

Traditional Crafts and Modern Identity Construction

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Abstract

Investigating the role of traditional crafts in contemporary identity formation among younger generations. Our findings suggest that craft practices serve as important markers of cultural belonging and provide a sense of continuity in rapidly changing social environments.

Traditional Crafts, Identity, Youth Culture, Cultural Belonging, Heritage

1. Introduction

In an era of rapid globalization and digital transformation, traditional crafts are experiencing a resurgence of interest among younger generations. This paper explores how engagement with traditional craft practices contributes to identity construction and cultural belonging among youth in East Asian societies.

2. Theoretical Framework

Drawing on theories of cultural identity and practice-based learning, we examine how the embodied knowledge of traditional crafts provides a tangible connection to cultural heritage while allowing for creative expression and personal meaning-making.

"Craft practices offer a unique pathway for young people to negotiate their identities between tradition and modernity, local and global, individual and collective."

3. Methodology

This study employed ethnographic methods, including participant observation and in-depth interviews with 45 young craft practitioners (ages 18-35) in China, Japan, and South Korea. Participants were engaged in various traditional crafts including ceramics, textiles, woodworking, and metalwork.

4. Findings

Three major themes emerged from the analysis:

Crafts as a means of connecting with ancestral heritage and cultural roots

The therapeutic and grounding effects of slow, mindful craft practices

Creative adaptation of traditional techniques for contemporary expression

5. Discussion

The findings suggest that traditional crafts serve multiple functions in contemporary identity construction. They provide a sense of cultural continuity, offer respite from digital saturation, and enable young people to articulate their identities through material practice. The revival of traditional crafts among youth represents not nostalgia but an active engagement with heritage as a resource for navigating modern life.

References

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