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Author(s)	NILIMA HAQUE RUMA
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Pattern-changing Business Model Framework for the Handloom Industry: A Case Study in Bangladesh

Nilima Haque Ruma

Supervisor: Kim Eunyoung

Graduate School of Advanced Science and Technology

Japan Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (JAIST)

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Abstract

1.Background

Bangladesh handloom sector is a centuries-old cultural industry which is employing over a million people. The handloom sector plays a critical role in rural employment, cultural preservation, and gender-inclusive livelihoods. Despite its socio-economic and heritage value, the industry faces serious challenges, including market disconnection, financial exclusion, technological backwardness, and digital illiteracy. These limitations have contributed to growing generational disengagement and institutional neglect which threaten the sector's sustainability.

2.Originality/Value

This research introduces a Pattern Changing Business Model (PCBM) Framework, that is culturally embedded and digitally enabled approach that reconfigures traditional handloom enterprises through the lenses of business model innovation, cultural sustainability, and inclusive digital transformation. It extends existing theory by embedding artisanal identity, digital facilitation, and co-creation mechanisms into a business model architecture tailored for informal, cultural enterprises in the Global South.

3. Research Objectives

This major research objective is to develop a Pattern Changing Business Model (PCBM) Framework to reposition Bangladesh handloom sectors viability in both local and international markets.

- To identify the key structural, financial, technological, and institutional challenges that handloom SMEs face in Bangladesh.
- To analyze the effectiveness of existing business models in addressing market needs and consumer preferences.
- To develop a pattern-changing business model framework that integrates sustainability, digital engagement, and value co-creation for enhanced competitiveness and resilience.

4. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative-dominant mixed-method case study design across three handloom clusters: Jamdani (Narayanganj), Banarasi (Dhaka), and Tangail (Tangail). Data collection

included 60 in-depth interviews, two multi-stakeholder FGDs, and business and digital tool usage surveys. The analysis followed thematic coding, cross-cluster comparison, and triangulation. The theoretical foundation draws from the Business Model Canvas (Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2010), Resource-Based View (Barney, 1991), Hybrid Organizing (Battilana & Dorado, 2010), and Co-Creation Theory (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004).

5. Findings

The study identifies six core challenges across all clusters, which include financial fragility, technological backwardness, market disconnection, digital exclusion, Institutional gaps, and Cultural erosion. However, cluster-specific variations show potential for targeted innovation, especially in Tangail. The research proposes a modular, adaptable business model that emphasizes artisan storytelling, community-based digital facilitation, hybrid sales channels, cooperative branding, and participatory pricing systems.

6.Implications

Academically, the study enriches the discourse on business model innovation in informal and cultural economies. Methodologically, it introduces a triangulated, multi-cluster approach grounded in knowledge science. Practically, the PCBM Framework offers a viable roadmap for policymakers, NGOs, digital entrepreneurs, and artisan cooperatives to promote inclusive, resilient, and culturally grounded enterprise development. It also provides scalable tools and guidelines that can be replicated in other marginalized craft sectors across the Global South.

Keywords

Bangladesh Handloom Industry, Business Model Innovation, Pattern-Changing Business Model, Rural Entrepreneurship, SME Development.