

The Role of the Textile Designer in Cultural Tourism and Sustainable Textile Export: A Practice-Based Perspective on Craft Heritage, Design Authorship, and Export Value

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ABSTRACT

The study examines the role of textile designer in cultural tourism and sustainable export of textile, from practice-based approach. It centers on the way that textile designers link craft heritage, creative authorship and market value to create culturally relevant and commercially viable products from traditional textile practices. The paper contends that textile designers are not just developers of products but also interpreters of local craft knowledge and how it can be understood and given tourist-friendly, contemporary forms for export. The study investigates the linkage between traditional artisans, design innovation, culture and sustainable export development through qualitative and practice-based methodology. It's a study that emphasizes ethical partnerships, authenticity, material responsibility, and fair recognition of craft communities as the key to sustainable textile exports. It is concluded that textile designers can contribute to cultural tourism by developing products which maintain culture values and fulfill the requirements of the consumers in the current era.

Keywords: Textile Design, Cultural Tourism, Craft Heritage, Sustainable Export and Design

INTRODUCTION

Textile Design is an emerging area of study which is significant as a result of its crossing of the culture, creativity, tourism and export value. As well as being decorative and/or functional, traditional textiles tell stories, are emblematic of people and their communities, and embody skills and values. For cultural tourism, handmade textiles can draw in visitors, as they offer a tangible link with the customs, materials, motifs and techniques of the local community. This is an important role for textile designers, who convert the craft heritage into modern day textile products that can be used, exhibited, bought and exported. Traditional craft is made more accessible to national and international audiences through design, and retains cultural meaning. By nature, traditional craftsmanship bears one of the most concrete characteristics of ICH, having passed on from generation to generation through the transmission of knowledge and skills, UNESCO explains (Pagán et al., 2020).

Nowadays, the textile designers are associated with the sustainable export development in the modern creative economy. Sustainable textile export is not just a matter of selling products in the foreign markets it is also about ethical production, care of the environment, fair participation of the artisans and authenticity

of the culture. The addition of traditional methods to modern approaches to design thinking, quality enhancement, branding, storytelling and market research can enable a textile designer to add value. This puts the designer into a significant role as a link between artisans, tourists, export buyers and cultural institutions. Creative goods and services are important for economic diversification and job creation, inclusive growth and sustainable development, as noted by UNCTAD (Graburn, 1979).

Objectives

1. To examine the role of textile designers in promoting craft heritage.
2. To explore the link between textile design, cultural tourism, and export value.
3. To analyze how sustainable design practices support textile export.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cultural tourism is well associated to heritage, identity and local creativity. People tend to look for experiences that enable them to learn about a culture through objects, practices, stories. Traditional textiles are an important component of this experience as they serve as a symbol, color, pattern, technique and meaning of a community's lifestyle and history. It is possible for a textile like woven cloth, embroidered garments, printed fabrics, rugs, shawls, handmade accessories and so forth to be cultural souvenirs as well as export goods at the same time. UN Tourism recognizes the link between tourism and culture and provides information to support informed decision making in strengthening the link between tourism and culture (Lee et al., 2009).

The textile design is particularly significant with respect to craft heritage as many of the techniques used in textiles are passed down through generations. Technique is sometimes passed on in long-term family or community traditions, as in weaving, embroidery, natural dyeing, block printing, appliqué and hand stitching. They are not only production practices, but also cultural knowledge systems. UNESCO says the protection of traditional craftsmanship is not only about the preservation of objects, but also the stimulation of traditional craft production by artisans and the transmission of knowledge to others. This implies the need for active practice, participation of local communities and new avenues for the artisans to sustain textile heritage (Graburn, 1979).

The textile designers can contribute to the preservation of craft heritage by adapting traditional crafting to the current markets. Designers can learn about traditional motifs, local materials, cultural narratives and traditional techniques, and then reinterpret these in the contemporary way, such as fashion textiles, home textiles, accessories, museum products, tourism souvenirs. Design can add value to craft products by enhancing their usability, appearance, finishing, packaging and branding. But it's a change that needs to be done with care. When designers are only using cultural symbols for commercial use, without the understanding of their meaning, it could actually become cultural appropriation. Hence, the need for good design-artisanal collaboration (Tung, 2012).

Another key topic in the textile design and export enterprise is authorship of the designs. Often, the main creative knowledge of the craft is a community asset used to create and sell work under the name of a designer, brand or company. This can lead to issues of recognition and fairness. A proper design authorship is the recognition of the design contribution of artisans, communities, and cultural traditions in the making of a textile product. It also involves setting up clear systems, with artisans being paid fairly, given credit and long-term benefits. Examples of this in recent fashion and craft discussions around the world indicate

both the importance of traditional craftsmanship skills for certain niche markets in luxury and export, as well as the fact that this skill contribution is not a part of most conservation strategies (Jiu & Sethi, 2025).

Sustainability in Textile Export is Social, cultural, economic and environmental. Social sustainability involves equitable pay, safe working environments and artisans' dignity. Culture sustainability is the protection of traditional knowledge, motifs and community identity. In order to be economically sustainable, products must be competitive in the local and international market. Environmental sustainability is about responsible materials, minimizing waste, natural processes and sustainable products. Slow production, hand-made quality, repairability and local materials are often associated with traditional craft practices and have the potential of contributing to sustainable design models. These can be reinforced by using sustainable fibers, natural dyes, minimizing waste, and incorporating circular design approaches by contemporary designers (Littrell, 1990).

As a result of the development of the creative economy, textile design has become even more important as an export-oriented area. Today the creative industries are viewed as income-generating, job-creating, innovative and a source of international identity. Because of the uniqueness, authenticity and handmade value, textile products based on craft heritage can be used as a means of attracting tourists and foreign buyers. According to UNCTAD, creative goods and services are a relevant component of international trade and have the potential to contribute to inclusive growth and economic diversification. This indicates that sustainable textile export is not only an industrial process but it is also cultural and creative. Finally, textile designers serve as cultural mediators, market creators, and creative authors that bridge heritage and today's market (Senanayake, 2024).

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative and practice-based research method is used in this study. The practice-based approach is appropriate because it has been related to the topic of textile design, craft processes, material experimentation and product development. The study would be based on the visual study, observation of traditional textile practices, dialogue with artisans, and analysis of the existing textile products based on the crafts that are utilized in cultural tourism and export markets. Semi structured interviews with textile designers, artisans, craft sellers, tourism personnel and export related stakeholders can be used to gather primary data. The interviews would discuss with textile designers their work with craft heritage, the creation of products for tourists and export customers, as well as their conceptions of authorship and sustainability in practice. Craft workshops, design studios and local markets can also be observed to gain insight into production processes and interaction with the consumer. Secondary sources would be books, research articles, reports, tourism, design catalogues and online sources on textile craft, cultural tourism, creative economy and sustainable export. Thematic analysis would be used to analyse the collected data. It can be on the main theme of craft preservation, design innovation, authorship, sustainability, tourism value, or export potential.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that textile designers are at the heart of cultural heritage tourism and export, and that they have a vital role in this area. In addition to creating attractive patterns and products, textile designers also give expression to cultural meaning and transform it into a functional form of textile. Traditional motifs, local techniques and handmade processes can be perfected in the design and become part of products ranging from scarves and shawls to home textiles and sacks, clothes and wall hangings and souvenirs. These products can be used to draw tourists to the area as they put the local culture into view and will be memorable for the visitors.

The study also indicates that craft heritage will have more value if presented in an appropriate design, finishing, packaging and narration. Tourists and foreign buyers may be curious about the production history of a textile product (who made it, how it was made, what the motif implies, how they relate to a given place etc.). However, textile designers can build up this value based on the creation of labels, catalogues, product tags, visual identity and brand narratives. This way, design fosters a cultural and export value.

One of the other significant findings is that cooperation between designers and artisans is needed in the context of achieving sustainable development. It is the duty of the designer to respect artisans in the process of designing or creating traditional craft otherwise the traditional craft will be commercialized in a harmful way. If the collaboration is done in a fair manner, however, artisans get new markets and designers get craft knowledge. This can lead to an equilibrium that is achieved between innovation and tradition. It is also important with respect to the proper authorship as artisans and communities should be credited for their contribution.

It is also demonstrated that sustainable export of textiles is reliant on quality, authenticity and ethical production. Handmade items with eco-friendly and cultural ethics are gaining popularity among foreign customers. Many traditional methods of making textiles are environmentally friendly due to their use of locally sourced products and materials, their hand processes and small-scale production and their durability. But the story isn't entirely positive as there are some challenges, including limited production capacity, inadequate modern marketing skills, inconsistent quality, and problems meeting export standards.

In general, the designer of the textile is a creative and responsible person. The designer represents a link between tradition and modernity, the craftsman and the consumer, the national and the international. The designer's entrepreneurial activities are able to ensure the conservation of cultural identity in addition to generating income from tourism and export. Hence, textile design should be seen as a cultural and economic activity and a sustainable practice, in addition to its decorative function.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study are that textile designers can play an important role in the process of developing cultural tourism and sustainable textile export. They link traditional craft knowledge with contemporary design practice, enabling the visibility, usability and marketability of textile heritage. By cooperating with artisans in an ethical way, designers can help artisans, safeguard cultural identity and develop products that have high export values. The study also emphasizes that the authorship of design needs to be dealt with responsibly to ensure recognition and benefit for craft communities. Through practice, it has been confirmed that textile design is not only about the production of the product, it's also about the interpretation of the culture, sustainable development, and the value development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Working directly with artisans is vital for textile designers in order to have fair collaborations and a true design development with them.
2. Proper label, stories and information on cultural origin should be included in the craft-based textile products.
3. The promotion of local textile craft should be incorporated into cultural tourism programmed by government and tourism section.

4. Artisans and designers should be trained to ensure their quality control, export standards and branding, as well as their sustainable production.
5. Traditional textile motifs, artisan rights and cultural design authorship need to be safeguarded via the development of policies.

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