

Innovation as a Means of Preserving Himachali Woodcarving

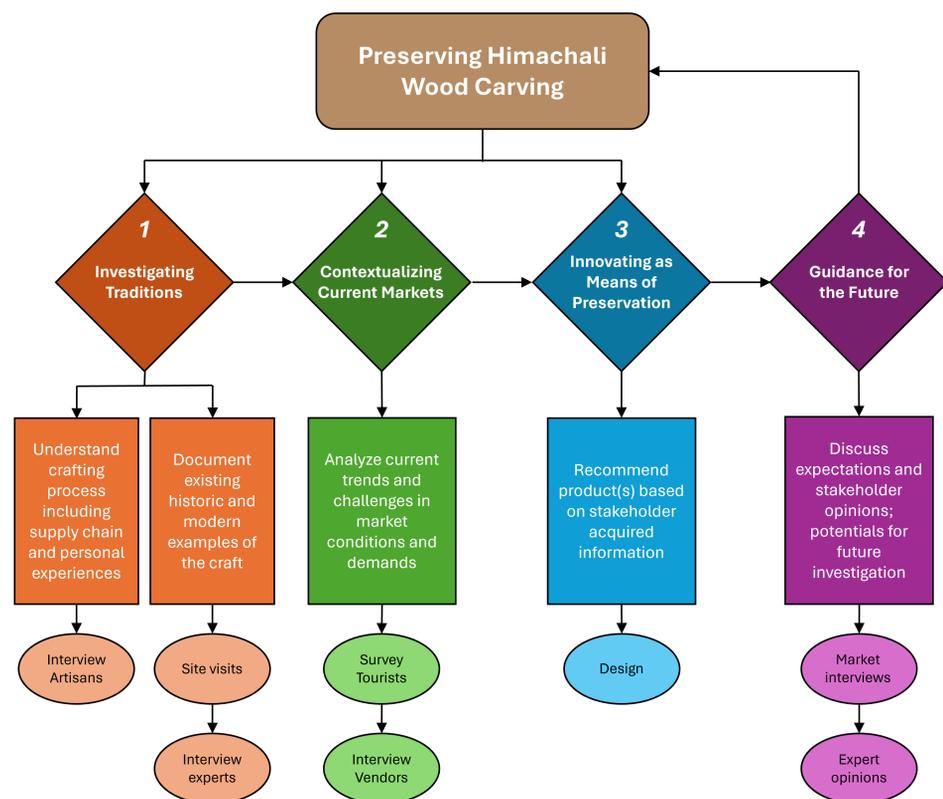
Mentor(s): Dr. Arti Kashyup, Dr. Uma Kumar, Dr. Alex Sphar

Pratham Patel, Laura Pellowski, Cameron Wian; Kumar Love, Prateek Patel, Ayush Singh, Srijan Sood

Introduction

Woodcarving is a traditional practice of Himachal Pradesh, utilized in temple and home architecture, religious artifacts, and furniture making. However, with contemporary changes in tastes and demands as well as globalization, the craft and its artisans face many challenges. Creating innovative products which can help preserve the historic craft amongst modernization can help local artisans maintain their livelihoods and culture.

Methodology



Results & Discussion

1

- The traditional craft is based, for temple architecture, in *kath kuni style*, with depictions of local deities, flora, and fauna
 - Evolution of patterns and styles from nature to geometric; local to Brahmanic
- The craft is passed down generationally through viewing and experiencing hands-on
 - Other career options considered in modern times, limiting growth
- Devdar* or deodar wood has been used traditionally because of its resistance to water and pests, durability, and workability
 - Government regulations of green-felling forces use chemically treated imported woods and synthetic materials

2

- More Brahmanical deities and national flora and fauna are depicted
- Economic value of craft has diminished with mass production and machinery
- Products with religious and cultural significance from the Himachali region make for more successful souvenirs

3

- An innovative product provides utility with art.

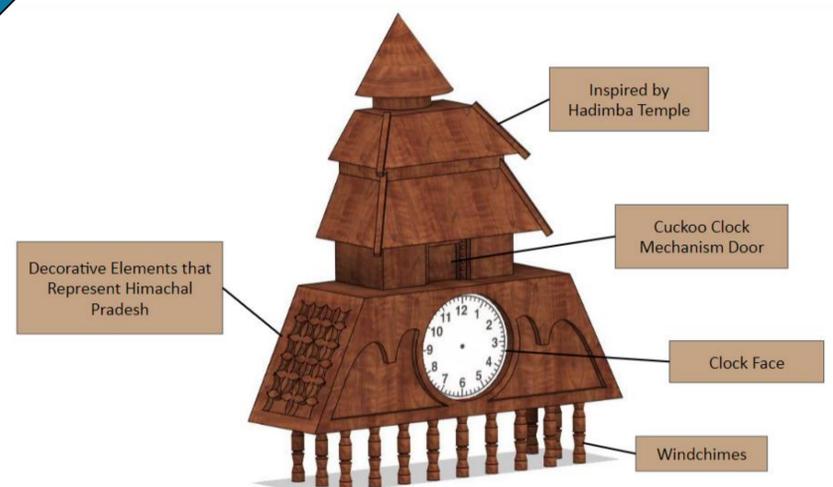


Figure 1: Artisan interview in Mandi.



Figure 2: Interview at Jehara Village in Somgad.



Figure 3: Interview at Sharan Village in Naggar.



Figure 4: Visit at Hadimba Devi Temple in Manali.

Recommendations

4

- Work with existing institutions to promote woodcarving as a valued craft:
 - Himachal State Museum and Museum of Himachal Culture & Folk Art to record and preserve artifacts
 - NORTH architecture to continue craft in modern context
- Develop more products for the souvenir/luxury goods market
 - Windchimes, chandeliers, lamps, puzzles; considering varying price points
- Promote cultural importance of woodcarving to tourist industry

Conclusions

It is imperative for the value of woodcarving to be promoted for the craft to survive and its cultural history to continue to flourish. Listening to and hearing the stories of the resilient people which inhabit the magnificent Himalayas is the most authentic means to understanding the history and culture of woodcarving.