

Crafting Sustainability: Leveraging Gender Preferences to Preserve and Market Nypa Palm Midrib Stick Handicrafts

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the impact of gender preferences on the sustainability and marketability of Nypa Palm midrib stick products within the realm of traditional handicrafts. The research reveals that gender-specific design elements, such as patterns, shapes, and colors, play a crucial role in shaping consumer behavior and influencing market demand. By strategically incorporating masculine and feminine design features, artisans and producers can broaden the appeal of these traditional crafts to a diverse audience, enhancing both their market relevance and long-term sustainability. The study emphasizes the importance of collaboration between artisans, designers, and marketers to fuse traditional craftsmanship with contemporary design trends. Such collaborations foster the creation of innovative, visually appealing products that cater to modern consumer preferences while preserving the cultural heritage of Nypa Palm midrib stick handicrafts. Additionally, the ability to adapt to evolving consumer preferences is highlighted as a key factor in maintaining the market appeal of these products. By continuously updating product designs to reflect current trends and incorporating both gender-neutral and gender-specific elements, artisans can ensure that Nypa Palm midrib stick crafts remain relevant in a competitive market. The research recommends conducting comprehensive market analysis to better understand shifting consumer preferences and developing trends. This knowledge would enable artisans and entrepreneurs to tailor their products and marketing strategies effectively, ultimately driving the commercial success of Nypa Palm midrib stick handicrafts while preserving their cultural and economic value in a dynamic marketplace.

Keywords — sustainability, gender, nypa palm, handicrafts

INTRODUCTION

Traditional Malay handicrafts, known for their rich cultural significance, often rely on natural materials like the nypa palm midrib. These crafts encompass a wide range of products, from everyday tools to decorative items, reflecting the deep-rooted artistic and cultural traditions of Malay communities. In Malaysia, handicrafts are not merely functional or decorative; they are symbols of heritage, embodying local values, sustainability practices, and craftsmanship. The legacy of these crafts is passed down through generations, forming an integral part of the Malay cultural fabric. The nypa palm (*Nypa fruticans*), particularly its midrib, is a versatile and sustainable material used in Malay handicrafts. It is favored for its

durability, flexibility, and natural aesthetic, making it an ideal material for weaving and crafting. In Malay communities, artisans have long utilized nypa palm midribs to produce items such as baskets, mats, and even ceremonial objects. The use of such natural resources not only reflects a commitment to environmentally friendly practices but also preserves traditional crafting methods that might otherwise be lost. The role of nypa palm midrib in traditional handicrafts serves as a tangible expression of local wisdom and eco-consciousness. As the material is sourced from a renewable resource, its use aligns with sustainable development goals, promoting an eco-friendly alternative to synthetic materials. The nypa palm's strength and flexibility also make it an ideal material for the creation of intricate, long-lasting products. In modern times, efforts to revive traditional craftsmanship are often linked with promoting eco-friendly materials like nypa palm midribs, thus blending heritage with sustainability.

Gender plays a notable role in shaping the design and consumer preferences for traditional handicrafts. Research highlights that product design can incorporate gender-centric features to cater to specific market segments. For example, according to Van Tilburg et al. (2015), design elements such as slim proportions, curved lines, and soft textures are often associated with femininity, while more angular and bulky shapes are perceived as masculine. These design attributes can influence consumer appeal and purchasing behavior, particularly when handicrafts are marketed as lifestyle or fashion items. In the context of Malaysian handicrafts, the differentiation of designs based on gender preferences can enhance consumer engagement. For instance, creating nypa palm midrib products with masculine features, such as bold lines or angular patterns, may attract male consumers, while more delicate, intricate designs could appeal to female buyers. However, there remains a gap in how traditional handicrafts target male consumers, who, according to Wilkins (2011), tend to prefer other local specialty products like electronics or perfumes.

One of the key challenges in promoting traditional handicrafts is the limited focus on gender-based preferences, which leads to underrepresentation in male-oriented designs. Traditional handicrafts, including those made from nypa palm, are often perceived as feminine due to their association with delicate weaving techniques and intricate patterns. This perception has created a market imbalance, with more attention given to products that appeal to female consumers. Additionally, modern marketing strategies for traditional handicrafts often overlook the importance of aligning product designs with male aesthetics, resulting in a missed opportunity to expand the consumer base. This disconnect is further complicated by a general decline in the appreciation of traditional crafts among younger generations, particularly among men. While regional arts and crafts remain popular in certain contexts, they are not always marketed effectively to appeal to a wider audience. By integrating more diverse design elements that cater to both masculine and feminine tastes, Malaysian handicrafts can achieve broader market appeal, ensuring their relevance in contemporary society.

Despite its abundance and potential, the nypa palm midrib remains underutilized in modern product design. Md. Farid Hossain et al. (2015) emphasize that nypa palm materials are traditionally used to create a narrow range of products like brooms and baskets. This limited scope has hindered the material's full potential in eco-friendly, innovative product design. There is significant potential to explore the use of nypa palm midrib in new contexts, such as sustainable fashion accessories, home décor, or contemporary art pieces. The development of new designs that incorporate the nypa palm midrib could not only revitalize interest in traditional handicrafts but also promote Malaysia's heritage on a global stage. Eco-conscious consumers, in particular, are increasingly looking for products that combine sustainability with cultural authenticity, making the nypa palm an ideal material for modern design. Moreover, by addressing gender preferences in these new products, artisans and designers can create more inclusive, diverse offerings that appeal to a broader range of consumers.

The use of nypa palm midrib in traditional Malay handicrafts highlights the rich cultural heritage and sustainable practices of Malaysia. However, challenges such as under-utilization of the material and limited attention to gender preferences in design present obstacles to wider adoption and appreciation of these crafts. By exploring innovative applications for nypa palm and integrating gender-based design elements, Malaysian artisans can not only preserve their cultural legacy but also expand the market for traditional handicrafts.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The traditional Malay handicraft industry, known for its rich cultural heritage and reliance on natural materials such as the Nypa Palm midrib, faces significant challenges in maintaining its sustainability and market appeal in modern times. As consumer preferences evolve, traditional artisans often struggle to align their products with contemporary tastes, which can limit their marketability and, ultimately, the survival of these crafts. One critical but underexplored factor in this dynamic is the role of gender preferences in shaping the design and demand for traditional handicraft products. Despite the versatility and sustainability of Nypa Palm midrib sticks, the lack of gender-specific design considerations in the creation of these products limits their appeal to a broader consumer base. Research indicates that gender plays a substantial role in consumer preferences, with men and women favoring distinct design elements such as patterns, shapes, and colors. However, traditional handicrafts have often been perceived as catering predominantly to female consumers due to their association with delicate weaving techniques and intricate patterns. This perception not only narrows the target audience

but also limits the market potential of Nypa Palm midrib products, which could otherwise appeal to a diverse group of buyers if gender preferences were more thoroughly incorporated into the design process.

Moreover, the disconnect between artisans, designers, and marketers further hampers efforts to promote these sustainable products in the competitive modern market. The lack of strategic collaborations means that traditional craftsmanship is often isolated from modern design and marketing trends, which are essential for enhancing both sustainability and marketability. Without effective collaboration, artisans face difficulties in adapting their products to meet current consumer expectations while preserving their cultural significance.

Thus, there is a pressing need to address these challenges by exploring how gender-specific design elements can be integrated into Nypa Palm midrib stick products. Additionally, fostering collaborations between artisans, designers, and marketers can enhance the visibility and market reach of these traditional crafts. By tackling these issues, the industry can ensure that Nypa Palm midrib stick handicrafts not only preserve their cultural heritage but also thrive in a modern, competitive market.

Research Objectives

This research aims to explore the potential of nypa palm midrib sticks as the main material in traditional handicraft design, with a focus on gender preferences in terms of patterns, shapes, and colors. The specific objectives are:

1. To analyze the impact of gender preferences on the market demand and consumer acceptance of Nypa Palm midrib stick products.
2. To identify and evaluate key gender-specific design elements, such as patterns, shapes, and colors, that resonate with male and female consumers.
3. To explore the role of collaboration among artisans, designers, and marketers in fostering the sustainability and cultural relevance of Nypa Palm midrib stick handicrafts.

Research Questions

This question often addresses an issue or a problem, which, through analysis and interpretation of data, is answered in the study's conclusion.

1. How do gender preferences influence the design and market demand for Nypa Palm midrib stick products in traditional Malay handicrafts?
2. What specific design elements (patterns, shapes, colors) can be incorporated to align Nypa Palm midrib stick products with gender-specific preferences and appeal?
3. How can collaborations between artisans, designers, and marketers enhance the sustainability and marketability of Nypa Palm midrib stick handicrafts?

By addressing these questions, the research aims to enhance the sustainability of traditional Malay handicrafts and promote gender inclusivity in their design, ensuring their continued relevance and appeal in modern markets.

Significance of Research

Traditional handicraft refers to the process of creating handcrafted items utilizing techniques typically passed down through generations. This craft demands exceptional skill, the use of age-old materials, and aesthetic practices unique to specific areas or towns, representing the cultural heritage and artistic traditions of those regions. Traditional handicrafts are more than mere objects; they are embodiments of cultural identity and continuity, preserving the knowledge and skills of artisans who contribute to the cultural richness of their communities. The primary goal of this study is to produce innovative designs for home decoration by using sustainable local materials for rural communities. This research seeks to rebrand Malaysian traditional handicrafts with sustainable materials, such as the nypa palm midrib stick, to emphasize cultural diversity in new design concepts based on gender preferences. By understanding and incorporating gender preferences, this

research aims to revitalize interest in traditional handicrafts, leading to a more inclusive and appealing market for these products.

Significance of Rebranding Traditional Handicrafts

Rebranding Malaysian traditional handicrafts with sustainable materials like the nypa palm midrib stick is significant for several reasons:

1. **Cultural Preservation and Innovation:** By integrating sustainable materials into traditional handicrafts, this research promotes the preservation of cultural heritage while introducing innovative design concepts. This fusion of tradition and modernity ensures that traditional crafts remain relevant in contemporary society, appealing to both local and international markets.
2. **Promotion of Sustainable Practices:** Utilizing natural materials such as the nypa palm midrib stick highlights the commitment of local communities to sustainable practices. This not only reduces the environmental impact of production but also sets an example for eco-friendly craftsmanship, aligning traditional handicrafts with global sustainability goals.
3. **Addressing Market Demand:** Studying gender preferences as a factor influencing the declining demand for handicrafts allows for a targeted approach to design and marketing. By understanding what appeals to different genders, artisans can create products that cater to a broader audience, thus increasing the marketability and demand for traditional handicrafts.
4. **Economic Empowerment of Rural Communities:** By focusing on sustainable local materials, this research supports the economic empowerment of rural communities. The use of readily available resources like the nypa palm midrib stick reduces production costs and provides a sustainable source of income for artisans, fostering economic resilience in rural areas.
5. **Enhancing Aesthetic and Functional Appeal:** Incorporating gender preferences in terms of shape, patterns, and color into the design of home decoration products ensures that these items are not only aesthetically pleasing but also functionally relevant. This approach broadens the appeal of traditional handicrafts, making them suitable for modern home decor while retaining their cultural essence.

By exploring and integrating gender preferences into the design of nypa palm midrib products, this research aims to release a new perspective on traditional handicrafts. Home decoration products inspired by gender preferences can meet the diverse tastes and preferences of contemporary consumers, making traditional crafts more accessible and appealing. This research underscores the significance of rebranding Malaysian traditional handicrafts by using sustainable materials and considering gender preferences. By doing so, it addresses the challenges of declining market demand, promotes sustainable practices, and fosters the economic empowerment of rural communities. The study's findings will contribute to the preservation and innovation of traditional crafts, ensuring their continued relevance and appeal in a rapidly changing world.

Delimitation of the Study

Middle Ground

The experimentation to implement gender preferences in the design of traditional handicrafts involves specific methodological choices. These choices are crucial for the accuracy and applicability of the research findings. The study primarily relies on online questionnaire surveys distributed to a selective group of respondents. These respondents are categorized based on gender (male and female) and their educational background in art. The inclusion of both art-educated and non-art-educated respondents ensures a diverse range of opinions and preferences, which is essential for capturing a comprehensive understanding of gender influences on design. However, this approach has its limitations. The reliance on self-reported data from online questionnaires may introduce biases related to self-selection and the respondents' interpretation of the questions. Furthermore, the experimentations on product design are not solely based on survey results but also reference existing literature on gender preferences in design. This dual approach aims to balance empirical data with theoretical insights,

ensuring that the final product designs are informed by both contemporary consumer preferences and established academic knowledge. To address gender preferences equally in the product designs, the study aims to create designs that incorporate elements appealing to both male and female respondents. This balanced approach seeks to produce handicraft items that are inclusive and resonate with a broader audience, thereby increasing their market appeal and relevance.

Time Constraint

The research project is confined to a two-year period, spanning from 2023 to 2024. This temporal limitation imposes significant constraints on the depth and scope of the study. Given the finite duration, the research must prioritize certain aspects of design experimentation and data collection, potentially overlooking longer-term trends and developments that could emerge beyond the study period. This time constraint also impacts the iterative design process, limiting the number of prototyping and testing cycles that can be conducted. Consequently, the findings and final products may represent a snapshot of preferences and trends specific to the study period, rather than providing a long-term solution. This temporal limitation must be acknowledged, as it may affect the relevance and applicability of the research outcomes in the future.

Potential Geographical Bias

The qualitative nature of this research introduces the possibility of geographical bias, as the majority of respondents are likely to be from a specific location. This geographical concentration can influence the findings, as cultural, social, and economic factors unique to the region may shape respondents' preferences and perceptions differently compared to other areas. Such a bias limits the generalizability of the study's conclusions, as the results may not be applicable to broader populations with diverse cultural backgrounds. To mitigate this bias, the study should aim to include respondents from various geographical locations within Malaysia, if possible. However, given the practical constraints of the study, this may not always be feasible. In recognizing these delimitations, the research acknowledges that its findings are context-specific and may require further validation through additional studies in different geographical and cultural settings. This approach will help ensure that the insights gained are robust and applicable to a wider range of contexts. In summary, the study on implementing gender preferences in traditional handicraft design using nypa palm midrib faces several delimitations. The reliance on online surveys and existing literature introduces potential biases and limitations in capturing a fully representative sample of consumer preferences. The two-year time constraint restricts the depth and scope of the research, potentially impacting the long-term relevance of the findings. Additionally, the potential geographical bias inherent in the qualitative approach limits the generalizability of the results. Acknowledging these delimitations is essential for contextualizing the research findings and understanding their applicability and limitations in broader contexts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The nypa palm (*Nypa fruticans*), native to Southeast Asia, particularly Malaysia, plays a crucial role in traditional Malay handicrafts. Among its many parts, the midrib of the palm fronds stands out as a vital material due to its flexibility, durability, and environmental sustainability. Historically, artisans have utilized nypa palm midribs to craft a variety of functional and decorative items, such as baskets, mats, hats, and bags. These products serve both practical and cultural purposes, reflecting the artistic traditions and ecological awareness of Malay communities. In Malay craftsmanship, the nypa palm midrib is often woven into intricate patterns, demonstrating the high level of skill and creativity of the artisans. Its pliable yet sturdy nature makes it ideal for creating aesthetically pleasing and long-lasting products. The use of this material aligns with the broader values of traditional craftsmanship, emphasizing the harmonious relationship between the community and the natural environment. Furthermore, the practice of using nypa palm midribs illustrates a sustainable approach to resource utilization, as the material is renewable and biodegradable, contributing to environmental conservation efforts. Despite the long-standing cultural significance of nypa palm midrib handicrafts, the demand for these products has declined in recent years. One key factor contributing to this downturn is the influence of gender preferences. Traditionally, nypa palm handicrafts have been designed in ways that cater predominantly to female tastes, with delicate patterns, softer shapes, and a focus on decorative rather than

functional features. This gendered design focus has limited the market appeal of these products, particularly among male consumers.

Wilkins (2011) highlights that men generally prefer other types of local specialty products, such as electronic goods or perfumes, rather than traditional handicrafts. This trend indicates a significant gap in market engagement, as current designs fail to appeal to a wider, more gender-diverse audience. Research suggests that gender-specific preferences, including differences in how color, pattern, and shape are perceived, influence consumer choices significantly. Products featuring slim proportions, rounded shapes, and delicate patterns tend to be viewed as feminine, while those with angular shapes, bold lines, and bulkier proportions are considered more masculine (Van Tilburg et al., 2015). The lack of masculine elements in traditional nypa palm designs contributes to their limited appeal among male consumers, further exacerbating the decline in demand. To counter this issue, there is a need to diversify the design of traditional handicrafts by incorporating elements that appeal to both men and women. This could involve creating products with stronger lines, darker colors, and more functional designs that resonate with male aesthetics. By broadening the scope of design to include gender-specific features, the market for nypa palm handicrafts could be revitalized, potentially attracting a wider audience and fostering renewed interest in these traditional crafts. Malay traditional handicrafts can be classified into several fields, each characterized by its use of distinct materials and techniques. The nypa palm midrib falls under forest-based crafts, which rely on natural materials sourced from the surrounding environment. Forest-based crafts include products made from wood, bamboo, rattan, and nypa palm, all of which are sustainable and reflect Malaysia's commitment to eco-friendly practices.

These materials are harvested using methods that ensure their continued growth and availability, aligning with principles of responsible resource management and environmental sustainability.

- **Textile Craft:** Focuses on fabric-based arts such as batik, songket, and pua kumbu, representing a rich cultural heritage in Malaysia.
- **Forest-based Craft:** Involves the use of natural materials like wood, bamboo, and nypa palm, which are woven into everyday items or artistic creations. These crafts emphasize sustainability and eco-friendliness.
- **Metal-based Craft:** Includes items made from metals such as iron, copper, and silver, with products like tepak sirih (betel nut sets) and jewelry.
- **Earth-based Craft:** Covers ceramics made from clay, marble, and glass, including pottery and other functional art forms.
- **Various Craft:** Encompasses a wide range of materials like beads, shells, and paper, representing the diversity of artisanal practices in Malaysia.

The use of nypa palm midrib in traditional handicrafts has both environmental and socioeconomic benefits. As a renewable resource, the nypa palm is harvested in ways that do not harm the ecosystem, making it an environmentally friendly alternative to synthetic materials. The production of handicrafts using nypa palm midrib supports local artisans, particularly in rural areas, by providing them with a sustainable livelihood. This, in turn, contributes to the preservation of cultural heritage and supports rural economies. Traditional handicrafts play a significant role in promoting sustainable economic models, as they are often created by small-scale artisans who rely on locally sourced materials. By fostering the continued use of natural resources like nypa palm, these crafts contribute to the long-term conservation of biodiversity and environmental health. The design of traditional handicrafts, including those made from nypa palm midrib, is heavily influenced by gender dynamics. Masculine and feminine traits, as culturally constructed, often dictate how products are perceived and valued. Masculine design elements, such as strength, functionality, and independence, are often associated with bulkier, more angular products. In contrast, feminine traits, such as delicacy and emotional expression, are linked to products with curved lines and softer shapes. By considering these gendered expectations, artisans can create products that resonate more deeply with both male and female consumers. Balancing gender preferences in traditional craft design requires a careful integration of diverse aesthetic elements. This approach not only broadens the market appeal but also fosters inclusivity and cultural sensitivity. By addressing gendered design preferences, nypa palm midrib handicrafts can become more engaging and relevant to contemporary consumers. The traditional use of nypa palm midrib in Malay handicrafts underscores a rich cultural legacy intertwined with sustainable practices. However, the decline in demand, partly due to gender preferences, highlights the need for more inclusive and diverse design strategies.

By integrating masculine and feminine elements into handicraft designs, artisans can appeal to a broader audience, revitalizing interest in these traditional products. Furthermore, the eco-friendly nature of nypa palm midrib presents significant potential for sustainable design innovation, aligning with global environmental goals while preserving Malaysia's cultural heritage.

METHODOLOGY

The selection of an appropriate methodology is a fundamental aspect of conducting research, serving as the cornerstone for ensuring the accuracy and reliability of the information and materials under investigation. This methodological framework is essential for systematically examining data and drawing valid conclusions. To effectively complete the study, comprehensive data collection is required, encompassing both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data involves the direct gathering of original information through methods such as surveys, interviews, or experiments, providing firsthand insights directly relevant to the research question. Secondary data, on the other hand, refers to information that has already been collected and documented by other researchers or institutions, such as academic articles, reports, and statistical databases. The integration of both primary and secondary data sources enables a robust analysis by leveraging existing knowledge while also acquiring new, context-specific insights. This dual approach ensures a thorough exploration of the research topic and enhances the overall validity and depth of the study's findings. The approach to data collection is pivotal in determining the effectiveness of research, as the chosen methodologies significantly impact the accuracy and reliability of the findings. Employing appropriate data collection techniques provides researchers with a distinct advantage in acquiring precise information, thereby enhancing the overall quality of the investigation. In this study, which explores gender preferences regarding patterns, colors, and shapes in handicraft design, a multifaceted methodological approach was utilized to gather comprehensive input.

Primary Data

Primary data, being original and collected firsthand, is crucial for obtaining specific insights relevant to the research question. This study employed several methodological strategies to collect primary data, including surveys, observations, literature reviews, and experiments.

Questionnaire

An online survey was conducted using Google Forms, designed to gather detailed feedback from respondents regarding their preferences for shapes, patterns, and colors in handicraft design. The questionnaire, which consisted of 26 questions divided into five sections, aimed to capture diverse perspectives on gender-related preferences.

- Section A (Demographic): This section included five questions focusing on the demographic characteristics of the respondents, such as gender, age, occupation, educational background, and familiarity with handicrafts. The demographic data helps contextualize the responses and analyze patterns based on different population segments.
- Section B (Handicraft): This section contained five questions assessing respondents' understanding and opinions about handicrafts. It sought to gauge their level of engagement and personal viewpoints on the role and significance of handicraft items.
- Section C (Shape): Comprising five questions, this section aimed to understand respondents' preferences and opinions on various shapes. It explored psychological associations with shapes, gender-specific shape preferences, and the role of shape in enhancing the aesthetic appeal of handicrafts.
- Section D (Pattern): With five questions, this section investigated preferences for patterns associated with gender identity. Respondents were asked about their associations of certain patterns with femininity or masculinity and their opinions on whether patterns could be gender-neutral or symbolize specific genders.
- Section E (Color): This section, consisting of six questions, focused on color preferences and their impact on product selection and perception. Respondents provided insights into their preferred color schemes, the influence of color on product attractiveness, and the potential for colors to symbolize gender beyond traditional associations like pink and blue.

By utilizing this structured questionnaire, the study aimed to obtain nuanced data that would inform the understanding of gender preferences in handicraft design and contribute to developing more inclusive and appealing products.

DISCUSSION

Demographic Insights in Handicraft Studies

Demography, the statistical study of populations, plays a significant role in understanding consumer preferences and behavior, especially within handicraft markets. Demographic analysis typically focuses on groups categorized by gender, age, occupation, education, and knowledge about handicrafts, which provide valuable insights into shaping product designs and marketing strategies. In this survey, a total of 100 respondents were equally divided between male and female participants. The age distribution showed that 69% of the respondents fell within the age range of 17-30 years, while the remaining 31% were between 31-45 years and older. Additionally, the respondents came from various professional backgrounds, with 43% being students, 53% employed, and 4% unemployed. This diversity reflects the importance of considering different demographic factors in analyzing the popularity and acceptance of traditional handicrafts, as preferences may vary based on occupation and life stage. Education also plays a significant role in shaping handicraft awareness. In this survey, 53% of respondents had an educational background in art, suggesting a greater familiarity and understanding of handicraft traditions. On the other hand, 47% of respondents had no formal art education, which may affect their perception and appreciation of handicrafts. A notable 85% of respondents already had knowledge of handicrafts, while 15% were less familiar, indicating that increasing exposure and education about traditional crafts could potentially widen market engagement.

Section A (Demographic)

Table 4: Result of section A (Demographic) in Questionnaire

Respondent's background		
		Valid percent
1. Gender	Male	50%
	Female	50%
2. Age	0-16 years old	0%
	17-30 years old	69%
	31-45 years old	17%
	45 and above	14%
3. Occupation/ Profession	Student	43%
	Employed	53%
	Unemployed	2%
4. Do you have an educational art background in any field ?	Yes	53%
	No	47%

5. Have you ever heard or seen about handicrafts before ?	Yes, I already know about the existing of handicrafts.	85%
	No, I don't know much about the existence of handicrafts.	15%

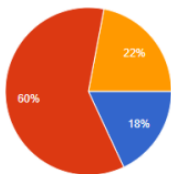
Section B: Insights into Consumer Preferences for Handicrafts

This section of the survey delves into consumers' preferences for traditional handicrafts, shedding light on what drives their purchasing decisions. The findings indicate that the most important factor considered before purchasing a handicraft is the pattern, with 60% of respondents prioritizing this feature. Shape was chosen by 22% of respondents, while color was the least important factor, selected by only 18%. These results underscore the significance of design elements in influencing consumer choices and suggest that artisans should focus on creating intricate and attractive patterns to appeal to potential buyers. Furthermore, when asked about the most attractive traditional handicrafts, respondents showed a preference for option 2, followed by option 3, while option 1 was the least preferred. This indicates that specific design elements resonate more with consumers, and artisans may benefit from refining their designs to match current trends and consumer preferences.

Section B (Handicraft)

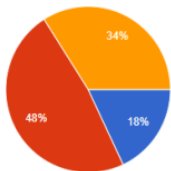
This section consists of 5 questions. This section is made to review respondents' understanding and opinion about handicraft.

Pie chart 1 : Among these options, what are the things that you consider before buying any product?



Pie chart 1 shows that there are 60% respondents chose pattern the most. There are 22% respondents chose shape. The least respondents as much as 18% chose colour.

Pie chart 2 : Which one of these traditional handicrafts that you find most attractive?



Option 1



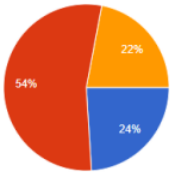
Option 2



Option 3

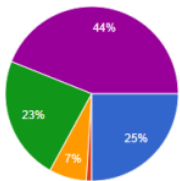
Based on pie chart 2 the respondent prefers option 2 the most. The second highest option is option 3 and the least choice is option 1.

Pie chart 3 : How can craftsmen enhance their handicraft?



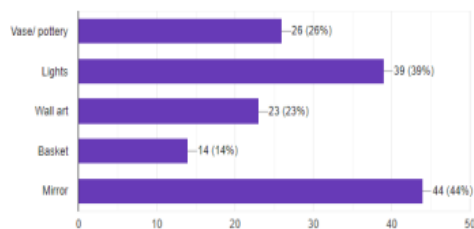
As much as 54% respondents prefer to make innovation in the design. Following the trend are the second most choices, as many as 24%. The remaining 22% respondents opinion is to implement gender-centred interest handicraft for a wider target market.

Pie chart 4 : In your opinion, what would you like to improve on traditional handicraft?



Pie chart 4 shows that 44% like to improve the design. 25% like to improve their functions. 23% like to improve the quality. 7% like to improve on price and there are 1% like to improve the size.

Checkboxes chart 5 : Which home decoration craft do you prefer?

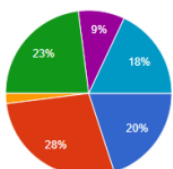


Based on the checkboxes chart 5, 44% of the respondents prefer mirror the highest as their home decoration craft. 39% of the respondents prefer lights, 26% of the respondents prefer vase or pottery, 23% of the respondents prefer wall art and the respondents prefer the least home decoration product is basket which is around 14%.

Section C (Shape)

This section consists of 5 questions. This section is made to review respondents' opinion and preferences about what shape that they mostly like ? From this psychology of shape, which person are you ? Do you believe that incorporating gender-specific shapes in handicraft design enhances the overall aesthetic appeal ? What shapes are suitable to represent both genders ? In your own preferences, What shape can symbolize male/female gender ?

Pie chart 1 : What types of handicraft shapes do you like?





Option 1



Option 2



Option 3



Option 4



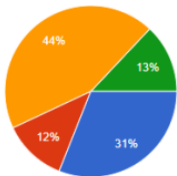
Option 5



Option 6

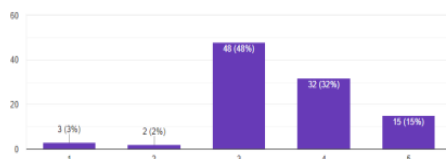
28% of respondents chose option 2 the most. 23% respondents chose option 4. 20% of respondents chose option 1. 18% of respondents chose option 6. 9% of the respondents chose option 5 and 2% respondents chose option 3.

Pie chart 2 : From this psychology of shape, which person are you?



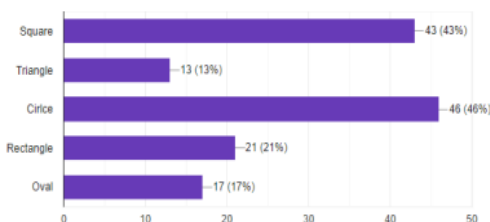
Pie chart 2 shows Most of the respondents which are about 44% are a square type of person. About 31% of respondents are a circular type of person. About 13% of respondents are vertical line types of people. Least of the respondents which are about 12% is a triangular type of person.

Bar chart 3 : Do you believe that incorporating gender-specific shapes in handicraft design enhances the overall aesthetic appeal?



48% of the respondents have a neutral opinion. 47% of the respondents more towards on agree with the statement. The remaining 5% respondents more towards disagree with the statement.

Checkboxes chart 4 : What shapes are suitable to represent both genders?



Based on the checkboxes chart 4, 44% of the respondents chose circle shapes the highest as the suitable shapes to represent both genders. 43% of the respondents chose square shape. 21% chose a rectangle shape. 17% chose oval and the least chosen shape is triangle by the respondents that is around 13%

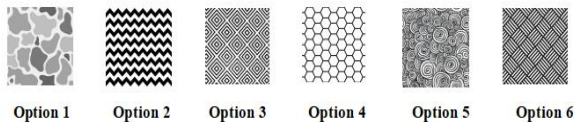
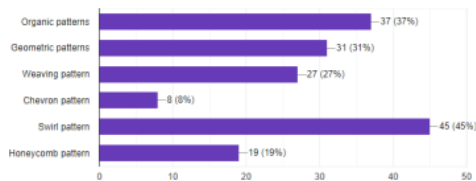
Respondent's opinion : In your own preferences, What shape can symbolize male/female gender ?

Circle is the most mentioned shape by the respondents that can symbolize male or female gender. Square is the second most mentioned shape and triangle is the 3rd most mentioned shape.

Section D (Pattern)

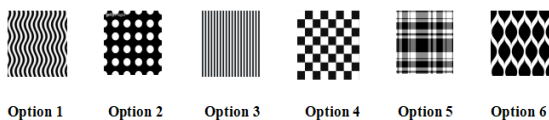
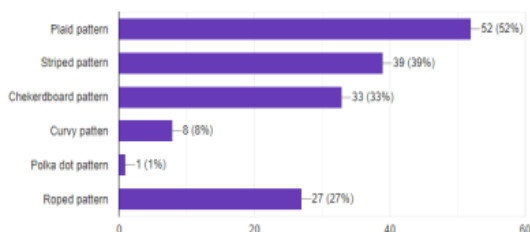
This section consists of 5 questions. This section is made to review respondents' opinion and preferences about which of the following patterns do you associate more with femininity ? Which of the following patterns do you associate more with masculinity ? Why do you think certain patterns are associated with gender ? For example, floral patterns displays feminine traits. Do you believe certain patterns are more gender-neutral or not associated with any specific gender ? In your own preferences, What pattern can symbolize male/female gender ?

Checkboxes chart 1 : Which of the following patterns do you associate more with femininity? (Please choose 2 patterns)



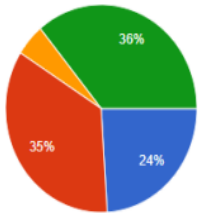
Checkboxes chart 1 shows that 45% of the respondents chose the swirl pattern (option 5) as the most associated pattern with femininity. 37% of the respondents chose the organic pattern (option 1). 31% chose the geometric pattern (option 3). 27% chose the weaving pattern (option 6). 19% chose the honeycomb pattern (option 4) and the least chosen pattern is the chevron pattern (option 2) by the respondents that is around 8%.

Checkboxes chart 2 : Which of the following patterns do you associate more with masculinity? (Please choose 2 patterns)



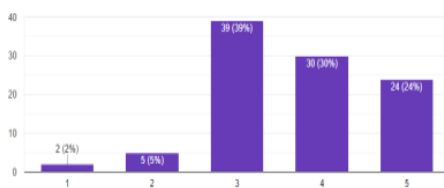
Checkboxes chart 2 shows that 52% of the respondents chose the plaid pattern (option 5) as the most associated pattern with masculinity. 39% of the respondents chose the striped pattern (option 2). 33% chose the checkerboard pattern (option 4). 27% chose the roped pattern (option 6). 8% chose the curvy pattern (option 1) and the least chosen pattern is the polka dot pattern (option 1) by the respondents that is around 1%.

Pie chart 3 : Why do you think certain patterns are associated with gender? For example, floral patterns display feminine traits.



Pie chart 3 shows 36% of respondents think that fashion is the biggest cause based on the following statement above. 35% respondents think that social stereotypes are the cause. 24% respondents think that gender attitude is the cause and the least influence is caused by mass media, which is about 5%.

Bar chart 4 : Do you believe certain patterns are more gender-neutral or not associated with any specific gender?



Based on bar chart 4, 39% of the respondents have a neutral opinion. 54% of the respondents more towards on agree with the statement. The remaining 7% respondents more towards disagree with the statement.

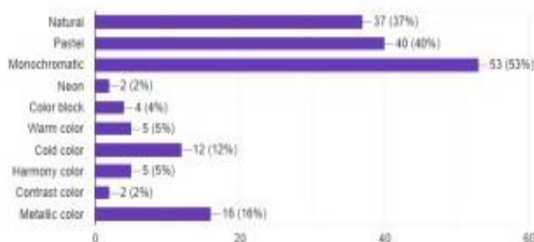
Respondent's opinion : In your own preferences, What pattern can symbolize male/female gender?

Geometric is the most mentioned pattern that can symbolize male or female gender.. Plaid and striped is the second most mentioned pattern and circle is the third most mentioned pattern

Section E (Color)

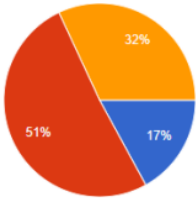
This section consists of 6 questions. This section is made to review respondents' opinion and preferences about Which color scheme do you prefer ? (Please choose 2 types of color). Are there any "gender-neutral colors that are equally appealing to people of all gender identities ? Can color affect your item selection ? How much do products' color influence the quality ? How much do products' color influence their attractiveness ? In your own preferences, What color can symbolize male/female gender other than pink and blue.

Checkboxes chart 1: Which color scheme do you prefer? (Please choose 2 types of color)



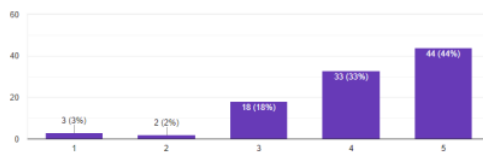
Checkboxes chart 1 shows that 53% of the respondents prefer monochromatic color schemes the most. 40% of the respondents prefer the pastel color schemes. 37% of the respondents prefer the natural color schemes. 16% of the respondents prefer the metallic color schemes. 12% of the respondents prefer cold color schemes. 5% of the respondents prefer warm or harmony colour schemes. 4% of the respondents prefer color block schemes and the least preferred color schemes is the neon or contrast color schemes by the respondents that is around 2%.

Pie chart 2 : Are there any "gender-neutral colors that are equally appealing to people of all gender identities ?



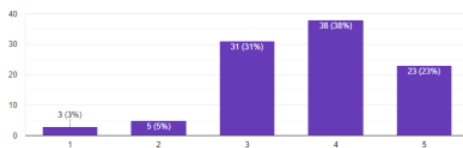
51% of respondents chose black color the most as gender-neutral colors that are equally appealing to people of all gender identities. 32% of respondents chose white color and the least respondents as much as 17% chose grey color.

Bar chart 3: Can color affect your item selection ?



Bar chart 4 shows 61% of the respondents more towards on agree with the statement. 31% of the respondents have a neutral opinion. The remaining 8% respondents more towards disagree with the statement.

Bar chart 5: How much do products color influence the attractiveness ?



85% of the respondents more towards on agree with the statement. 13% of the respondents have a neutral opinion. The remaining 2% respondents more towards disagree with the statement.

Respondent's opinion : In your own preferences, What color can symbolize male/female gender other than pink and blue ?

Black is the most mentioned color by the respondents that can symbolize male or female gender. White is the second most mentioned color and green and yellow is the third most mentioned color.

CONCLUSION

The research on the impact of gender preferences on the sustainability of Nypa Palm midrib stick products in traditional handicrafts has yielded significant insights. It underscores the critical role gender-specific preferences play in shaping market dynamics and influencing consumer acceptance. By recognizing and incorporating gendered design elements into these traditional crafts, artisans can enhance the appeal of their products, ensuring their sustainability in an ever-evolving market. The experimentation with patterns, shapes, and colors revealed that a balanced approach—incorporating both masculine and feminine qualities—significantly boosts the commercial attractiveness of Nypa Palm midrib stick items. Masculine elements such as geometric patterns and angular shapes resonate with male consumers, while feminine elements like swirls and organic shapes appeal to female buyers. This approach not only attracts diverse consumers but also demonstrates the flexibility and adaptability of traditional handicrafts to modern design trends, a vital factor in ensuring the products' longevity. Additionally, the findings emphasize that gender-neutral designs can bridge the gap between traditional and modern consumer expectations. Neutral patterns and inclusive color schemes make these handicrafts appealing to a broader demographic, including gender-diverse audiences, thereby

increasing their market potential. Looking forward, the study suggests that aligning Nypa Palm midrib stick products with gender preferences is crucial for their continued success and relevance. As the market for handicrafts becomes more competitive, artisans, designers, and marketers need to collaborate to create products that blend cultural heritage with contemporary aesthetics. This strategic alignment will not only help preserve the cultural and ecological value of Nypa Palm midrib stick goods but also ensure their sustained attractiveness and commercial viability in the evolving field of traditional handicrafts. This overall approach holds great promise for keeping traditional crafts relevant in a globalized market, ensuring that cultural heritage, craftsmanship, and sustainability go hand in hand. By catering to diverse gender preferences, traditional handicrafts can maintain their relevance and secure a stable position in modern consumer markets.

A primary recommendation is to conduct thorough market research to better understand modern consumer preferences. This analysis should not only focus on overall market trends but also dive deeper into specific gender preferences and emerging patterns. As the study suggests, consumer preferences are evolving, and understanding these changes is essential to tailor products accordingly. By identifying gender-based preferences and keeping up with new trends in the target market, artisans and entrepreneurs can more effectively design and market Nypa Palm midrib stick products. For instance, recognizing that masculine designs like geometric patterns or feminine swirls attract different segments of the market allows artisans to diversify their offerings and cater to broader consumer bases. Moreover, segmenting the market based on age, occupation, and educational background (as highlighted in the research findings) will enable producers to identify niche opportunities and craft targeted marketing campaigns. This approach could not only boost the product's popularity but also ensure its sustainability in both traditional and contemporary settings. Another key strategy is fostering collaborative partnerships among artisans, designers, and marketers. Collaboration encourages innovation and diversity in product offerings, creating a unique fusion of traditional craftsmanship and modern design sensibilities. For example, designers can introduce current trends like gender-neutral shapes and colors, while artisans maintain the cultural authenticity of the craft. These collaborations can help produce items that are visually appealing to a wider audience, which in turn increases the market potential of Nypa Palm midrib stick products. Moreover, working with marketing professionals can help craftspeople position their products more effectively in the market. By strategically highlighting the cultural heritage and sustainability aspects of these products, while also appealing to modern consumer aesthetics, Nypa Palm midrib stick crafts can achieve a stronger market presence.

The ability to adapt to changing design trends is vital for ensuring the long-term attractiveness of Nypa Palm midrib stick products. As consumer tastes evolve, particularly with the growing interest in sustainability and gender-inclusive designs, artisans need to regularly update their product lines. This might involve integrating new shapes, patterns, and colors that resonate with contemporary design trends while maintaining traditional techniques. For example, experimenting with minimalist designs or incorporating elements from modern interior decor trends could attract younger consumers. Additionally, introducing sustainable practices in the production process, such as using eco-friendly dyes or materials, can align with the increasing consumer demand for environmentally conscious products. Regularly refreshing product designs based on consumer feedback ensures that these traditional handicrafts remain relevant and desirable. By staying current with consumer preferences, artisans can effectively bridge the gap between tradition and innovation, ensuring the long-term market sustainability of Nypa Palm midrib stick products. In conclusion, the sustainability of Nypa Palm midrib stick products in the traditional handicraft sector can be significantly enhanced by implementing these strategic recommendations. Conducting in-depth market analysis will allow artisans and producers to better understand consumer preferences, particularly gender-based trends. Collaborations between craftspeople, designers, and marketers will foster innovation and broaden the product's appeal. Finally, maintaining flexibility and adaptability to emerging design trends ensures that these products remain attractive in an ever-changing market. Through these approaches, Nypa Palm midrib stick crafts can achieve greater market relevance and sustainability, preserving both cultural heritage and economic potential.

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This study is provided in accordance with the guidelines of the Universiti Teknologi MARA (Kedah branch). It allows for unrestricted utilization, dissemination, and replication in any form, provided that proper acknowledgment of the original author(s), source, and any modifications made is given. We extend our

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