

# Shawls Market

## Making a fashionable statement with new variants

The shawl segment has undergone a change, with stoles and scarves making a headway. However, new blends and designs still have a strong demand in shawls which is seen more as a warm fashionable accessory now, write **Piasi Sinha** and **Ajay Goswami**

The humble piece of embroidered wrap widely used as a body warmer has come a long way from the valleys of Kashmir to the high street stores of Louis Vuitton. The simple shawl has changed its avatar to become scarves for the runway. It is a versatile fashion accent that enhances the style quotient and makes a personal style statement.



**Shawl has evolved and undergone a change**

**The domestic market is approximately Rs 1,500 crores business**

**Category expected to grow by 8-10 per cent this year**

**Market for shawls growing at 10 to 15 per cent annually**

**Newer versions like scarves and stoles more in trend**

**New blends in demand in domestic market**

**Overseas woolen shawls see higher take off**

**New designs, styles lure customers**

And this simple garment is for everyone. The target audience includes everyone from young, chirpy, fun youngsters looking to add some spunk to their wardrobe to the elegant and stylish fashionistas, from teenagers to the octogenarians.

**Shawls for the masses and classes**

Traditional shawls have a history that dates back as early as 1803 in India. Kashmiri needlework production was established back then to increase and hasten output of these shawls. Later on it was imitated in England



**Amit Jain,**  
President, Shingora

“No one wants to commit to anything. Everyone wants to wait till the last minute to place orders. This leads to uncertainty in the market. We don’t know what to produce, how much to produce. But our year-on-year growth is about 15 percent. Sales would be driven by women’s line while the children’s line and men’s line would grow somewhere between 10-12 per cent . Net input costs have gone up. But there is no increase in end prices.”

since 1784 and even in France. But by 1870, the advent of the Jacquard loom in Europe destroyed the exclusivity of the original Kashmir shawl, which began to be produced in Paisley, Scotland. Soon enough, always a luxury commodity, the intricate, tapestry-woven, fine wool shawl had become a fashionable wrap for the ladies of the English and French elite by the 18th century.

Till date, fashion is driving demand for shawls, stoles and scarves as prime accessories. Today, the domestic market is approximately Rs 1,500 crores and the sector is expected to grow at 8-10 per cent this year. As per market reports, the domestic market for shawls is growing at 10 to 15 per cent annually with newer versions like scarves and stoles.

“This year we are expecting about 13-15 per cent increase in growth rate. The sale of shawls depends upon the climatic conditions. As earlier winter seasons used to be for 3-4 months and now it only lasts for 1-2 months. Nowadays winter is moderate so in such climatic condition people demand for stoles rather than shawls,” says Ashwani

Kumar Sabharwal , Proprietor, Diva Shawls. Today, there are two broad segments in shawls category and brands are working on creating distinctive collections as per demand. “We target the middle class with shawls made of wool-polyester and viscose fabrics and with karni gold fabrics, we usually target the premium class,” says Sabharwal.

On the other hand, brands like Shingora are targeting a wider audience ranging from 8 to 55 years. “My brand does a line for men from pocket squares to scarves. For women, we do shawls, scarves, squares, neck scarves and stoles. We have a core collection, which is more for the upper middle class. And we have a premium collection for the upper end of the market. Core is priced between Rs 1,500 to Rs 5,500; premium shawls are for Rs 5,500 to Rs 15,000,” says Amit Jain, President, Shingora.

**From wardrobe to fashion runways**

“Winter is always more suited for shawls sale. Sales are driven by the need for fashionable clothes that help manage frequent changes in weather,” points out Jain. In today’s contemporary fashion



**Ashwani Kumar**  
Sabharwal , Proprietor,  
Diva Shawls

“Nowadays there is more demand for printed shawls and stoles whereas earlier plain shawls and stoles were in demand. Two or three years back, there was more demand for wool-polyester fabric and last year, demand was for fine wool fabric. It keeps changing year to year. Globally, pure wool shawls are more sought after. This year, there is about 10-15 per cent increase in prices of raw materials.”

scene traditional shawl is preferred only by a niche market even though it continues to be in demand to make a fashion statement. Evolving consumers tastes have pushed shawl players to introduce products matching expectations. Brands are going the extra mile to offer unique and trendy designs to woo young customers.

“The customer is evolving and becoming more demanding and discerning about latest international fashion trends. Technological upgradation of looms, yarn dyeing and print machinery and effluent treatments is a regular investment by Shingora to improve the product quality and meet international standards” adds Jain.

Like all other fashion categories, shawls segment is also being driven by design innovation. From Pashmina to Swarovski, marketers are trying to create exclusivity to cater to the discerning customer. “Every year, we make new and fresh prints in shawls. We make shawls and stoles out of fabrics like viscose, wool, wool-polyester and karni gold. Stoles are also made up of modal fabric whereas we don’t make shawls out of this fabric. The demand for shawls

also varies according to the area. People in Delhi prefer shawls made of karni gold fabric as they consider it a fashion statement and warm enough to protect them from cold," explains Jain.

Different types of shawls are in demand among rural and urban people. In small cities, people demand shawls made of fabrics like viscose and wool-polyester. Stoles are mostly in demand from the youth and shawls by elderly. "For youth, we make fancy, colorful shawls which are pocket friendly. Popular colors are: white, red, black, pink, purple, blue, mustard, bottle green, maroon and dark pink.

Every year, we just experiment with these colors," says Sabharwal. Similarly, Shingora innovates with woolen shawls. "We do indigo dyeing on wool. We have developed new fabrics that are lightweight fabrics and blended. The fabrics are blended with cashmere, silk, modal, wool. For colors, we normally follow international trends. In India, colors are black and maroon," opines Jain.

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whereas earlier plain shawls and stoles were in demand. Two or three years back, there was more demand for wool-polyester fabric and last year, demand was for fine wool fabric. It keeps changing year to year. Globally, pure wool shawls are more sought after. This year, there is about 10-15 per cent increase in prices of raw materials," avers Sabharwal.

However, experts believe India is still lagging behind in innovation. "There is very little innovation happening in India. They want to make cheap products while customers may not be looking for cheap offerings. The shawl industry can focus on innovations as cheap products inhibit progress.

I feel the customer is ready to pay for something innovative. You may be surprised to know my expensive products sell the most. That clearly says the customer doesn't care about price. But people in this industry are competing with each other in reducing prices. And a fashion product becomes a commodity," opines Jain.

### What ails shawl category

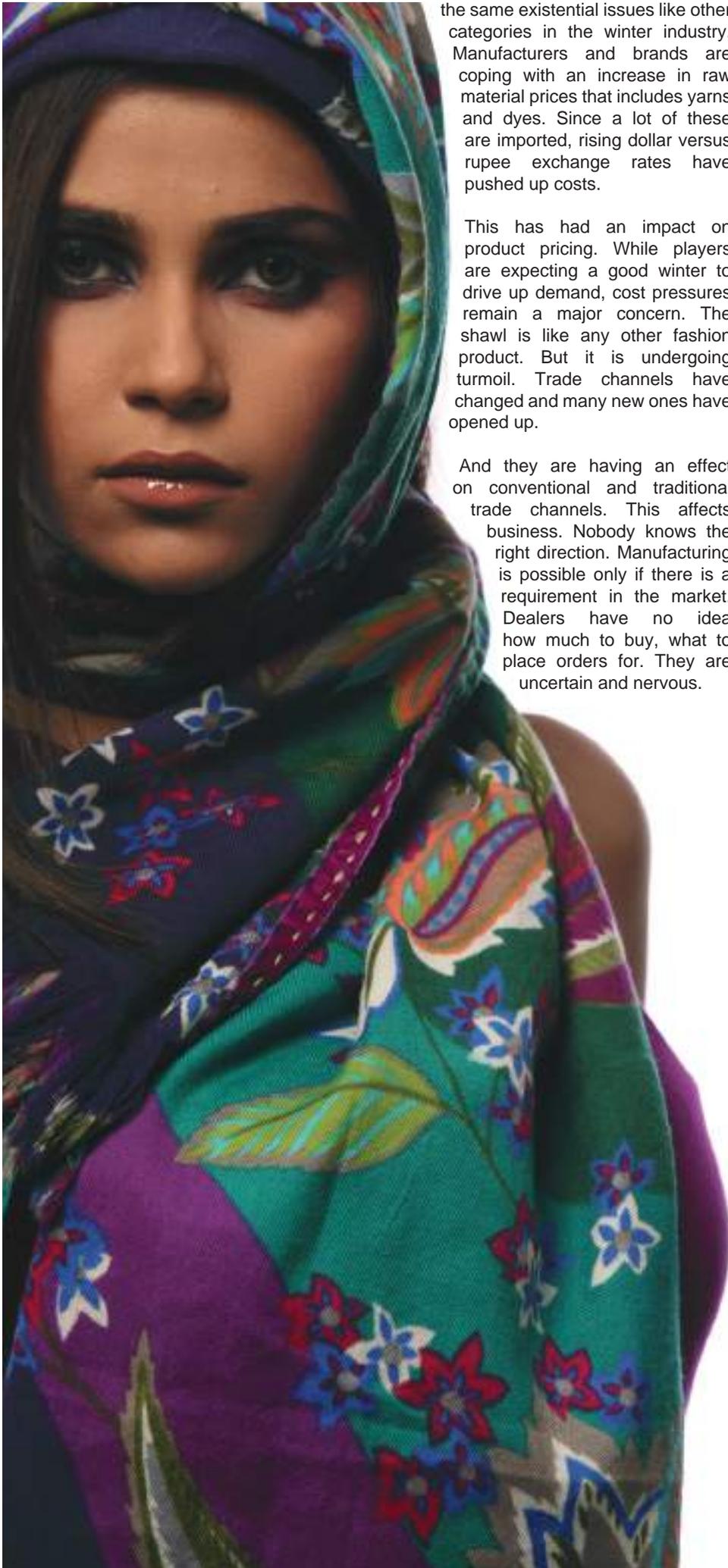
Though the product has a versatile aspect which makes it a perfect fashion accessory, the shawls segment is facing



**Ashish Jain,**  
Director, Hang n Hold

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the same existential issues like other categories in the winter industry. Manufacturers and brands are coping with an increase in raw material prices that includes yarns and dyes. Since a lot of these are imported, rising dollar versus rupee exchange rates have pushed up costs.

This has had an impact on product pricing. While players are expecting a good winter to drive up demand, cost pressures remain a major concern. The shawl is like any other fashion product. But it is undergoing turmoil. Trade channels have changed and many new ones have opened up.

And they are having an effect on conventional and traditional trade channels. This affects business. Nobody knows the right direction. Manufacturing is possible only if there is a requirement in the market. Dealers have no idea how much to buy, what to place orders for. They are uncertain and nervous.

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“No one wants to commit to anything. Everyone wants to wait till the last minute to place orders. This leads to uncertainty in the market. We don’t know what to produce, how much to produce. But our year on year growth is about 15 percent. Sales would be driven by women’s line while the children’s line and men’s line would grow somewhere between 10-12 per cent. Net input costs have gone up. But there is no increase in end prices,” Jain laments.

Meanwhile, branded shawl makers are facing competition from the unbranded market. The Indian shawl industry being primarily unorganised, brands are finding it challenging to retain profitability while offering quality. But organised players are now focusing on consolidating and trying to gain a footprint all across India. As Ashish Jain, Director, Hang n Hold says “Shawls category is growing well not only in domestic market but abroad too. We export shawls to Europe.

Shawls are mostly made of wool and modal, with lots of embroidery and handwork. We have bright colours.” The brand is looking for distributors in the southern markets. It already has a good presence in North with 800 multi brand outlets. They recently launched its website [www.hnh.in](http://www.hnh.in) and has tied up with major e-commerce platforms. Shingora too has presence through multi brand outlets and further plans to open five exclusive brand outlet in Tier II towns of North India.

Shawls segment in India is facing the same existential issues like other categories in the apparel industry. Manufacturers and brands are coping with an increase in raw material prices that includes yarns and dyes. Since a lot of these are imported, rising dollar versus rupee exchange rates have pushed up costs. This has had an impact on product pricing. While players are expecting a good winter to drive up demand, cost pressures are a major bug bear.