

# Exploring the potential of material innovation to revitalize traditional crafts in Egypt

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## Abstract

This PhD paper focuses on the revitalization of traditional crafts in Egypt through material innovation and design. The traditional crafts in Egypt are facing repetition and lack of development, posing a threat to their survival. The study aims to support local crafts-practitioners in Egypt by exploiting the advancements in the field of material innovation and design in Italy, a country renowned for its expertise in this field.

The research methodology involves three phases: theoretical, practical, and developmental. The theoretical research analyzes traditional crafts in Egypt, including materials, processing, potential for development, and products. The practical research compares Egyptian and Italian materials and production processes, observing innovation and development. The study identifies advancements in Italian design and material innovation that can apply to Egyptian traditional craftsmanship, focusing on tools, materials, design, manufacturing, and collaboration. The final phase involves developing local materials in collaboration between Egypt and Italy to benefit from each other's expertise and heritage, forming new ideas for design and material innovation.

The study aims to have an impact on multiple levels, including political, economic, environmental, social, cultural, and international. The results of the study can provide the basis for submitting proposals to the local government, improving the education system, supporting small industries and crafts, creating a creative climate for the development of traditional crafts, and promoting the traditional crafts as part of cultural heritage and economic growth.

This paper proposes a structured approach to revive traditional crafts in Egypt. Collaboration between craftsmen, designers, and researchers is necessary for innovation and preservation. The methodology includes analyzing the current state of Egyptian crafts and studying typical materials. Four materials used in Italy and Egypt are compared, with examples of material innovation and creative design from Italian labs, companies, and studios. The final phase suggests methods for Egypt and Italy to collaborate in developing local materials in labs and workshops. Also discusses the background of Egyptian society and the importance of collaboration between craftsmen and designers to renew and transform the notion of tradition and local identity. The artisan region is characterized by cooperative societies, creative and supportive economies, relationships, shared experiences, and collective projects, making it a cultural and geographical hub.

## Author keywords

Traditional crafts, Material Innovation, Cultural Industries, Local Materials, Egypt.

## Introduction

The problems of traditional crafts in Egypt have been appearing for many years. Although there are about 28 different types of craft in nearly 20 cities in Egypt, yet the crafts suffer from repetition and lack of development. Egyptian society is full of these products and this traditional art is now trying to survive, and the solution to survival is to search for new tools to develop these crafts, on more than one level, including the local materials and the design.

Also, one of the important points raised by the research is the method of cooperation with designers, which comes after years of strong closure and separation between technicians and designers, but today we see the opening of borders. Once again in design and production among craftsmen and designers, which today seems essential given the potential memory, tradition and culture.

The traditional crafts problem in Egypt, despite the rich history and culture of traditional crafts in Egypt, these crafts suffer from repetition and lack of development. The crafts have not kept up with modern times and there is a need for new tools and designs to be incorporated to revive and develop these crafts. This lack of development has led to a decrease in demand for traditional crafts, causing them to struggle to survive.

The Importance of Local Materials and Design comes one way to develop traditional crafts to utilize local materials and designs. Local materials are a unique feature of traditional crafts in Egypt, and their incorporation in craft production is an important way to promote cultural identity. Additionally, the use of local designs can also create a distinctive identity for the products, helping to distinguish them from mass-produced items.

Collaboration between designers and craftsmen is crucial for reviving traditional crafts. The Artisan Region serves as a cultural and geographical hub, including cooperative societies, supportive economies, and collective projects. It has a significant history in production processes and can promote cultural identity and economic development. Designers and craftsmen working together can modernize and revitalize traditional crafts by creating new ideas and techniques.



## Background

Since the earliest dynasties in ancient Egypt, Egyptians diligently recorded scenes from their daily lives and deeds on the walls of temples, touching on agriculture, industry, religious rituals, and the arts. Handicrafts were an important part of these murals, which depict pottery, glass, papyrus, jewelry, and weaving as well as artisans working with stone, metal, wood, and leather.

The study suggests that traditional craftsmen's products have a human touch due to their use of local raw materials and handmade tools, allowing them to create new forms and explore artistic possibilities. However, modern changes have led to the disappearance of traditional crafts, resulting in hybrid products lacking authenticity and soul, as synthetic fibers and plastics are used due to the scarcity of local raw materials.

This study delves into traditional crafts, examining the intricacies of each craft and the passion of its artisans. It showcases the beauty and detail of each individual craft item produced. The research explores the evolution of Egyptian civilization through its handicrafts, tracing the development of tools, techniques, and raw materials used to create works of art. The study also emphasizes the connection between each craft and the lives of the people who create and use it, as well as the fusion of craftsmen and craft that imbues each piece with brilliance and meaning.

In each craft, the author presents a brief history of the craft to anchor it in time and space and show how it relates to the needs of its users and the architectural and artistic styles prevalent in particular periods. We also look at transition periods and external influences to better understand the evolution of the craft and the evolution of the product. Where the research presents the history of each craft until the modern era, and it is also necessary to highlight the context in which these crafts appeared and developed, and to adapt to changing times in new forms, even with contemporary innovations in the twenty-first century that depend on traditional forms.

## Methods and Research Phases for the Study

### Methodology

The research begins with conducting a comprehensive analysis of the state of the art and craft in Egypt, including the cur-



Hoda Mohamed Aman

**Figure 1.** Examples for traditional crafts in Egypt with different local Materials.

rent situation, problems, and identifying the producers into three categories: makers, artists, and designers. The products will then be classified based on the level of materials and tools used and the types of crafts. The collected data will be analyzed to determine the current state of the craft and its potential for growth through case studies that aim to bring new values to the traditional craft rules.

## Research Phases

### 1. Theoretical Research

This phase focused on conducting research and investigating the types of traditional Egyptian crafts, including the materials used, processing methods, potential for development, and examples of products such as hand-made kilim, furniture, accessories, and ceramics. An analysis of the current artists and their practices in this field will also be conducted.

### 2. Practical Research

In this phase, five typical materials from Egypt selected. The data and results from the crafts in Egypt will be analyzed to understand what still exists in terms of materials, product types, production processes, and the relationship between the craftsperson and designer.

### 3. Material Innovation and Development

The final phase of the study involves collaboration between technicians from Italy and designers from Egypt to develop local materials in labs and workshops. The study aims to improve the local craft industry at the material level by creating creative links between Egypt and Italy. It will focus on four materials used in Italy and Egypt and compare how each country used and developed them. The final phase will suggest methods for collaboration between Egypt and Italy in the field of material innovation and design in traditional crafts.

## Analysis

The data collected will be analyzed from Egypt to get approach to identify the advancements in the field of design and material innovation in Italy, which can be applied to traditional craftsmanship in Egypt. The study will focus on the tools and materials used, the design and manufacturing processes, and the collaboration between craftsmen, designers, and researchers. Impact of Research on traditional crafts and their impact on various aspects of society has become a topic of great interest in recent years.

## The impact of research

It is not is not limited on traditional crafts as specific level, but extends to multiple levels, including political, economic, environmental, social, cultural and international levels.

On the political level, research on traditional crafts can provide the basis for submitting proposals to the local government on scientific grounds. The government can use the research findings to provide better infrastructure and create a more creative climate for the development of traditional crafts. The government can also use the research to improve the education system, making it more relevant to the needs of local communities.

On the economic level, small industries and crafts can play a major role in local development. Research on traditional

crafts can provide the basis for supporting these small industries and crafts, which can help restore the economic position of local communities. This can be especially important in villages and small towns, where traditional crafts can provide livelihoods for many citizens.

On the environmental level, research on traditional crafts can help promote the reuse and development of local materials during festivals such as Eid. This is considered one of the benefits of preserving the environment and not wasting natural resources. This can help reduce the carbon footprint of communities and contribute to the sustainability of local ecosystems.

On the social level, Research on traditional crafts can empower women financially and break down traditional gender roles. It can also promote the preservation of cultural heritage sites and raise awareness about their importance for future generations.

On the international level, Research on traditional crafts can facilitate the exchange of experiences between countries and promote cultural understanding. This can foster international cooperation and benefit all parties. Traditional craft research has far-reaching impacts on society, from improving infrastructure and local development to supporting women's empowerment and contributing to sustainable community development.

## Conclusion

By the end of the studies, it is expected that incorporating design and material innovation related to traditional crafts will be an essential aspect of utilizing the results to promote local industry development. Traditional crafts have the potential to significantly contribute to local economies. Developing new designs and materials for traditional crafts can help local artisans expand their customer base, create new products that appeal to contemporary tastes, and retain the cultural and historical significance of the craft, generating more income for the community and supporting economic growth. Moreover, promoting traditional crafts can foster international cooperation, as they often showcase local culture and heritage, leading to increased tourism, more revenue, and more opportunities for local artisans. Better infrastructure, such as creating more accessible markets and workshops, improving transportation and communication, and providing better access to raw materials, can support the growth of these crafts and provide more opportunities for local artisans.

## Acknowledgments

I am grateful for the constant support of Mahy Amin. I would also like to thank Yahya, who has changed my life meaning since 2019.

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