

THE CHALLENGES OF HANDICRAFT CARPENTERS IN THE SRI LANKAN TOURISM INDUSTRY

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Sri Lanka is an island located in the Indian Ocean and full of beachfront with fascinating sea views. According to the World Bank report (CBSL, 2019), Sri Lanka is a lower-middle-income country with a 4011.7 dollar per capita income in 2019. The tourism industry is the biggest third foreign exchange earner in Sri Lanka. The tourism industry depends on the foreigners who arrive in Sri Lanka annually. There are several types of associated manufacturing processes and services that have been created targeting foreigners. According to the report of the Sri Lankan tourism board (SLTDA, 2021), tourists reach Sri Lanka not only to visit important places but also to appreciate and buy Sri Lankan traditional handicrafts. The Sri Lankan Entrepreneurs related to the Tourism industry conduct businesses highlighting the Sri Lankan heritage. The Sri Lankan wood carving sector is popular among foreigners. There are various types of wood carving creations that have been created by talented Sri Lankan wood carpenters. This study is based on the challenges faced by handicraft carpenters in the Sri Lankan Tourism Industry. The specific objectives of the study are as follows. To investigate, a) the challenges in the wood carving sector and b) what are the solutions they expect? This study was conducted in Kandy which is located in the Central Province of Sri Lanka. To carry out this study, the information was collected from traditional handicraft carpenters who live in Kandy city using the stratified and snowball sampling method. The data were obtained via telephone conversations. According to the study, these carpenters have to face multiple challenges due to several reasons, such as the unwillingness of the new generation to embrace this career path and the lack of support of the government to these carpenters. The results suggest that these reasons may cause the extinction of the industry. The main point identified in the study was the carpenters' expectation of a solution from the government. They hope to start their work again and build their indigenous skills with the best policies and guidelines to address the afore-mentioned challenges.

Keywords: Carpenters, Challenges, Handicrafts, Tourism Industry