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Preservation and Innovation in Pakistani Truck Art in the Age of Modernization

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Abstract

This research investigated the conservation of Pakistani truck art alongside its creative development during modernization while conducting fieldwork in two cities of Punjab specifically Lahore and Multan. This research used a qualitative approach to collect data, which included semi-structured interviews with truck artists, workshop owners and drivers as well as photographic documentation. Thematic analysis was used to examine the data, allowing for the identification of recurring patterns, underlying concepts, and emerging themes. Traditional motifs expressing Pakistani cultural heritage remain prominent yet artists adopt digital enhancement technologies and modern commercial practices because economic constraints force their evolution. This folk-art transforms into urban elements through its redeployment in food establishments together with fashion displays and gallery spots. These developments lead to doubts regarding mundane versus genuine uses. The research demonstrates how the modern world modifies a traditional artistic tradition while sustaining its foundation. The research demonstrates how artists successfully maintain connection between tradition and modernity through their adaptability and determination to protect heritage.

Keywords: Digital Technologies, Printing, Symbols, fashion designs, and Photographs

Introduction

The practice of truck art changes regular transportation vehicles into decorative mobile works through its diverse artistic elements. The artistic genre of truck art features expressive colors in combination with ornaments of elaborate flowers and symbolic designs alongside poetic writings and intricate calligraphy. People used personalization and spiritual protection as their initial purposes for truck art before artists transformed it into an expressive artwork revealing cultural ideologies and social profiles alongside individual faiths (Ansari & Nawaz, 2024). Truck art operates as both an artistic medium for story sharing and communication between artists and viewers. Every picture and symbol in truck art gets selected with focused attention because they express what their creators together with the owners feel or the specific aspects of their region represent. Proficient artisans spend extensive periods of time and labor to convert plain



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trucks into distinctive artistic visual marvels during the creative process. People have used intimate workshop settings to learn these skills which transfer across different generations (Afridi & Saleem, 2025).

The customary method of ornamenting trucks continues to evolve without staying unchanged. The truck art tradition perpetually transforms itself by adapting to modern elements such as technological development and economic market demands together with altering social structures. New digital printing methods combined with LED illumination and prefabricated materials have toned down production time yet they challenge traditional production standards for handcrafting and genuineness of products (Standage, 2021). The modifications observed in the tradition earn support from people who believe they represent essential transformation while uncomfortable others identify them as dangers to the artistic honesty of traditional art (Liu, 2025).

The traditional context where truck art used to reside expands as this art form continues to evolve. Modern society adopts truck art for decorative purposes in urban areas as well as advertising and fashion designs and it appears at global events. Truck art enters new environments to experience a shifting interpretation process between meaning and usage. The wider distribution of truck art creates global appreciation but threatens to separate it from cultural foundations which enrich its significance (Sheikh, 2018).

Objectives

1. To document the traditional motifs still present in Punjab's truck art.
2. To explore the impact of technology on artistic practices.
3. To analyze the economic factors influencing truck art's evolution.
4. To understand how urban settings are reshaping its cultural context.

Literature Review

The existing literature about Pakistani truck art receives analysis in this section through an examination of previous research and scholarly discussions about cultural importance alongside social evolution history. The review presents significant research outcomes while noting consensus and filling gaps in existing literature to support this research on Pakistani truck art preservation alongside modernization.

Traditional Roots and Cultural Function

Vehicle owners and artisans started truck art as a personal decorative practice which allowed them to express meaning through their work tools. At first vehicle owners applied spiritual symbols and lucky objects to their vehicles before developing sophisticated visual narratives. At the beginning of truck art history protectors featured along with poetic text added to devotional images worked to defend against misfortune while sharing personal and communal identity (Ahmed, 2022).

These decorations fulfilled valuable functions in the same way as traditional manufacturing tools. These visuals went beyond natural expressions because they served to show pride as well as shared cultural meaning and spiritual belief (Abdulhay, 2023). Visual motifs consisting of animals alongside landscapes combined with calligraphy and eyes appeared commonly in truck artwork to convey meaning that included power and graceful with protection and emotional



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elements. Artistic symbols and visual signs used in truck decoration were recognizable by both the creators and audiences within each community thus establishing truck art as both social and personal communication (Kazmi, 2021).

Artistic Process and Symbolism

Vehicle owners collaborate extensively with artists during truck art production because this traditional artistic process needs plenty of manual labor. Different artistic elements including painting, metal working, wooden carving and mirror mounting appear in truck art creations. Truck artists spend numerous days or weeks on modifying vehicles because they focus on achieving both visual equilibrium and unified thematic messages. Visual elements including birds and flowers with eyes remain the most typical motifs that artists repurpose through different semantic meanings during their designs (Locher, 2014).

The artistic symbolism within truck art represents one of its fundamental reasons why people find it attractive. Different natural elements including trees and rivers and animals in truck art produce symbolic meanings regarding harmony and endurance and strength. Artistic verses bring extra emotion to truck artworks through their ability to convey memories and romantic messages together with social commentary (Goldman, 1995). Multiple creative elements compose a vehicle that finally transforms into an intricate storytelling display for both the eyes and emotions of the viewers (Zhou Bakhir, 2025).

These artistic workshops function as both creative environments for producing truck artwork and spaces for the continued practice of heritage techniques and apprenticeship learning. These operations function beyond the boundaries of the official economy while their success is based on apprentice-master learning models. The artisans keep discovering new methods while respecting their traditional rules despite receiving no institutional backing yet they demonstrate both flexibility and durability (Çebi, 2025).

Modern Influences and Adaptations

Modernization has heavily shaped the evolution of truck art throughout numerous years. Digital technologies have gained popularity because organizations need quicker service together with less expensive operations and uniform results. The truck art industry today uses adhesive vinyls together with printed decals and ready-made components for fast production of traditional designs at reduced costs. New methods in truck art production focus on customer desires for effective and standardized designs (Hanke, 2025).

These industry changes have born a controversy about how they affect traditional methodology in the field. Some art technicians combine recent design tools with traditional artistic techniques to produce contemporary mixed artworks. These style trends have people fearing they will eventually eliminate the detailed craftsmanship which depicts truck art. The paramount concern involves technique as well as the disappearance of conceptual content found in handmade verses and symbols (Canclini, 1993).

These economic and social developments cause this transformation. Digital solutions attract the transport sector due to increasing material costs along with shortened delivery times and heightened competition (Hanke, 2025). Traditional artisans face an essential decision because they need to keep both cultural heritage in stride with economic requirements in contemporary business



markets.

Urban Expansion and Global Reach

The rapid spread of cities has attracted truck art into modern commercial and artistic domains that exist outside its native environment. Today's café spaces as well as fashion brands and decorative designers and advertising companies extract visual stimuli from truck art's prominent colors and winding patterns (Markusen, 2006). The larger reach of truck art through expansion delivers better commercial prospects and increased visibility for artists yet threatens their cultural attachments. Truck art which initially used to portray the working-class and rural-urban journeys now mostly serves as an embellished aesthetic product. Even though some symbols associated with truck art once had specific cultural meanings they either have faded away or modern companies alter their interpretations for their current marketing needs (Klingmann, 2023). The preservation technique enables some continuation of the style yet makes critics question if the art grows stronger or becomes weakened (Cidell et al., 2024).

Truck art undergoes an essential transition beyond its cultural roots to take on the identity of commodity products despite this phenomenon being universal. Analysis of the global market entrance of traditional arts requires assessment of profitable acquisitions and the preservation of original meaning. People face the challenge of maintaining the core storytelling function along with identity creation within truck art despite its current transformations across different contexts (Hanke, 2025).

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research approach to explore the preservation and innovation of truck art in Punjab's urban centers. Data was collected through field visits to four key cities Lahore, and Multan both selected for its distinct cultural identity and strong economic ties to the trucking industry. Approximately 40 participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure diverse perspectives, including truck artists, workshop owners, and drivers. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather in-depth insights into artistic practices, personal experiences, challenges, and the ways in which traditional art is adapting to modernization. In addition to interviews, photographs were taken at truck stands and decoration workshops to visually document styles, motifs, and emerging design trends. Secondary sources including previous academic studies, media reports, and cultural documentation were reviewed to contextualize and enrich the primary data. Thematic analysis was used to examine the data, allowing for the identification of recurring patterns, underlying concepts, and emerging themes. To ensure credibility and depth, data triangulation was applied by integrating interview findings, visual data, and literature review. Ethical considerations were carefully observed throughout the research process. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and verbal consent was obtained prior to interviews. Anonymity and confidentiality were strictly maintained.

Results and Discussion

The qualitative assessment of data revealed four main themes which demonstrate how traditional and innovative elements combine in Pakistani truck artwork



Preservation of Traditional Motifs

The culture and spiritual background of Punjab sustains its traditional truck art through all challenges brought by modern transformations. Traditional art motifs moving forward include floral arrangements paired with religious verses and peacocks carrying their sustained role as core aspects of this artistic tradition. Several artists defend the practice of motif preservation because it fulfills their mission of cultural heritage preservation.

One respondent narrated:

"The designs which we use stem from our ancestral legacy. My grandfather showed me his artwork before passing it to my father whom I watched graduating into an artist. My brush becomes a physical link which extends from my hand to their hand. Producing something beautiful also involves remembering ancestral heritage and retaining our ancestral roots."

Another participant described:

"The imagery of flowers goes beyond mere representation since they hold symbolic meanings within this context. Through its messages the pattern communicates identity alongside peaceful and beautiful attributes. All traditional designs offer deep meanings which human language generally struggles to illustrate. The floral arrangement reveals its symmetry which creates harmonious quality."

The interview responses exhibit the deep emotional relationship of people across generations with traditional motifs. Many artists consider symbol conservation to be their religious obligation because it serves both as cultural protection and community self-preservation during times of broad social evolution.



Observational research and secondary data verify that modern elements transform cultural expressions but the dedication to traditional motifs implies strong cultural continuity has been maintained. Through its function Truck art provides the transmission of cultural heritage between generations thus protecting both visual beauty and historical emotional bonds with the past.

Innovation Through Technology



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Throughout the past years truck artists in Rawalpindi and Gujranwala together with urban centers have taken up digital printing for stickers and LED illumination to fulfill changing needs from their buyers. The main purpose of technological advancements serves market relevance but traditional art techniques maintain their place to protect authenticity.

One respondent explained:

“Technology helps us keep up. Quick visualization of ideas combined with time-saving benefits is made possible by using this modern technology. We can display five potential designs to customers before beginning any brushwork.”

Another participant reflected:

“Time efficiency comes from digital work yet abstract techniques help provide depth to otherwise empty digital art. Artistic essence exists because of the touch of artists. Machines lack both the capacity to experience emotion through joy or sadness.”

Users adopt a combination of traditional artistic methods together with technological approaches in this methodology. Artists keep past techniques alongside contemporary methods to manufacture products which combine traditional values with present-day preferences.



Data from urban workshops combined with photographic evidence proves that truck art continues to transform in its present state. The efficiency of digital tools exists alongside artist preference for human involvement which they consider fundamental to artistic essence. The theme indicates truck art experiences a balancing period between historical preservation and contemporary artistic development.

Economic Constraints and Artistic Decline

The combination of economic demands strongly affects both the quantity and long-term preservation of truck art in Pakistan. People using their vehicles now tend to select inexpensive machine-produced items such as printed wraps and vinyl materials instead of supporting truck artists who create unique handmade art. Many people view this change as destructive for the cultural importance of truck art.

One respondent shared:



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“The public mainly chooses to obtain affordable quick solutions instead of sophisticated artistic products. People focus solely on price without asking the background information regarding the work. In the past community members would spend multiple days to obtain a genuine artwork yet today they demand their artwork within a single night.”

Another participant remarked:

“Traditional truck artists used to receive honor for their handiwork during previous periods. Customers would engage in conversations while they provided tea during which they observed the artwork until completion. In current times we face the reality where we work as workers instead of expressing ourselves through art.”

The devaluation of craftsmanship emerges through these stories because people prioritize economical processes over cultural heritage values. Modern manufacturing practices have eliminated many opportunities for conventional artists while artists feel personally disrespected because their artistic value has diminished.



The research involving both market dynamics and cultural globalization methodologies supports the interview findings which show economics is transforming the truck art industry. The obtained observational data demonstrates both client attitude alterations and their growing preference for economical solutions instead of artisanal truck art values.

Urbanization and Commercial Rebranding

The traditional practice of decorating trucks with art has advanced to spread throughout commercial and urban areas. The contemporary revival of truck art has extended its reach to fashion products and art gallery displays as part of its transformation for universal appeal. The expanded display of truck art creates better visibility along with fresh prospects yet its original cultural relevance suffers when taken out of its natural environment.

One respondent shared:

“Modern truck art appears on different items including bags jackets and gallery



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exhibitions for people to experience. It's exciting, yes—but also strange. The idea of someone wearing my design for a fashion show presentation was totally off my expectations.”

Another participant explained:

“The art appears disconnected from truck-based contexts when it is placed in different settings. The creators intended this artwork for freeways with its purpose serving as both moving people ahead and offering godly blessings. Now it's static, framed.”

Many artists express dual emotions about their artwork being displayed in urban area commercial spaces. People vary in their opinion about this development because some perceive it as positive progress yet others believe context removal weakens cultural significance.



Urban photographs showcase truck art on fashion items and gallery displays which serve as tangible proof of how truck art experiences commercial transformation. The observational data highlights that artists currently express rising apprehension about the art losing its core mission to give spiritual blessings while spreading joy through road travel. The theme indicates that urban visibility has sparked a dilemma regarding authenticity along with the loss of spiritual and cultural connections which the art previously represented.

Discussion

Research data demonstrates changing patterns between established and modern styles of truck art in Punjab. Through modern changes society gives less priority to traditional symbols even though these motifs continue to display meaning in how they define communities and spiritual experiences. People in various cities expressed their strong connection to traditional cultural designs such as floral patterns, religious text, and peacock motifs which transmission is passed down through generations (Ahmed, 2022). These design patterns go beyond art and preserve cultural knowledge that many people in the community retain.

A transformation between generations stands as a simultaneous phenomenon. Young artists from various artistic disciplines integrate digital software together with vinyl printing services to meet client requirements and present market-friendly projects. Artists implement a contemporary model which combines



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traditional methods with computerized efficiency while demonstrating a complicated way of cultural conservation instead of total substitution (Cidell et al., 2024). Artists must find ways to maintain their artistic principles while achieving financial stability which proved to be a fundamental theme in all recorded interviews

Financial problems remain as the most important barrier to progress. People today prefer buying less expensive mass-made visual items which has reduced the market for handmade artwork. Participants revealed their worth has decreased and worry about people losing respect for their age-old craft abilities (Abdulhay, 2023). The changing economic system endangers both artists' income and could destroy their cultural heritage over many years.

Being part of an urban setting plus being used in commercial truck decorations makes the challenges faced by truck art creators more complex to handle. The art form expands from its roots to appear in art spaces, dining establishments, fashion rings, and humanitarian aid organizations where it attracts fresh viewers while creating business prospects. Respondents showed distance from their artwork when it left its usual setting of mobile blessing and creating (Locher, 2014). The art's purpose to share community stories now changes because it enters markets for artistic or sales purposes.

This research shows truck art in Punjab is changing in various intricate ways. Truck art does not vanish or keep the same form yet exists. Modern influences create changes alongside the traditional emotional values passed on by those who practice it today. Traditional craftsmanship benefit most from policies and institutions supporting its work while allowing it to stay connected to business and technical progress.

Conclusion

The tradition of truck art in Punjab maintains a thriving state because it blends ancestral symbols with contemporary development. Artists protect their own craft against its metamorphosis but technological progress in markets, urban development and industrial advances reshape both the practice and aesthetic value of their work. Future initiatives need to develop inclusive support platforms which respect heritage preservation and innovative practices to ensure sustainable growth of this cultural form.

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