



Traditional Handicraft Items Revival in the Carpentry Industry: Applied Research on Palestinian Household Furniture

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ABSTRACT

Despite the importance of Palestinian furniture to the local economy, there is still weak global demand for it, which hinders its export abroad and deprives manufacturers of the benefits of exporting this important product. This study aims to strengthen the competitive position of the Palestinian furniture industry in both local and international markets by emphasizing the strategic role of design, particularly by integrating traditional Palestinian craftsmanship into contemporary furniture production. The research addresses design strategies, the preservation and application of artisanal heritage, and market development, considering both domestic consumer demands and global market trends. A qualitative descriptive approach was employed, analyzing traditional crafts, such as straw weaving and henna artistry, and their adaptation into modern furniture. Case studies and practical design models were developed to provide actionable frameworks for artisans and industry stakeholders. The study found that relying solely on functionality and aesthetics is insufficient to attract modern consumers. Sensory and expressive elements rooted in cultural heritage significantly enhance product appeal and market differentiation. Evidence-based models demonstrate the potential to distinguish Palestinian products, while strategic recommendations guide competition toward heritage-inspired features, increasing visibility, attracting investment, and supporting sustainable growth within the industry.

KEYWORDS

Contemporary furniture, furniture industry, global market, heritage, Palestine, traditional crafts

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1. Introduction

The importance of export lies in its immense economic benefits to workers within the sector, the exporting countries, and, in general, to all members of society. Export contributes to strengthening national economic growth in the long term, increases income, reduces unemployment rates, and increases monetary reserves of foreign currencies. It also diversifies income sources while protecting local markets from fluctuations. Moreover, it expands the available markets for local products, which supports competitiveness, encourages production, and reduces overall costs (Amani and Yawar, 2025).

In Palestine, furniture exports rank second in export value, immediately after white stone (Misryef, 2018). However, it only reaches a limited number of regional or international markets (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics PCBS, 2025). Some attribute the weakness of exports to several factors, including supply chain barriers (Abuznaid, Doole and Stokell, 1999), as well as product-specific issues that have long hindered their ability to compete globally, as noted by S. Al-Surkaji (personal communication, 2019). This study believes that the weaknesses of Palestinian products are not limited to the aforementioned but rather stem primarily from more than just export restrictions or professional determinants such as finishing quality or product durability. Instead, the weaknesses stem from the lack of expressive and attractive elements that appeal to global markets. This study argues that one way this lack can be overcome is through the incorporation of Palestinian cultural heritage (Taha *et al.*, 2023; Al-Taie, 2025).

Traditional crafts are among the popular icons of Palestinian cultural heritage, and their effect on attracting a wide range of segments of the global market is substantial. Examples of these crafts include handmade straw trays and designs inspired from henna patterns that are popular in traditional Palestinian weddings. Incorporating Palestinian cultural heritage elements such as the examples illustrated in this research will be able to serve the local manufacturer and exporter in two ways. The

first is through enhancing the ability of contemporary Palestinian products to reach new, younger audiences who are drawn to the stories behind pieces that are inspired by local folklore. The sensory and expressive elements rooted in cultural heritage can enhance the product's appeal and distinction in the market, attract investment, and support sustainable growth within the industry (Khayat, 2025). The second is to bring these traditional art forms, which are tied to cultural heritage, to international recognition. Integrating tangible and intangible heritage elements contributes to building a product narrative that strengthens differentiation and emotional consumer attachment, thereby supporting brand equity and enhancing market visibility in international contexts.

2. Literature Review

Traditional arts play a central role within traditional societies, serving to fortify ideological and emotional connections among all members of the community. These traditional arts, employed on significant occasions, serve as reminders of the customs, traditions, and moral values that must be collectively preserved and cherished. Furthermore, traditional art functions as a mechanism of social governance within these societies, often providing a tangible alternative to formal legal systems. Globally recognized as conservative in nature, traditional art embodies a heritage passed down from time immemorial, faithfully preserved, and passed on from one generation to the next without renewal or alteration. The significance of heritage art extends to its role in serving and honoring various societal or religious influences, thereby reinforcing the connections between these ideological systems and institutions, and among members of the community. This underscores the traditional artists' ability to faithfully recreate and preserve ancestral heritage. Traditional art typically adheres to established and recognized styles without significant divergence. In contrast, contemporary artists continually strive for innovation and progression (Haidari, 1984). The

contemporary folk artists' role in innovation and progress aligns with the rapid changes of the present era. These artists need to be highly aware that the development process unfolds gradually before it is accepted and integrated within the conservative societal framework. The development of materials employed by contemporary designers is constrained by several factors, primarily economic considerations. This encompasses the accessibility of modern materials and their competition with those found in the local environment. In earlier times, there was reliance on locally sourced raw materials, with limited imports from other regions. This practice often encouraged people to utilize what was readily accessible within their immediate environment. This resonates with the Palestinian proverb, which translates to "Take the soil of your homeland to smear on your cheeks." Furthermore, the themes explored by traditional artists are shaped by their immediate surroundings. For instance, agricultural societies often incorporate iconographic elements such as ears of wheat, palm fronds, and harvest themes. Similarly, coastal populations incorporate fishing and sea-related elements into their artwork. Consequently, traditional art serves as a vivid reflection of the artist's environment, and the modern artist must not overlook this crucial source of inspiration in their present-day creations (Fischer, 1998).

Many developing countries diligently pursue progress by elevating their living standards and boosting national production. Development, as defined by Smelser, signifies the shift from societies reliant on traditional, basic methods toward the application of practical knowledge through technology. Numerous sociological scholars have shared the perspective that development is an integrated and comprehensive process in which folklore plays a pivotal role. Adams and Leeds contend that a direct and strong correlation exists between development and heritage in terms of objectives, content, program execution, and the individuals involved in them. They argue that tapping into cultural legacies, customs, and traditions that unify groups striving for development is essential for maximizing the effectiveness of development programs. The ultimate objective of development is to bring about positive shifts in societal practices concerning the utilization of available natural and technological resources, hence the significance of this study and its resulting insights (Sobhi, 2007).

2.1. The Straw Industry in Palestine:

This humble craft once held significant importance due to the widespread demand for its products in an era dominated by handicrafts. However, in today's world marked by industrial advancements, evolving societal needs, and diverse interests, this traditional craft faces the threat of extinction. Its relevance has now been primarily relegated to cosmetic and heritage preservation (T.A. Hamadneh, personal communication, 2021). The initial stages of straw production commence in the summer when women and girls gather on threshing floors. There, they amass sheaves of harvested wheat, and carefully sort and arrange the wheat stalks after separating them from the grains. The selection process involves choosing the most suitable and optimal section for this craft, typically spanning from the base of the spike to the first node in the stem, measuring approximately 40 cm in length. These selected segments are then bundled together by the women, and this process continues until they accumulate a sufficient quantity for their intended purpose. Additionally, women set aside a portion of straw without ears, known as 'stuffing,' without trimming it. This type of straw is usually of lower quality than the former and is reserved for industrial applications (Nairat, 2010). The subsequent phase of production entails preparing these materials to commence the manufacturing process. If a woman aims to create visually appealing and cheerful tools, she may

introduce natural dyes. Next, she softens the straw, including the straw designated for filling purposes, by soaking it in water for an appropriate duration. Subsequently, the women prepare themselves to initiate the manufacturing process, which often occurs during the winter, when there is less outdoor work due to the weather. They gather in groups, with each participant typically bringing her own tools and materials. The women come together to refine their craft and engage in conversations about village matters and community affairs (Bshara, 2020).

2.2. Tray Making:

The process of crafting trays commences when a woman gathers a small bundle of straws, typically no more than four or five, and binds them into a circular shape with a diameter ranging from 1 cm to 1.5 cm (see Figure 2). She then proceeds to wrap straw around these knots, creating a circular pattern, a step often referred to as "tray weaving." The process culminates with the creation of a small hole using an awl through which the straw is threaded (Wazwaz and Xinhua, 2020).

She continues to bend the straw into a circular shape, working in closely knit circles until the desired size is achieved. The filling is then stuffed into the newly woven section, and this process is repeated. Throughout the weaving process, women often incorporate color into trays according to their skills and preferences, resulting in the creation of beautiful geometric patterns. This cycle continues until the tray reaches the desired size, with diameters sometimes extending up to 70 cm (see Figure 3). Upon completing a tray to the required dimensions, some women finish it by sealing the edges with a small piece of cloth, measuring approximately 4–6 cm in length. This step serves to secure the final round of the tray and maintain its structural integrity (Abdul-Jabbar, 1987).

Additionally, some women decorate the entire uppermost surface of the tray with cloth, securely attaching the fabric using thread and a needle. This protective measure guarantees the long-term preservation of the tray. Furthermore, it is customary for women to create a small triangular loop measuring approximately 3 cm in height on the tray's top layer. This loop serves as a convenient way to hang the tray on a wall. While large, vibrant trays are often reserved for serving guests on special occasions, women also craft smaller, less ornate trays for everyday use within the household (Serhan, 1981). This traditional art form or cottage industry has gradually faded away in the past two decades, primarily due to the rapid transformation of modern lifestyles and the prevalence of consumerism. Straw utensils are no longer commonplace in daily use. However, there has been a recent resurgence, driven by the growing interest in heritage, and this craft's connection to women's economic empowerment through their work (Ghafry, 2022).

Today, straw baskets and trays are available for purchase at varying prices, contingent upon their size, the number of layers, and the intricacy of the patterns they achieve through coloring. The price of some of these items can reach up to 150 shekels, which is roughly equivalent to 50 US dollars. Families often acquire these products for decorative purposes and use them in wedding ceremonies, especially among Palestinians residing in villages or those living abroad (T.A. Hamadneh, personal communication, 2021).

3. Research Problems

The Palestinian people in general and the Palestinian furniture industry in particular face many challenges, including the following:

- According to S. Al-Surkaji (personal communication, 2019), the local society's estrangement from Palestinian cultural heritage stems from the perception that it does not align with the demands of modern life and is incompatible with the present era.

- Palestinian furniture currently suffers from low global and regional competitiveness, especially in contrast to imported furniture on the local market (S. Al-Surkaji, personal communication, 2019).
- Monotony and repetitiveness among consumers of Palestinian furniture. Local furniture designers are often found constraining themselves to a limited set of Palestinian folklore symbols such as the kuffiyah or folk embroidery, while disregarding other folklore icons, including various traditional crafts, such as handcrafted colored straw trays.
- Contemporary local furniture does not embrace the innovation and renewal of Palestinian traditional icons in their designs.

Despite growing scholarly interest in Palestinian cultural heritage and the economic challenges facing local industries, there remains a notable gap in understanding how traditional Palestinian cultural icons can be innovatively reinterpreted and integrated into contemporary furniture design. Existing studies largely focus on documenting heritage, analyzing market competitiveness (Al-Hurub, 2015). However, they seldom address the lack of design innovation, the overreliance on a narrow set of folklore symbols, or the potential of underrepresented traditional crafts - such as straw weaving and other material-based practices - as sources of modern aesthetic and functional value.

This study seeks to fill this gap by examining how culturally grounded yet modern design strategies can revitalize Palestinian furniture, enhance its competitiveness, and strengthen cultural identity in the local and global markets. Through this Lens, the research contributes new insights into the intersection of heritage preservation, creative innovation, and product development within the Palestinian furniture industry, areas that remain underexplored in the existing literature.

4. Methodology

A qualitative descriptive methodology was employed to investigate the integration of traditional crafts into contemporary furniture design. The study examined key Palestinian artisanal techniques - including straw weaving, wood carving, and henna-based surface decoration - through a systematic analytical process. This analysis involved documenting each technique's materials, production steps, structural properties, and visual characteristics, followed by evaluating their suitability for adaptation in modern furniture in terms of durability, scalability, and aesthetic coherence. The results revealed distinct opportunities; for example, straw weaving showed strong potential for use in panels and surfaces due to its lightweight nature, while wood carving offered rich symbolic depth suitable for feature components.

Case studies of Palestinian designers were conducted to identify best practices, challenges, and innovation models within the local design ecosystem. Data collection included field observations, semi-structured interviews with artisans and industry professionals, and reviews of academic studies and market reports. Based on the combined findings, practical design frameworks were developed as reference models for artisans and designers, demonstrating clear pathways for incorporating heritage-inspired elements into functional, aesthetically appealing, and market-ready furniture.

Interviews with the artisans were conducted using a semi-structured format, allowing for both guided questions and open-ended responses to capture detailed insights into their techniques, materials, and cultural practices. Each interview lasted approximately 45–60 minutes, and participants were selected based on their experience and expertise in traditional Palestinian crafts. The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns, challenges, and innovative strategies. The results of these interviews revealed key insights, including the technical intricacies of the craft, its cultural significance, and the decline in participation among younger generations. These findings were

incorporated into the study by informing the design adaptations of contemporary furniture pieces, guiding both the preservation of traditional motifs and their integration into functional, aesthetically appealing modern designs, thereby ensuring that the research conclusions were supported by empirical evidence.

5. Research Aims

The purpose of this study is to explore strategies for enhancing the competitiveness of the Palestinian furniture industry in both local and international markets by leveraging design as a strategic tool. The research emphasizes integrating traditional Palestinian craftsmanship into contemporary furniture to create products with unique cultural value and market appeal. The scope includes examining design strategies, artisanal heritage, and market development, addressing both domestic consumer needs and global trends. By connecting cultural heritage with modern market demands, the study seeks to provide actionable insights for designers, artisans, and industry stakeholders. The research also highlights the potential of heritage-based design to preserve Palestinian culture, strengthen artisanal skills, and contribute to economic development.

The research has long-term and short-term objectives, which can be summarized as follows:

- Preserving Palestinian visual identity and the cultural heritage.
- Developing designs for the regional sector that can compete in both local and international markets.
- Promoting the flexibility and potential of Palestinian folklore icons in contemporary furniture and encouraging the designer to investigate the wide spectrum of these icons beyond fixed, predetermined symbols.
- Encouraging regional designers to create and be imaginative by adding design elements drawn from their folklore and incorporating their distinctive imprint, culture, and personal experiences into each of their upcoming works.

6. Research Hypotheses

The research revolves around the following key hypotheses:

- It is believed that by including the visual heritage of Palestinians in standard household items, this history can be preserved and protected from the threat of extinction.
- It is believed that cultural identity can be represented through a globally marketable product.
- It is assumed that using modern designs imbued with the narrative of the Palestinian history and authenticity can motivate and enable the local industry to compete effectively in both the global and local markets.
- It is believed that presenting practical instances of how artistic principles such as reduction, abstraction, and modulation of color and pattern are applied to components derived from the Palestinian architectural legacy, while highlighting the significance of the chosen heritage element and its connection to the crafted piece (concept and idea), will inspire other designers to delve further into this tradition and push them to make risky decisions in their upcoming modern furniture creations.

7. Research Scope

The research scope can be summarized as follows:

- Practical and realistic applications on various household tables, such as coffee tables or side table
- The use of locally available woods such as olive and oak
- Inspiration from iconic elements in Palestinian folklore, with a primary focus on folk craft
- The use of technologies and materials available in the current local market.

8. The Primary Resources Used in the Application

- Various types of natural woods sourced from the Palestinian environment

- Locally available engineered wood, such as medium-density fiberboard (MDF) and high-density fiberboard (HDF)
- Computer numerical control (CNC) plotter cutter machine
- 3D CNC machines for automatic wood cutting and shaping
- Various types of epoxy resins (polyepoxides)
- Local blacksmiths

9. Practical Applications of Traditional Handicraft Elements Reintegrated Into the Palestinian Woodwork Industry

The following is a set of applications influenced by diverse models of handmade Palestinian folk crafts. These applications, designed and executed by the researcher, serve as essential components within this study, both independently and as complementary elements.

- Six corner tables inspired by traditional straw dishes (An-Najah University Exhibition, Nablus 2019)
- A coffee table, inspired by the traditional Palestinian bride's henna, exhibited for the first time at the Al-Baydar and Olive Festival in Asira (Asira Al-Shamaliya Museum, 2021).

9.1. First: Tea table or corner table "Grandma's Tray":

This tea table is inspired by traditional straw trays made by Thuraya Abdel-Karim Hamadneh, the wife of the late Haj Fahmi Odeh Sawalmeh from Asira Al-Shamaliya in Palestine. She is known as Umm Al-Abed (T.A. Hamadneh, personal communication, 2021).

Every summer, Umm Al-Abed, after collecting the stalks of wheat from the season's harvest, expertly crafts numerous straw trays, a craft she has mastered from childhood. Her creations exude the natural beauty of vibrant colors and intricate forms, showcasing an artistry that even many modern engineers cannot replicate, even more remarkable given that she is nearly 90 years old. She crafts her trays with grace and elegance, infusing them with love and passion. This artistic creation alternates between adorning the wall, gracefully holding its own among other artworks or paintings with its meticulous colors and patterns, and serving faithfully in the modest kitchens of Asira's neighborhoods, enduring the daily rigors with patience. Its design remains unassuming, devoid of flashiness, featuring only its exquisite, never-ending spiral lines (see Figure 1).

Considering all the factors mentioned above, it became imperative to preserve these childhood memories. As the traditional straw industry was declining, with fewer individuals, particularly young women, willing to engage in it, there was genuine concern about the potential loss of this valuable heritage (Almalki, 2017) (Sholy, 2021). The need arose to create a lasting tribute to this fine art from the authentic Palestinian cultural heritage. This is where the idea gained its significance, to remind people of this art form through recreating an exact replica of one of 'Grandma's Straw Trays' as an integral part of everyday furniture (something tangible and interactive). By doing so, Palestinian youth would have a daily reminder of this authentic art and the dedicated artisans who contributed to this industry's legacy. With the assistance of Mr. Kamal Zidan, identical copies of Grandma's Tray were meticulously crafted using molding techniques and resin to render them immortal and keep them remembered. These reproductions faithfully capture every engraving, color, and line, while occasionally introducing subtle alterations, such as unique color schemes or patterns that add the designer's personal touch. However, the tray's structural essence is preserved. The result is a series of design proposals that blend seamlessly with contemporary aesthetics, catering to a wide range of preferences, homes, and settings. Thus, we introduce the tea or corner table, which is available in multiple options and diverse materials to suit every taste.

In the following design (see Figure 1), the patterns of this work were inspired by a traditional tray crafted by Umm Al-Abed. This pattern

was replicated through the use of plaster casts and was subsequently adorned with hand-painted acrylic colors. To ensure durability and enhance its aesthetics, the surface was then coated with transparent epoxy. It is worth noting that the table's legs were sourced from coffee tables, while the woodwork draws inspiration from the Fatimid era in Nablus, crafted using the oak carving technique. In this rendition, the original design was preserved to maintain its original classic character without any fundamental changes. The surface diameter is 56 cm.

Figure 1. A model of straw trays dyed with natural colors sourced from plants, crafted by Thuraya Abdel-Karim Hamadneh, Asira Al-Shamaliya (2018), and next to it a coffee table inspired by the same authentic straw work, Nablus 2019



The first case study examines a design experiment inspired by traditional straw trays. Their characteristic use of seasonal wheat stalks, spiral patterns, and natural colors formed the basis for analyzing the technical and aesthetic features of this craft. Interviews and field observations revealed a decline in the practice of straw weaving and a lack of engagement among younger generations, raising concerns about the loss of this heritage. The study found that the technique is highly adaptable to contemporary furniture due to its visual simplicity and cultural symbolism. Accordingly, the designer reproduced an exact model of the tray using plaster molds and resin, with subtle color adjustments, while preserving its structural essence. Comparing the traditional and modern versions showed that incorporating straw work into functional pieces - such as a tea or side table - successfully bridges heritage and modernity, particularly with added elements such as carved wood and an epoxy-coated hand-painted surface. This case demonstrates an effective approach to integrating Palestinian visual identity into contemporary furniture design. Furniture designers are encouraged to actively explore and adapt traditional crafts in their own work, using heritage elements not only for decoration but also as a source of inspiration for functional, modern pieces that connect cultural identity with contemporary living.

Figure 2 showcases another artwork inspired by straw trays. In this piece, the surface was gilt with metallic-hued colors before a coat of transparent epoxy was applied. The table legs were inspired by traditional designs reminiscent of those employed in wooden sawmills of the past, using the time-honored interlocking method in the traditional Palestinian style, as evident in its construction. The design of these legs harks back to ancient times and it is a common sight in the Levant and extensive regions of northern Egypt.

Figure 2. Another work inspired by straw dishes with traditional wooden legs commonly used in the Levant, surface diameter 56 cm, Nablus 2019



The second case study (see Figure 2) includes a description of the selected design, explaining the relationship between the subject and the concept behind both the design and the presented form. It summarizes observed design practices, showing how traditional motifs, materials, and techniques - such as straw weaving, gilding, and interlocking wooden legs - were incorporated into contemporary furniture. The design of the wooden legs draws inspiration from historical practices commonly seen in the Levant and northern Egypt, illustrating how ancient forms can inform and enrich modern design. Insights from interviews highlight challenges such as material access, declining youth engagement, and strategies for bridging tradition and modernity. Comparative analysis reveals recurring themes, including balancing authenticity with contemporary appeal and identifying opportunities to further integrate Palestinian heritage into modern furniture design while leveraging historical knowledge to guide innovative approaches.

Figure 3 showcases the innovative fusion of a traditional Palestinian straw tray with a post-modern design. While the foundational structure remains unchanged, the details and colors have been adapted with a modern touch. This artwork features three oak legs in classic aged brown, with the fourth leg painted solid beige, a color that extends to partially cover the table surface for a unique visual effect. The hand-painted plaster rendition of the straw tray mimics natural straw and is protected by a transparent epoxy finish. The table surface measures 56 cm in diameter and was crafted in Nablus in 2019.

Figure 3. An artwork inspired by the traditional Palestinian straw tray in a post-modern design style, with a surface diameter of 56 cm, Nablus 2019



The third case study (see Figure 3) serves as a significant example for Palestinian designers by demonstrating how traditional crafts, such as straw tray weaving, can be adapted into modern furniture, providing practical methods for blending heritage with contemporary aesthetics. Its creative features - like the asymmetrical fourth leg, color adaptations, and use of hand-painted plaster with epoxy - highlight possibilities for innovation and material experimentation. The case emphasizes the preservation of Palestinian visual identity within functional designs, while showing that culturally rooted pieces can meet modern market needs without losing authenticity. Overall, Figure 3 acts as both a practical model and an inspiration, guiding designers to innovate while sustaining and promoting their cultural heritage.

The artwork depicted in Figure 4 showcases a lighter and more streamlined approach compared to previous examples. Notably, the design simplified the legs, as well as the assembly process, while avoiding elaborate coloring and intricate embellishments on both the surface and leg carvings. This deliberate choice directs attention primarily to the table's clean and simple surface. Furthermore, it aligns with the preferences of a younger audience drawn to the principles of simplicity and minimalism in design. Furthermore, the use of white color aligns seamlessly with the prevailing aesthetics of this modern design school, appealing to a diverse audience, particularly the younger generation.

Figure 4. In this work, the traditional Palestinian straw tray was repurposed in a modern, contemporary design style to produce a low serving table with a diameter of 56 cm, Nablus 2019



In the fourth case study, the artwork depicted in Figure 4 highlights a selected Palestinian designer who was chosen for their skill in adapting traditional motifs for contemporary furniture. The case study revealed that the designer simplifies traditional elements, including the legs and assembly process, while avoiding elaborate coloring and intricate carvings, resulting in a cleaner, more minimalistic aesthetic. Interviews indicated that this approach responds to practical challenges, such as ease of production and material use, while also appealing to younger audiences who prefer simplicity, clarity, and modern functionality. The results demonstrate that Palestinian designers can successfully integrate cultural heritage into contemporary furniture by prioritizing visual simplicity and minimalism, providing a model for balancing traditional inspiration with modern design principles and market expectations.

In this piece (see Figure 5), beyond the recurring use of the traditional straw dish with an epoxy-coated surface, particular attention was given to the table's supporting legs. These legs drew inspiration from the sturdy trivets typically found beneath the iconic metal trays of kunafa, a beloved sweet specialty from Nabulsi, the very region that birthed this work of art. Their measurements and proportions were adapted to suit their new role as support for the straw table. Although modern materials and techniques were employed, they are infused with the spirit and authenticity of Palestinian culture.

Figure 5. An artwork inspired by traditional straw plates and the trivets that hold up traditional trays of kunafa (a local sweet), surface diameter 56 cm, Nablus 2019



The fifth case study (see Figure 5) provides Palestinian designers with a valuable lesson in contextual and symbolic inspiration, demonstrating how functional elements from well-known traditional sweets - specifically the iconic Nabulsi kunafa tray and supporting trivet - can be reinterpreted in furniture design. By adapting the proportions and structural logic of these traditional utensils, designers can draw meaning from culturally specific objects and practices, integrating them in ways that honor their heritage while

creating entirely new functions. The case highlights the importance of embedding local narratives and regional identity into design decisions, encouraging designers to explore sources of inspiration beyond purely decorative motifs. Additionally, it offers a practical design device: diversifying creative influences within popular culture, which may include traditional culinary arts and their utensils, enabling designers to produce pieces that communicate cultural stories through form, structure, and contemporary sensibilities.

9.2. Second: Center table, "Bride's Henna":

This tea table is inspired by the traditional Palestinian bride's henna patterns. Henna has many uses in the Arab world. It is used for decoration, treatment, or even to ward off evil. In the Islamic tradition, it is especially favored for decorative purposes (Alshernobie, 2003). Henna is a cherished Palestinian tradition, notably featured on joyous occasions such as weddings and holidays. The practice of adorning hands and feet with intricate henna patterns has been handed down through generations.

In the Arab world, variations in geography and climate have given rise to diverse customs and traditions from one country to another. Nevertheless, a prevalent tradition shared across many Arab nations is the imitation of the bride's henna ceremony in preparation for her wedding. This underscores the significance of henna in Arab culture. In Palestine, it holds such importance that the night preceding the wedding day is named 'Henna Night.' On this night, separate celebrations are held for both men and women.

The women's celebration typically occurs at the bride's family home. The bride wears an intricately embroidered Palestinian dress and carries a tray with a plate of henna encircled by candles and scattered flowers. She dances to lively traditional songs before her relatives and friends adorn/paint her hands with various henna patterns. These designs draw inspiration from the surrounding environment or sometimes incorporate elements from her dress patterns. On this special occasion, the bride takes her place alongside friends and family on a stage, distributing henna and sweets in small pouches to everyone in attendance.

She keeps a small portion of this henna hidden, reserving it for the next day when she enters her groom's house. The groom's palms may also be decorated with henna, using simpler and less complex patterns (Neirukh, 2012).

This artwork features a single, 60 cm-wide piece of naturally dyed solid beech. The henna design drew inspiration from the intricate patterns typically seen on the hands of Palestinian brides, with some modifications. The design was initially hand-drawn and then digitized using several computer programs. The final design was precision cut with a digital cutting machine and carefully placed on the surface for installation (see Figure 6). A spraying technique was employed to apply white paint to the blank surface.

Figure 6. Design of the henna pattern for the 'Bride's Henna' table, after undergoing a transformation from a manual drawing to a digital design, which was then applied to a single piece of beech wood, Asira Al-Shamaliya 2021



The sixth case study (see Figure 6) presents a tea table inspired by the traditional Palestinian bride's Henna Night patterns, a cherished cultural practice symbolizing celebration, beauty, and heritage. The design draws from the intricate motifs applied to the bride's hands and feet during the henna ceremony, incorporating elements inspired by her dress and surrounding environment. The results of this case study show that Palestinian designers can successfully translate intangible cultural traditions into functional furniture by combining heritage motifs with contemporary production techniques. It also revealed that using digital tools alongside traditional inspiration enables precision, scalability, and adaptability in design. Overall, this case study illustrates how designers can preserve cultural symbolism, engage younger audiences, and innovate within modern furniture practices while maintaining a strong connection to their Palestinian heritage.

10. Results

The results of this study were drawn from multiple sources to ensure comprehensive and reliable results. Key insights into traditional techniques, materials, and cultural practices were obtained directly from artisans through semi-structured interviews and field observations. Expert perspectives on design challenges, innovation strategies, and market considerations were gathered from industry professionals. Additionally, previous studies and academic literature provided contextual support and validation of observed trends. Analysis of contemporary furniture products and the current local market further informed findings related to adaptation strategies, design applications, and gaps in the industry. Clearly specifying these sources strengthens the credibility of the results and highlights the empirical basis of the study's conclusions.

The study identified strategies to enhance the presence of Palestinian furniture in both local and international markets. These strategies can be summarized as follows. There is a need to direct competition toward the distinctive contributions of Palestinian contemporary furniture production, which the study demonstrates can be enhanced by drawing from the rich heritage of Palestinians. This heritage encompasses a wide range of traditional crafts, from handcrafted straw weaving to the intricate art of henna drawing. These challenges include the high labor costs, material expenses, and export restrictions or supply chain barriers, which hinder the industry's technological and technical advancement. Moreover, a clear call was made for leadership and creativity in all aspects of production. The study emphasized the importance of raising awareness about intellectual and artistic property rights, discouraging the culture of plagiarism and mere repetition. Instead, it promotes a spirit of innovation and creativity. The research also strongly advocates for renewal and diversity in the artistic elements employed by Palestinian designers and artists, encouraging them to explore beyond established symbols such as Palestinian embroidery, the 'key of return,' and the kuffiyah. Palestinian artists possess a wealth of traditional artistic themes drawn from their environment, history, and ancestral arts. This study, which delved into traditional folk crafts rich in artistic and decorative elements, highlights the potential for Palestinian artists to emphasize their identity and deep roots in the land. They can do so by creating artistic works in a universal language capable of conveying distinctive expressive messages to the world. These tangible and practical pieces of art can be interacted with in our daily lives, serving as a bridge to share the Palestinian narrative with a global audience. Utilizing modern artistic techniques, such as reduction, abstraction, and modification, can empower contemporary artists to create applied works with deeper artistic significance. This not only aids the Palestinian industry in accessing new markets, but also amplifies its cause on the global stage, as art serves as a universal language.

11. Discussion of the Results

This study is grounded in theories of cultural heritage-based design and innovation diffusion. According to heritage-based design theory, traditional crafts and cultural symbols can be leveraged to create unique market differentiation (Bertola and Teunissen, 2018). Innovation diffusion theory supports the idea that incorporating heritage into contemporary products facilitates adoption by modern consumers, particularly when products carry cultural narratives and emotional value (Rogers, 2003). These frameworks guided the study in linking traditional Palestinian crafts with strategies for market competitiveness and consumer engagement.

The study revealed that relying solely on functionality and aesthetics is insufficient to attract modern consumers. Contemporary buyers value sensory and expressive qualities that convey cultural narratives and authentic artisanal craftsmanship. Furniture incorporating heritage elements - such as geometric motifs, traditional weaving patterns, and henna-inspired designs - demonstrated higher market appeal and differentiation. These findings align with the theoretical framework, confirming that heritage-based design enhances perceived product value and facilitates innovation adoption. Furthermore, the integration of traditional craftsmanship into modern design fosters visibility, investor interest, and long-term industry sustainability. Six case studies showed that artisans who effectively combine heritage elements with contemporary forms can create culturally authentic yet commercially viable products. The evidence-based models developed in this research provide practical templates for artisans to innovate while preserving their artistic identities. Strategic recommendations emphasize heritage-driven differentiation rather than price-based competition. These include developing culturally informed marketing campaigns, forming collaborative networks among designers, manufacturers, and retailers, and investing in artisan skill development. Such approaches align with innovation diffusion principles, promoting wider adoption of heritage-inspired products, both locally and internationally.

This study contributes to the field by demonstrating how cultural heritage can be systematically incorporated into contemporary furniture design to enhance competitiveness. It provides a framework for combining artisanal knowledge with modern production techniques, offering insights for design education, industry policy, and business strategy. Additionally, the research underscores the importance of sensory and expressive elements in creating products that resonate emotionally with consumers, thus expanding the theoretical understanding of heritage-based innovation in furniture design.

For artisans and employees in the furniture sector, this study highlights the need to actively integrate traditional motifs and techniques into contemporary products. Designers should prioritize creativity and cultural authenticity while considering market trends. Workshops and factories should invest in training programs to enhance technical skills, while marketing teams should communicate the cultural narratives embedded in each product to enhance consumer perception and engagement. Decision makers and managers are encouraged to form strategic partnerships, develop export-oriented strategies, and seek investors interested in heritage-based design innovation.

12. Conclusion

The study concludes that the deliberate integration of Palestinian heritage into contemporary furniture design offers a sustainable pathway for market differentiation, cultural preservation, and economic development. By linking traditional craftsmanship with modern design approaches, Palestinian furniture can achieve

competitive advantages in global and local markets. The evidence-based models developed in this research provide actionable frameworks for artisans, designers, and industry stakeholders to produce culturally authentic, aesthetically appealing, and commercially viable products. Heritage-based differentiation enhances consumer engagement, attracts investment, and fosters long-term industry sustainability. Ultimately, the synthesis of traditional craftsmanship, cultural storytelling, and innovative design positions the Palestinian furniture sector as a symbol of cultural identity and a competitive participant in the international design market, contributing to both economic growth and the preservation of artisanal skills.

13. Recommendations

The concluding chapter on achieving global prominence emphasizes the imperative of identifying and harnessing the maximum potential of available technology and local raw materials. It encourages optimizing these resources to their fullest capacity to benefit the sector. The study asserts that contemporary and traditional raw materials still hold unexploited potential that, when combined with distinctive elements from Palestinian folklore, can significantly contribute to the growth and development of this vital industry in Palestine. The final chapter, focused on achieving international recognition, offers key recommendations to both local furniture designers and industry leaders. It urges them to maximize their resources by drawing inspiration from the heritage bequeathed to them by their ancestors. In doing so, they can position themselves for competitive success on both the local and global stages. This study provides practical examples that local artisans can use as a starting point of reference to create more sophisticated and advanced works in the near future, imbued with their unique artistic identities.

Furniture designers are advised to experiment with integrating traditional motifs and crafts into modern designs, combine innovative materials and techniques with cultural symbolism, simplify forms and colors to appeal to younger audiences, and explore diverse sources of inspiration within Palestinian heritage, including folklore, traditional rituals, and everyday objects. By following these strategies, designers can create functional, aesthetically appealing, and culturally meaningful furniture that strengthens both local identity and international competitiveness.

Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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