

Advancement in Handicraft Techniques: Traditional Skills with Contemporary Market Demands

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Arts and crafts, Craftsmanship, Market tendency, Product development, Online stores, and Environmental conservation.	Artisan products have significant cultural and economic importance, yet artisan organizations struggle to remain viable. The purpose of this research was to examine how traditional handicraft technologies can harmonize with current consumer requirements. In the study, both artisans and consumers were interviewed and self-completed questionnaires about the ideas of updating designs, materials, and selling platforms yet preserving the handicraft attribute. Analytical conclusions indicated modern designs with the retention of traditional shapes, the shift towards the use of eco-friendly materials, and sales through online platforms. In terms of percentage, consumers' preferences were 60% for traditional designs, 70% for sustainable materials, 40% for willingness to pay a premium price, and 55% for comfort in digital shopping. Some of the topics pointed out the desire to improve handicrafts by integrating traditional construction with contemporary design, environmentally friendly materials, and e-commerce. Conclusions highlighted the need to combine a conservative approach with the appeal to modern consumers. Recommendations entailed product development that embraced artisan skills, enhancement of capacity to produce unique designs, use of sustainable materials, and an online platform to ensure the socioeconomic sustainability of handicrafts. The paramount idea is maintaining history while increasing marketability. This study offers significant implications for how conventional skills of handicrafts can be merged with present-day consumer requirements utilizing effective change management..

1. INTRODUCTION

Crafting has therefore had a very significant sociopolitical and economic significance within the course of the development of human civilization. Handicraft goods are products mainly made by hand, whereby many items are made using simple tools and techniques inherited from forefathers (Chen et al., 2019). Handicraft skills are therefore a cornerstone of many cultures and societies, reflecting their history and character. In many developed countries in the world and in recent decades, the traditional handicraft industries have been facing a lot of challenges and have been forced to close down because of factors such as globalization, industrialization, and changes in consumer demand (Mair et al., 2006). On the same note, there is increasing awareness of the need to retain traditional artisan skills and support artisans to continue earning a means through.



handicrafts. This has resulted in a growing push to reconcile traditional handicraft practices with modern business requirements through modifying processes and aesthetics while preserving the foundational concept and heritage associated with craftsmanship (Kapur et al., 2014). Consumer goods such as handicrafts are attractive to buyers because they are made by hand, frequently with a touch of cultural influence. Research has also examined how consumer experiences relate to characteristics such as originality, novelty, beauty, and quality of handmade items with certain cultural backgrounds. There is an opportunity to seek ways of upgrading traditional handicraft skills into products that will be appealing to the contemporary market. Efforts on different fronts seek this balance between the restoration of cultural heritage and the need to satisfy the market forces in the revival of the folklore-based craft sector (Majeed et al., 2023). These include technology, technological advancements in materials and product development, enhancements in organization and marketing skills within artisan firms, and policy initiatives that give credence to the social, economic, cultural, and environmental significance of traditional methods of hand-making quality products (Mwila, N2024). The handicraft industry has significant

socioeconomic importance in numerous developing countries, offering a source of income to numerous numbers of low-income, rural, or disadvantaged crafts producers (Jose et al., 2021). In India, more than 6.8 million people work in the handicraft industry, including people from vulnerable groups. It is therefore beneficial for artisan groups to be enabled to access markets other than the residual consumption one if they are to sustain their income generation (Chattalas et al., 2015). This has been driven by gaps in product styling, inability to source raw materials all year round, lack of information on the outside market, and limited resources that prevent the use of technology (Tiwari et al., 2023). Focusing on such bottlenecks can be used to mainstream the articulation of artisanal groups with expanding market opportunities. Several technologies can address handicraft sector challenges and improve market access. These include electronic facilitators such as e-commerce and online knowledge-sharing structures, plus production technologies like laser cutting, 3D printing as well as computer-aided design (CAD) (Duan et al., 2023). Web-based handicraft markets have made it possible for women artisans' groups all over India to market their products to urban and international consumers. Technological aid is therefore reducing the traditional past reliance on middlemen and localized markets (Walsh et al., 2014). Inadequate access to resources and technology skills within the disadvantaged artisan groups can slow down the use of the technologies. Efforts to increase the adoption of technology and facilitate necessary capital investments are important for traditional handicraft organizations to fully leverage the current technologies. Apart from technological improvement, innovation in material and product design is necessary to fit handicrafts with modern trends (Chen et al., 2019). Design inputs are essential in changing conventional artisanal products and converting them to popular consumer products by altering characteristics such as ergonomics, functionality, and aesthetics into those that conform to present-day life. Some of these design-led handicraft innovations are being championed by the private sector and governments in various countries like Thailand through trend forecasting, product development, and initial testing with a target market. The dilemma of operational commercialism and artistic integrity becomes blended when incorporating craft motifs into outside requirements (Sarma et al., 2024). Some of the creative control aspects can include: sustaining artisanal qualities can allow for a unique market positioning as compared to products that are produced in high volumes. There is also the need to pay attention to sustainable sourcing of raw materials when enhancing handicrafts to reduce pressure on the environment through extraction. In addition to product improvements, interventions for organizational development aiming at improving the trade capacities of the artisan groups need policy consideration. The art and craft ventures from the grassroots are usually devoid of business wisdom regarding other buyers apart from localized cultural tourism clientele (Zbucha, A. 2022). Efforts to enhance the competencies of handicraft collectives such as costing, quality standards, inventory, and export systems can increase the market potential. India's national handicraft development program is an example of government-supported cluster-based enterprise development, skill development, design and technology access, and marketing support for the artisan groups (Mwila, N 2024). Such multifaceted policy measures acknowledging the fact that handicraft production has both cultural and commercial aspects are crucial for the absorption of traditional artisans into the mainstream economy. Thus, the sustainable integration of time-honored craft-making practices and modern customer demands is crucial for the continued survival and revival of artisanal craftsmanship in the emergent global markets (Jose et al., 2021). This needs comprehensive intervention strategies that include technology support, product development, and enterprise development alongside politicization of handicraft identity that recognizes their dual social/economic roles. Market linkage for handicraft preservation involves multiple players such as artisan groups, businesses, designers, charitable foundations, and government departments (Latuszynska et al., 2012). Thus, developing such value-added synergistic networks across the handicraft value chain, the traditional and core skill sets are capable of creating enhanced and diversified livelihood chances for the deprived artisan communities and at the same time satisfying the emerging consumer pull factors of authentic and culturally diverse products.

2. METHODOLOGY

Study Design

Both qualitative and quantitative research procedures were used to explore the innovations in the conventional techniques of handicrafts and their relevance to the current market. It consisted of two sections: In the qualitative phase, 25 artisans, craft organizations, and market experts were interviewed to gain knowledge about the alteration in techniques, materials, and consumers' preferences. The goal was to get information on how the artisans have been able to change their work to fit the new market trends. In the quantitative phase, a self-developed and structured questionnaire was administered to 150



consumers and 50 handicraft-selling vendors to assess the market situation and consumer needs. The survey sought to determine issues such as tradition/modernism, willingness to pay, and perceived quality. In this regard, the study employed a focus on qualitative data in combination with quantitative data to close the existing gap between the ornate artistic work of artisans and the contemporary trend-seeking buyer. The three-dimensional strategy gave a broad picture of how handicraft skills and designs may be taken forward to produce more marketable articles.

Data Collection

The study on the advancement of techniques of handicrafts involved both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were carried out with artisans and these were recorded and transcribed. Thematic analysis was used in the context of the study and utilized to show the changes that have occurred in handicraft techniques and designs to accommodate current market trends. Self-developed questionnaires were available in two formats, online to cover the largest circle of participants, and in physical handicraft markets for the participants to fill in by the artisans and customers. The factors that were used in the survey design included aesthetics, usability, price, and function and these were on a Likert scale. Qualitative and quantitative data collection regarding handicrafts were designed to close the gap between the traditional techniques of creating handicrafts and the modern standards and marketability of the handicrafts. Using several data collection techniques of the current study, the research explored how artisans can adopt trendy features into the preservation of cultural heritage while economically benefiting from the same. The verbs employed are in past tense because this is a summary of methods that have been used for the study that has already been conducted.

Qualitative Data

Semi-structured interviews were taken from the artisans and recorded. Videotapes allowed thematic analysis to recognize changes in techniques and designs of handicrafts based on the market demands at different times. The interviews that were conducted gave more elaborate information from artisans on the development of the handicraft industry.

Quantitative Data

The data were obtained by developing and administering online questionnaires to the participants of the handicraft market to assess their attitudes to different handicraft characteristics. The questionnaires used Likert scale questions to qualify the aesthetic appeal, usefulness, cost, and functionality. To complement the online survey, questionnaires were also filled in face-to-face settings at handicraft markets targeting both the sellers and buyers.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was done with the help of NVivo software to identify possible repetitions and responses of the participants regarding the changes of traditional handicrafts for the current requirements. This paper therefore sought to establish how artisans have been able to innovate from the traditional techniques and meet the modern market demands. SPSS was also used in descriptive statistics and regression analyses that were conducted for consumers' preferences and how they influenced market success. Analytical research focused on the question of which product characteristics and attributes have enabled some artisans to be profitable while others remain unprofitable in the new handicraft economy. In sum, the mixed-methods approach combined the artisan's subjective views with objective data on customers. The use of Triangulation gave a broader perspective of how techniques in handicrafts have evolved in a bid to suit the current fashion and demands of customers in the twenty-first century. Despite the adherence to the cultural and traditional aspects, many artisans have adapted to the changing society by coming up with new designs and ways of making their products more relevant and sustainable. The combined quantitative and qualitative approach revealed insights about the application of strategies for the integration of handicraft firms with current market trends.

3. RESULTS

Qualitative Findings

Three broad issues were identified in the interviews. First, several artisans have adopted modern designs for their artworks while retaining the traditional form and style to suit the contemporary market, hence establishing innovation in their works. Second, consumers and artisans were more inclined towards the usage of environment-friendly products, which pointed towards the theme of elevated materialism. This was seen as a move towards the consideration of the environmental aspect of sustainability. Last of all, Internet stores and social networks had emerged as essential tools to communicate with modern consumers, which exemplifies the importance of new market outlets. These changes in consumer trends saw artisans use these online platforms to market their goods to other markets. Altogether, the investigation revealed that the key to preserving the handicraft techniques was the introduction of new designs and materials, as well as new means of communicating the available traditional products to the current market needs. To sustain the traditional craftwork into the modern marketplaces, it was necessary to incorporate the current trends and blend them with heritage practices.

Quantitative Findings

In Table 1 the research focused on the extent to which traditional artisans are willing to change their handicraft practices to suit current market trends. It compared preferences based on four factors, which include price, quality, brand, and location.



Among the artisans, 60% had epitomized traditional design preference, 30% believed in contemporary designs, and 10% had no specific preference. Regarding material preference, 70% choose to maintain the traditional materials, 20% are okay with contemporary materials, and the remaining 10% have no preference. Respondents were as follows: 45% would not be willing to increase the price for modern designs, 40% were willing, and 15% were indifferent. 35% opted for selling through conventional physical stores while 55% were comfortable with online selling and 10% had no preference in Figure 1. The level of willingness of artisans to change was moderate in design, materials, and online retail while low was in the aspect of price increment. Several artisans demonstrated traditional inclination but an equal number of artisans expressed their willingness to incorporate the traditional craft with modern trends and demands.

Table 1: Consumer Preferences for Traditional vs. Contemporary Handicraft Designs Across Various Factors

Factor	Traditional Preference (%)	Contemporary Preference (%)	No Preference (%)
Design	60%	30%	10%
Material Sustainability	70%	20%	10%
Willingness to Pay Higher Price	45%	40%	15%
Digital vs. Physical Shopping	35%	55%	10%

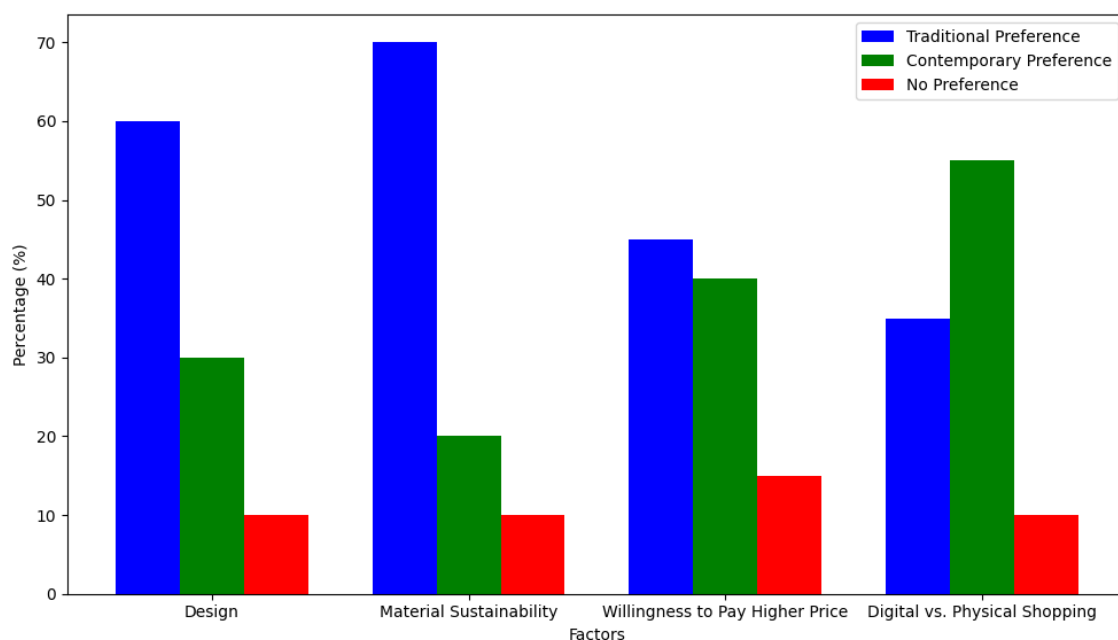


Figure 1: Consumer Preferences for Handicraft Factors

4. DISCUSSION

The qualitative results show that artisans are gradually incorporating modern designs into the products but at the same time striving to maintain the traditional forms and styles that will suit modern markets. This creates some innovation in their works to maintain consumer interest. Artisans and consumers opt for environment-friendly products and this is an indication of environmental consciousness (Chen et al., 2019). Social networks and sites are essential media that artisans and twenty-first-century customers use to promote handcrafted products internationally. Incorporating both the endemic techniques in construction and the modern touches in design, material, and e-commerce marketing is crucial to maintaining the age-old art of making handicrafts (Mair et al., 2006). The quantitative results are supportive of the qualitative results. While 60% of the artisans want to maintain the traditional tapestry design, a substantial 30% can consider modern design with another 10% being neutral- illustrating moderate flexibility. 70% of the respondents prefer traditional materials as opposed to 20% who



prefer contemporary materials (Pret et al., 2019). Regarding higher pricing for modernized products, 40% agreed and 45% disagreed which shows less agreement. Notably, 55% are comfortable selling online while only 35% are comfortable selling through physical stores, which highlights awareness of e-retail importance (Joshy et al., 2021). Thus, the readiness to change is fairly high for the materials, design, and digital selling but rather low for the price increase. Many artisans report being willing to adapt to integrate new components in traditional handicrafts to meet the modern market demand (Mwila, N 2024). Integrating traditional craft into contemporary needs by innovating products, using sustainable materials, and adopting online marketing strategies is crucial to maintaining customers' patronage and adherence to traditional craft practices (Sawant et al., 2023). Any modification to the designs should be within artisans' skills through capacity building and training for the sake of retaining originality (Duan et al., 2023). The novelty must be appealing to the consumers for the product to experience commercial success. Any efforts to transform traditional craft into more relevant items in contemporary society require approaches such as the following. The research provides valuable suggestions on how to combine the traditional craftsmanship of Moroccan handicrafts with current consumer trends. It promotes change management activities such as product design innovation, sustainable material sourcing, and digitized trade platforms for the transformation of conventional manual crafts by artisans. More research can be conducted on intervention approaches and find out the effectiveness of handicraft promotion and capacity building for income generation (Latuszynska et al., 2012). Studies on the right pricing strategies and e-marketing channels for new products can be useful to the artisans who sell refurbished products. This discussion leads to further exploration into real-life applications of how the traditional knowledge in handicrafts can be merged with modernization for better socio-economic development (Sarma et al., 2024).

5. CONCLUSION

The study carried out on the application of traditional handicraft skills in the current market was found to have the following implications. Firstly, regarding the designs and materials, respondents, as well as artisans, in the study have revealed that despite the majority of artisans avoiding contemporary designs and materials, a sizable portion of artisans expressed willingness to incorporate modern aspects that are attractive to today's consumers. This integration of tradition and creativity is essential for the continuity of these handicraft practices. Secondly, the trends observed were increased environmental awareness – both artisans drew more and more to the use of sustainable materials. Traditional handicrafts can meet today's standards for environmentally sustainable products. This can be leveraged to attract modern patrons who care about ethics and social responsibility. New media platforms have become other critical interfaces for reaching out to modern markets for artisans. One type of selling the interns was relaxed with more than half of the artisans asserting that they were comfortable selling through Internet stores and social media. Digital presence allows them to reach consumer markets beyond physical stores within their local areas. This is essential for the future of handicrafts – the use of contemporary technology to sustain traditional practices. for the techniques used in the handicraft industry to be sustained, one has to link them with today's consumer market. In essence, the artisan can retain the conventional characteristics of the business, but add modern features such as; styles, eco-friendly materials, and online selling. This shows the comprehension of these necessities as a moderate willingness among artisans to alter traditions. When the traditional practices adapt to the use in the contemporary society, then the living heritage of handicrafts can last while improving the lives of the individuals. The main point is to balance between traditions and consumer demands the selling appeal of handicrafts in the modern world is in preserving their roots while moving forward

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