

An Investigation into the Challenges Faced by Batik Craftsmen in Sri Lanka

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Abstract – This research explores the practice of batik craftsmanship in Sri Lanka, focusing on its unique artistic elements and the challenges faced by craftsmen. Despite its rich cultural heritage, the Sri Lankan batik industry has seen limited growth, largely due to insufficient documentation and understanding of the challenges encountered by artisans. This study addresses this gap by examining the experiences of five batik craftsmen from diverse regions—Puttalam, Kurunegala, Kandy, Colombo, and Galle—selected for their representation of the craft's geographic spread. Using a case study approach and qualitative methods, data were gathered through semi-structured questionnaires and analyzed thematically. Four key themes emerged: Cultural Impact, Socio-economic Challenges, Environmental Challenges, and Production Challenges. The findings revealed that batik craft in Sri Lanka is entirely handmade, characterized by distinctive motifs, color palettes, inspirations, and the exceptional artistic skills of its craftsmen. However, the industry faces significant hurdles in socio-economic conditions, environmental sustainability, and production processes. To support the sustainability and growth of Sri Lankan batik, the study recommends documenting unique practices, promoting awareness programmes, fostering knowledge sharing on sustainable methods, and encouraging government support for the craft. These measures aim to preserve and enhance the legacy of batik craftsmanship in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: Batik; Batik Craftsmen; Case Study; Challenges

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I. Introduction

Batik is a textile art that originated in Indonesia during the 5th century and later spread to other regions, including Sri Lanka. Batik is a traditional textile art form that uses wax and dye to create intricate designs (details/patterns) on fabric. It is a complex and time-consuming process, but it is a highly skilled art form that is cherished by many cultures around the world. In Sri Lanka, batik has a rich history dating back to the 19th century deeply rooted in the nation's artistic heritage and cultural identity (H.A.K.L.Manjula, Lankapradeepa, 2023). Despite its significance, the batik artistry in Sri Lanka faces numerous challenges that hinder the smooth practice. This research aims to investigate these challenges faced by batik craftsmen in practicing batik artistry in Sri Lanka.

II. Research Problem

Batik is recognized as a traditional textile craft in the country due to the long-standing practice, community engagement and cultural significance. The Batik craft has contributed significantly to the country, offering economic benefits, creating job opportunities and preserving traditional heritage. Passed down through generations, batik reflects the country's rich artistic traditions and cultural identity. However, despite its importance, the batik industry has seen limited growth and socialization within the country (Ruwanpathirana, 2012). This stagnation is attributed to a lack of proper documentation and evidence detailing the challenges faced by batik artisans.

To address this gap, this research seeks to identify and analyse the real challenges encountered by the batik craftsmen in selected areas of Sri Lanka. Additionally, it explores how batik is practiced and highlights the unique aspects of the craft as sustained by these artisans. The identified primary problem for the research is the absence of sufficient literature documenting the challenges that batik craftsmen face in practicing the craft in the contemporary Sri Lankan context.

III. Literature Review

Batik is a handmade technique that uses hot wax to create resist patterns, allowing the production of intricate single- or multi-colored designs through successive dye applications (Mignon, 2017). It is a traditional art form utilizing various materials such as cotton, silk, and even wood showcasing its versatility.

Javanese batik, known for its prestige, is deeply woven into their culture, adorning everything from clothing to ceremonial items reflects its deep integration into Javanese traditions, (Gaffney, *The Batik Guide*, 2020). The 1997 International Batik Convention defined batik as a wax-resist dyeing process that creates patterns by leaving certain areas of fabric undyed (Syahrin, 2015). Derived from the Javanese word for "dot," batik is an ancient textile art form, possibly dating back 2,000 years, with historical evidence across Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. While artistic depictions of batik are found in caves and temples, physical proof of early batik fabrics are rare (Gaffney, *The Batik Guide*, 2020). Batik's origins are widespread, with Indonesia's Java Island becoming the artistic center where the art form thrived for centuries (Aderson, 2023).

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Despite its rich heritage, a study on the Indonesian batik industry reveals ongoing challenges, including limited innovation and insufficient sustainable production practices (Indarti, Rahayu, & Peng, 2019).

Figure 1

13th century stone carving on a temple in East Java showing batik pattern (Gaffney, 2020)



Figure 2

Wax resist textile from Niya, Xinjiang, China (Gaffney, 2020)



Figure 3

A mural from the Ajanta caves, India (Gaffney, 2020)



Sri Lankan batik boasts a rich history and vibrant cultural significance. While its exact origin remains debated, pioneers like Soma Udabage, Vipula Dharmawardhana, Eric Suriyasena, and Buddhi Keerthisena are credited with establishing the contemporary batik industry. Their dedication has not only preserved this art form but also propelled it to new heights, resulting in a unique Sri Lankan style recognized worldwide (Team Next Travel, 2023).

Figure 4

Soma Udabage - Tribute Ceremony (Reshani, 2023)



Figure 5

Premakumara Epatawela (Epatawela, 2001)



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Artist Ena de Silva, inspired by a Geoffrey Bawa house, launched a successful batik brand and later established a thriving women's cooperative in her ancestral home, preserving traditional Sri Lankan crafts (Robson, 2008).

Figure 6

The ceiling of multiple batik panels made by the Aluvihare Heritage Centre (Cinnamon Benthot Beach, n.d.)



Figure 7

Batik Maestro Buddhi Keerthisena (Gunawardhana & Edward, 2023)



Buddhi Keerthisena, a Sri Lankan batik pioneer, blends traditional techniques with modern design, creating culturally authentic and globally admired pieces, inspiring future generations (Gunawardhana & Edward, 2023). Eric Sooriyasena has made a name for himself in the nation as a pioneering artist in addition to a successful reporter. Mr. Sooriyasena started what would turn out to be a very successful career as a designer.

Figure 8

The veteran at work (Illankoon, Sunday Times, 2013)



Figure 9

Eric Sooriyasena Batik Showroom located in Marawila (Reshani, 2023)



The Batik industry in Sri Lanka is currently in a unique state. This industry involves creating beautiful designs on fabrics through a special wax and dye process. For a long time, it has been an essential part of Sri Lankan culture. However, in recent times, the batik industry faces certain challenges (Jayawardena, 2022). Mass-produced batik by large companies challenges small businesses, but the tradition remains cherished in Sri Lanka (Withanaarachchi, 2022). Specially, Sri Lanka invested Rs. 98.236 Mn in 2021 to establish 60 Batik Training Centers nationwide, training 75

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instructors and 1200 batik producers to revitalize the local batik industry (State Ministry of Batik, 2021). Research revealed that the majority of Sri Lankan batik consumers were ethnocentric and believed in local products rather than foreign-made products (Mendis & Ranaweera, 2023).

A batik artist named Zinara Rathnayake reports the same concern highlighted by Mr. Ranasinghe and Ms. Mohammed about the fading interest of young people entering in the traditional craft of batik (Christian Science Monitor, 2023). Furthermore, a study revealed that the COVID-19 pandemic severely disrupted Sri Lanka's batik industry by impacting the access to raw materials, market access, transportation, and livelihoods of artisans (Senaratne & Silva, 2023).

IV. Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore the diverse challenges faced by batik craftsmen in Sri Lanka. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for exploring detailed and complex challenges while understanding the personal experiences and perspectives of the participants. Using purposive sampling, five batik craftsmen were selected from different districts in Sri Lanka, Puttalam, Colombo, Kandy, Kurunegala, and Galle to ensure a diverse representation of perspectives, including those of batik brand owners, artists, and instructors. The National Crafts Council (NCC) reported a total of 2,041 registered batik craftsmen, with a significant concentration in Kandy (Ministry of Public Services, 2020). However, acknowledging the large number of unregistered craftsmen, the selection process aimed to reflect a broader representation of the industry. This approach ensured the inclusion of varied experiences across the batik sector.

Semi-structured interviews were the primary method of data collection, providing a balance between structured inquiry and flexibility to explore participants' experiences, challenges, and perspectives on batik artistry. An interview guide was carefully developed to align with the research objectives and was informed by existing literature on the batik industry. A pilot study was conducted to refine the questionnaire, ensuring clarity and comprehensiveness and effectiveness in capturing relevant data. The finalized questionnaire consisted of five key sections: demographic information, data on the batik industry, details of batik practice, challenges in batik practice, and insights into batik artistry. To facilitate better comprehension among the participants, the questionnaire was translated from English into Sinhala.

Thematic analysis, a widely recognized method for qualitative data analysis method, was used to identify and interpret patterns within the collected data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This rigorous process involved several systematic stages: familiarizing with the data, generating initial codes, identifying potential themes, reviewing and refining the themes, defining and naming them, and ultimately producing a final comprehensive report. This structured approach enabled an in-depth exploration of the data, uncovering key themes that provided valuable insights into the challenges encountered by batik craftsmen.

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The findings of the study are subject to certain limitations. The relatively small sample size and limited geographic focus provide a narrow perspective, which may not fully capture the challenges experienced by all batik craftsmen across Sri Lanka. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data introduces the possibility of bias. Despite these limitations, the study offers critical insights into the challenges faced by batik craftsmen and provides a foundation for developing policies and programs to support and sustain this vital cultural heritage. Future research could address these limitations by including a larger, more diverse sample from additional districts and incorporating quantitative methods to complement the qualitative findings.

V. Findings

Five semi-structured Interviews were conducted with experts who are professional batik craftsmen, each representing different roles within the batik industry. Selecting a sample with diverse roles enabled the collection of a broad range of information, reflecting their expertise across various aspects relevant to the research topic. The profiles of the interviewees are summarized in Table 4.1 below.

Table 1

Profile of the Cases for the Expert Interviews

Case ID	Profession	Remarks	Industry Experience
C1	Batik Craftsman	Batik brand owner for 5 years	10 years
C2	Batik Craftsman	Batik instructor	15 years
C3	Batik Craftsman	Brand owner and fashion designer	60 years
C4	Batik Craftsman	Batik artist	11 years
C5	Batik Craftsman	Batik brand owner and instructor	25 years

Note. Created by the author.

As shown in the table above, interviews were conducted with experts who have over five years of experience, ensuring they possess sufficient knowledge and understanding of the challenges faced by batik craftsmen in the Sri Lankan batik craftsmanship. Henceforth, all participants are collectively referred to as batik craftsmen, and each is designated as C1, C2, C3, C4 and C5. Based on this coding system, four themes were generated: Theme 01 – Cultural Impact, Theme 02 – Socio-economic challenges, Theme 03 – Environmental challenges and Theme 04 – Production challenges.

This literature review underscores the importance of integrating ethical considerations into the prototyping phase of design. While many ethical frameworks exist, there is a need for more concrete, actionable guidelines to help designers incorporate ethics into the prototyping process. Existing research highlights the challenges of balancing ethical concerns with other priorities,

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such as cost and functionality, but also points to promising tools, methodologies, and collaborative strategies that can help bridge the gap between theory and practice. The next phase of research will focus on developing and testing a framework that offers practical solutions for embedding ethics into the prototyping process, with the aim of creating more responsible, sustainable, and user-centered design practices.

A. Theme 1 – Cultural Impact

Batik craftsmanship, particularly the traditional hand-made process, faces significant challenges. In Sri Lanka, batik is created entirely by hand from start to finish, as highlighted by C3, who emphasized its 100% handmade nature. However, there is growing concern that modern methods and foreign influences, while introducing new designs, may undervalue traditional craftsmanship. This devaluation risks diminishing appreciation for and the value of hand-made batik. Sometimes, by changing the traditional ways too much, batik becomes just a product for sale and it loses its original cultural significance. According to statements from batik craftsmen, the loss of traditional practices in batik craft equates to losing the unique techniques that define and preserve its authenticity (Case-1, 2023). Similarly, an Indian research study found that the rising demand for batik has led to mass production and the use of synthetic dyes, threatening traditional techniques and the use of natural materials (Goyal, 2019).

Figure 10

Showcasing the hand-drawn batik design (Reshani, 2023)



Figure 11

Doing a crack design on the fabric by hand (Reshani, 2023)



Figure 12

Hand sketch of the drawing before doing the batik (Reshani, 2023)



Traditional practices are linked with batik, preserving its authenticity and artistic expression. However, they may also pose challenges to batik's future sustainability (Case-5, 2023). Adhering too rigidly to traditional methods may lead to stagnation and decline, potentially threatening the very existence of this cherished craft. Batik faces the delicate challenges of adapting to modern demands while preserving its cultural authenticity. According to Case-2, the influx of mass-produced batik products, often made with lower-quality materials and techniques, has further undermined the value of traditional handcrafted batik (Case-2, 2023). In Sri Lanka, batik motifs often reflect the cultural and religious heritage of the region. Sri Lankan batik designs are

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heavily influenced by the artist's cultural background. For example, C3, an artist from Kandy, incorporates local elements such as the Kandy Perehara festival and temple art into their batik work (2023). Elephants, regarded as sacred animals in Sri Lanka, are also another popular motif, symbolizing the deep cultural and religious significance they hold (Ceylon Expedition, 2013).

Figure 13
Doing the waxing process by canting (Reshani, 2023)



Figure 14
The batik Workshop Marawila (Reshani, 2023)



Figure 15
The head part of the elephant batik painting is inspired by Kandy Perahera (Reshani, 2023)



According to Case-4, craftsmen consider batik as a unique craft due to the use of cultural motifs and the artisans' exceptional talent (Case-4, 2023). Motifs and artistic inspiration play a significant role in shaping consumer perceptions, as some batik art forms, and batik garments gain uniqueness through the craftsmen's artistic talent (Case-1, 2023). For instance, C3 incorporates line art alongside nature motifs, adding distinctiveness to their designs and influencing how consumers perceive batik (2023).

However, batik artisans face a heavy challenge like copyright infringement. Many, including C3, refrain from posting their designs online to safeguard their creative work and protect their business and brand identity (Case-1, 2023). Cultural preferences can also limit batik's diversity, such as in Negombo, where Catholics favor black clothing for religious purposes, restricting the use of vibrant colors and traditional motifs (Case-2, 2023). Batik in Sri Lanka reflects regional cultural influences and social hierarchy, with distinct styles emerging across different regions, such as the unique styles from Central province's compared to Chilaw, Marawila, Galle, and Jaffna styles. And batik in the Central Province also has an association with the Nobility (2023). Sri Lankan batik designs frequently feature the lotus flower, a symbol of great significance in Buddhism. However, there is ongoing debate about using such sacred motif in everyday clothing. Traditional artisans, mindful of the lotus's religious significance, often avoid using it in their batik work (Case-3, 2023).

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Figure 16

Batik Drawing: Inspiration from the North Western Province Flag (Reshani, 2023)



Figure 17

The Batik Drawing: Inspiration from fisherwomen (Reshani, 2023)



Figure 18

The batik drawing, which is inspired by fishermen's lifestyles in the Marawila area (Reshani, 2023)



Figure 19

Turtle batik Painting: To show the unique thing to Galle. (Reshani, 2023)



B. Theme 2- Socio-economic Challenges

Sri Lanka's batik craft faces significant socio-economic challenges in spite of its rich cultural legacy and worldwide recognition. A Malaysian study highlights similar challenges among batik artisans, such as entering the market due to limited technological access, weak marketing skills, and difficulties in securing funding (Hanitahaiza, Nor, & Noorb, 2012). Sri Lankan batik artisans, like C3, also struggle to access formal markets including retail stores and online platforms (Case-3, 2023). This restricts their customer reach and income, forcing them to rely on limited sales at local fairs and to tourists. According to Case 5, one of the primary challenges faced by batik craftsmen is their limited exposure to potential buyers (Case-5, 2023).

Despite traditional batik being produced in rural areas, few established brands exist in those locations, making it hard for artisans to reach customers (2023). In addition, Limited market

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access, as C3 highlights, can push artisans toward using lower-quality materials to compete, ultimately harming the overall appeal of batik products (2023). The study about “The Impact of Government Expenditure on Economic Growth” provides a comprehensive review of the literature on the role of government intervention in global market development. Moreover, the same study found that government intervention can play a positive role in market development by providing incentives for innovation, reducing barriers to entry, and promoting fair competition (Rahman, Prava Nath, & Abu Bake, 2023). However, as per the study, government intervention can be ineffective or even counterproductive if not carefully designed and implemented. Aligning with this interpretation, all the cases recognized government intervention through monetary and fiscal policies and empowerment programs as a primary factor influencing the development of the Sri Lankan batik industry.

C4 exclaimed that the high cost of raw materials, such as fabric, dye, and wax is a major barrier for batik artisans in this country. Most operate as small-scale businesses and struggle to afford these materials, especially since Sri Lanka relies heavily on imports which can be expensive (2023). The high cost of materials force artisans to price batik products higher, reducing demand as they become unaffordable for many consumers (Case-5, 2023). Sri Lankan batik artisans, like C3, feel disadvantaged compared to those in countries like Indonesia and Malaysia, where governments actively support batik through collaborative efforts by ministries. Such political encouragement and supportive policies enable artisans to improve and preserve the craft (2023).

The lack of society awareness is another reason for the socio-economic challenges faced by the batik craft, directly affecting the batik craftsmen. According to C3 and C5, cheap, low-quality batik imitations flood the Sri Lankan market, confusing consumers and harming local artisans who sell authentic but more expensive batik (2023). Supporting this, the existing literature also highlights the lack of societal awareness as a significant obstacle to the development of the batik craft (Gatut & Aryanto, 2010). C2 further noted, “Consumers focused solely on price don't understand the value of handmade batik, which discourages artisans due to the Time-consuming and effort invested in each piece” (2023). Moreover, Case-5 observed that “Changing consumer tastes for new fabrics and Western styles threaten batik's popularity, potentially leading to a decline in sales, artisan income, and the future of the craft itself” (Case-5, 2023). A Sri Lankan study suggests that social involvement can empower batik artisans, with government and NGOs playing a role through community support, festival participation, and social entrepreneurship training (Gunawardena, Rajapakse, & Jayawardena, 2016).

C. Theme 3- Environmental Challenges

C4 exclaimed that the high cost of raw materials, such as fabric, dye, and wax is a major barrier for batik artisans in this country. Most operate as small-scale businesses and struggle to afford these materials, especially since Sri Lanka relies heavily on imports which can be expensive (2023). The high cost of materials force artisans to price batik products higher, reducing demand as they become unaffordable for many consumers (Case-5, 2023). Sri Lankan batik artisans, like C3, feel

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disadvantaged compared to those in countries like Indonesia and Malaysia, where governments actively support batik through collaborative efforts by ministries. Such political encouragement and supportive policies enable artisans to improve and preserve the craft (2023).

Batik artisans acknowledge the environmental impact of the industry and believe traditional practices need to be updated to minimize harm and embrace sustainability. All cases highlighted the use of toxic chemicals as a raw ingredient in batik crafting as a significant challenge due to chemical contamination. C4 raised concerns about the environmental impact of batik, specifically citing the various chemicals used—dyes, wax, solvents—and their potential harm (2023). Additionally, C2 and C5 asserted that while some eco-friendly practices are being adopted in some other countries for batik crafting, these practices are rarely found in the local context (2023). Artisans also expressed concerns about the sustainability of the craft due to low-quality and potentially harmful imported materials, such as reactive dyes (Case-1, 2023). All these issues negatively affect the health and livelihood of craftsmen as well as for the customers who buy these batik products.

Figure 20
The chemicals used for the batik craft (Reshani, 2023)



Figure 21
The wax removal and washing process (H.A.K.L.Manjula, 2023)



Figure 22
The dye washing tanks and the disposal area (Reshani, 2023)



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The “International Journal of Environmental Research” and “Journal of Tropical Geography”, warn about the dangers of improper batik chemical disposal, highlighting risks of contamination to water, soil, and ecosystems, which can harm aquatic life and human health. (Afriani, Handayani, & Haryadi, 2019) (Kamaruddin, Mohamad, & Norli, 2015). The batik dyeing process pollutes water with heavy metals like chromium and mercury, endangering aquatic life and causing potential health problems for people relying on nearby water sources (Case-5, 2023). The extraction of dyes from plants growing near water sources can lead to soil erosion and sedimentation in rivers and streams, affecting water quality and aquatic habitats.

A study examined the quality of air in batik producing regions, revealing a range of respiratory problems, including eye irritation, coughing, wheezing, and even an increased risk of lung cancer (Winarsih, Haryati, & Sumarni, 2017). C1 highlighted air pollution from batik production, noting that burning wax and solvents releases harmful pollutants contributing to smog and endangering human health (2023). Batik production also generates significant waste, like fabric scraps, wax, and solvents, which are difficult to dispose of properly and can become breeding grounds for pests and diseases. Improper disposal methods, like burning or dumping, pollute the environment and harm human health through air and water contamination. Furthermore, C4 noted a common issue mentioned in almost many conversations: The dyes we used for batik clothes and washed off multiple times, and the wastewater was disposed of onto the land (2023). C1 also commented that lack of access to natural dyes and knowledge of sustainable practices forces many artisans to use harmful chemicals, further polluting the environment during disposal (2023).

Therefore, no sustainable or eco-friendly production process plan has been provided by any government or crafts institute in Sri Lanka. As a result, sustainability and zero-waste management practices are minimum among batik craftsmen. Zero-waste management includes Refuse, Reduce, Reuse and Recycle (Johnson, 2013). C3 highlighted a specific batik region in Marawila, where traditional improper disposal methods for harmful chemicals have polluted water resources over generations, impacting the water supply (2023).

C. Theme 4– Production Challenges

Supply chain disruptions pose a significant production issue in the context of batik crafts in Sri Lanka. These disruptions negatively impact various aspects of the production process, from sourcing raw materials to delivering the final products. All five cases stated that the batik craft industry in Sri Lanka faces challenges due to a shortage of essential raw materials and high material cost, affecting production, supply-demand balance and the survival for small-scale craftsmen. The COVID-19 pandemic worsened problems in batik crafts, such as limited production, worker layoffs, difficulties accessing materials due to import restrictions, and economic hardships for artisans (Case-3, 2023). Senaratne & Silva (2023) similarly observed that the pandemic caused significant disruptions to the batik craft supply chain, affecting the availability of raw materials,

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transportation, and market access. They further noted that the pandemic had a devastating impact on the livelihoods of batik craftsmen, leading to decreased income, unemployment, and increased poverty.

Batik craftsmen in the country face significant technological constraints in their batik craft practices. These challenges include the tension between tradition and modern production methods. Batik, a traditional craft passed down through generations, often relies on old techniques, limiting efficiency and market competitiveness compared to more modern production methods (Case-3, 2023). A Japanese study suggests integrating traditional batik techniques with digital tools to improve efficiency and compete globally (Nishimura, Hiramatsu, & Yamaguchi, 2018). Unlike other countries where batik production employs faster techniques, Sri Lankan artisans struggle to meet growing demand due to their reliance on time-consuming hand-drawn designs and traditional dyeing methods (Case-1, 2023).

Furthermore, C2, C3 and C4 mentioned that the batik craft industry struggles to attract younger generations for the production process as modern technologies overshadow traditional crafts, posing a threat to the preservation of the craft knowledge and skills (2023). Batik craftsmanship faces another crucial challenge: the lack of knowledge transmission. Experienced artisans, fearing competition, hesitate to share their expertise with younger generations. This poses a risk to the craft's future, as the unique techniques and cultural significance of batik could fade without proper knowledge transfer (Case-3, 2023).

Withholding batik knowledge due to competition fears discourages younger generations from entering the craft, potentially leading to a loss of the intricate techniques and cultural significance that define batik (Sediyono, Mahatma, & Hunga, 2018). Skill shortages threaten Sri Lanka's batik industry, a cultural treasure that requires expertise to maintain quality and meet market demands. Moreover, as mentioned by C1, C3 and C5, mass production of batik is primarily driven by business interests, often involving individuals with lack of knowledge and skill in the batik craftsmanship (2023). Batik production thus faces a tug-of-war between mass production, which prioritizes speed and profit through unskilled labor, and the preservation of artistic integrity and quality championed by skilled craftspeople.

VI. Conclusion

In an increasingly complex and interconnected world, the role of design extends far beyond aesthetics and functionality. As digital products, services, and systems become integral to everyday life, designers are faced with the growing responsibility of ensuring their creations are not only usable and innovative but also ethically sound. Ethical considerations in design encompass a wide array of concerns, including user privacy, data security, inclusivity, sustainability, and the long-term societal and environmental impact of products. While ethical principles have long been discussed in design theory, there remains a significant gap in their practical application, particularly during the early stages of product development such as prototyping. The researcher

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investigated the challenges faced by batik craftsmen in selected areas of Sri Lanka. Five batik craftsmen (cases) were interviewed, and the objectives of the study were achieved using the thematic analysis method.

The first objective was to examine how batik is practiced in Sri Lanka. According to the findings of the study, batik practice in Sri Lanka is entirely handmade, encompassing every stage from drawing designs to the final production. The second objective was to identify how batik craftsmen preserve batik as a unique craft. The results indicate that batik is unique due to its motifs, colour palettes, inspirations, and the artistic talents of Sri Lankan craftsmen. However, the ultimate objective was to analyze the challenges faced by batik craftsmen.

Socio-economic challenges emerged as a major issue. These include social status constraints, financial hardships, the scarcity of established batik brands, and geographical isolation, which limit market access. In addition, improper government budget allocations, unplanned spendings and misuse of allocated funds hinder the industry's development. Furthermore, a lack of societal awareness has led to the prevalence of low-quality alternative batik products, which are more affordable but confuse consumers regarding authenticity.

Environmental challenges also significantly affect batik craft practice. For instances, air, water, and land pollution are caused by chemical contamination, and the lack awareness and false practices on the proper waste disposal methods, and the limited awareness of global sustainable concepts such as 3R (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle approach).

On the other hand, production challenges also impact the batik craft. The scarcity of quality raw materials is identified as the main supply chain disruption. Additionally, constraints related to technology arise from a lack of awareness and knowledge about modern technologies and production methods. Moreover, traditional knowledge is not systematically transmitted to the next generations due to typical attitude problems and the unavailability of specific skills required for batik craftsmanship, contributing to skill shortages.

Sri Lankan batik, rich in tradition and craftsmanship, faces challenges. Educating consumers about its value and documenting this cultural art form are essential steps towards its preservation. To empower artisans and strengthen the industry, initiatives should focus on improving market access, providing financial support, and encouraging collaboration. Addressing the environmental impact is also crucial. Which can be achieved through sustainable practices, stricter regulations, and the use of eco-friendly materials. Finally, enhancing skills and integrating technology can improve quality, efficiency, and ultimately, the future prospects of Sri Lankan batik.

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