weavers are included in this sector. Raw materials suppliers are providing yarn, then the dyers by scouring, dyeing, and drying is producing the threads. The designers are plotting designs on the computer and with the help of the workers; they are plotting the design on hard paper. The full direction of beautification of the product is given by the designers including cross-stitching, jori thread using, and varieties color of thread using. After that, the main responsibilities go to the weavers. They need to fix the threads through weft and warp, insert design and start their weaving when the structure is ready. It takes quite a good amount of time comparing with the power loom industry. Weaver needs to remain very careful as a single mistake may spoil the entire saree.

#### 5.3.2 Secondary Sector

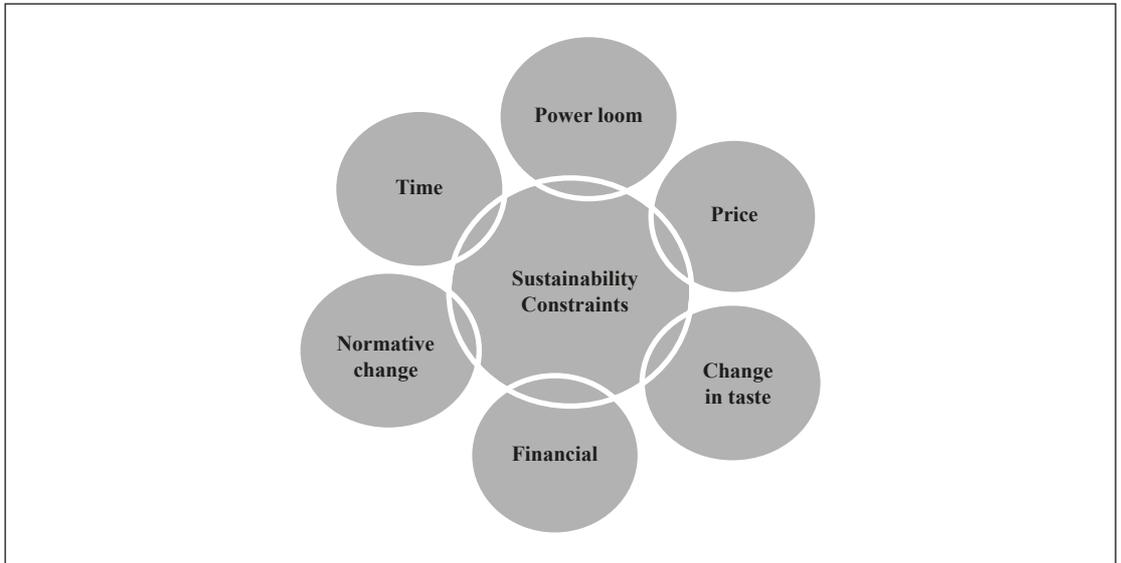
Mahajan and local markets are included in the secondary sector. Mahajan is taking delivery of sarees from the weavers and provide them to the local market at the cost of a handsome amount of money. Local markets are selling the sarees in ‘Karotia Hat’, local showrooms, in different sorts of local festivals, etc.

#### 5.3.3 Tertiary Sector

Traders especially wholesalers, retailers, and transporters are the main actors in this sector. Traders help to send sarees to the local or export market. Their role can be explained in three categories.

Retailers here provide the handloom product from Mahajan to final consumers by providing expected infrastructures and services. Transporters are mainly helping to deliver the handloom products to Mahajan to local market then retailer to the customers.

#### 5.4 Sustainability Constraints of the Handloom Sector



**Figure 3.** Handloom Sustainability Constraints. Source: Authors Created

Nowadays handloom products are on the edge of extinction. The gradual decrease in the number of industries is a sign of this destruction. Currently established handloom business owners reported that they don't want their children to run this business. They don't find any hope in this industry soon. According to them, the most pressing constraints are-

##### 5.4.1 Power-Loom Constraint

Due to technological advancement traditional handloom is now substituted by the power loom industry. In power loom machines are used with help of electricity instead of the human laborer. Thus, most business owners are now interested in this new system of production. One of our respondents, Bijoy Bashak said, "I'm trying to shift in power loom, but can't manage a loan yet. If the loan is sanctioned, I'll buy power loom machinery and will give my business a new shape."

Another Business owner, Suresh Bashak, explained the causes of this shift, "In power-loom, we can produce more products within a short period than in handloom. We can ship the products in due time. The making costs of the products are also very low at the same time demand is high. So, why not we shift to power-loom?"

##### 5.4.2 Price Constraint

The price of the handloom product is higher than power-loom products. But the retail seller or the industry is not responsible for this high price. Retail sellers are responsible for this high price. Haripod Basak, who is a Mahajan as well as the owner of a wholesale-retailer shop, stated, "we have a contract with Aarong, the saree they are taking from us, we need to give the weaver 1000 taka per saree and we are selling that sarees to Aarong by 2500-3000 taka each." But it was quite difficult to find these sorts of Tangail Jamdani saree in Aarong below 10000 takas each. It has some negative impacts as well. As everybody is not capable enough to buy sarees costing more than 5000 takas each, they are distracting from handloom sarees."

### 5.4.3 Time Constraint

The time required for handloom weaving is much more than the time required for power loom weaving. One of the weavers said, "Most of the time we can't deliver the product in due time. Companies always want fast delivery for every order. But we are not machines, we can't deliver like machines." On the other hand, power loom products take less time to be prepared for the market.

### 5.4.4 Financial Constraint

There is no specific government loan scheme for the traditional handloom sector. Mahajans and Weavers face lots of troubles in sectioning loans to run their businesses. In this study area, there is only one co-operative association, named 'Pathrail Tant Samiti' which is established by local handloom industry-related personals. Bonoy Bashak said, "I've tried for loans for hundred times, but can't manage. Then I managed the money from local Mahajans with a high interest rate. But the business is down now. I don't know how I will repay."

Apart from the Mahajan, (the business owners) weavers are also not getting their wages properly. As the wages of the weavers are getting compared with their labor and time duration, it is completely below standard. That's why most of them are thinking to migrate to India. 28 years old Pranta, a weaver, said, "I was trying to be married for last three years, but couldn't. Still, I'm unable to manage all the money to run a family of 7 members. I heard about the financial condition of Indian weavers from my relatives. They are well paid. I don't know anything except weaving; I've to live on it. If I get an opportunity, I'll move there."

### 5.4.5 Normative Change Constraint

In the recent past the number of festivals has increased in our society at the same time the celebration pattern also has changed. Now people want to celebrate every event. One of our respondents, Smriti Bashak explained, "Women don't want to wear the same saree on two occasions. Thus they need a huge amount of Shares every year. They use saree for a short period and only for show-off purposes. They want to spend less amount of money on one saree. Comparing the price between handloom and power loom, power loom sarees are cheaper in rate. So, customers tend to buy power loom sarees more, even though the quality of power loom sarees is worse than that of handloom sarees and not as much comfortable as handloom."

### 5.4.6 Change in Taste Constraints

Another vital problem is found that the women nowadays are not interested in putting on Sarees rather they are focusing on different trendy dresses. Besides, the availability of foreign products likes kameez and Kurta also responsible for this shift. Now females are more comfortable with this dress. They only wear sarees on special occasions. Rakhil Bashak, a small industry owner said with sorrow, "How can we sell handloom sarees, when you all are wearing kameez or foreign dresses? No one likes to wear handloom sarees nowadays. They are attracted to georgette and other products. Even if they buy saree, they do not want to spend much for one saree, rather they choose the cheaper power loom products."

## 6. Conclusion

Handloom is one of the world heritages which have its history in past times. The condition of the handloom value chain, its present condition, and constraints are explored in this paper by following the qualitative tradition of social research. Findings showed that it is quite a long process from the raw materials collecting to making the final product and sending it to the retailers. The handloom value chain is constructed with inbound and outbound logistics, operations, transportation, sales, and marketing activities. Raw materials suppliers, dyers, designers, weavers, Mahajan, local marketers, wholesalers, and retailers are the stakeholders or primary actors of this value chain. Raw material suppliers collect the yarn and distribute it to the dyers; designers prepare the output plan whereas the responsibility of weavers is to execute the plan. Mahajans coordinate the whole process and send the final product to the local marketers or wholesalers. At the final stage of this chain, retailers dispatch the product in the consumer's hand. Data also shows that the sustainability of this traditional value chain is in question. Competi-

tion with power-loom products, lack of financial assistance, time and high price of the products, cultural change in taste, and normative patterns of the customers are the main impediments to the sustainability of this sector. As a result, shutting down the business, migration to neighboring countries, the prevalence of poverty, unemployment is becoming the reality of the handloom-related personals. Without the strong intervention of the Government, it will be quite impossible to sustain handloom industries in Bangladesh. Thus, dedicated financial assistance for the handloom sector, increasing access to digital platforms to sell handloom products, setting out minimum wage standards can be some of the solutions to short-term problems. In the long run, a visionary policy is needed to save this year-old industry from extinction.

## 7. Recommendations

The handloom industry has the potential for reducing rural poverty in Bangladesh if further development takes place in this sector. For this very reason, the following specific steps should be taken as early as possible to save this heritage bearing sector from extinction:

- Introducing 'handloom loan' with 2-3% interest rate which will be out of any kind of taxation.
- Announcing import of raw materials and export of final product of handloom sector as duty-free.
- Opening special online and offline platforms to sell handloom products.
- Setting minimum wage as BDT. 8000 for handloom workers.
- Arranging subsidies for the handloom sector in the annual budget.

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