

Revival of Sri Lankan Handicrafts: Identifying Challenges through Collaboration for Sustainability

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Abstract

Traditional craft industries throughout Sri Lanka face sustainability challenges, including a decline in the prominence of the craft industry, sourcing difficulties for raw materials, a dwindling supply of young artisans, and inconsistent awareness of technological tools. The theory of collaborative advantage (TCA) principles and strategies within Sri Lankan craft manufacturing will be evaluated for their potential to enhance heritage preservation while optimizing resource utilization and creating market opportunities in sustainable global business operations. Semi-structured interviews were administered to artisans in crucial areas for qualitative research analysis. The analysis of twelve themes from interviewed data included common aims, work processes, communication, and resource constraints using MAXQDA software for coding and thematic analysis. Research outcomes identify TCA solutions for digital platforms, skills development initiatives, and strategic marketplace connections that drive beneficial sustainability improvements. Supply chain members can enhance their market accessibility through collaborative marketing efforts, whereas shared resources decrease pricing to increase profitability. Digital tools enable streamlined communication and management within the supply chain framework. The results show that TCA allows sustainable development of the craft industry through effective cultural coordination alongside environmental and economic targets. The generated outcome will provide industry leaders and policymakers with better methods to align theoretical frameworks with practical sustainability strategies in transitioning global economy towards sustainability.

Keywords: Traditional Craft, Collaborative Advantage Theory, Handicraft, Economic Impact, Sustainability

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Introduction

Since ancient times, Sri Lanka's traditional industries such as pottery, textiles, reed and cane crafts have provided economic benefits to families and kept its culture alive. In addition to being part of our cultural heritage, these crafts employ many rural people, thereby supporting their communities. However, in recent years, these industries have faced significant challenges such as trade, shortage of raw materials, a decline in skilled artisans, and the inability of the products they produce to effectively compete with today's commerce, which can lead to their disappearance from the market.

During Sri Lanka's ongoing post-war recovery, preserving tradition and helping people find sustainable employment are particularly important, as these are essential for the country's development. Since traditional crafts are often found in rural areas, these areas need to be revitalized using cultural practices without harming them. Traditional crafts provide a way for people to develop their economy and culture together, strengthening society. According to the study applying the cooperative advantage theory, a collaboration between artisans, industry members, and policymakers is necessary to revive Sri Lanka's traditional handicrafts in the global market, thereby emphasizing their authenticity and cultural value.

The research aims to show how organizations in the Sri Lankan traditional handicraft industry can use teamwork to improve how they share resources, encourage new ideas, and access international markets, helping the industry survive for many years. It proves that these industries have the potential to boost the economy as well as strengthen the country's culture and continuous development. The main objectives of post-conflict recovery follow this objective, where focusing on the economy and tradition benefits the people and society.

Research Problem

Sri Lanka has a rich heritage of traditional handicrafts, textiles, woodwork, pottery, and metalwork, each of which bears witness to the nation's cultural heritage and craftsmanship. Despite their importance, these crafts face barriers to entry into global markets. However, small businesses in the handicrafts sector play a significant role in developing countries' gross domestic product (GDP). Export Development Board EDB (2024) mentioned that craft persons generate jobs and income, protect cultural heritage, teach the same to the new generation, and contribute to increasing production in their country using the latest techniques. A review of the craft classification by EDB (2024) reveals noticeable declining trends in sub-categories such as pottery, heated bamboo, cane, textiles, rush, batik, and metalwork. Notably, pottery, textiles, and cane products have experienced a significant decrease in export rates compared to 2022 and 2023. When studying the EDB report, it can be observed that exports have decreased in 2023 compared to 2022. The following three industries can be identified to analyse the clay, cane, and textile sectors. According to the EDB (2024), the pottery industry decreased by

approximately 1.66% in 2023 compared to 2022. The cane industry decreased by 0.3, while the textile industry decreased by 0.9. Researchers can identify each country's unique craft industry, which equates to the country's identity. From that, researchers understand that traditional crafts are a significant factor in a country.

However, in many countries, including Sri Lanka, the traditional craft industry is an industry that is ending. The decrease in traditional handicraft industries is happening around the world. As an example, crafts in Colombia earn substantial income and provide many job opportunities, even though the sector encounters problems resulting from globalization and market shifts (wang, 2022). There are about 30 million people employed in Thailand's craft industry, but the sector is decreasing mainly in the central parts because young people are choosing better-paying jobs instead of craftsmanship (Chudasri et al., 2012). Just as in Asia, traditional skills such as blacksmithing and shoemaking in Brazil are not as common now, which brings difficulties to the lives of craftsmen (Rezaul & Franco, 2020). Because of both labour gaps and old methods, Malaysia's handicraft industry cannot compete as strongly as it should (Redzuan & Aref, 2011). Over the last twenty years, Japan has worked hard to save its old crafts, but the number of workers and sales has fallen by half (Chudasri et al., 2012).

The drop in clay, textiles, and rush/reed/cane crafts in Sri Lanka has greatly affected rural communities. Traditional crafts have been an important resource for supporting people's incomes and employment in many rural areas. When the economy slows, families' incomes are lower, poverty rises, and the regions experience weaker economic growth. Also, losing traditional abilities threatens both cultural traditions and the unity of communities. Many young people leave the field of handicrafts and rural areas because of few opportunities and low wages, which further threatens the existence of handicraft traditions and unbalances their local economies (Redzuan & Aref, 2011). The decrease also reaches related industries such as local raw material making, which adds to the economic problems in smaller rural areas of Sri Lanka. To deal with these challenges, special policies are needed to help artisans with money and skills and to link them to markets so that the handicraft sector remains lively and important to rural people. We interviewed several artisans in each category to find information about such industries. The interviews concluded after we reached the required level. We had an interview guide based on the study's objectives for these interviews. This guide was developed based on the theory of Collaborative advantages to coordinate well with the questions of theoretical foundation and research objectives.

Research Questions

- What challenges does the Sri Lankan traditional handicraft industry face in reaching a competitive market?
- What is the current state of the Sri Lankan traditional craft industry?

Contribution of the Study

The research explores the traditional handicraft industry in Sri Lanka, highlighting its economic and cultural contributions, job creation opportunities, and conservation of cultural resources. It also explores local arts and crafts like handloom (dumbara weaving), beeralu lace making, batik, rush reed and cane, and pottery while addressing income generation issues. The findings can help policymakers design policies supporting the industry, suggesting technology, market linkages, and financial structures. The study also provides actionable strategies for artisans, such as technology marketing and international trade fair participation. The report points out ways to help artisans in Sri Lanka's handicraft industry, focusing mainly on technology and participating in international trade fairs. With the help of e-commerce, social media and internet marketplaces, artisans can contact people directly and expand their audience worldwide, without the need for middlemen. Through Instagram and Facebook, artisans can attract new people, highlight what they do and strengthen their brand. Targeted advertising and partnering with influencers are other digital approaches that allow a brand to reach a bigger audience. Joining international trade shows allows artisans to get to know others, learn about what sells and form relationships for export. Together, they allow artisans to make more money, compete better and uphold their traditional cultures worldwide.

Literature Review

Sri Lanka's rich heritage of traditional handicrafts, textiles, woodwork, pottery, and metalwork showcases the state's cultural and historical past and craftsmanship. Despite going through boundaries to international marketplace entry, those crafts contribute to growing international locations' Gross Domestic Product (GDP). It was initially a practical enterprise. (e.g. batik, reed work, wickerwork, etc.).

Behaviour of craft business

Historically, crafts in Sri Lanka have challenged the effects of mass production and are important in postcolonial society. In traditional culture, crafts, including batik, reed, and cane, were usually made and used by the community. Because of mechanization, many old practices have been replaced, and fewer people are interested in traditional products since mass-produced goods are more available (De Silva, 2019). However, the COVID-19 pandemic caused people to seek local products more because of import bans and the shutdown of responsible businesses. At the same time, the National Enterprise Development Authority's contests favoured companies that work this way.

Though craft businesses usually present creative ideas, and high-quality items, care for the community, and focus on the season, their market growth is stunted due to several underlying issues, like limited use of digital tools and ineffective support from the government (Jigyasu, 2021; Sweta & Sundararaman, 2021). They focus on top-quality items and new ideas, yet lack

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the use of modern design and online tools to keep up with the competition worldwide (Jin, 2022; Somwethee et al., 2023). A company can turn handicrafts into competitive international products by cooperating with designers and following helpful policies.

Characteristics of Creative Craftsmanship

Combining tradition and new ideas, artisans create special pieces that reflect their talents and where they come from. Practitioners in this field sharpen their talents for many years, use the best of both older and newer styles, and more frequently make their work using sustainable and ethical materials (Wang et al., 2023). The fast progress in technology and the growth of knowledge-based societies make many manual jobs less common, putting many artisanal skills at risk (Tarquini et al., 2022).

Challenges aside, making products with their hands gives craftsmen a sense of pride and ties them to their history. It is important to take steps to protect intangible cultural heritage to save these traditions. Teaming up with young designers and gaining recognition from luxury brands helps the industry to remain creative and supports its long-term survival.

What is a Traditional Craft?

Many generations have mastered traditional crafts, so they represent the traditions and style of a culture. Pottery, weaving, carpentry, and basketry belong to them, and such crafts are treasured because they are hand-made, last for years, and are used during rituals. Still, it is tough to measure and define the craft industry, as wealthier regions experience a drop in their size (Vanderploeg & Lee, 2019; Zbучea, 2022).

Handicrafts are an important source of income for low-income families, though they usually do not get enough support (Khan et al., 2023). Because of globalization and mass production in India, the craftsman's skills are not valued as much, forcing them to seek out employment in low-skilled cities (Purwar, 2010). A combination of education, boosting markets, backup from government policies, and involvement by local people is necessary to defend traditional crafts. Digital methods can bring in younger people and sustain traditional crafts in society.

Traditional Craft in the Global Market

Business in the handicraft sector is increasing, especially in home accessories, giving artisans more business opportunities. Still, there are issues that Sri Lankan exporters have to deal with because of globalization. Using fusion crafts, developing a brand, and using tourism are some of the best practices Sri Lanka can use to remain competitive in handicrafts.

The tourism industry could be much more beneficial for crafts by improving integration and offering additional training (Curkovic, 2021). If artisans focus on updating digital tools, building good branding, and making products fit customers' needs, their standing and daily

lives will improve. In the future, studies should find ways to enhance promotion techniques in tourism to secure the sustainability and competitiveness of Sri Lankan handicrafts.

Traditional Craft Industry in Sri Lanka

Traditional Crafts Sri Lanka Traditional crafts refer to the skills of antique artisans that have been transferred over generations and portray the country's cultural identity, special techniques, and aesthetic values . Such crafts are pottery, weaving, batik, rattan work, and reed/cane work, which are usually produced by rural people and used or substituted as or in addition to decoration. It does not matter how culturally important and handmade the items are; the realm of the handicraft industry is hard to define; thus, it is challenging to determine the input the sector has in the economy and the number of craftspeople. In Sri Lanka, where handicrafts are mainly manufactured at home, they are of great importance to more than six million artisans, the majority of whom are women and marginalized groups in rural regions (Teo et al., 2020; Vanderploeg & Lee, 2019).

Sri Lanka's Ceramic culture is very ancient, and the island started using clay to create tools and build structures. This culture bears the society's transition from a hunter-gatherer society to a settled society. High-quality raw materials such as kaolin and ball clay have made it possible to produce high-quality porcelain and ceramics to be exported. Nevertheless, the modern ceramic industry is plagued by various problems like an increase in the cost of production, slow demand in the home market owing to low rates of construction growth, migration of labour, and lack of innovation, which have impacted the industry's profitability and market share on a global scale. Other challenges to the technological development of the industry are a shortage of skilled labour worldwide and capacity excess (Arunashantha & Bandara, 2020).

The Dumbara handloom weaving tradition, with a 300-year history of being performed by the Kinnara community, is one of the examples of the textile-rich history of Sri Lanka. The art is re-emerging since only a few families practice the craft, yet the market demand is growing. Due to social-professional changes and industrialization, unemployment among women is growing, who previously earned part of the household income with such crafts as lacemaking, rope-twisting, palm-mat weaving, and pottery, and many of the traditional crafts are declining (Dodamani & Senadheera, 2018; Kulathiaka & Abesinghe).

Batik is one of the most colourful and culturally rich crafts still offered in Sri Lanka, which the Dutch introduced. Batik centres in the tourist regions of Hikkaduwa and Galle employ complicated wax-resist dyeing patterns to create vibrant multi-coloured designs. It is, however, thriving on individual creativity because it is a small-scale industry, and the economic factor of export and tourism offers it an added advantage, where the tourists get an opportunity to experience a bit of a different culture (Steelyana, 2012).

Rush and reed/cane crafts are rural livelihood forms that utilize natural resources in the wetlands to create bags, mats, and huts. Mass production, in addition to the modernization of agriculture, interrupted the development of raw materials, which were interfered with by mass production and agriculture, which threatened the economic sustainability of these crafts. In response, conservation and diversification programs were initiated to rescue this heritage. Kalu Pottan or the cane industry has early roots that can be archeologically traced back and toponymically or through place names, i.e., it was always an economically important product in regions like Radavadunna and Weveldeniya (Handapangoda et al., 2016; Rathnayaka & Kodithuwakku, 2021).

In sum, the traditional crafts of Sri Lanka are a rich culture and the predominant livelihood for most, especially rural women. However, challenges of industrialization, labour migration and market are encountered in sustainability. Concerted innovation, market creation, and preservation efforts are required to revive these crafts for a cultural and economic future in a globalized society.

Collaborative advantage theory

A framework known as the Theory of Collaborative Advantage (TCA) highlights the benefits and Advantages businesses experience when cooperating instead of competing. It highlights the benefits of teamwork, partnerships, and Collaborative planning, which promote progress and effectiveness. Strategic planning promotes collaborative principles, broader participation, and interpersonal unity by helping businesses communicate effectively, negotiate changes, and utilize resources (Kanter, 1994).

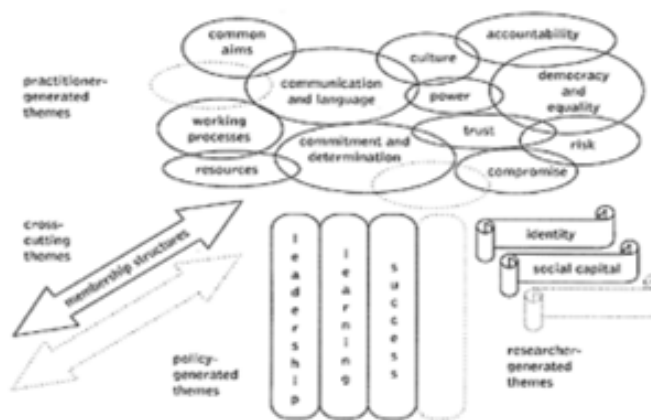


Figure 1: Collaborative advantage theory factors

The collaborative advantage theory emphasizes managing the collaborative process in dynamic contexts. Key practitioner-generated themes include common goals, efficient work processes, sharing resources, effective communication, commitment, culture, power, trust, compromise, accountability, democracy, equality, and risk sharing. Common goals align efforts and resources towards shared goals, while efficient work processes ensure precise task distribution and innovation.

Trust builds between partners, and compromises balance individual and collective interests. Accountability ensures all parties fulfil their responsibilities, and democracy and equality enforce inclusive practices (Vangen & Huxham, 2013).

After the war in Sri Lanka, focusing on culture and employment is important. TCA's emphasis on working together can strengthen the groups of artisans, unite local communities, and form sustainable patterns of economic support. Hence, TCA provides a helpful plan for boosting the handicrafts sector with relations that ensure sustainability, drive new ideas, and help sell goods in many countries.

Methodology

Semi-structured interviews guided this qualitative research project to analyze Sri Lanka's traditional craft industries as they try to gain access to global competitive markets. The research selected 15 declining export artisans (until they reached saturation points) in ceramics, textiles, and rush/reed/cane crafts from the important craft areas of Molagoda, Wewaldeniya (Radawadunna), Galle, and Kandy (Talagune) through purposive selection. It was the rich traditions and historical status that made Molagoda, Wewaldeniya (Radawadunna), Galle, and Kandy (Talagune) the right choice as central locations for ceramics, textiles, and rush/reed/cane crafts. Since these regions are experts in specific crafts and have seen a drop in exports, understanding what challenges artisans encounter when trying to compete internationally is very important. Data gathering used a semi-structured interview guide, allowing artisans to talk about their experiences, what they face, and what they think without limiting their answers. As a result, I could explore ideas about collaboration, resource sharing, and innovation, which follow the principles of the Collaborative Advantage Theory. Participants could offer detailed responses while following the study's main objectives because open-ended questions allowed for this from the Collaborative Advantage Theory developed by Vangen & Huxham (2013) to maintain correspondence between research purposes and theoretical underpinnings. The data collection interval ended when the saturation of information was confirmed. The research used MAXQDA software to perform thematic analysis based on the Braun and Clarke framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to identify meaningful relationship patterns that answered the research questions. The Collaborative Advantage Theory guided the interpretation and data collection stages because it stressed the advantages of collaborative

work, relationship-building, and resource-sharing while encouraging innovation throughout the research process.

Results and Discussion

Results

Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns in textual data, using collaborative advantage theory as a framework. The study identified common aims, working processes, resources, communication, commitment, culture, power, trust, compromise, accountability, democracy, and risk.

Common Aims

The craft industry combines cultural traditions with artistic practices and promotes economic stability. Through their innovative work, artisans hold a link between the present and beyond cultures while holding onto age-old pottery and weaving strategies. *"It is now not pretty much-making merchandise; it is approximately maintaining our background alive,"* one artisan emphasized. They aim to share their knowledge with the next generation because youth involvement in their practice continues to decrease. Artists who share their skills through collaborative work find solutions to issues that generate a vibrant artistic ecosystem. Through their commitment to creativity, they protect both modern trends and authentic value. *"We hope to create beautiful designs while keeping our culture forward."* Their mission unites heritage preservation with economic growth aspirations.

Working Process

The craft industry is a vital combination of age-old methods and contemporary development. Artisans in the clay industry focus on two key points: *"We do most of this by hand, using machines as well. However, the designs we make are entirely by hand."* Artisans observe that handloom weaving requires specific hand-based operations to create refined products. *"Beeralu lace making is all carried out by hand, with great care and precision."* Batik creation relies on manual labour, as artisans state, *"Batik making here is still very much reliant on manual labour."* Traditional hand tools throughout the industry help product makers showcase skilled practices of heritage arts.

Resources

The Sri Lankan craft industry exists in a challenging setting, and it navigates old customs against new developments. Artisans deal with two main problems involving cultural heritage protection and the need for modern adaptation. Clay pottery artisans encounter issues carrying

their products to market and dealing with government rules for raw materials. *"It takes fifty-five to get a truck from Polgahawela,"* one noted, emphasizing financial strain. One noted, emphasizing financial strain. The increase in cotton yarn prices leads handloom weavers to depend on imported yarn, while market experts request better prices. *"Access to affordable credit"* and *"subsidies for yarn purchases."* Beeralu lace makers confront inconsistent thread quality, while cane artisans prefer imported materials for uniformity. Artisans showcase resilience and adaptability despite obstacles: "Our craft reflects not just our skill but also our ability to adapt to changing times."

Communication & Language

Artisan businesses depend heavily on language and communication systems to build productive relationships between producers, suppliers, creators and customers. One artisan notes, *"I primarily converse with suppliers and transporters in Sinhala."* Language utilization in local areas takes precedence. However, *"Our main challenge is that our English skills are not very strong,"* complicates international business. Despite these limitations, artisans create WhatsApp groups for digital collaboration, and they state, *"We connect with craft associations via a WhatsApp group."* Art enables communication across linguistic sections because, as another artisan observed, "Everyone understands the art, and that is all that matters."

Commitment & Determination

The creative industry relies heavily on the spirit of persistence, which artisans combine with their deep love for their artistic work to sustain traditional cultural knowledge and techniques. One artisan notes, *"Craft is creating with my hands from my heart and having control over the whole process."* As artisans explain, the practice has passed through generations: *"It is something that is carried out as an inheritance from our fathers and mothers."* In the face of economic difficulties, artisans focus on their artistry more than monetary earnings by stating, *"I do a job to make a living, not to make a profit."* Due to their devotion, the craft continues as a treasured folk tradition, as another artisan notes. *"Craft means great products, individually and lovingly made by a creator who cares."*

Culture

The traditional handwork sector of Sri Lanka vividly displays national values through multicultural heritage by maintaining traditional practices alongside innovative market changes. According to a local potter, Floor pottery is essential in historical development because it links craftsmen to sacred practices and national ceremonies. *"Customers are acquiring a piece of Sri Lankan history."* Handloom weaving, described as *"a legacy of Sri Lankan history,"* symbolizes continuity and creativity. Beeralu lace has been successfully transmitted between generations because people hold it in great esteem. *"A part of Sri Lanka's Faculty of Management and Finance, University of Ruhuna, Sri Lanka. July – 2025 ISBN: 978-624-5553-76-1"*

cultural identification.” The batik technique combines artistic skill with traditional techniques because artisans add texturing through clever use of “*traditional motifs*” to attract tourists. The art of cane contains vibrant elements from rural life that craftsmen proudly glorify. “*This is our tradition.*”

Risk

The traditional craft sectors in Sri Lanka, including pottery production, handloom weaving, Beeralu lace making, batik, and cane industries, encounter serious difficulties that jeopardize their continued existence. Adult artisans in pottery face mounting costs for materials and shipment expenses, which a pottery artisan unambiguously expresses his discouragement about. “*We spend so much, and yet we cannot sell our products.*” Regulatory barriers further complicate operations. “*If we are hauling clay, we are arrested by the police.*” The combination of environmental influences and changes in the generational population worsens the existing problems. Artisans working in the handloom industry encounter unstable yarn prices and imported goods in the market competition. “*Competition with cheaper imports led to the decline.*” These cultural creations need strategic assistance to maintain their essential value despite difficult times.

Power

According to collaborative advantage theory, “power” means that the involved parties can guide decisions, manage resources, and create good outcomes for everyone, as they also fulfil their objectives. It requires leading efforts by groups and making sure partners work together effectively. Multiple forces determine the structure of Sri Lankan traditional arts, which impacts resource availability and marketplace leadership. Artisans obtain support from institutions such as Shilpa Sabha, though they encounter bureaucratic challenges. “*The biggest problem is finding the documents required to gain government subsidies.*” Under current market conditions, intermediaries acquire goods at cheap rates while selling them at inflated prices to benefit themselves. “*The intermediaries come most commonly, taking our products for a lower rate and then selling them at a better price.*” While navigating through these hurdles, artisans hold strong value in collaborative work relationships. “*In our workshop, I make many decisions but always consult other artisans.*” External forces exist, composed of intermediaries and foreign buyers who exert substantial control and influence on the industry.

Trust

Trust is the primary foundation that supports the Sri Lankan craft industry, which includes pottery production and Beeralu lace production. Artisans usually base their agreements on verbal terms, according to the statement. “*We commonly do not use contracts. It is typically*

based on trust and know-how." Trust reaches suppliers under arrangements, including *"Yes, we will bring it to the village when we say so."* In Beeralu lace, artisans say, *"In the past, people would come to the houses. They would collect them. It is the same today,"* highlighting long-standing trust-based systems. However, this trust also leaves artisans vulnerable to exploitation.

Compromise

The craft industry in Sri Lanka, including pottery, Beeralu lacemaking, and cane weaving, is characterized by compromise. Artisans balance tradition with market demands, often sacrificing profit margins: *"I reduce the price just to get the cost back."* Customization is key, as artisans adapt to customer needs: *"If you are given a design, we will make the same design but with small modifications."* Economic pressures force artisans to yield creative integrity, yet adaptability allows them to thrive: *"We had to adapt to survive."* This adaptability is crucial for survival in a fluctuating marketplace.

Accountability

The Sri Lankan craft industry battles with the construction of reliability systems throughout its diverse pottery, handloom, and cane crafts sectors. The artisans pursue their work based on trust and shared responsibilities, although they struggle with insufficient institutional support. One artisan laments, *"I am waiting for such assistance...but there is no response yet."* The slow distribution of funds and insufficient resources become an additional obstacle to development progress. *"We do not get the cash and equipment right now."* Despite all obstacles, artisans maintain rigorous professional standards as they profess, *"We need to have a lovely finish."* Despite all obstacles, artisans maintain rigorous professional standards as they profess.

Democracy & Equality

The rural craft industry functions through democratic and equal principles to build its foundation. The artisans stress their dedication to working with governmental institutions while promoting team collaboration. *"I can only do this if someone is willing to help me,"* and *"If the government gives proper support, we will be able to do these things well."* Artisans function as a team, which leads them to support each other and bypass intermediaries integrally. *"Take too much of the income."* The maintenance of cultural elements is essential, according to artisans who say, *"It is our responsibility to maintain this for a long time."* The industry maintains both heritage preservation and employment creation functions for society.

Discussion

Traditional craft businesses in Sri Lanka, including pottery, handloom weaving, cane work, and textile making, face survival-threatening issues. These industries need manual labour in challenging settings because the financial compensation remains low. The shift of young people toward higher-paying careers alongside their reluctance to hand down traditional crafts creates a worsening situation for their long-term survival. The accessibility of raw materials remains restricted for pottery workers and cane artisans because regulation demands specific approval to move clay. In contrast, unauthorized clay transportation leads to enforcement penalties, including fines or detention. Rural artisans encounter limited market access because of pricey transportation fees created by logistical obstacles.

The entry of inexpensive imported products weakens traditional crafts within Indian markets. Handloom weavers experience unstable yarn prices combined with an ever-growing market of mass-produced products, while Beeralu lace makers deal with poor yarn reliability. The collapse of local raw material supplies leads Rattan artisans to import alternative materials since their domestic sources have become unavailable. Production disturbances and market operation interruptions from the COVID-19 pandemic have worsened these existing problems. Reserving cultural heritage remains a vital objective for artisans even when facing hardships. Traditional crafts in Sri Lanka are historical and artistic representations that bridge cultural elements from traditional practices with current market dynamics. Artisan communities maintain authentic product traditions through adaptive practices that include adding traditional motifs to batik designs to attract tourists. Preserving traditional culture clashes with the need for modern change in a complex manner.

Discriminatory power dynamics inside this sector allow intermediaries to acquire goods from artisans at minimal prices and charge excessive premiums when they resell them. Procedures enforced through bureaucracies hinder artisans from accessing government support programs and financial assistance programs to ease their economic burden. The survival of Sri Lanka's craft industries demands strategic strategies involving market connections, financial help with raw materials, and improved regulations that empower artisans.

Conclusion and Policy Implications

The traditional industries in Sri Lanka are now in a crucial position, trying to keep their originality intact while making changes for foreign markets. For operations to remain sustainable, an alliance should exist among artisans, policymakers, and business stakeholders. Such collaboration may happen if artisans, policymakers, and businesses meet and discuss how to support artisans, develop strategies, and connect them to buyers. By using these platforms, artisans can join forces to acquire yarn and clay at reduced prices, which helps them enhance their goods and contributes to the location's economy.

Recommendations for policymakers include giving financial support to farmers to reduce their expenses and using products available in the region, which steadies employment in rural areas. The government should simplify its policies to assist artisans faster and without delay. By using e-commerce sites, producers can sell their products directly to customers from other countries, so they do not have to go through intermediaries and ensure more people know about Sri Lankan crafts. Besides, participating in international trade exhibitions enables craftsmen to introduce their goods to markets everywhere, mix with people from different cultures, and possibly increase their sales abroad.

Mixing knowledge about today's skills and ancient techniques is vital for new ideas in crafts. These programs' training should help artisans go beyond average skills and produce more with methods they know will continue their cultural ways. If designers, artisans, and technical people collaborate, they can develop products to meet today's standards while also keeping the unique crafts of Sri Lanka alive. When efforts from various sectors come together, the Sri Lankan craft industry significantly boosts its economy, traditions, and international market success.

Future Research Directions

Enabling artisans to use e-commerce platforms is crucial for their economic uplift, as it streamlines connecting with buyers. Because of Etsy and Instamojo, geographic boundaries have been removed, allowing more people to view artisan products, and artists to interact with customers easily, and providing them with helpful tools to make informed decisions. Still, people face problems with costs and worry that learning new technology might result in forgetting old skills.

To appeal to young people, community groups such as the Norwegian Folk Art and Craft Association set up camps and offer workshops combining learning traditional skills and bringing together people from different cultures. With these programs, young people learn weaving, knitting, and woodworking hands-on and find traditional crafts interesting and amusing. DIY online archives support youth by offering simple guides to help them build new skills and be creative. By including youth, such projects ensure they take responsibility and help preserve traditional arts and crafts.

At the same time, communities should preserve their history while using new ways to move forward. Worldwide, Indigenous crafts are marketed through web platforms that respect the cultures where they come from and consider market needs. Eco-friendly products are made possible when designers and artisans work with each other, with the community taking part in keeping practices green.

Digital marketplaces, as well as help from the government, are positive for artisans because they help them become financially independent, use fewer middlemen, and have more direct

communication with clients. These steps support the well-being of people, empower their communities, maintain old traditions, and improve their capability to face economic challenges.

Promoting the growth of local cotton by supporting the handloom industry helps cut costs, makes the country less dependent on foreign goods, and increases jobs for artisans. For this reason, handloom supports sustainable farming that is environmentally friendly and makes it easier for handloom products to compete at home and overseas.

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