



Social-Economic Implications of Endangered Heritage Crafts in Uganda

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Introduction

This research examines the socio-economic implications of endangered heritage crafts in Uganda. Endangered heritage crafts are traditional skills and techniques that are at risk of disappearing. These crafts are not merely artistic expressions but are vital embodiments of intangible cultural heritage that reflect the histories, values, and identities of various ethnic groups. However, there is a significant knowledge gap regarding the social and economic implications of endangered heritage crafts in Uganda, particularly for the makers, sellers, and users. Uganda serves as a prime example of these implications. This research aims to understand how craft endangerment affects the livelihoods, social structures, and cultural continuity of Ugandan communities and develop effective preservation strategies that address both cultural and economic dimensions.

Objectives

The main objective of this study was to examine the socioeconomic implications of endangered heritage crafts in Uganda. The specific objectives of the study were to:

1. Identify the types of heritage crafts found in Uganda and examine the reasons behind their production.
2. Identify the endangered heritage crafts and their social and economic impact on the community.
3. Analyze the role played by the heritage institutions in preserving and promoting heritage crafts.

Methods

- This research employs a qualitative research approach.
- The sample size of this research consisted of 50 respondents.
- A purposive sampling was used to select 6 respondents from heritage institutions which are the National Museum of Uganda, the Cross-Cultural Foundation in Uganda (CCFU), the Uganda Community Museums Association (UCOMA), the National Arts and Crafts Association of Uganda (NACAU), Bukomansimbi Organic Trees Farmers Association (BOTFA), and Sceck Consultant, and 4 representatives from community museums.
- Simple random sampling was used to select 20 respondents from crafts sellers and 20 respondents from producers from the local community in Pakwachi district, Jinja city, and Kampala, respectively.
- The methods used are desktop review, observation, interviews, and Focus Group Discussions.

Results

The findings of the reasearch reveal significant social and economic implications stemming from the endangered heritage crafts in Uganda. The decline of these crafts threatens the cultural identity of various ethnic groups, as they are essential for expressing community heritage, practices, and values. This loss weakens community ties and hinders the intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge. Economically, artisans who rely on traditional crafts for income face challenges as demand diminishes, leading to reduced job opportunities and potential financial hardship. The crafts market and tourism sector also suffer, as fewer unique and authentic crafts are available for sale, which in turn deters visitors from seeking cultural experiences.



Some of the endangered heri tage crafts such as local mat, shoes and beer guard

Conclusion

The findings underscore the urgent need to establish sustainable frameworks for traditional knowledge transfer, including structured training programs that engage young people not only in technical skills but also in understanding the deeper cultural significance of these crafts. This initiative will foster appreciation for heritage crafts while addressing economic sustainability concerns, and offer promising pathways for preservation.

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