

TRADITIONAL METHODS OF ORNAMENT MAKING IN KERALA

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Abstract

There is a lack of structured documentation, preservation, and integration of Kerala's traditional ornament-making methods into modern design, policy, and sustainability frameworks. In this paper, we proposed the Traditional Methods of Ornament Making in Kerala (TMOMK) framework that provides a structured lens to explore, preserve, and reinterpret the rich artisanal heritage of Kerala's ornamentation practices. Rooted in centuries-old craftsmanship, this framework encapsulates the indigenous techniques, tools, cultural symbolism, and community-based knowledge systems that define Kerala's traditional ornament-making processes. TMOMK emphasizes a multidisciplinary approach, integrating anthropology, material science, and design studies to document and analyze handcrafted jewelry—such as those made from gold, silver, and natural elements like palm leaves, shells, and beads. The framework also highlights the intergenerational transmission of skills, the role of artisans in regional identity, and the influence of religious and ritualistic practices. Through this model, TMOMK seeks to safeguard intangible cultural heritage while offering pathways for sustainable revival, educational dissemination, and contemporary adaptation of these timeless techniques. The framework supports researchers, policymakers, and designers in understanding and innovating within Kerala's rich ornament-making traditions.

Keywords: *Traditional methods, Ornament Making, Kerala, region, culture*

1. Introduction

Kerala, often referred to as "God's Own Country," located in the southwestern part of India, is renowned for its rich cultural heritage, and one of the most significant manifestations of this heritage is seen in its traditional ornament-making practices [1][2]. These methods reflect a blend of indigenous craftsmanship, religious symbolism, and societal values that have evolved over centuries [3][4]. Ornamentation in Kerala has always been deeply tied to identity, status, and ritual, with specific styles and patterns unique to different communities and castes [5][6]. The state's artisans, often belonging to hereditary goldsmith families, have preserved techniques passed down through generations [7].

Traditional ornament making in Kerala primarily involves materials such as gold, silver, beads, natural stones, and even organic elements like palm leaves and shells [8][9]. The goldsmithing tradition, especially, has been shaped by temple demands, royal patronage, and classical dance forms like Kathakali and Mohiniyattam that require intricate jewelry as part of their costume [10][11]. Each ornament is crafted not just for aesthetics but also for cultural and symbolic significance, often representing fertility, protection, or prosperity [12][13]. Tools such as blowpipes, anvils, and chisels continue to be used alongside basic furnaces, showcasing a continuity of ancient metallurgical knowledge [14].

Among the most popular traditional ornaments are the *mangamalas*, *kasu malas*, *elakkathali*, *oddiyanam*, and *mukkuthi*, each with distinct regional and functional characteristics [15]. These designs have stood the test of time and continue to be worn during weddings, festivals, and temple rituals. The ornamentation is also gendered, with specific items crafted exclusively for men or women, often inscribed with motifs from nature, mythology, and spirituality [16]. Additionally, ornament crafting in Kerala is closely associated with ritual purity, and certain customs and taboos are still observed during the process.

Despite modernization and the increasing popularity of machine-made jewelry, the demand for handcrafted traditional ornaments remains strong, especially in rural and temple-centric communities [17]. Many contemporary designers are now attempting to revive these age-old practices by blending them with modern aesthetics, thus ensuring their relevance in today's fashion and cultural landscape. The traditional methods have also garnered academic and commercial interest, leading to renewed efforts in documentation, preservation, and training [18].

In essence, the traditional methods of ornament making in Kerala are not merely about creating decorative pieces but represent a living heritage of art, culture, and identity. These practices continue to inspire pride, foster community identity, and contribute significantly to the cultural economy of the region. Preserving and promoting these methods is essential for sustaining Kerala's rich intangible cultural heritage in an increasingly globalized world.

1.1 Contributions

The novel contributions of this study are:

- 1 Introduces the TMOMK framework as a new interdisciplinary model to study and preserve Kerala's traditional ornament-making practices.
- 2 Documents rare indigenous techniques and tools used by artisans, offering insights into Kerala's centuries-old craftsmanship.
- 3 Provides a cultural mapping of ornament symbolism in Kerala's social, religious, and ritualistic contexts.
- 4 Proposes sustainable and modern adaptations of traditional methods to promote their relevance in contemporary design and fashion industries.

2. Literature Review

This section critically examines existing scholarly work and documented practices related to traditional ornament making in Kerala, with a focus on historical evolution, cultural significance, sustainability, legal protection, and contemporary adaptations, thereby identifying gaps and opportunities for the development of the TMOMK framework. Table 1 shows summary of research gaps.

Lueraj (2024) [19] conducted a practice-based research that creatively adapts the make-up and costume design traditions of Kathakali and Khon to inspire unique jewelry designs. The iterative design and fabrication approach reflects the deep cultural significance of these classical performing arts, promoting innovative cross-cultural expression and reinterpretation in contemporary ornamentation.

Roy et al. (2024) [20] offered a comprehensive analysis of India's textile heritage, covering regional diversities, historical significance, sustainability practices, and modern reinterpretations. Their study provides a contextual foundation for understanding traditional crafts, including jewelry, as expressions of cultural identity and historical continuity.

Kumar et al. (2025) [21] examined the sustainable practices of the Mavilan tribes in Kerala, highlighting how their ethnomedicinal and ethno-agricultural traditions embody principles of environmental harmony. Their work presents an important model for understanding sustainability through indigenous practices, relevant to traditional ornament-making as well.

Mir (2024) [22] discussed the legal protection of handicrafts like Kashmir Pashmina under India's Geographical Indications (GI) Act. This study underscores the importance of legal recognition in preserving the authenticity and commercial identity of traditional crafts, a lesson equally valuable for Kerala's ornament makers.

Sandhya et al. (2024) [23] used a case study approach to explore how rural artisans can achieve socio-economic wellbeing through inclusive growth in the tourism sector. Their analysis is crucial in positioning traditional artisans, including jewelry makers, within a sustainable and equitable development framework.

Mishra (2025) [24] presented a detailed case study on Kalyan Jewellers, tracing its brand evolution and innovative marketing strategies. The transformation of this Kerala-based brand highlights how traditional jewelry businesses can modernize while retaining cultural essence and market competitiveness.

Table 1: Summary of Research Gaps

Ref No.	Focus Area	Key Contributions	Research Gaps
Lueraj (2024) [19]	Practice-based design research	Cross-cultural reinterpretation of Kathakali and Khon into jewelry design	Lack of studies connecting Kerala's traditional ornament motifs directly to modern design innovation processes
Roy et al. (2024) [20]	Textile heritage and sustainability	Comprehensive review of Indian textile traditions and cultural diversity	Limited integration of Kerala's ornament craft traditions into broader textile-craft sustainability discourses
Kumar et al. (2025) [21]	Indigenous sustainability practices	Analysis of Mavilan tribal traditions and their alignment with SDGs	Absence of focused study on how tribal communities in Kerala contribute to ornament-related sustainable practices
Mir (2024) [22]	Geographical Indication (GI) protection	GI legal framework in handicrafts with Kashmir Pashmina as a case study	Lack of research applying GI protection to Kerala's traditional ornaments to prevent imitation and ensure authenticity
Sandhya et al. (2024) [23]	Artisan well-being and tourism	Inclusive growth models for rural artisans in tourism ecosystems	Need for specific analysis of traditional ornament artisans' inclusion in Kerala's cultural tourism economy
Mishra (2025) [24]	Brand transformation and strategy	Case study of Kalyan Jewellers' branding and customer engagement	Gap in exploring how large-scale branding impacts local traditional artisans and their design identity in Kerala

2.1 Research gaps

Despite increasing attention to traditional crafts in India, significant research gaps persist regarding the traditional methods of ornament making in Kerala. Existing studies have explored the adaptation of classical art forms into jewelry design, but there is limited investigation into how Kerala's indigenous ornament motifs can inform contemporary design innovation. While the broader heritage of Indian textiles has been well-documented, Kerala's ornament-making traditions are underrepresented in discussions on sustainability and cultural continuity. Indigenous practices related to sustainability are acknowledged in tribal communities, yet their contributions to traditional ornament craftsmanship remain largely unexamined. Legal mechanisms like Geographical Indication (GI) have been successfully applied to protect other handicrafts, but Kerala's traditional jewelry lacks focused research on such protective frameworks. Additionally, although market inclusion and brand transformations in the jewelry sector have been studied, the specific socio-economic challenges and opportunities for Kerala's traditional ornament artisans within tourism, retail, and modern branding contexts remain insufficiently explored.

2.2 Problem statement

The traditional methods of ornament making in Kerala, rooted in centuries-old craftsmanship and cultural symbolism, are facing a gradual decline due to modernization, lack of documentation, and limited recognition in contemporary design and policy frameworks. Despite their rich artistic and cultural value, these practices are increasingly overshadowed by mass-produced, machine-made jewelry, leading to a loss of indigenous techniques, tools, and intergenerational knowledge transfer. Furthermore, the absence of structured preservation efforts, legal protection mechanisms like Geographical Indication (GI), and insufficient integration with tourism and sustainability initiatives have marginalized the role of traditional artisans in Kerala's evolving socio-economic landscape. This situation highlights the urgent need for a comprehensive framework to document, preserve, and revitalize Kerala's ornament-making heritage through multidisciplinary research, innovation, and inclusive policy support.

3. Objectives

The novel objectives of this study are:

- 1 To explore and analyze the traditional ornament-making techniques practiced across different regions of Kerala.
- 2 To document the tools, materials, and processes used by artisans through ethnographic and visual methodologies.
- 3 To examine the socio-cultural and ritual significance of ornaments in Kerala's communities.
- 4 To develop recommendations for preserving and revitalizing traditional ornament-making practices through education and innovation.

4. Proposed Methodology

The proposed methodology adopts a qualitative, practice-based research approach to develop the Traditional Methods of Ornament Making in Kerala (TMOMK) framework.

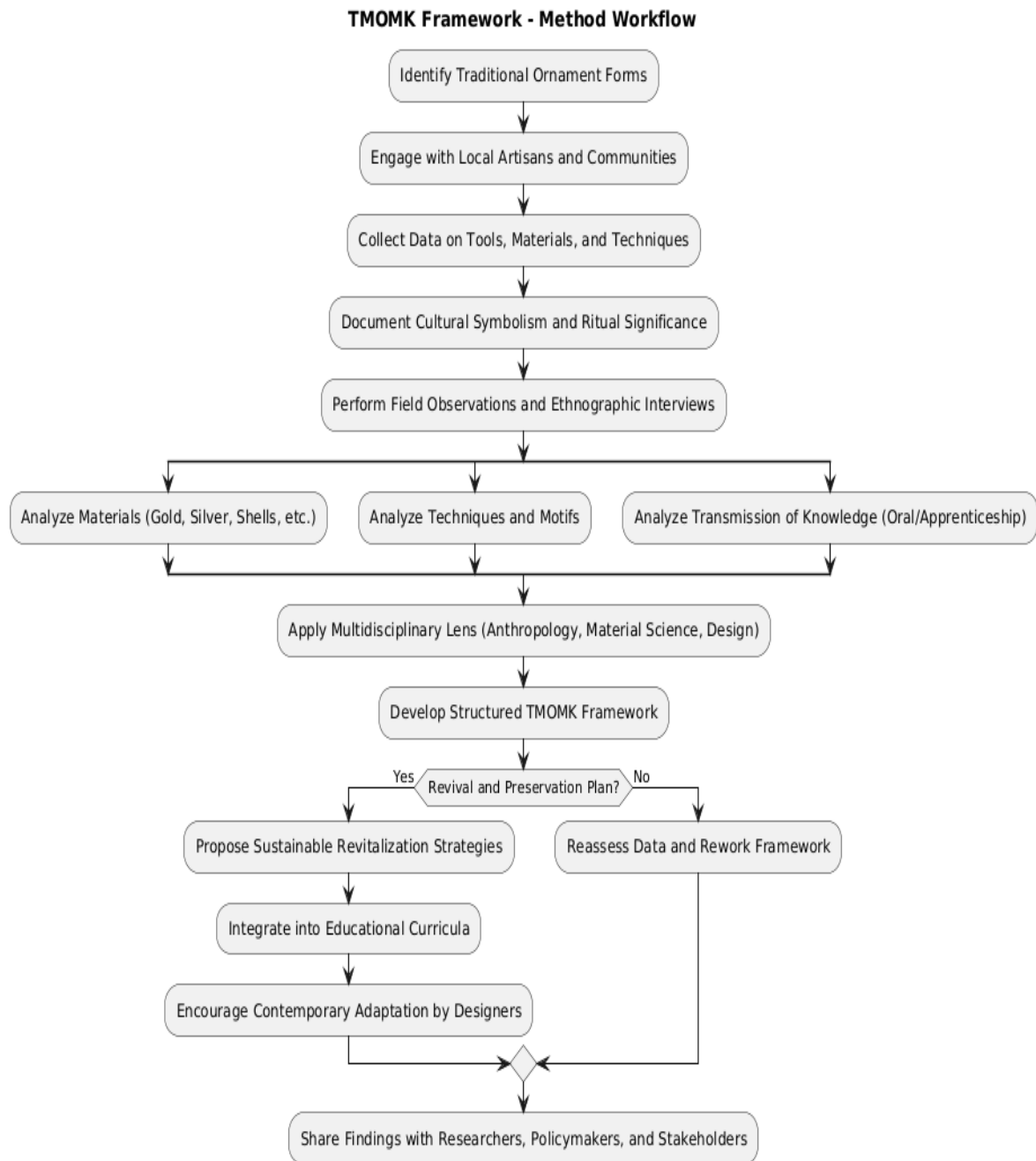


Fig 1: TMOMK Method Workflow

The process begins with the identification and documentation of traditional ornament forms across various regions of Kerala through field visits, visual surveys, and interactions with local artisans. Data collection includes recording tools, techniques, materials used (such as gold, silver, palm leaves, and shells), and the cultural symbolism embedded in each ornament. Ethnographic interviews and participatory observations are employed to understand the intergenerational transmission of skills and the socio-religious context of ornament use. The data is then analyzed using an interdisciplinary lens incorporating anthropology, material science, and design studies. The insights derived are used to construct the TMOMK framework, which serves as a model for cultural preservation, sustainable revival, and contemporary adaptation. Fig 1 illustrates the method workflow of the TMOMK framework. The workflow starts with the identification of traditional ornament types and proceeds through direct engagement with artisans for primary data collection. It includes documenting tools, techniques, and symbolic meanings, followed by analytical processes segmented into materials analysis, technique analysis, and transmission analysis. These parallel steps converge into a multidisciplinary evaluation phase where the findings are interpreted through cultural, material, and design perspectives. The workflow then branches into two paths—if the data supports actionable outcomes, sustainable revival strategies and educational integrations are proposed; otherwise, the process loops back for framework refinement. The workflow concludes with the dissemination of findings to stakeholders including researchers, policymakers, and designers, ensuring practical utility and cultural continuity.

4. Proposed Methodology

This study employs a qualitative ethnographic approach, integrating field-based documentation, oral testimonies, and visual analysis to formulate the *Traditional Methods of Ornament Making in Kerala (TMOMK)* framework. The methodology aims to trace the transmission, practice, and preservation of indigenous ornament-making traditions across select districts in Kerala, focusing on their cultural, ritual, and socio-economic dimensions. The study positions artisan narratives at the core of data collection and triangulates them with field observations and thematic interpretation to construct a culturally grounded and policy-relevant framework for heritage preservation.

4.1 Archival and Field Literature Review

The first phase of the study involved reviewing historical texts, anthropological records, and regional craft documentation to understand the evolution of ornament design and metalwork traditions in Kerala. Special emphasis was placed on examining caste-linked occupational practices, temple jewelry archives, and regional craft manuals. This secondary data provided historical continuity and context for the field-based inquiries.

4.2 Field Observations and Visual Documentation

Site visits were conducted across Thrissur, Kozhikode, Palakkad, Alappuzha, and Kasaragod, regions known for their deep-rooted ornament traditions. Artisans' workshops, temple jewelry units, and community-based craft hubs were observed. Attention was given to tool use, design processes, symbolic motifs, and workspace rituals. High-resolution photographs and videos captured the making of ornaments, tools in use, and ritual applications. Visual data emphasized traditional processes like repoussé, filigree, and palm leaf work.

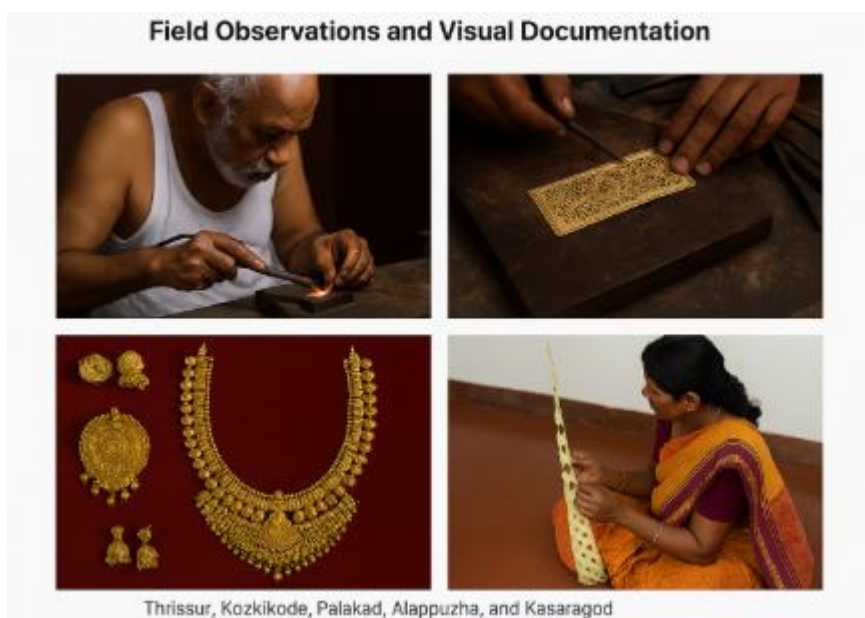


Fig. 2: Traditional Ornament Craft Processes Across Kerala
(Image credit: Author/Field Visit)

Fig 2 presents a composite visual documentation of traditional ornament-making techniques observed during field visits across Thrissur, Kozhikode, Palakkad, Alappuzha, and Kasaragod. The images capture critical aspects of the craft, including the use of indigenous tools, intricate repoussé and filigree work, finished gold ornaments characteristic of temple jewelry, and palm leaf ornament design by craftswomen. These visuals emphasize the richness of the artisan's tactile engagement with metal, the preservation of ritualistic detail in ornament production, and the continuity of gendered craft practices in Kerala's heritage ornament sector. This documentation serves as both ethnographic evidence and a visual archive supporting the proposed framework.

4.3 Oral Testimonies and Craft Narratives

Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with a cross-section of 75 respondents, including 50 traditional artisans, 10 cultural historians, 5 NGO representatives, and 10 temple priests. These narratives, primarily in Malayalam, were transcribed and translated. Core themes included intergenerational transmission, perceived decline, cultural symbolism, and innovation resistance. Craftswomen's voices were highlighted where applicable, particularly in beadwork and ritual ornamentation domains.

Table 2 presents the demographic and area-wise distribution of the 75 participants involved in the study across five key districts of Kerala—Thrissur, Kozhikode, Palakkad, Alappuzha, and Kasaragod. These regions were selected for their rich heritage in traditional ornament-making practices. The respondents included a diverse mix of traditional artisans, cultural historians, NGO representatives, and temple priests. The majority of participants were male (52), reflecting the male-dominated nature of the craft sector, although notable female participation (23) was observed, especially in beadwork and ritual ornamentation. The age range of participants varied from 20 to 72 years, ensuring inclusion of both experienced

senior artisans and younger practitioners. This demographic spread allowed for a comprehensive understanding of intergenerational knowledge transmission, regional craft variation, and the evolving roles within the ornament-making community.

Table 2: Demographic and Area-wise Distribution of Participants

Region	Primary Group Interviewed	Number of Participants	Participant Categories Represented	Male	Female	Age Range (Years)
Thrissur	Goldsmiths, Temple Artisans	18	Traditional Artisans, Temple Priests	14	4	30–70
Kozhikode	Craft Innovators, Cultural Historians	14	Artisans, Historians	10	4	28–65
Palakkad	Tribal Ornament Makers, Priests	13	Tribal Artisans, Temple Staff	9	4	35–72
Alappuzha	Beadworkers, NGO Representatives	15	Craftswomen, NGO Experts	10	5	25–68
Kasaragod	Shell Craftsmen, Cultural Custodians	15	Artisans, Ritual Keepers	9	6	20–66
Total		75		52	23	

4.4 Thematic Analysis and Framework Design

Interview transcripts and observation notes were analyzed using thematic coding. Recurrent motifs such as ritual continuity, symbolic protection, caste-linked craftsmanship, and gendered ornament roles were clustered into thematic nodes using NVivo. A five-phase workflow model was constructed to represent the cycle from documentation to framework dissemination, echoing the grounded approach used in cultural anthropology.

4.5 Ethical Protocols

Participants’ consent was obtained prior to documentation. Anonymity was preserved upon request. The study adheres to ethical standards for research on indigenous knowledge systems and ensures that the artisan community benefits through proposed policy interventions and training recommendations.

5. Findings and Discussion

The study uncovered multiple layers of meaning embedded in Kerala’s traditional ornament-making practices, extending beyond material craftsmanship to symbolic, ritualistic, and socio-economic dimensions. The following key findings were drawn from field data, interviews, and visual documentation.

5.1 Regional Craft Variation and Symbolism

Traditional ornament styles vary significantly across the regions studied, influenced by caste-based customs, temple affiliations, and localized rituals. For instance, while Thrissur and Palakkad emphasize granulated gold and repoussé work used in temple processions, Alappuzha features beadwork for folk performances.

Table 3: Regional Symbolic Patterns in Ornament Design

Region	Ornament Type	Dominant Motif	Cultural Significance
Thrissur	Temple Jewelry	Makara, Conch, Lotus	Used in temple processions
Kozhikode	Bridal Jewelry	Mango, Peacock	Symbol of fertility and prosperity
Palakkad	Ritual Adornments	Sunburst, Serpent	Tribal and agrarian protection
Alappuzha	Beaded Necklaces	Spiral, Mirror Work	Folk arts and community gatherings
Kasaragod	Shell and Brass Work	Fish, Star	Coastal spiritual practices

Table 3 shows Regional Symbolic Patterns in Ornament Design. The study reveals distinct regional variations in ornament design across Kerala, each imbued with unique cultural symbolism. In Thrissur, temple jewelry featuring motifs like the *makara*, conch, and lotus is central to religious processions, while Kozhikode’s bridal ornaments incorporate mangoes and peacocks to symbolize fertility and prosperity. Palakkad’s ritual adornments, adorned with sunbursts and serpents, reflect tribal and agrarian protective traditions, whereas Alappuzha’s beaded necklaces with spiral and mirror work are tied to folk arts and communal celebrations. Kasaragod’s coastal identity is expressed through shell and brass ornaments depicting fish and stars, linking craftsmanship to spiritual practices. These regional distinctions underscore how ornament-making in Kerala serves as both artistic expression and cultural storytelling.

5.2 Gendered Dynamics and Craft Transmission

Craft knowledge is transmitted through both familial lines and community-based learning. Male artisans dominate metalwork (gold, silver), while women participate in palm leaf and bead ornaments. However, the study found a growing erosion of interest among youth due to lack of economic security.



Fig 3: Gender-wise Involvement in Ornament Craft Processes

Fig. 3 shows Gender Distribution in Ornament Craft Practices. The data reveals a significant gender disparity in Kerala's traditional ornament-making sector, with male artisans constituting 60% of practitioners compared to 40% female participation. This imbalance reflects historical occupational patterns where metalworking (gold and silver jewelry) remains male-dominated, while women primarily engage in beadwork and palm leaf crafts. The 20% gender gap highlights both the persistence of traditional craft divisions and the untapped potential for greater female involvement in all aspects of ornament production. These findings underscore the need for targeted initiatives to promote gender equity in skill development programs and market access, ensuring the craft's sustainability while honoring its cultural roots.

5.3 Artisan Identity and Cultural Heritage

Ornaments serve as markers of identity—caste, community, and ritual. Many artisans expressed pride in their work but also voiced concerns over market-driven designs overshadowing traditional symbols. Interviewees linked ornaments to festivals like Pooram, Theyyam, and Vishu, emphasizing their intangible cultural value.

Table 4: Festivals and Associated Ornament Roles

Festival	Region	Ornament Involved	Role in Ritual
Thrissur Pooram	Thrissur	Nettipattam (caparison)	Elephants adorned in procession
Theyyam	Kasaragod	Headgear, waistbands	Worn by performers in trance states
Vishu	Palakkad	Gold Chains and Bangles	Given as symbolic gifts (Kaineettam)

Table 4 shows Festivals and Associated Ornament Roles. The study highlights how traditional ornaments are deeply intertwined with Kerala's cultural and religious festivals, serving both ceremonial and symbolic purposes. During *Thrissur Pooram*, the *nettipattam* (elaborate elephant caparison) transforms temple processions into vibrant spectacles, while *Theyyam* performers in Kasaragod don ritual headgear and waistbands to embody divine spirits during trance states. In Palakkad, *Vishu* celebrations feature gold chains and bangles as *kaineettam* (auspicious gifts), symbolizing prosperity and familial bonds. These festival-specific ornament traditions not only preserve ancient craftsmanship but also reinforce community identity and spiritual connections, demonstrating how jewelry transcends adornment to become a living part of Kerala's cultural performance.

5.4 Decline, Preservation, and Revival Hopes

Multiple artisans reported a decline in patronage and traditional commissions, with mass production and imitation gold posing threats. However, the study also found interest from cultural NGOs and academic institutions in preserving the heritage, especially through exhibitions and documentation.

Table 5: Artisan Views on Preservation Needs (Survey-Based Responses)

Preservation Need	Percentage of Artisans Supporting
Financial Aid	45%
Training Programs	30%
Documentation	15%
Policy Support	10%

Table 5 shows Artisan Views on Preservation Needs (Survey-Based Responses). The survey responses from 75 traditional artisans in Kerala highlight their priorities for preserving ornament-making practices. Financial aid emerged as the most critical need, with 45% of artisans emphasizing its importance for economic sustainability. 30% advocated for training programs to ensure intergenerational skill transfer, while 15% stressed the urgency of documenting techniques and cultural symbolism. Only 10% identified policy support (e.g., GI tags, subsidies) as an immediate requirement, suggesting limited awareness of institutional frameworks. These findings underscore the need for targeted interventions that address economic viability while safeguarding intangible heritage.

5.5 Discussion

The findings of this study illuminate the intricate relationship between Kerala's traditional ornament-making practices and its socio-cultural fabric. The regional variations in design motifs—from Thrissur's temple-centric *makara* and lotus to Kasaragod's coastal fish and star motifs—reveal how ornaments serve as tangible expressions of local identity, spirituality, and communal values. This aligns with broader discourses on intangible cultural heritage (Roy et al., 2024), yet the study uniquely bridges gaps by mapping these practices to contemporary sustainability frameworks. For instance, the gendered division of labor (60% male artisans in metalwork vs. 40% women in beadwork) not only reflects historical occupational hierarchies but also underscores the need for inclusive interventions to empower women artisans economically and creatively. The TMOMK framework, by integrating anthropology and material science, offers a replicable model for documenting such craft ecosystems, addressing the lack of structured preservation noted in prior research (Lueraj, 2024; Mir, 2024).

However, the decline in traditional patronage, exacerbated by mass production and waning youth interest, poses existential threats to these artisanal traditions. While 45% of artisans prioritized financial aid for survival, the low demand for policy support (10%) suggests a disconnect between grassroots needs and institutional mechanisms. This echoes Kumar et al.'s (2025) findings on indigenous sustainability but highlights an urgent gap: the absence of Geographical Indication (GI) protection for Kerala's ornaments, unlike Kashmir's Pashmina (Mir, 2024). The study thus advocates for multi-stakeholder collaboration—blending artisan narratives with policy action—to ensure these practices evolve without losing their cultural essence. By positioning ornaments as dynamic heritage (not relics), the TMOMK framework paves the way for their adaptation in modern design and tourism, ensuring relevance while honoring tradition.

5.6 Limitations

1. **Geographical Scope:** The research focused on five key districts of Kerala (Thrissur, Kozhikode, Palakkad, Alappuzha, Kasaragod), potentially overlooking unique ornament-making traditions in other regions of the state.
2. **Sample Size and Diversity:** With only 75 participants, the study may not fully represent the perspectives of all artisan communities, especially marginalized or lesser-known groups.
3. **Gender Data Depth:** While gender disparities were noted, the study did not extensively explore socio-economic barriers faced by women artisans, such as wage gaps or limited access to markets.
4. **Modernization Impact:** The research emphasized traditional methods but did not quantitatively assess how modernization (e.g., machine-made jewelry) directly affects artisan livelihoods or craft authenticity.

5.7 Implications

1. **Cultural Sustainability:** The study highlights how Kerala's ornament-making traditions are intertwined with regional identity and rituals. Without intervention, the erosion of these practices could lead to irreversible loss of intangible cultural heritage and community knowledge systems.
2. **Economic Vulnerability:** The dominance of mass-produced jewelry and declining artisan livelihoods (45% demand for financial aid) signals a crisis in the traditional craft economy, risking the displacement of skilled artisans and cultural commodification.
3. **Policy Gaps:** The low awareness of legal protections (e.g., GI tags) among artisans (10% demand for policy support) reveals systemic gaps in institutional frameworks, leaving traditional crafts vulnerable to imitation and exploitation.

5.8 Recommendations

1. **Geographical Indication (GI) Tagging:** Advocate for GI certification for Kerala's signature ornaments (e.g., *nettipattam*, *kasu malas*) to safeguard authenticity, deter imitation, and enhance market value, following models like Kashmir Pashmina (Mir, 2024).
2. **Gender-Inclusive Skill Development:** Launch targeted training programs to bridge the 20% gender gap in metalwork, coupled with microloans and market linkages for women artisans in beadwork and palm-leaf crafts.
3. **Cultural Tourism Integration:** Partner with Kerala's tourism sector to create artisan-led workshops, live demonstrations, and heritage trails, aligning with Sandhya et al.'s (2024) inclusive growth models for rural economies.

6. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Kerala's traditional ornament-making practices represent far more than decorative arts—they are living embodiments of cultural identity, spiritual values, and intergenerational knowledge. The TMOMK framework provides a crucial methodology for documenting and revitalizing these endangered crafts through its interdisciplinary approach combining anthropology, material science, and design studies. While the research successfully mapped regional variations, gendered production patterns, and preservation priorities among artisans, it also revealed critical gaps requiring urgent attention—particularly the threats posed by mass production, waning youth participation, and lack of legal

protections. The findings underscore that sustainable preservation must address both cultural and economic dimensions, from securing Geographical Indications to developing equitable market opportunities. Future research should expand to document marginalized artisan communities across Kerala while developing measurable frameworks to assess how specific interventions (like GI tagging or craft tourism) impact livelihood security and cultural transmission. By positioning traditional ornaments as dynamic rather than static heritage, this work lays the foundation for culturally-grounded innovation that honors the past while adapting to contemporary realities.

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