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Analysis Of Experience, Motivation, And Collaborative Models To Improve Financial Capability Towards Export Events Study on Craft Business Actors

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Abstract— Participation in international trade shows is a strategic route for creative-industry enterprises seeking access to global business-to-business markets, yet limited financial capability, export costing and pricing skills, and working capital remain major barriers. This study analyzes business actors' experiences and motivations for internationalization and formulates a collaborative model to strengthen financial capability. A qualitative case-study approach was used with triangulated evidence from craft entrepreneurs, financial institutions, Dekranas/Dekranasda, ASEPHI, curators, and mentors. The findings show that early exhibition failures were associated with inaccurate export cost structures, weak payment-term readiness, and limited production standardization. Motivations shifted from short-term turnover toward long-term business sustainability, global market validation, lower customer-acquisition costs, and access to working capital through B2B down payments. Financial capability improved through sinking funds, partner subsidies, digital bookkeeping, and tiered pricing. Horizontal collaboration, institutional incubation, and financing partnerships reduced entry costs and strengthened export readiness before, during, and after exhibitions.

Keywords— Experience; motivation; financial capability; collaborative model; craft SMEs

I. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's craft industry combines economic activity with the preservation of local cultural identity. Handmade production, traditional motifs, local materials, and intergenerational skills give craft products a distinctive value proposition, but they also create constraints in standardization, production scale, quality consistency, and delivery. Collaboration among government agencies, financial institutions, industry actors, creative communities, and associations is therefore important for building an ecosystem in which cultural preservation and global market access can reinforce each other.

International exhibitions are a strategic mechanism for introducing craft products to foreign buyers, distributors, and investors. They allow SMEs to benchmark quality, design, packaging, pricing, and service against international expectations while developing networks that may lead to B2B orders. Prior research shows that exhibitions can support sales and market introduction (Fitriani et al., 2021), networking capability and experiential learning contribute to international performance (Karami & Tang, 2019), and institutional and stakeholder networks strengthen SME internationalization (Torkkeli et al., 2019; Journeault et al., 2021). However, exhibition participation is financially demanding because firms must fund booth rental, travel, logistics, product preparation, packaging, and follow-up production before export revenue is realized.

The internationalization literature emphasizes internal and external motives, networks, learning, and access to resources (Prasanthi & Bhaskara Rao, 2019; Deng, 2009). Digital export capabilities may support cross-border growth (Elia et al., 2021), while productivity and learning-by-exporting can strengthen later export performance (Gkypali et al., 2021). For craft firms, these capabilities are intertwined with cultural specificity. Traditional arts and crafts survive when firms can adapt products to market needs without eroding local meaning and authenticity (Huang & Anderson, 2019; Sasaki et al., 2021). This requires dynamic capabilities, innovation, stakeholder support, and access to financing (Permatasari et al., 2023; Zarrouk et al., 2020).

Financial capability is central to this process. SMEs frequently rely on internal funds, family resources, bank credit, trade credit, and government support (Kent Baker et al., 2020). Digital transformation can reduce information asymmetry and improve access to finance (Zhang et al., 2023), fintech can broaden financial inclusion (Nugraha et al., 2022), and better financial literacy supports more effective financial decisions (Yao & Liu, 2023). Yet access to finance alone is insufficient if firms cannot calculate export costs, distinguish retail and wholesale margins, manage the cash conversion cycle, prepare reliable financial records, and coordinate production for large orders.

Despite the relevance of these issues, limited research jointly examines experience, motivation, financial capability, and collaborative models in the context of international craft exhibitions. This study therefore investigates how exhibition experiences shape business learning and cultural preservation, what financial and strategic motivations underlie participation, how business actors strengthen financial capability, and how collaborative arrangements involving financial institutions, government, associations, and peer firms support export readiness. The analysis is informed by a resource-based perspective, experiential learning, and an ecosystem view of collaboration.

II. METHOD

This study used a qualitative case-study approach within an interpretive paradigm and was conducted during 2023–2025 in Indonesian regions with craft SME centers, collaboration programs between financial institutions and local governments, and

export-oriented exhibition activities. The design was selected to capture the experiences, motivations, capabilities, and inter-institutional relationships that shape craft SMEs' participation in international exhibitions, particularly INACRAFT.

Informants were selected purposively and expanded through snowball sampling. The study involved 20 informants representing craft business actors, banking institutions, Dekranas/Dekranasda, the Association of Handicraft Exporters and Entrepreneurs (ASEPHI), and SME curators or mentors. Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews, participatory and non-participatory observation, financial-document review, and policy/program documentation. The research focused on business motivation, managerial and financial capability, perceived financial performance, and forms of collaboration such as financing, training, market facilitation, curation, and mentoring.

Data analysis followed the interactive logic of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification were conducted iteratively from the collection stage. Validity was strengthened through source triangulation across entrepreneurs, government, associations, and financial institutions; method triangulation across interviews, observation, and documentation; and comparison with prior research. Informant approval was obtained, identities were protected, and the data were used for academic purposes.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Craft Business Realities and Cultural Preservation

The first finding concerns the tension between handmade uniqueness and export standardization. Craft products derive value from manual production, philosophical motifs, local materials, and inherited skills, yet international buyers often require consistent dimensions, smooth finishing, safety, traceability, and reliable delivery. The field evidence indicates that the main challenge is not simply product quality, but the need to translate cultural authenticity into specifications that can be accepted by global buyers without eliminating the craft's identity. Functional adaptation emerged as a practical solution: traditional fabrics, carvings, and motifs were redesigned into contemporary apparel, accessories, and interior products while the underlying technique was maintained.

A second challenge is the regeneration of artisans. Production is often dominated by older craftspeople, while younger people perceive craft work as labor-intensive and financially uncertain. International exhibitions can partly reverse this perception by demonstrating that authentic products receive recognition from collectors and foreign buyers. Younger family members increasingly contribute through branding, design, negotiation, digital marketing, and business administration, while senior artisans maintain production knowledge. Exhibition participation also increases awareness of intellectual-property protection because wider product exposure raises the risk of imitation.

TABLE I. SUPPORT FOR CRAFT PRESERVATION AND MARKET ACCESS

Supporter	Role	Observed Result
Regional Office / Dekranasda	Local curation and exhibition-access subsidies	Acts as a bridge enabling small-capital artisans to enter national and international showcases.
State-Owned Enterprises / Financial Partners	Booth financing, training, scale-up, and financial mentoring	Reduces exhibition barriers and strengthens packaging, financial management, and export preparation.

B. Experience and Motivation for International Exhibitions

INACRAFT functioned as an experiential learning environment. Direct criticism from international buyers generated what informants described as a cognitive shock: aesthetic quality alone was insufficient when product edges, finishing, thickness, safety, packaging, or consistency did not meet buyer expectations. Business actors responded by revising workshop SOPs, strengthening quality control, testing materials, and adjusting product design. Repeated participation transformed rejection into learning, and in some cases later enabled contracts with buyers who had previously declined orders.

The exhibition also created cultural validation and peer learning. Artisans reported that buyer appreciation for the story, production process, and cultural meaning of products increased pride and commitment to preserve traditional techniques. At the same time, interactions with neighboring exhibitors produced horizontal knowledge exchange on natural dyes, logistics, export procedures, and production capacity. These relationships sometimes developed into informal consortia that could jointly fulfill larger orders. The pattern is consistent with experiential learning: concrete experience is followed by reflection, conceptualization, and experimentation.

TABLE II. EXHIBITION EXPERIENCE AS A BUSINESS-TRANSFORMATION CYCLE

Experience Stage	Process	Business Preservation / Export Output
Concrete Experience	Curation, price offers, product critique, and collector appreciation	Direct exposure to market preferences and international standards.
Reflective Observation	Comparing booths, analyzing buyer rejection, and peer discussion	Identification of weaknesses in SOPs, design, quality, and market communication.
Abstract Conceptualization	Designing adaptive products, precision standards, and IPR protection	A strategy balancing cultural authenticity and commercial innovation.
Active Experimentation	Testing dyes, finishing, design, packaging, and new routines	Improved business capability, product durability, and export readiness.

Financial motivation also changed with experience. Rather than treating exhibitions only as promotional cost centers, more financially capable entrepreneurs viewed them as instruments for liquidity, customer acquisition, and working-capital formation. Retail sales during the event were used to accelerate cash inflows and recover sunk exhibition costs, while B2B orders were valued for their longer-term profitability. Several informants targeted break-even within the first two or three exhibition days and treated later sales as contribution to profit and working capital. Large buyers who paid deposits also reduced the need for interest-bearing bank financing during production. In this sense, exhibition participation was evaluated through customer-acquisition cost, break-even timing, cash conversion, and the probability of securing repeat or export contracts.

C. Strategies for Strengthening Financial Capability

Four practical financial strategies were consistently identified. First, businesses created a dedicated exhibition sinking fund by setting aside a portion of monthly profit for several months before the event, preventing booth and production costs from disrupting routine cash flow. Second, firms actively used partner subsidies and fostered-business programs from government agencies, state-owned enterprises, banks, and other institutions to reduce the initial cost of participation. Third, digital bookkeeping

and cloud-based accounting increased financial transparency and made it easier to provide statements when applying for working-capital credit after receiving purchase orders. Fourth, firms used tiered pricing by separating domestic retail prices from wholesale or export prices such as FOB, allowing retail margins to absorb exhibition overhead while larger B2B orders were priced for volume and long-term relationships.

TABLE III. FINANCIAL-CAPABILITY STRATEGIES FOR EXHIBITION READINESS

Financial Strategy	Operational Action	Impact on Business
Exhibition sinking fund	Set aside approximately 10-15% of monthly profit for several months	Protects routine production cash flow and reduces sudden liquidity pressure.
Partner / CSR subsidy	Pass curation to obtain booth or program support	Reduces exhibition entry costs and allows cash to be redirected to production capacity.
Digital financial reporting	Use POS, cloud accounting, and documented cash flow	Improves credit verification and access to working capital for confirmed orders.
Tiered pricing	Differentiate retail, wholesale, and export price structures	Helps recover exhibition overhead while protecting margins on B2B orders.

D. Collaboration and Partnership Model

The collaboration findings show that effective support depends less on one-time financial assistance than on a system of knowledge transfer and risk sharing. Three complementary arrangements were identified. Horizontal partnerships allow two or more craft firms to share booth costs, staffing, display space, and sometimes production capacity. Vertical fostered partnerships involve banks, state-owned enterprises, private companies, or government programs that curate SMEs and provide exhibition space, digital-transaction support, training, or export mentoring. Regional institutional partnerships connect artisans with Dekranasda, ASEPHI, local governments, and curators who facilitate pavilions, standardization, documentation, and buyer access.

Triangulated evidence indicates that these arrangements decompress financial risk by converting individual entry costs into shared or subsidized costs, while also strengthening production discipline, branding, packaging, B2B negotiation, and digital transactions. The model is therefore closer to a Penta-Helix ecosystem than to isolated sponsorship. Support is most effective when it begins several months before the exhibition, continues through curation and market engagement, and extends to post-exhibition follow-up, working capital, and order execution. This is consistent with the literature emphasizing stakeholder collaboration, open innovation, and institutional networks as drivers of SME capability and sustainability (Journeault et al., 2021; Raya et al., 2021; Dvorský et al., 2023).

Field evidence also clarifies the different value created by each partnership form. In horizontal joint-booth arrangements, firms share booth rental, staffing, display, and sometimes production responsibilities, reducing the burden that would otherwise be borne by one small enterprise. The source interviews report that this arrangement can substantially reduce individual exhibition costs while creating visual synergy and cross-selling opportunities. Vertical fostered partnerships add a stronger capability-building element: sponsors do not merely pay for space, but use curation to assess production capacity, quality control, digital-payment readiness, and the ability to serve foreign buyers. Regional partnerships perform a complementary role by matching traditional artisans with curators or younger designers and by facilitating product standardization, export documentation, and pavilion access.

The collaboration model becomes particularly important after an exhibition. A successful booth may generate a purchase order that exceeds the capacity of one artisan, creates an immediate need for raw materials, or requires financing before final buyer payment. In such cases, peer clusters can distribute production, financial institutions can provide working capital based on purchase orders and financial records, and associations can support export procedures. The source findings therefore distinguish between exhibition visibility and export conversion: contacts and buyer interest create value only when the business ecosystem can convert them into contracts, production, delivery, and repeat orders.

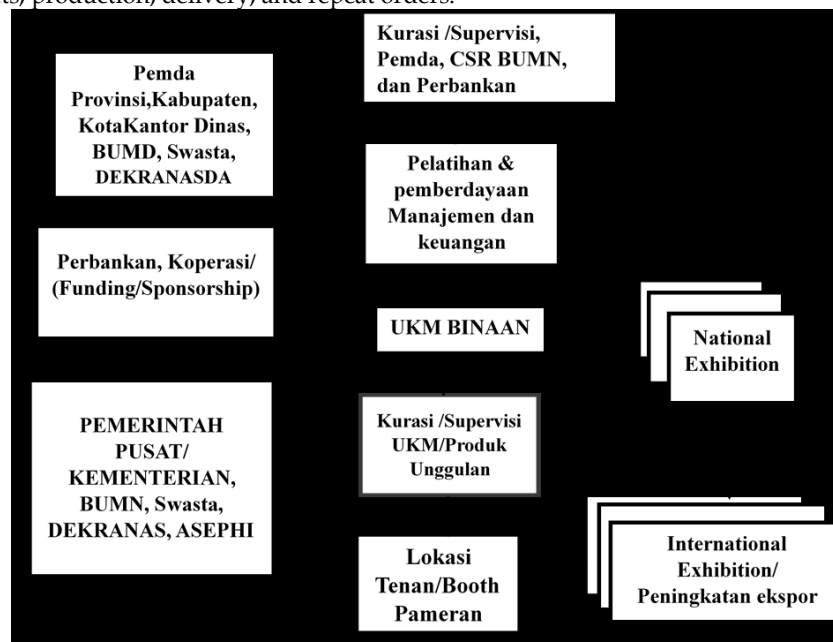


Figure 1. Collaboration Model for the Creative Business Export Journey (Source: Authors)

TABLE IV. COLLABORATION PATTERNS AND EXPORT-READINESS EFFECTS

Collaboration Pattern	Mechanism	Main Effect
Horizontal joint booth / co-branding	Two to four craft firms share booth cost, staffing, display, networks, and in some cases production capacity.	Reduces individual entry costs and supports cross-selling, peer learning, and collective order

		fulfillment.
Fostered vertical partnership	Banks, state-owned enterprises, private sponsors, or government programs curate SMEs and provide space, finance, training, and export mentoring.	Transforms sponsorship into export-readiness incubation and lowers financial exposure.
Regional institutional partnership	Dekranasda, ASEPHI, and local government facilitate pavilions, curation, standards, documents, and buyer access.	Improves standardization, market access, design adaptation, and institutional legitimacy.

These findings indicate that the most resilient model is not a one-off subsidy but a staged collaboration pathway. Pre-exhibition support should address curation, product quality, digital finance, cost structure, and export literacy; exhibition support should focus on market access, transactions, and networking; and post-exhibition support should address working capital, production scaling, documentation, buyer follow-up, and contract execution. The value of collaboration therefore lies in combining risk sharing with capability development so that exhibition participation can be converted into sustainable export activity.

The financial logic of the model is equally important. Craft SMEs that independently bear exhibition costs face high entry barriers and may weaken routine production cash flow before any buyer contract is obtained. Cost-sharing and subsidized access reduce this exposure, but long-term resilience still depends on the firm's own financial discipline. Sinking funds, separation of personal and business finances, digital bookkeeping, transparent cost calculations, and differentiated retail/wholesale/export pricing improve the firm's ability to evaluate whether an exhibition is financially viable and to respond quickly when an order is received. Access to external finance becomes more useful when it complements, rather than substitutes for, these internal capabilities.

The findings also suggest that sustainability and cultural identity should be incorporated into export preparation. International buyers increasingly ask about material origins, environmental practices, production stories, and the social meaning of craft products. The source interviews show that artisans can respond through traceability, environmentally responsible materials, intellectual-property protection, and narrative-based marketing. These measures strengthen differentiation while preserving the cultural knowledge embedded in production. In this sense, financial capability, export capability, and cultural preservation are not separate outcomes; they are mutually reinforcing elements of a viable international craft-business model.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that Indonesian craft SMEs face a distinctive internationalization challenge: the same handmade characteristics that create cultural and market value also make standardization, scaling, and export compliance difficult. International exhibitions provide a high-intensity learning environment in which entrepreneurs obtain real-time feedback on product quality, design, safety, pricing, packaging, and buyer expectations. These experiences can strengthen cultural preservation when artisans adapt product functions and management practices without abandoning the techniques, narratives, and local identity that differentiate their products.

Business motivation also becomes more financially strategic with experience. Participation is not limited to short-term retail turnover; entrepreneurs increasingly use exhibitions to accelerate liquidity, lower customer-acquisition costs, validate products, obtain B2B deposits, build distributor relationships, and create a pipeline of export orders. Financial capability is strengthened through disciplined sinking funds, partner or CSR subsidies, digital bookkeeping, cost and margin control, tiered pricing, and access to working-capital facilities. These practices are important because post-exhibition success depends on the ability to execute large purchase orders, not merely to attract visitors or collect contacts.

An effective collaboration model is therefore integrated and long-term. Horizontal co-booth and resource-sharing arrangements reduce costs and production constraints; financial institutions and state-owned enterprises provide financing, curation, and business support; local and central government and associations facilitate legality, exhibition access, export literacy, and intellectual-property protection; and academics or designers can help translate cultural assets into products aligned with global sustainability and design trends. Rather than one-off accommodation support, the preferred model is a 6–12 month incubation pathway before the exhibition, followed by structured post-event conversion of buyer contacts into sustainable contracts.

For business actors, the practical priorities are to maintain separate business finances, prepare detailed exhibition budgets, calculate break-even and export price structures, establish working-capital reserves, and evaluate customer-acquisition and post-event conversion. For supporting institutions, assistance should combine financing with product curation, digital financial management, export documentation, market mentoring, and follow-up order execution. Such an ecosystem can reduce entry barriers while strengthening the financial resilience and cultural sustainability of craft enterprises seeking international markets.

A. Practical Recommendations

Craft entrepreneurs should treat exhibitions as part of a longer export pathway rather than as the end of a promotion program. Before participation, they should prepare a conservative budget, a break-even target, a detailed matrix of domestic retail, wholesale, and export prices, and sufficient cash reserves to absorb delayed B2B payments. A dedicated sinking fund can protect daily operations, while digital bookkeeping and clear separation between personal and business finances improve creditworthiness. After the event, firms should evaluate cash flow, customer-acquisition cost, buyer conversion, and the working-capital implications of purchase orders before deciding on subsequent participation.

Supporting institutions should move from short-term booth sponsorship toward incubation that begins six to twelve months before the event. The program should combine product curation, export-standard quality control, digital financial management, packaging, business communication, intellectual-property protection, export documentation, and post-event buyer follow-up. Cost-sharing through cooperatives, regional clusters, or co-booth concepts is particularly relevant for micro firms. Collaboration with banks and fintech providers should focus on financing confirmed production needs, while collaboration with academics and designers should help artisans translate traditional knowledge into contemporary products without removing cultural authenticity.

Finally, market development should emphasize storytelling and traceability, environmentally responsible materials, co-creation with contemporary designers, and regeneration of craft skills through internships or mentoring with experienced artisans. Government and association support for trademarks and intellectual-property rights is important because wider exhibition exposure also increases imitation risk. The long-term objective is an ecosystem that allows craft SMEs to preserve cultural value, improve financial discipline, execute larger orders, and build sustainable relationships with international buyers.

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