

Experiential Tourism in a Handloom Cluster: A Braun and Clarke Thematic Analysis of Pochampally, Telangana

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ABSTRACT

Experiential tourism (ET) has emerged as a noticeable trend in current travel. Highlighting immersive, authentic, and emotionally meaningful meetings. Despite this rising trend, little research has studied travellers experiences in handloom clusters such as Pochampally, a renowned Ikat weaving cluster in Telangana, India. The author explores the experiential dimensions of tourism in Pochampally. Seven in-depth interviews were conducted with visitors, data was analyzed using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis in MAXQDA software. Six ET themes appeared: (1) cultural authenticity, (2) emotional experience, (3) experiential learning, (4) socio-economic awareness, (5) behavioural intentions, and (6) sustainability future. Tourists sensed greatly engaging experiences stemming from artisan interactions and live weaving demonstrations. Cognition of artisans' challenges motivated empathetic and helping behaviours. The findings suggest that ET in Pochampally supports Tourists satisfaction while supporting to the protection of weaving heritage. The study adds to craft-based tourism literature and underscores the need for targeted policy support for sustainable development.

Keywords: Experiential Tourism, Craft tourism, Authentic experience, Pochampally

INTRODUCTION

Global tourism industry has witnessed a notable transformation from traditional sightseeing towards better immersive and participatory experiences (Madanaguli et al., 2023). ET is the present trend in global tourism (Pazari et al., 2025). According to Pine and Gilmore (1999) the present economic era- the era of experience- describes a general challenge for the tourism industry, as customers' anticipations and needs evolve radically different. Products and services are no longer enough to generate economic prosperity, being experienced an instrument for differentiation. Experiences are subjective, highly personal and intangible sensation (O'Dell & Billing, 2005), very hard to describe (De Freitas Coelho et al., 2018), dynamic and with difficult nature (Kim & Tussyadiah, 2013). At the personal level, researchers connect the experience with intrinsic aspects such as perception, learning, prior experiences and memory (Li, 2000). Tourists are increasingly aiming to develop authentic experiences and experiences of the destinations they visit during their visitor trips; this kind of tourism is concentrated on creating authentic, personalized and emotionally impactful experiences that will

stay in the visitors' memories for a long term. (Pazari et al., 2025). While undertaking leisure trip, in most cases, tourists desire to enjoy the history and culture of a distant place, relax in an eco-friendly place, or experience the beauty of culture like dance, drama, theatre, handicrafts, or any additional fine arts. These experiences evolve memorable and stay in our minds for more extended duration (Varma, 2023). ET is an outgrowth of an international movement toward experiential learning, where travellers form meaning through direct experience (Jayabharathi & Vedamuthu, 2017).

Alfifto et al. (2020) connected ET with experiential quality, experiential value, and satisfaction in the context of Lake Toba, Samosir District. Kokkranikal and Carabelli (2021) studied ET through visitor's participation in cooking classes, allowing them to learn about and engage in local food preparation in Cinque Terre. Van Nguyen and Nguyen (2024) explored individuals' choices to take part in ET by engaging in salt fields and the traditional salt-making process. Sommit and Boonpaisarnsatit (2020) linked ET with local plant-based gastronomy experiences. ET encourages tourists to participate in the experience. Promoting activities that attract people outdoors and into cultures and communities is an essential part of ET, India is home to mixed cultural landscapes showing immense scope for ET. "India's culture, deeply embedded in a pluralistic ethos, continues to deliver the values and belief practices that have sustained our culture through the generations, for those communities, particularly in lesser known rural regions, which have begun taking some initiatives to integrate themselves into the most consolidated traveler circles of India, experiential tourism is an effective medium to offer possibilities for economic development and better living standards (Jayabharathi & Vedamuthu, 2017). Craft tourism, a subset of artistic tourism, concentrates particularly on destinations where conventional craftsmanship is

observed, experienced, and consumed by tourists. Crafts in India expand beyond the tangible perimeters of skill, workmanship, and other physical aspects. Indian craft is a reflection of the enormous creativity of common individuals in the search for self-expression and contentment (Jain & Thakkar, 2019). Studies highlight that visitors are increasingly drawn to place where handcrafted products and cultural craftsmanship are prominent to the local identity (Guha et al., 2025; Jayabharathi & Vedamuthu, 2017; Markwick, 2001). Pochampally is most famous for its Ikat style of sarees and material and the world knows this town for its amazing Ikats, Pochampally offers ET opportunities, allowing travelers to interact with local craftspeople and observe and participate how sarees are traditionally crafted through age-old weaving procedures. Despite the growing interest in ET, limited research has examined experiential dimensions in rural handloom clusters. No previous study has explored how tourists experience, interpret, and emotionally engage with the weaving traditions of Pochampally, nor how these authentic experience shape learning, socio-economic awareness, purchase behaviour, revisit intentions, and perceptions of sustainability. This research addresses this gap by providing a qualitative, tourist-centric exploration of ET in Pochampally.

Study area

Indian handloom silk sarees known for their special features like stunning colour blends, detailed designs and excellent motifs, tops the demand of the domestic market. In India, there are numerous silk weaving hubs extend all over the country, known for their special and typical class of weaving. South India is the top silk growing area of the country also known for its renowned silk weaving enclaves like Kancheepuram, Dharmavaram, Arni, Pochampally etc. The look of the silk is the key to having excellent silks. Pochampally is a mandal located in the district of Nalgonda in Telangana and is famously referred to as the 'Silk City of India'

for its beautifully prepared silk Ikat sarees and fabric.

This handloom cluster is renowned globally for the finesse of its handwoven products in both silk and cotton. In addition to its primary emphasis on silk sarees, the cluster also makes cotton sarees, dress materials, bed sheets, furnishing fabrics, and wall hangings. The tie-and-dye textiles of Pochampally are highly respected and enjoy a substantial demand both within India and overseas. These products are crafted using traditional pit looms, with approximately 2000 such looms currently operating across more than 20 villages in the cluster shown in figure-1. Pochampally distinct tie-and-dye process is predominantly practiced by the well-known Padmasali weaver community. According to locals, about a decade ago the village housed nearly 3000 looms, with nearly every Padmasali family having at least one. Yet, the number of practising weavers (Figure 4) has dropped sharply with current assessments

placing the figure as low as 450-500. The survey also showed that many homes still retain remnants of old looms stored away and no longer in use (Telangana Tourism, 2011). Pochampally Ikat tie-and-dye designs, woven on century-old handloom practices are unparalleled in their refinement. Owing to this distinctiveness, they have been given Intellectual Property Rights protection, becoming the first traditional Indian craft to receive geographical branding. The design guaranteed recognition under the “Geographical Indications” category, which protects Pochampally handloom sarees from unfair competition and counterfeiting. As Pochampally sarees achieved popularity both within India and abroad, local weavers increasingly faced intense competitor from inexpensive powerloom imitations. The GI status, therefore, plays a crucial role in preserving the authenticity and heritage of this traditional Craft.



Figure-1 Pochampally village image (Source: Google Map)

Research On ET

Experiential tourism has appeared as an important paradigm shift in modern tourism, where travelers aim meaningful, immersive, and emotionally engaging experience rather than sightseeing only. Pine and Gilmore (1999) defines experience as the central economic offering, underlining the domains of experience such as education, escapism, entertainment and aesthetic. ET is represented by participation, interaction, and emotional relevance, allowing travelers to connect deeply with local culture,

individuals, and environments. According to Varma (2023), ET is a form of tourism in which people concentrate on experiencing a nation, city or distinct place by actively and meaningfully experiencing with its history, people, culture, and environment, ET, also known as “Immersion travel” is a form of travel in which the emphasis is on the experience. It is comprehended that Uniqueness is one of the biggest assets that a destination can have when it comes to ET. Many tourists, who prefer immersive travel, do it because they desire to live a truly

genuine experience and get to know the local culture, while undertaking leisure trip, in most cases, we desire to enjoy the history and culture of a distant place, relax in an eco-friendly place, or experience the beauty of culture like dance, drama, theatre, handicrafts, or any additional fine arts. These experiences transform into memorable experience and stay in our minds forever (Varma, 2023).

Cultural tourism, as defined by the UNWTO, involves travel undertaken to experience cultural destinations, heritage sites, traditions and craft practices. Craft tourism, a subset of artistic tourism, concentrates particularly on destinations where conventional craftsmanship is observed, experienced, and consumed by tourists. Crafts in India expand beyond the tangible perimeters of skill, workmanship, and other physical aspects. Indian craft is a reflection of the enormous creativity of common individuals in the search for self-expression and contentment (Jain & Thakkar, 2019). Uniqueness of the place and authentic experiences are the hallmarks of ET (Varma, 2023). Experiential travel is more of a promise than traditional travel, but is also believed to be more fulfilling, leaving a everlasting impact on the visitor. Experiential travel circles around cultural exploration and activity-based travel experiences. Authenticity has become a central focus for a lot of tourists today. Travelers desire to go beyond gazing out of a tourist destination and actually spend time

interacting with locals (Smith, 2005). Pochampally is most famous for its Ikat style of saris and material and the world knows this town for its amazing Ikats, Pochampally offers ET opportunities, allowing travelers to interact with local craftspeople and observe and participate how sarees are traditionally crafted through age-old weaving procedures. Studies highlight that visitors are increasingly drawn to place where handcrafted products and cultural craftsmanship are prominent to the local identity (Guha et al., 2025; Jayabharathi & Vedamuthu, 2017; Markwick, 2001). This study therefore focuses on ET opportunities in Pochampally Village famous for Ikat sarees through interviews of tourists visiting Pochampally.

METHODOLOGY

For the study, ET: A case of Pochampally, Telangana the researcher chose to employ the Braun and Clarke six-step framework for thematic analysis. The researcher selected to use the Braun and Clarke six-step framework shown in figure-2, because it is an open method for doing thematic study that is not associated with any theoretical underpinnings. The six steps of the Braun and Clarke framework for accomplishing thematic analysis include familiarizing with the data, developing initial codes, developing themes, reviewing and modifying themes, describing and naming themes and writing the findings report (Braun and Clarke, 2022).

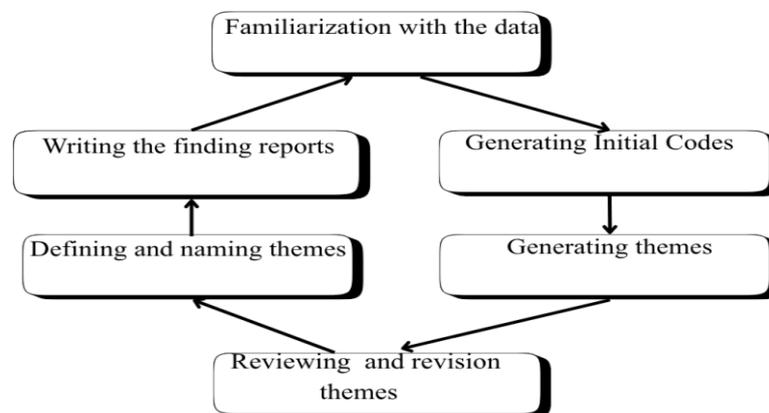


Figure 2. Adopted from Braun and Clarke's (2006)

Pochampally, famous for its traditional Ikat weaving, was chosen as the study site due to its cultural value and potential as an ET destination. Preliminary data were collected through semi-structured interviews with travellers who recently visited the village. A purposive selection method was used to select 7 participants who directly interacted with local craftspeople and weaving activities. All interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed.

Step 1: Familiarizing with the Data

In following the first step of the Braun and Clarke, six-step framework for thematic analysis the researcher initiated with reading and re-reading their transcripts to acquaint with the responses given by the interviewed tourists and to get the nuances of tourists’ responses.

Step 2: Generating Initial Codes

The researcher then proceeded to the second step of the Braun and Clarke, six-step framework for thematic analysis that is developing initial codes (Braun and Clarke, 2022). In order to generalise the initial codes, the researcher therefore read and re-read all tourists transcripts line by line and coded all the required information in MAXQDA. This process confirmed that no substantial details were missed.

Step 3: Generating Themes

After coding the whole dataset, the researcher proceeded to the third step - theme generation. At this stage, codes sharing identical underlying meanings were grouped jointly. These clusters of connected codes

created the basis of preliminary themes. The researcher analyzed patterns across the codes to determine broader concepts that represented participants shared experiences.

Step 4: Reviewing and Refining Themes

Once preliminary themes were developed, they were analysed for coherence and applicability to the study goals. In his step the researcher refined the themes by mixing overlapping themes, excluding unsupported themes and ensuring that every theme cover a special and important aspect of the participants experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2021). This iterative review provided analytical rigor and clarity.

Step 5: Defining and Naming Themes

The researcher evidently described and named the final themes illustrated in figure-3. Every theme was given a short descriptive label and accompanied by a thorough description outlining the essence of the theme and the distinct aspects of travellers experiences it represented. A table containing all final themes along with their MAXQDA-generated descriptions was prepared to support this step.

Step six: Producing the Findings Report

The final step was concluded reporting the findings. These results synthesized quotes and themes into a readable description that reflects the key findings adopted from the research of (Naeem et al., 2023). The final write-up aimed to show the participants’ experiences authentically while presenting a rigorous and systematic analytical approach.

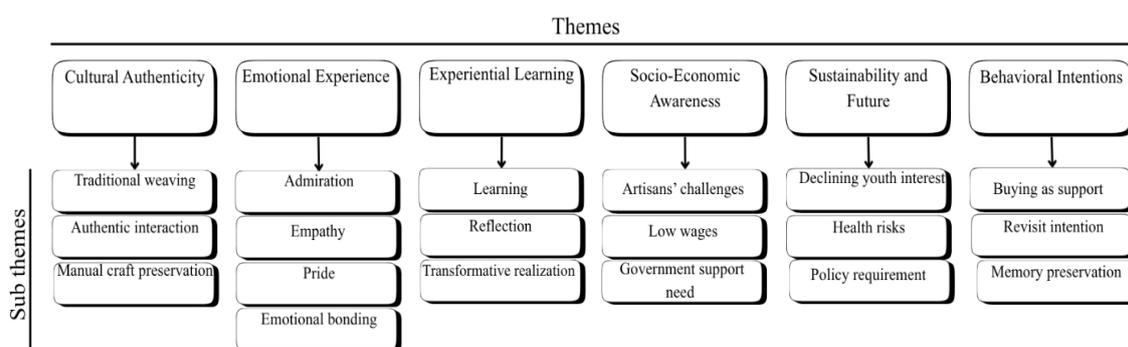


Figure-3 Numbers of themes developed

Findings

A total of seven visitors were interviewed in-depth, of whom five were male and two were female. Content analysis of the interview transcripts recognized six main themes and twenty subthemes in figure 3, related to the

experiences of tourists visiting Pochampally, Telangana. Whereas Table 1 shows the six themes along with the number of text segments that emerged under each theme. A brief discussion of each theme is given below.

Table-1. The Number of Text Segments Emerged under Individual Theme

Themes	Number of text segments
Cultural Authenticity	18
Emotional Experience	16
Experiential Learning	14
Socio-Economic Awareness	13
Purchase Behavioural and revisit Intentions	11
Sustainability and Future	9

Theme 1: Cultural Authenticity

Tourists in Pochampally got the opportunity to experience an authentic and living heritage space and cultural experience, where traditional craftsmanship is still practiced in its original form. The following narrative, for example, describes how “Cultural Authenticity” can shape tourist’s experience. I got to see the traditional way of weaving that people here are still following. They continue to hand-weave Ikat sarees in the old traditional manner, without using power looms, I saw them drawing the designs by hand, it was fascinating (Respondent 1). I saw them drawing the designs by hand, it was fascinating (Respondent 2). The houses are designed around the looms... showing how craft and lifestyle are integrated. They use natural dyes created from plants and minerals, and all processes are without electricity. This weaving method is centuries old and still fully handmade, this authenticity can’t be replicated by machines (Respondent 3). Their weaving process is centuries old and still fully handmade—this authenticity can’t be replicated by machines (Respondent 6), Everything was new for me—the language, the culture, the work—it was all different from my background (Respondent 5). Similarly, many Visitors repeatedly refer to manual, heritage-based weaving as the essence of authenticity in Pochampally.

Theme 2: Emotional Experience

Tourists also related their experience to Emotional significant travel moments.

Emotional Experience is perceived highly significant in tourism field and in experiential tourism point of view. Some of tourists described their experience as lifelong memorable experience which they will remember forever.

I felt very excited and intensely interested while watching the weaver’s work. Their patience and commitment made me respect them even more. The locals were warm, respectful and welcoming, which added emotional richness to the experience. I left with a strong sense of respect and appreciation (Respondent 1). The patience of the weavers impressed me the most. They operate with thin threads for long hours with steady hands. Observing their focus and devotion made me admire them deeply. Their innovation, even without formal education, was inspiring and emotionally moving for me (Respondent 2).



Figure 4. Artisan weaving Saree (Source: Author)

I felt inspired by their dedication despite health problems, no proper handling equipments and low earnings. Their resilience and cultural commitment touched me deeply. Even though I arrived from a similar community, I felt an emotional bond seeing how they continue their heritage with pride (Respondent 3). Emotionally, the visit moved me deeply because the artisans attach feelings, love, and patience to every thread they weave. Watching them pamper the threads like a child made the craft feel alive. Their happiness despite hardships touched me, and I sensed that their emotional connection to their work gives beauty to the sarees (Respondent 4). Emotional connection and admiration are central, tourists express gratitude, pride, and emotional resonance when they have positive experience. The craft experience tourism allows travelers to engage directly with the supply chain which offers not only an prospect to share knowledge and raise awareness of the innovative process, but also help in deeper understanding and value-building of crafts. Hence, tourism can be a significant force for the sustaining of historic and cultural heritage and can stimulate arts, crafts, and other innovative activities within communities (UNEP & UNTWO, 2005).

Theme 3: Experiential learning

Experiential learning in guides to the process through which tourists gain knowledge, skills, attitudes and personal insights through direct, meaningful, and immersive experiences at a destination. It is embedded in the idea that learning is most effective when people actively participate in their surroundings, reflect on their experiences and internalize new understandings.

I learned many new things that I had only seen in movies before. Seeing the weaving process live helped me understand how much effort and skill go into one saree. The way threads are dyed and woven was completely new to me and gave me meaningful insights into the craft (Respondent 1). I realized that weaving is not just printing on fabric but making patterns during the weaving itself.

The tie-and-dye process and the way colors emerge on woven cloth were entirely new ideas to me. Watching both conventional and semi machine supported looms gave me deeper knowledge about the craft's sophistication (Respondent 2).

I learned new approaches like how tubes are tied on yarn and how patterns reflect after dyeing. The distinctions between their looms and ours gave me fresh insights. The visit helped me understand variations in design, dyeing, and weaving styles (Respondent 5). Participating in the dyeing process made me discover how much physical power and concentration are required in this craft. I got to know that how threads are tied, boiled, dyed and prepared before weaving. This hands-on experience helped me to understand the psychological and emotional elements hidden behind their art (Respondent 7).

Their experience suggests that Visitors gain *experiential learning*, transforming pre-visit assumptions into profound understanding.

Theme 4: Socio-Economic Awareness

In tourism Socio-economic awareness directs to the understanding visitors develop about the economic and social truths of the destination they travel. It surrounds tourists' recognition of how local communities earn their livelihoods, how tourism impacts income distribution, employment, cultural protection and how their own travel-related actions contribute to positively or negatively to the local economy and culture.

I felt how hard these artisans work for long hours just to finishes one saree. Yet they do not make much. The physical pressure and constant effort made me understand their struggles more deeply. Their hard work despite challenges made me feel they deserve more support (Respondent 1). I felt that the artisans are skilled yet inadequately compensated. Their earning is not sufficiently for the time and precision required for each saree. They deserve much more recognition and financial support, particularly since many people do not even

know the struggle behind single piece (Respondent 2).



Local artisan using chemical bare hands
(Source: Author)

They told me they have “Weaver Cards” but don’t get real benefits. Many suffer from finger injuries, dye-related concerns, and low income. Their living situations and lack of government assistance made me realize how much support they truly need (Respondent 3). Many weavers told me that they suffer from skin allergies, irritation and inadequate income. The heavy dyeing work is risky and the financial return is not enough for the effort. Their struggles made me understand their need for recognition and proper support (Respondent 4).

I sensed their poor health situations and low income, which affect their health and well-being. Despite having deep emotional devotion to their craft, they suffer financially and physically. The lack of corporate or state support highlighted how vulnerable these workers are in the socio-economic structure (Respondent 5). I felt how difficult it is for locals to compete with cheap bulk products imported from China. Many depend solely on weaving, yet the financial returns are uncertain. Their dependence on conventional approach and lack of support showed me the fragility of this craft economy (Respondent 6).

The analysis of tourist’s interviews show that locals artisans are facing financial, physical and technological challenges due to which it is becoming hard for the artisans to compete in the market with imported China’s machines products and raising concern of their survival in the market.

Theme 5: Purchase Behavioural and revisit Intentions

This theme refers to the likelihood that travelers will engage in specific future activities after experiencing a place. These preferences reflect tourists’ attitudes, satisfaction, perceived value, and emotional reactions and they offer substantial predictive power for destination sustainability, purchase behaviour and repeat visitation.

I didn’t buy anything during this visit, I plan to return and spend more time with them, observing and documenting their emotional engagement. As a psychologist, I want to work closely with them in the future to comprehend their behavior. I also plan to raise awareness through my word so more people respect their work (Respondent 5). I concluded up buying four sarees instead of one because I felt connected to their work and quality. I deeply recommend everyone to visit and appreciate this art. I would gladly return to explore more and support the artisans again (Respondent 4). I didn’t buy anything because similar products exist in my hometown, but I would still recommend that tourists must experience the culture here. If a person asks me to accompany them, I will gladly visit again to help them understand the craft (Respondent 3).

I bought sarees because of the authenticity and originality of their work and felt emotionally driven to support them. I firmly recommend others to visit Pochampally and buy directly from weavers. I would love to re-visit again to explore more designs and interact with artisans (Respondent 2). I bought products even though I had not planned to, simply because watching the weaving process created an emotional connection. I felt that I should take

something as a memory and support them. I also shared my experience with family and friends and would love to revisit to buy more (Respondent 1).

PB among visitors was mainly emotionally driven, serving as a significant way to honour the artisans' craftsmanship and preserve their memories of the visit. Most of the interviewed travelers purchased products from Pochampally, indicating their appreciation for both the authenticity and the emotional value embedded in the handwoven items. All interviewed expressed willingness to revisit the destination. This intention was especially influenced by their overall satisfaction, memorable experiences and emotional attachment formed during the visit.

Theme 6: Sustainability and Future

Sustainability and Future in tourism refers to tourists' awareness, perceptions and anticipations regarding the long-term protection, responsible development and continued viability of tourism destinations. It reflects how travellers comprehend the need to protect cultural, environmental and socio-economic resources to ensure that tourism blessings can be passed on generations.

Pochampally requires guides or organizers so travellers can explore properly. Many weaving units are difficult to find and structured tourism could help sustain this craft. Time constraints kept me from exploring more and I wish the place received more support and recognition (Respondent 1). I am concerned that younger generations might not resume this tradition because of low income. Despite the GI tag, the craft still lacks sufficient promotion. Sustaining this art requires awareness, proper branding and government initiatives to secure its future (Respondent 2). Modern mechanization has impacted conventional weaving and made it slightly profitable. Younger generations are moving away from the craft. Unless government enhances facilities and support, otherwise this tradition may continue to decline (Respondent 3). Readymade machine sarees from private companies threaten the

survival of this craft. The weavers' emotional commitment keeps the practice alive. But without monetary support and awareness, this art may fall. I think govt. subsidies and CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) initiatives are crucial for sustaining this heritage (Respondent 5).

Most of the respondents mentioned the need to raise awareness about preserving this destination through increased financial support from the government and enhanced promotional efforts. They emphasized that such measures are essential to assure that future generations can experience and appreciate the traditional craft of Ikat weaving.

DISCUSSIONS

Author's purpose of this study was to explore ET dimensions in Pochampally and how tourists experience, interpret and emotionally engage with the weaving traditions of Pochampally and how these authentic experience shape learning, socio-economic awareness, purchase behaviour, revisit intentions and perceptions of sustainability by providing a qualitative, tourist-centric exploration of ET in Pochampally. Through qualitative interviews and thematic analysis in MAXQDA. The research identified six experiential themes: (1) cultural authenticity, (2) emotional experience, (3) experiential learning, (4) socio-economic awareness, (5) behavioural intentions and (6) sustainability future. The result reveals that Pochampally offers a deep immersive and meaningful ET environment which demonstrated by traditional craftsmanship, artisanal narratives and interactions between visitors and locals. This part discusses the findings in relation to existing theories and research.

A major theme arising from the data is that "*cultural authenticity*" includes the primary driver of visitor satisfaction in Pochampally. Visitors consistently expressed the weaving procedure, artisan homes, dyeing processes, and handmade Ikat designs as real, genuine and untouched by modern machinery.

This aligns with MacCannell's (1973) frontstage-backstage idea of authenticity, as

well as the views of Littrell et al. (1993) and Wu et al. (2024) which indicate that visitors intentionally seek culturally pure and minimally commercialized destinations. Pochampally shows access to authentic working spaces, homes with looms, dyeing pits and fibre storehouse, which visitors sense as authentic, forming strong emotive and cognitive engagement. Previous research on ET emphasizes the essence of genuineness in heritage destinations (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). Pochampally fits this framework by providing an immersive experience that varies from museum-style staged authenticity; instead, visitors observe real artisans completing real tasks. Thus, the study reinforces findings that authenticity anchors visitor experience in craft-based rural destinations.

Another major theme emerged *Emotional Experience*, visitors' compassion for artisans, respect for manual craftsmanship and emotional relation to the weaving process reflects that emotional experiences at Pochampally, which aligns well with the findings of Yang et al. (2021), Yin and Jung (2024), and Wu et al. (2024). This also supports Tung & Ritchie's (2011) and Pine & Gilmore's (1999) experiential model, where emotional immersion forms a center component of memorable experiences.

The third major theme which emerged *Experiential Learning*. Observing the weaving process led to new appreciation and knowledge, aligning with Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (1984) and Van Winkle & Lagay, (2012) where direct experience guides to conceptual understanding and reflection.

Socio-Economic Awareness was another major theme, where Visitors who originally came for leisure left with socio-economic understanding—demonstrating that ET can develop empathy and social responsibility, similar to the findings by Smith & Robinson (2006), Farooq & Haq, (2025) and Luekveerawattana et al., (2025).

Purchase Behavioural and revisit Intentions theme was primarily driven by what researchers call emotional consumption—

purchasing not for utility but to sustain artisans. Visitors felt morally obliged to buy at least one item, reflecting findings in ethical consumption, literature that individual interaction with producers triggers empathetic purchasing (Hossain et al., 2022; Maldonado-López et al., 2025; Rukhsar et al., 2024; Shaw et al., 2005; Zhao et al., 2024).

The sixth and final theme, Sustainability and Future, reflects visitors' concerns about the long-term preservation of Pochampally's craft traditions, which aligns with the observations of Dhar et al. (2024) and Fang (2025). Themes such as youth disinterest, mechanization, low income and lack of governmental support echo concerns from prior research on the decline of handloom industries in India (Jayabharathi & Vedamuthu, 2017). The research reveals that Pochampally offers a highly meaningful ET environment where cultural authenticity, emotional resonance, hands-on learning and ethical reflection shape travelers' experiences. These dimensions collectively impact favourable behavioural intentions, including buying, promoting the destination and revisiting. Sustainability difficulty such as income insecurity, health risks and generational reduction, shows serious threats. Thus, ET can play a significant role not only in improving travellers but also in sustaining the livelihood and legacy of artisans. If provided proper support is introduced.

Limitations and Further Research

This research provides rich insights into ET in Pochampally, Study has specific constraints and that must be acknowledged. First the study is based on seven in-depth interviews limiting the generalizability of the results. Though qualitative studies focus on depth over breadth and a more comprehensive and more diverse selection may have delivered broader perspectives. Second, the study concentrates solely on Pochampally, a single weaving village, and thus the findings may not fully describe the experiential dynamics of other handloom

clusters in India such as Kanchipuram, Bhuj, Varanasi, or Sambalpur. Additionally, the data were collected within a specific time period, and visitor experiences may vary in seasons, festivals, or transforming tourism patterns. Another constraint is that the study concentrates primarily on tourist perceptions; the perspectives of Local artisans, and other stakeholders were not included but could have enriched the analysis. Furthermore, the research depends primarily on self-reported experiences from travellers, with limited direct observation of travellers' behaviours during their exchanges with locals and weaving units. A comparative study can take place where different handloom tourists experience can be measured, and a quantitative study can also be applied to measure tourists experience. Researchers can also explore guided tours, storytelling etc. These constraints open several avenues for future study.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the experiential dimensions of tourism in Pochampally, a heritage weaving village famous for its Ikat craft. Through seven in-depth interviews. The study shows that travellers experience Pochampally as an authentic and culturally immersive destination where traditional weaving practices are preserved and performed in their natural environment. interviewees highlight the genuineness of artisan homes, weaving units, dyeing areas and design processes, which contributed to a strong feeling of cultural authenticity. The emotional engagement that come from observing local artisan at work, marked by admiration, compassion and inspiration emerged as one of the most powerful components of their visit. These sentiments were closely tied to experiential learning. As visitors accumulated new knowledge and insight into the fineness of handloom production, challenging their preconceptions and deepening their appreciation for the craft.

Author also found that visitors developed a heightened awareness of the socio-economic

realities of the artisan community. Observing low incomes, health issues and limited govt. support made tourists more conscious of the systemic challenges faced by weavers. This awareness frequently changed into meaningful behavioural responses, such as unplanned purchases, intentions to revisit and strong recommendations to others. The result consolidates that ET in Pochampally does more than entertainment, it educates travellers, stimulates empathy and supports responsible tourist behavior. However, challenges of sustainability surfaced throughout the interviews. Tourists expressed worry about declining youth participation, competition from mechanized production, financial instability, and the need for structured tourism support such as guides, interpretation centres and improved visitor amenities. Overall, the study concludes that Pochampally possesses a unique ET value rooted in authenticity, emotional resonance and learning. These experiential dimensions not only improve traveler satisfaction but also have the potential to contribute to the preservation and sustainability of weaving heritage when backed by effective policy measures and community-based tourism planning.

The findings emerged from this study highlights the significance of promoting craft villages like Pochampally as experiential place and emphasize the need for targeted interventions that can help weaver livelihoods while enhancing traveler experiences. By incorporating cultural heritage, artisan narratives, and immersive learning prospects, Pochampally can serve as a model for sustainable craft-based rural tourism in India.

Declaration by Authors

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