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# Digital Communication Strategies for Traditional Craft Villages: Integrating Philanthropy to Create Sustainable Value

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**ABSTRACT:**

**Purpose:** This study examines how strategic philanthropy and digital communication are affecting the sustainability of traditional craft villages—particularly when local communities play an active role. It explores how these two factors work together to support the long-term survival of craft villages, and how the level of community engagement can either enhance or diminish the impact of philanthropic efforts. The goal is to offer practical insights for policymakers, NGOs, and craft village leaders who are trying to find the right balance between keeping cultural traditions alive and building economic resilience.

**Method:** This study used a quantitative research approach, collecting data through a structured survey distributed to 400 individuals, including artisans, local leaders, tourists, and nonprofit workers from across Southeast Asia. The survey asked respondents to rate their views on strategic philanthropy, digital communication strategies, community involvement, and sustainability outcomes, which were measured using a 5-point Likert scale. To analyze the data, SPSS was used for basic statistics, Cronbach's alpha was employed to check reliability, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) helped uncover underlying patterns, and linear regression was used to test the hypotheses. The SPSS Process Macro was additionally used to examine how community engagement might influence the link between strategic philanthropy and sustainability.

**Findings:** The results supported all the hypotheses, with strong relationships between the key factors: strategic philanthropy (0.657), digital communication strategies (0.702), and a significant moderating effect of community engagement (0.495) on the connection between philanthropy and sustainability. Community engagement helped boost the positive impact of philanthropy on the sustainability of craft villages. These findings suggest that local community involvement enhances philanthropic efforts, making a greater impact both culturally and economically.

**Originality/Value:** This research makes a unique contribution by highlighting the moderating role of community engagement, going beyond traditional linear models. By combining the Triple Bottom Line and Stakeholder Theory, the study provides deeper insights into how partnerships can help balance cultural preservation with economic sustainability. The findings not only enhance our academic understanding but also provide practical strategies for creating inclusive, community-driven solutions within traditional craft industries.

**KEYWORDS:** sustainability of traditional craft villages, strategic philanthropy, digital communication strategies, community engagement.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the digital age, traditional craft villages face mounting challenges in preserving cultural heritage while remaining competitive (UNESCO, 2020). Digital communication expands market access, but when digital communication is integrated with strategic philanthropy, it fosters community engagement and promotes ethical consumerism. Jones (2017) argues that this synergy not only supports economic sustainability but also strengthens social responsibility. Stakeholder Theory emphasizes the need to address the interests of artisans, consumers, and investors (Harrison, Freeman, & Abreu, 2015). As globalization challenges traditional crafts (Połeć & Murawska, 2022), this study explores how philanthropic digital strategies contribute to both economic sustainability and cultural preservation. The findings aim to provide valuable insights for policymakers, businesses, and artisans in balancing tradition and innovation to ensure long-term value creation.

Several studies highlight the role of digital communication in promoting traditional craft villages. However, most focus solely on economic benefits, overlooking the integration of philanthropy in fostering long-term sustainability. While research has explored cultural sustainability in various contexts (Soini & Birkeland, 2014), little attention has been given to understanding how digital philanthropy supports both economic resilience and heritage preservation. Moreover, the interplay between stakeholder engagement and digital strategies in fostering sustainable value remains a relatively underexplored research area. Agusta (2023) emphasizes the need for a more in-depth examination of how philanthropy-driven digital initiatives can enhance the long-term sustainability of traditional craft villages. A comprehensive understanding of this relationship is essential to ensuring the resilience of traditional craft villages and their continued relevance in an increasingly dynamic and globalized landscape.

This article seeks to address existing research gaps by answering two key research questions. The first is: "How do strategic philanthropy in craft and digital communication strategies impact the sustainability of traditional craft villages?" The second explores: "How does community engagement moderate the relationship between strategic philanthropy and the sustainability of traditional craft villages?" Accordingly, this study has three key objectives. First, it examines whether the integration of philanthropic initiatives and digitalization in communication creates sustainable value for traditional craft villages. Second, it investigates the moderating role of community engagement in the relationship between strategic philanthropy and sustainability of traditional craft villages. Finally, the study aims to make theoretical contributions and provide practical insights by proposing concrete strategies to enhance the sustainability of traditional craft villages.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Sustainability of Traditional Craft Villages

Sustainability, as outlined in Our Common Future, refers to meeting present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to do the same (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). Purvis et al. (2019) highlight that sustainability encompasses three interdependent dimensions: environmental, economic, and social. Within traditional craft villages, sustainability is not just about economic viability but also the preservation of cultural heritage and community identity. However, the forces of globalization and urbanization have disrupted traditional industries, reducing generational knowledge transfer and threatening the survival of many craft practices (Połeć & Murawska, 2022). Despite these challenges, some traditional craft villages have successfully adapted to modern economic conditions. Some communities, like Taiwan's Taomi Eco-Village, have adapted by integrating community workshops and eco-tourism to sustain their lacquerware traditions while ensuring economic stability. Sun et al. (2022) highlight how such initiatives help craft villages build resilience.

From an anthropological perspective, the sustainability of craft villages is deeply connected to cultural capital—the knowledge, skills, and traditions that shape a community's identity. Bourdieu (1986) emphasizes the role of cultural capital in preserving traditions across generations, influencing how they are valued and passed down. In traditional crafts, this capital is not just about technical expertise but also the deeper cultural and social meanings embedded in artisans' work (Zheng et al., 2024). Cultural capital is shaped by both digital communication strategies and strategic philanthropy, as they play a crucial role in preserving knowledge, reinforcing social norms, and sustaining cultural values. Digital communication strategies enable cultural exchange and preservation by making it easier to share and adapt cultural knowledge in a dynamic, interconnected world. Castells (2011) added how digital networks facilitate this process. At the same time, strategic philanthropy fosters social cohesion and strengthens shared values, creating a sense of collective cultural responsibility (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012). Together, these elements enhance cultural capital by reinforcing collective identity and facilitating the transmission of cultural knowledge across generations.

However, globalization has put many traditional crafts at risk, as younger generations increasingly turn to industrial or digital-based jobs instead (Połeć & Murawska, 2022). Without effective ways to pass down this knowledge, these crafts risk losing their authenticity and becoming mere commercial products, detached from their cultural origins. To prevent this, scholars emphasize that sustainability efforts must go beyond economic survival—they should also focus on protecting intangible heritage and ensuring that traditional crafts continue to thrive in a modern world.

### 2.2. Anchoring Theoretical Framework

#### 2.2.1. Triple Bottom Line (TBL) Theory

The triple bottom line (TBL) theory, introduced by Elkington in 1997, offers a well-rounded perspective on sustainability by incorporating three key aspects: economic, social, and environmental. When applied to traditional craft villages, this framework highlights how economic viability, social responsibility, and environmental stewardship must work together to ensure long-term sustainability.

From an economic standpoint, craft villages need to maintain financial stability through sustainable business models, diverse revenue streams, and strategic philanthropic efforts. Since these villages often depend on local markets and niche demand, integrating strategic philanthropy can enhance economic resilience by securing funding, supporting skill development, and fostering collaborations with larger enterprises. Research suggests that businesses can create shared value when they align profitability with societal benefits. This concept is particularly relevant to traditional craft villages, where balancing financial sustainability with social impact is crucial (Pfitzer, 2013). Moreover, digital communication strategies play a crucial role in improving economic outcomes by expanding market reach, strengthening brand positioning, and increasing consumer engagement. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) point out that digital platforms enable businesses to connect with consumers more effectively, giving them a competitive edge in an increasingly digital marketplace.

On the social side, the TBL framework emphasizes the importance of community engagement in preserving cultural heritage and strengthening social cohesion. Traditional craft villages are rich in cultural identity and artisanal knowledge, but their sustainability depends on active participation from local communities, policymakers, and external stakeholders. Community engagement acts as a moderating variable in this study, reinforcing the connection between strategic philanthropy and sustainability by encouraging participation, knowledge-sharing, and localized governance. Studies indicate that participatory development approaches promote social inclusion and improve the effectiveness of sustainability efforts. Pretty (2003) highlights how inclusive development models foster deeper community involvement, ultimately strengthening sustainability initiatives. Additionally, digital communication fosters cultural exchange, connects artisans with global audiences, and raises awareness about sustainable practices. Research highlights how digital platforms enable communities to share their cultural narratives, thereby strengthening cultural identity while increasing market accessibility. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) further illustrate this point by demonstrating how online platforms facilitate global exposure for local artisans.

From an environmental perspective, the TBL theory stresses the importance of mitigating the environmental impact of craft production. Many traditional techniques rely on natural resources, making it essential to adopt sustainable practices that reduce depletion and ensure long-term resource availability. Strategic philanthropy can provide financial and technological support for eco-friendly material sourcing, waste reduction, and sustainable production methods. Businesses with strong sustainability commitments are more likely to implement green production processes when institutional pressures and financial incentives are in place. Bansal and Roth (2000) argue that external pressures, combined with financial viability, significantly influence a firm’s decision to adopt environmentally friendly practices. At the same time, digital communication contributes to environmental sustainability by promoting transparency, advocating for eco-conscious consumer behavior, and encouraging responsible production standards. Research suggests that transparency in supply chains, facilitated through digital platforms, plays a crucial role in shaping consumer preferences and driving demand for sustainable products (Bansal & Roth, 2000).

However, this study takes the view that when economic, social, and environmental factors are brought together—as Elkington’s triple bottom line (1997) suggests—they can genuinely support the sustainability of traditional craft villages. Strategic philanthropy and digital tools are conceptualized not mernely as buzzwords, but as practical ways to help these villages stay economically strong (Pfitzer, 2013; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). When local people are involved and feel part of the process, the social impact tends to go deeper (Pretty, 2003). On top of that, the study assumes that when institutions apply the right kind of pressure—and offer financial support—it can push craft villages toward greener, more sustainable practices (Bansal & Roth, 2000).

### 2.2.2. Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) Theory

Sahin (2006) pointed out that the Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) theory provides a valuable perspective on how digital communication strategies are adopted and spread within traditional craft villages. According to this theory, innovations such as digital marketing, e-commerce, and social media gain traction based on their perceived benefits, compatibility with existing practices, ease of use, trialability, and visibility. In the context of craft villages, digital communication serves as a crucial factor in sustainability by expanding market access, enhancing customer interaction, and strengthening brand identity in an increasingly competitive landscape. The adoption of digital platforms has been shown to significantly improve business sustainability, particularly by enhancing operational efficiency and consumer engagement. Zeng and Gerritsen (2014) emphasize that businesses leveraging digital tools can optimize these advantages, ensuring long-term growth.

One of the key insights from DOI theory is the influence of opinion leaders and change agents in shaping adoption trends. Traditional craft villages, which have historically relied on localized marketing and in-person sales, often face challenges when transitioning to digital platforms. However, strong community engagement can ease this shift by fostering mentorship programs, knowledge-sharing networks, and digital literacy initiatives. This dynamic is particularly relevant when considering the role of strategic philanthropy in supporting sustainability efforts. Studies suggest that communities with strong social capital are more likely to adopt digital innovations more quickly. Sykes, Venkatesh, and Gosain (2009) discuss how trust and collective participation within a community can accelerate the adoption process, underscoring the importance of collaborative efforts in digital transformation.

Another critical aspect of DOI theory is its classification of adopters into different categories, ranging from innovators and early adopters to the late majority and laggards. This classification helps explain the varying pace at which craft villages integrate digital tools and philanthropic initiatives. Younger artisans and tech-savvy entrepreneurs often lead the way in digital branding and e-commerce, paving the path for broader adoption. Strategic philanthropy can further support this process by funding capacity-building programs, providing access to digital infrastructure, and incentivizing early adoption of technology. At the same time, the digital divide remains a challenge, particularly for older artisans who may struggle with technological adaptation. Addressing these barriers requires targeted training and community-driven digital literacy efforts, reinforcing the moderating role of community engagement (Rogers et al., 2014).

The visibility of the benefits of digital communication also plays a crucial role in encouraging broader adoption. Successful case studies, endorsements from industry leaders, and viral social media content can all contribute to accelerating the transition to digital platforms. Kietzmann et al. (2011) highlight the power of digital storytelling in branding and consumer engagement, allowing craft villages to showcase their heritage, production techniques, and commitment to sustainability. As digital platforms continue to evolve, DOI theory offers a strong foundation for understanding how craft villages can effectively integrate technology to enhance sustainability through strategic philanthropy and active community participation.

However, this study believes that bringing digital communication into craft villages—drawing on the Diffusion of Innovations theory (Sahin, 2006)—can genuinely help improve their long-term sustainability. The idea is that when trusted local figures are involved and the community actively engages, people are more likely to adopt new digital tools (Sykes et al., 2009). Strategic philanthropy also plays a part by supporting skill-building and encouraging early adopters to lead the way. When villages share their successes through compelling stories and visible results, it not only motivates others but also helps build a stronger brand and create genuine connections with consumers (Kietzmann et al., 2011; Rogers et al., 2014; Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014).

### 2.3. Determinants of Sustainability of Traditional Craft Villages

#### 2.3.1. The impact of Strategic Philanthropy

Philanthropy has always been a force for community development, but when done strategically, it becomes more than just giving—it creates a lasting impact. Instead of one-time donations, it integrates social responsibility into business strategies, ensuring both communities and companies thrive together (Porter & Kramer, 2002). This approach fosters innovation, strengthens local economies, and empowers artisans, turning short-term aid into long-term opportunity. More importantly, it shifts the focus from dependency to self-sufficiency, helping craft villages build resilience and adapt to evolving market demands (Jones et al., 2021). When aligned with sustainable business models, strategic philanthropy not only preserves cultural heritage but also opens doors to new economic possibilities. By emphasizing long-term investments rather than temporary relief, businesses can help create an ecosystem where artisans are not just recipients of aid but active participants in economic progress.

One of the most significant advantages of strategic philanthropy is its ability to drive sustainable growth through conscious capitalism. Mackey and Sisodia (2013) argue that businesses should not just chase profits but also contribute to social well-being, ensuring that the communities they engage with grow alongside them. In the context of traditional craft villages, this means investing in skill development, technology, and fair trade practices, giving artisans the tools they need to thrive in an evolving market. A great example of this is the Slow Food movement in Europe, which shows how businesses can support local artisans while still maintaining strong market appeal (Thompson & Kumar 2022). When companies actively collaborate with craft villages, they are not just producing unique high-quality goods but also fostering long-term sustainable partnerships. This approach goes beyond cultural preservation, as it strengthens consumer trust, enhances brand value, and ultimately creates a competitive advantage (Carroll & Shabana 2010). Beyond financial stability, strategic philanthropy can enhance human development by expanding opportunities and freedoms, aligning with Sen's (1999) capability approach. True progress is not simply about financial aid, but about equipping individuals with the skills and opportunities to shape their own futures. In traditional craft villages, this translates to investments in education, digital literacy, and access to global markets. For instance, in the Kajigelem craft villages of Indonesia, an ecotourism-based empowerment strategy has been proposed to both preserve cultural heritage and stimulate economic growth (Astutiningsih & Hasan, 2022). By integrating environmental stewardship into economic development, such initiatives ensure that artisans do not just survive but thrive in an increasingly competitive world. However, while these efforts create a strong foundation for long-term success, their effectiveness depends on broader structural factors, such as market access and institutional support. Without these enablers, even well-designed philanthropic initiatives may struggle to create enduring change.

Strategic philanthropy can be a powerful tool for change, but if not carefully planned, it can do more harm than good. Dependency theory (Dos Santos, 1970) suggests that constant external aid can create long-term reliance instead of fostering resilience. Yunus (2010) echoes this concern, arguing that financial support without a clear path to self-sufficiency can trap artisans in cycles of dependency. Similarly, Prahalad and Hart (2002) stress that philanthropy alone will not drive lasting change because without proper infrastructure and policy support, its impact remains superficial. A striking example comes from Bangladesh's craft villages, where many philanthropic initiatives focus on keeping production afloat rather than equipping artisans with the tools to grow their businesses. As a result, when funding dries up, many struggle to remain competitive because they were never empowered to succeed independently (Rahman et al., 2021). Instead of strengthening communities, poorly structured philanthropy can unintentionally make them more vulnerable over time. For philanthropy to truly make a difference, it must go beyond temporary relief. By investing in skill development, technology, and sustainable market access, it can empower artisans to build thriving businesses, turning short-term support into long-term success.

Strategic philanthropy can indeed drive substantial positive change in traditional craft villages, but only if it is part of a holistic, long-term approach. It requires careful planning, management, and an understanding of local contexts and constraints. Without addressing broader issues such as market access, infrastructure, and institutional reforms, the impact of philanthropy will remain limited. However, when managed effectively, it has the potential to empower communities, create sustainable livelihoods, and drive economic development for the future.

By constructing the theoretical framework, we integrate the foundational perspectives discussed previously, leading to the formulation of the first hypothesis presented below.

H1: Strategic philanthropy positively impacts sustainability of traditional craft villages.

**2.3.2. The impact of Digital Communication**

Digital communication is more than just a way to connect—it's transforming how traditional craft villages grow and thrive. When used wisely, digital communication does more than just open up new markets; it helps preserve cultural heritage and ensures long-term economic stability (Yanan et al., 2024). Rather than sticking to traditional marketing methods, craft villages now have the chance to use digital tools to reach global customers while still maintaining their unique cultural identities. This shift creates new economic opportunities and helps artisans adapt to changing market trends, moving them away from relying on local buyers to becoming more independent and achieving sustainable growth (Yanan et al., 2024).

When implemented thoughtfully, digital communication can make a big difference by expanding market access and preserving cultural traditions. The technology acceptance model (TAM), developed by Davis (1989), offers a useful perspective on why artisans choose to adopt digital tools. According to TAM, people are more likely to embrace technology when they find it useful and easy to use. For artisans, digital tools like e-commerce websites, social media, and virtual exhibitions are more appealing when they are seen as effective and simple to navigate. This helps explain why some digital projects are more successful than others. In Ghana, for example, training programs that focused on mobile platforms allowed local artisans to showcase their handmade products online, boosting their visibility and sales (Frimpong, Ayaburi & Andoh-Baidoo, 2024). TAM emphasizes the need for easy-to-use, accessible systems and the importance of training to encourage digital adoption among craft communities. Alongside this, the sociotechnical systems theory, proposed by Trist and Bamforth (1951), highlights that successful technology integration depends on balancing both technical and social factors. In traditional craft villages, where skills and cultural practices are passed down through generations, this theory points to the importance of community-driven solutions. In Morocco's High Atlas region, for example, local artisans played a key role in shaping digital solutions that respected their traditions and work culture, which led to successful implementation (Rüller et al., 2021). Together, these two theories show that when digital communication is tailored to the needs and culture of local communities, it can drive growth, foster creativity, and preserve cultural heritage.

While digital communication offers new opportunities, it also brings its own set of challenges. Appadurai's (1986) theory of "cultural commodification" suggests that when traditional crafts are sold online, they often have to be simplified to appeal to a global market, which can strip away their cultural and artistic essence. On top of that, van Dijk's (2006) digital divide theory points out that unequal access to technology can worsen social and economic inequalities. Many artisans, especially in rural areas, face issues like poor internet access and lack of digital skills, making it difficult for them to take full advantage of online platforms. This digital gap keeps them from reaching a wider audience and benefiting from the potential of digital tools, ultimately limiting their growth and success. For example, in Bangladesh, rural artisans struggle to connect with global buyers due to limited technological access and insufficient digital literacy (Deb et al., 2024). If these challenges aren't addressed, digital communication could further marginalize traditional craft villages.

In conclusion, when approached strategically, digital communication can be a powerful tool for growth in traditional craft villages. It not only helps expand market access but also preserves cultural heritage. To make the most of these benefits, it's important to ensure fair access to technology, protect the authenticity of handmade products, and equip artisans with the necessary skills to navigate the digital world. Only then can digital communication truly support the sustainable development of these communities.

The development of the theoretical framework allows for the synthesis of key perspectives discussed earlier, culminating in the articulation of the second hypothesis below:

H2: Digital communication positively impacts Sustainability of Traditional Craft Villages

**2.3.3. The moderating role of Community Engagement**

Community engagement is a dynamic process where community members and Stakeholders work together to identify, plan, and implement solutions to local issues, all while fostering shared ownership and empowerment (Israel et al., 2005). It stems from the participatory development approach, which views local actors not as passive recipients but as active participants in decision-making (Mansuri & Rao, 2013). This collaborative approach ensures that initiatives are not only culturally appropriate and contextually relevant but also socially sustainable, especially when development goals overlap with heritage preservation and economic change. In traditional craft villages across Southeast Asia, especially in Vietnam, community engagement plays a crucial role in preserving culture, passing on knowledge, and integrating tourism (Ngo & Creutz, 2022). These villages are often home to skilled artisans whose crafts hold both historical and spiritual significance. However, modernization and the migration of younger generations have put these traditions at risk. By fostering active community involvement through collaborative decision-making, sharing skills across generations, and promoting inclusive economic growth, these challenges can be addressed. A good example is the Kim Bong woodworking village in Hoi An, where local engagement has not only helped revive the craft but also improved the socio-economic conditions of the community (Tran, 2024).

Community engagement plays a crucial role in how strategic philanthropy impacts the sustainability of traditional craft villages. Strategic philanthropy—where organizations intentionally focus on creating positive social change—can only be successful in the long term when it resonates with local values and capabilities (Porter & Kramer, 2002). In this sense, community engagement acts as the link that connects external support with local acceptance. When community engagement is strong, philanthropic efforts are co-designed with local input, leading to more trust, legitimacy, and flexibility to adapt as needed (Osburg & Schmidpeter, 2013). Take, for example, projects aimed at promoting sustainable water use for traditional dyeing methods—these efforts are much more effective when community members are involved in creating the solutions, ensuring they align with the village's customs and beliefs (Pauschinger & Klauser, 2022). On the flip side, when engagement is minimal, top-down approaches often fail to gain local support, leading to wasted resources or even outright rejection by the community.

Different academic viewpoints offer varying opinions on the strength of community engagement in moderating the relationship between philanthropy and sustainability. Some studies argue that community engagement can significantly boost the impact of philanthropic efforts by building trust and driving local innovation, particularly in sustainability initiatives (Buengeler et al., 2020). However, others suggest that engagement may only improve outcomes under certain conditions, depending on the internal cohesion of the community and the broader institutional environment (Georgiou & Arenas, 2023). For instance, if village leadership is fragmented or politically divided, the positive effects of community engagement might be diminished, even with substantial philanthropic contributions.

From a philosophical standpoint, community engagement ties closely with Dewey's (1916) pragmatism, which sees democracy as something that is lived and shaped through active, collaborative participation. It also aligns with Sen's capability approach in development economics, where empowering individuals and communities increases their ability to achieve meaningful outcomes (Sen, 1999). Economically, community engagement plays a key role in building social capital—creating networks of trust, cooperation, and mutual support—which are essential for fostering resilience and innovation, especially in rural and informal economies (Putnam, 2000).

Drawing upon the theoretical insights established above, the framework has been shaped to support the formulation of the third hypothesis outlined hereafter:

H3: Community engagement positively moderates the relationship between strategic philanthropy and the sustainability of traditional craft villages.

By grounding the hypotheses in robust theoretical foundations, this study enhances its potential to make a meaningful contribution to scholarly discourse through the conceptual framework outlined below.

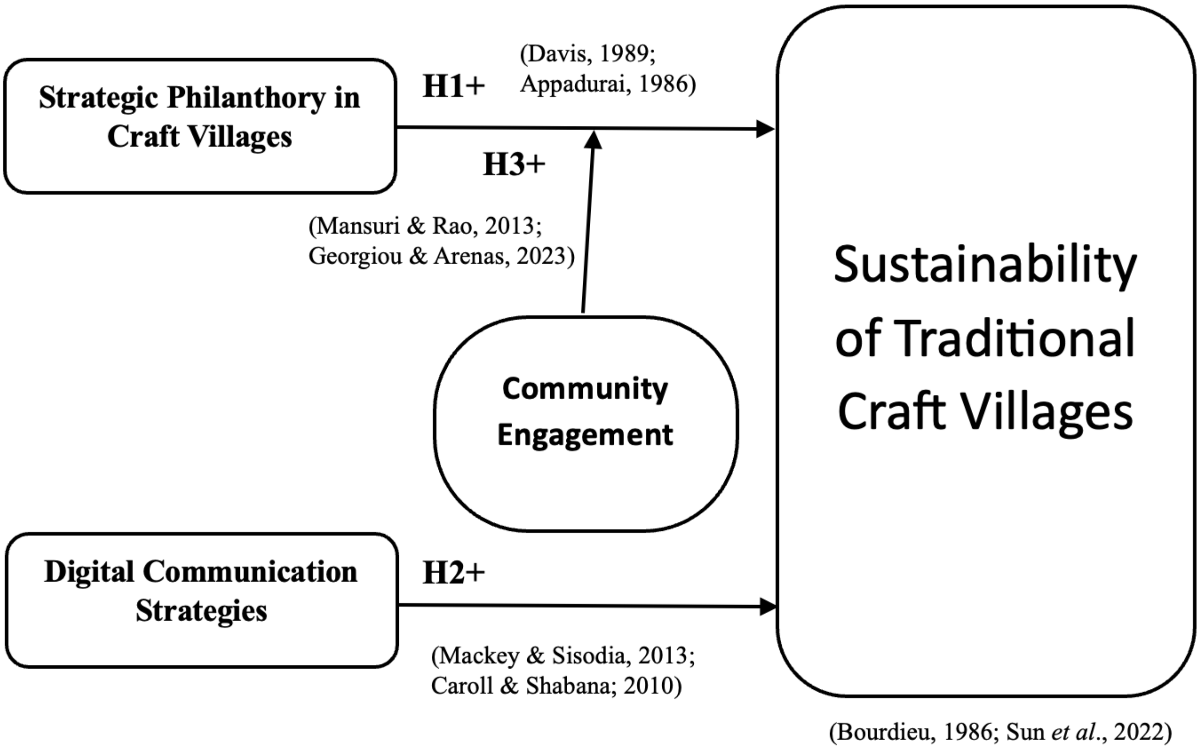


**Figure 1 The Article's Conceptual Framework**

## 3. METHODOLOGY AND DATA

### 3.1. Research approach and strategy

In this study, we chose a quantitative research approach because it allows us to gather and analyze data in a structured way to explore and confirm patterns (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This method relies on statistical tools to objectively assess the data and produce clear, measurable results (Babbie, 2010). Using this approach helps us directly address our research question and explore the relationships between key variables.

### 3.2. Participants

In this study, we used a probabilistic sampling method (Bryman, 2012), applying a stratified sampling technique to ensure a well-balanced representation of different perspectives on the sustainability of traditional craft villages. To collect responses, we designed a structured questionnaire using a 5-point Likert scale (Brown, 2011), targeting four key stakeholder groups: consumers of craft village products, university students in relevant fields such as communication, marketing, tourism, or sociology, tourists visiting the villages, and local residents. We shared the survey through a variety of channels to reach a diverse group of respondents. This included posting it in online communities of both local and international travelers, such as travel forums, social media groups, and tourism websites. We also distributed the survey through university mailing lists and student networks, especially in programs related to communication, tourism, marketing, and sociology. Additionally, we engaged with local communities by sharing the survey in craft village associations, on municipal social media pages, and through local government outreach. Using these diverse platforms helped us gather a wide range of perspectives from relevant stakeholders.

To capture a broad range of insights, we divided our sample into proportional segments. Consumers of craft village products made up 35% of the sample, as their opinions on brand perception, product value, and ethical sourcing are important for understanding both economic potential and trust in philanthropic efforts. University students in relevant disciplines represented 25% of the sample, providing a future-oriented view on digital communication trends and awareness of social responsibility. Tourists who visit traditional craft villages also accounted for 25% of the respondents, offering insights into their travel motivations, cultural appreciation, and preferences regarding sustainability. The remaining 15% of the sample consisted of local residents, who are most directly impacted by philanthropic projects and digital strategies, and whose feedback is key to evaluating community engagement and inclusivity. In total, we collected 385 valid responses out of 732 distributed questionnaires through a combination of manual and online channels. This balanced and inclusive sampling approach allows for a comprehensive analysis of how digital communication strategies and philanthropic initiatives influence the sustainability of traditional craft villages, while also considering how community engagement moderates these effects across different stakeholder groups.

## 4. RESEARCH RESULTS

### 4.1. Reliability analysis

**Table 1 Reliability analysis of the dependent variable "sustainability of traditional craft villages"**

| Reliability Statistics | |
|---|---|
| Cronbach's Alpha | N of Items |
| .785 | 4 |

| Item-Total Statistics | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Scale Mean if Item Deleted | Scale Variance if Item Deleted | Corrected Item-Total Correlation | Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted |
| SCV1 | 8.600 | 9.461 | .666 | .678 |
| SCV2 | 7.932 | 7.394 | .612 | .562 |
| SCV3 | 7.508 | 8.951 | .608 | .635 |
| SCV4 | 9.588 | 9.717 | .598 | .613 |

**Source:** (The authors, 2025)

Where SCV1, SCV2, SCV3, SCV are coded for survey questions 1, 2, 3, 4 of the sustainability of traditional craft villages respectively.

As shown in Table 1, all dependent variables achieved adjusted item-total correlation coefficients of no less than 0.3. The overall Cronbach's alpha was 0.785, which exceeds the standard threshold of 0.6 and is higher than the alpha that would result from removing any individual item. Furthermore, for each dependent variable, Cronbach's alpha remained greater than the corresponding adjusted item-total correlations, even when items were individually excluded. Consequently, no items were eliminated from the analysis. Comparable patterns were observed in the Cronbach's alpha values for the remaining variables.

### 4.2. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

**Table 2 Rotated Component Matrix for the 2 independent variables.**

| Rotated Component Matrix[a] | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Component with loading factors | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| SCV1 .725 | SP1 .659 | DC1 .635 | CE1 .520 |
| SCV2 .707 | SP2 .559 | DC2 .636 | CE2 .686 |
| SCV3 .727 | SP3 .768 | DC3 .684 | CE3 .649 |
| SCV4 .638 | SP4 .688 | DC4 .694 | CE4 .749 |
| Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. | | | |
| a. Rotation converged in 7 iterations. | | | |

**Source:** (The authors, 2025)

Where CE1, CE2, CE3, CE4; SP1, SP2, SP3, SP4; DC1, DC2, DC3, DC4 are coded for survey questions 1, 2, 3, 4 of the moderator one and two independent variables respectively.

As presented in Table 2, the rotated component matrix classified the eight dependent variables into two distinct factors aligned with the independent variables, with all dependent variables retained in the analysis. Each variable demonstrated a factor loading exceeding 0.5. In addition, a comparative analysis was performed involving both the dependent and moderator variables.

### 4.3. Multiple linear regression model

**Table 3 Coefficients[a]**

| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| 1 | (Constant) | 7.211 | .631 | | 3.721 | .000 |
| | SP | .673 | .585 | .657 | 3.472 | .000 |
| | DC | .722 | .615 | .702 | 3.807 | .000 |
| a. Dependent Variable: SCV | | | | | | |

**Source:** (The authors, 2025)

Where **SCV**: mean of SCV1, SCV2, SCV3, SCV4; **SP**: mean of SP1, SP2, SP3, SP4; **DC**: mean of DC1, DC2, DC3, DC4

Table 3 shows that the significance values (Sig.) derived from the t-tests are .000, both of which are well below the 0.05 threshold. This indicates that the independent variables, strategic philanthropy and digital communication strategies, have a statistically significant impact on the dependent variable, namely the sustainability of traditional craft villages. As a result, both hypotheses are supported.

### 4.4. Moderator analysis

**Table 4** Results analysis of community engagement

Model : 1
Y : SCV
X : SP
W : CE
Sample Size: 385

**************************************************************************

OUTCOME VARIABLE:
SCV

Model Summary

| R | R-sq | MSE | F | dl1 | dl2 | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| .588 | .568 | .533 | 6.658 | 3.000 | 381.000 | .000 |

Model

| | coeff | se | t | p | LLCI | ULCI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| constant | 4.723 | .255 | 73.328 | .000 | 5.551 | 5.071 |
| SP | .682 | .344 | 3.484 | .000 | .396 | .363 |
| CE | .674 | .541 | 4.260 | .000 | .282 | .254 |
| Int_1 | .495 | .470 | 4.005 | .000 | .364 | .311 |

**Source:** (The authors, 2025)

Where **CE**: mean of CE1, CE2, CE3, CE4

As shown in Table 4, the p-value for the interaction term (Int_1) is 0.000, significantly below the 0.05 threshold, confirming a statistically significant interaction between community engagement and strategic philanthropy in predicting the sustainability of traditional craft villages. The interaction coefficient of 0.55 indicates that community engagement enhances the positive influence of strategic philanthropy. Therefore, hypothesis H3 is confirmed.

## 5. COMMENTS

### 5.1. Summary result

The results of the linear regression analysis indicate that digital communication strategies exert the strongest influence (0.702) on sustainability of craft villages. Although strategic philanthropy also plays a significant role, its impact is comparatively lower, with a coefficient of 0.657. Additionally, community engagement functions as a moderating variable, shaping the relationship between strategic philanthropy and sustainability to a moderate extent, with a moderation coefficient of 0.495. This analytical approach was adopted to comprehensively address the research questions and clarify the interconnections among the key variables.

**5.2. Theoretical implication**

The empirical support for H1 strengthens the argument that strategic philanthropy plays a meaningful role in supporting the sustainability of traditional craft villages. This aligns with Porter and Kramer's (2002) perspective that when philanthropy is integrated into business strategy, it creates shared value for both communities and companies. It also echoes the ideas of Mackey and Sisodia (2013), who highlight how conscious capitalism can uplift local economies through thoughtful corporate involvement. Even so, our findings do differ somewhat from views like those in Dependency Theory (Dos Santos, 1970) and Yunus's (2010) concerns that long-term philanthropic support can create dependency—especially if deeper issues like market access aren't addressed. While those critiques are valid, our results suggest a different outcome: when philanthropy is strategically designed and culturally relevant, as suggested by Austin and Seitanidi (2012), it can actually empower artisans rather than making them reliant. The findings also challenge Rahman et al. (2021), who argue that many philanthropic efforts fall short due to a lack of focus on self-sufficiency. Instead, our research highlights that when philanthropy is combined with education, digital tools, and community involvement, it can promote both economic resilience and cultural preservation.

The positive confirmation of H2 gives strong support to the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989) and the Diffusion of Innovations theory (Sahin, 2006), reinforcing the idea that ease of use and visibility are key drivers for artisans adopting digital tools. This also supports Kaplan and Haenlein's (2010) claim that social media boosts direct customer engagement and expands access to broader markets. The findings resonate with Castells (2011), who sees digital networks as a means of preserving cultural stories. At the same time, the results highlight some tensions. Appadurai's (1986) warning about cultural commodification—where exposure through digital platforms might dilute authenticity—remains a valid concern. Similarly, van Dijk's (2006) point about digital divides, especially for older artisans, is partially reflected in our findings. But in contrast to Deb et al. (2024), who claim that technological barriers significantly hinder sustainability, our research suggests that with the right training and community-driven platforms, these barriers can be overcome. Ultimately, the study supports an inclusive approach to digital transformation—one that blends innovation with heritage to maintain both cultural and economic value.

As for H3, our findings confirm that community engagement plays a key moderating role between strategic philanthropy and sustainability. This supports Dewey's (1916) view that democratic involvement boosts program relevance and effectiveness, and reflects Sen's (1999) idea that empowerment enhances the impact of development efforts. The results also align with Osburg and Schmidpeter's (2013) call for co-created initiatives that foster trust and adaptability in community projects. However, our conclusion contrasts with Georgiou and Arenas (2023), who argue that the benefits of engagement depend heavily on community cohesion and institutional structures. While Buengeler et al. (2020) view engagement as a consistent driver of sustainability, our study suggests that its impact is more context-dependent—shaped by cultural fit and the strength of local leadership. We also diverge from the top-down models criticized by Rahman et al. (2021), emphasizing instead that engagement should not be an afterthought. It is a key enabler that turns external philanthropic efforts into meaningful, community-owned action. In this way, the study proposes a more integrated model, where engagement isn't just helpful—it's essential for long-term, sustainable transformation.

**5.3. Practical Implications**

The findings from this study offer practical insights for practitioners, policymakers, and community organizations working to support the sustainability of traditional craft villages.

First, the strong impact of strategic philanthropy (H1) suggests that businesses and nonprofit partners should move beyond short-term aid and focus on building long-term capacity. This means investing in artisan training, developing fair-trade platforms, and launching heritage-focused marketing campaigns. These efforts not only help artisans become more self-reliant but also strengthen the local economy (Jones et al., 2021). Collaborations should be guided by shared value principles, following Porter and Kramer's (2002) idea that social impact can drive competitive advantage.

Second, the confirmed role of digital communication (H2) highlights the importance of inclusive digital infrastructure and culturally aware technology solutions. Training programs that teach digital literacy and effective use of social media can help artisans bridge the digital divide (Deb et al., 2024). Community-led branding initiatives—similar to successful examples like the High Atlas project in Morocco (Rüller et al., 2021)—can preserve authenticity while expanding market reach. It's also crucial to design digital tools that are intuitive and user-friendly, based on models like the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) by Davis (1989), which emphasizes ease of use and usefulness.

Finally, the confirmed moderating effect of community engagement (H3) points to the need for embedding participatory practices into philanthropic planning. Establishing local councils or artisan-led planning boards can ensure that community voices are heard, increasing the legitimacy and long-term effectiveness of development efforts (Osburg & Schmidpeter, 2013). Public-private partnerships should embrace a bottom-up approach that respects local culture and values. Importantly, policies should include community engagement as a key metric when evaluating the sustainability of such initiatives.

In short, this research reinforces the idea that sustainable development in traditional craft villages depends on strategic, inclusive, and community-centered approaches.

**5.4. Limitations**

While the study's quantitative approach ensures statistical reliability, it may overlook the cultural depth and emotional layers of artisans' experiences. Relying on Likert-scale responses can limit insight into deeply held community values. The stratified sample, though varied, was confined to four groups in one region, which may reduce the broader relevance of the findings. Time constraints also limit the ability to assess long-term impacts of digital and philanthropic efforts. These limitations suggest the findings should be applied with care in different contexts and point to the value of future qualitative research for a more holistic understanding.

**5.5. Future Research Directions**

Future research should consider a longitudinal mixed-methods approach to better understand how philanthropic and digital efforts develop over time and impact both cultural preservation and economic outcomes. Ethnographic fieldwork would be especially valuable in exploring how artisans personally interpret and engage with these initiatives. Comparative studies across different craft villages—both within and beyond Southeast Asia—could highlight cultural and institutional variations in adopting sustainability practices. Additionally, examining the influence of government incentives and digital policy reforms could reveal how public support shapes long-term success. Exploring factors like gender, age, and access to technology in philanthropy-driven programs could also provide deeper insight into equity and inclusion in the revitalization of traditional crafts.

**5.6. Conclusion**

This study provides strong evidence that strategic philanthropy and digital communication play a vital role in supporting the sustainability of traditional craft villages—especially when paired with active community engagement. While the findings highlight the transformative potential of these strategies, they also point to possible risks, such as cultural loss or digital exclusion, if not applied inclusively. By drawing on frameworks like the Triple Bottom Line, the Technology Acceptance Model, and community-based development, the research presents a well-rounded view of how tradition and innovation can work hand in hand. Crucially, it emphasizes that sustainability isn't just about economics or the environment—it's a social process grounded in cultural identity, participation, and empowerment. As digitalization and globalization continue to reshape our world, this study underscores the importance of inclusive, strategic action to protect and revitalize heritage. Its insights offer valuable guidance for future policy, academic research, and on-the-ground initiatives in craft preservation.

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**APPENDIX**

**Table 6: Survey Questionnaire**

| **Background information** | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | You are in which group? | Consumers are interested in craft village products | Students majoring in communications, marketing, sociology or tourism | Tourists visit traditional craft villages | Local residents in craft villages |
| 2 | Have you ever bought products from traditional craft villages? | Yes | No | Maybe | |
| 3 | Reasons you choose craft village products: | Quality | Cultural values | Community support | |
| 4 | Have you ever participated in community activities supporting craft villages (club,volunteer campaigns, social media,...)? | Yes | No | Maybe | |
| 5 | How did you know about the craft village? | Friends/ Acquaintences | Social network | On tour | Press/TV |
| 6 | Have you ever heard or used digital media tools (fanpage, livestream, website, promotional clips,...) to introduce craft villages? | Yes | No | Maybe | |

| **No.** | **Variables** | **Coded Sub-variables** | **Content** |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Sustainability of Traditional Craft Villages (SCV) | SCV1 | Our craft village's sustainability efforts equally address economic, social, and environmental needs. (Purvis et al., 2019) |
| | | SCV2 | Our village has successfully integrated cultural heritage preservation with modern economic strategies. (Sun et al., 2022) |
| | | SCV3 | Cultural capital such as artisanal skills and traditions continues to be transmitted across generations. (Bourdieu, 1986; Zheng et al., 2024) |
| | | SCV4 | Digital communication and philanthropic efforts have enhanced our resilience against globalization threats. (Połeć & Murawska, 2022; Castells, 2011) |
| 2. | Strategic Philanthropy (SP) | SP1 | Strategic philanthropic support has improved our artisans' access to training and skill development programs. (Porter & Kramer, 2002; Mackey & Sisodia, 2013) |
| | | SP2 | Long-term philanthropic initiatives in our village foster self-sufficiency rather than dependency. (Sen, 1999; Jones et al., 2021) |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | SP3 | Philanthropy integrated with sustainable business models increases our economic resilience. (Pfitzer, 2013; Thompson & Kumar, 2022) |
| | | SP4 | Strategic philanthropy helps in preserving cultural heritage while creating market opportunities. (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012; Carroll & Shabana, 2010) |
| 3. | Digital Communication (DC) | DC1 | Our village has used digital platforms to improve customer engagement and expand market access. (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Yanan et al., 2024) |
| | | DC2 | We perceive digital tools as easy to use and useful in promoting traditional products. (Davis, 1989) |
| | | DC3 | Digital strategies respect local work culture while enhancing global visibility. (Rüller et al., 2021) |
| | | DC4 | We are aware of the risk of cultural commodification when using digital channels to promote crafts. (Appadurai, 1986; Deb et al., 2024) |
| 4. | Community engagement (CE) | CE1 | Our community members are actively involved in co-planning and implementing sustainability initiatives. (Mansuri & Rao, 2013) |
| | | CE2 | Community engagement in our village enhances the success of philanthropic projects. (Osburg & Schmidpeter, 2013;) |
| | | CE3 | Participatory approaches strengthen social trust and increase commitment to sustainable development. (Pretty, 2003; Putnam, 2000) |
| | | CE4 | Our village's ability to influence philanthropic initiatives is enhanced by high levels of local engagement. (Chatterjee et al., 2021; Nguyen & Vo, 2023) |

Survey link:
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeXPI9ewd9WA8rHaIf3qMQ_Er2lQQ4G3P9WVhJkqTweseTNUQ/viewform