

MALAYSIAN CRAFTPRENEURS OPERATIONS: ASSESSING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SUSTAINABLE ENTREPRENEURSHIP INVOLVING ENTREPRENEURIAL MOTIVATION, COMMITMENT AND GROWTH PERFORMANCE

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Abstract: This paper explores the emergence and possibilities of sustainable entrepreneurship as a new field of knowledge in the Malaysian craft industry. Fundamentally, the paper focusses on assessing the relationship between entrepreneurial motivation in sustainable entrepreneurship involving business commitment and growth. This research used a path-model survey to acquire the causal relationships and multiple regressions to verify the R-square with data derived from 380 craftpreneurs in Kraftangan Malaysia. The results found that the first layer of the path-diagram indicated 37.8% of variance in growth performance was determined by factors involving entrepreneurial motivation and business commitment, and 43.3% of business commitment was determined by factors involving entrepreneurial motivation. The findings imply that business commitment emerges as a prominent intermediary and moderating variable in discerning the relationship between sustainable entrepreneurial motivation and growth performance. Finally, the results also imply that entrepreneurial motivation is a crucial factor in developing sustainable entrepreneurship, involving business commitment and growth.

KEYWORDS: Entrepreneurial motivation, business commitment, growth performance, sustainable entrepreneurship, craft industry

Introduction

Currently, sustainable entrepreneurship research has emerged from the larger body of business research in response to questions affecting change in social business. According to Boxer (2005), sustainable entrepreneurship is a spin-off concept from sustainable development that covers many new evolutions of business, such as: corporate social responsibility, stakeholder participation, environmental improvement, and also entrepreneurial motivation. Since sustainable entrepreneurship is essential in the Malaysia craft industry, entrepreneurial motivation is considered as an important entrepreneurial trait necessary for business commitment and growth. The Malaysia Handicraft Development Corporation also known as Kraftangan Malaysia

is a government agency responsible for the professional development of the craftpreneurs, in term of: entrepreneurial traits, craftsmanship skills, business knowledge, and sustainable social conditions (Kraftangan Malaysia, 2008). Cohen (2006) mentions that the concept of sustainable entrepreneurship is dissimilar from the study of conventional entrepreneurship, which tends to consider any entrepreneurial activities that involve a profit motive as lying within their research domain. However, the sustainable entrepreneurship is more concerned with additional goals of promoting sustainable living and environmental improvement (Basu *et al.*, 2009).

Sustainable entrepreneurship is an approach that is more often applied to large, often industrial companies whereas the objective of this study is to measure the relationship

between sustainable entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial motivation, involving business commitment and growth among craftpreneurs in Kraftangan Malaysia. Fundamentally, the significance of entrepreneurial motivation and business commitment has been emphasised by many researchers in their studies, such as: McClelland, 1961; Littunen, 2000; Rotter, 1966; Hansemark, 1998; and Gartner, 1990. Most of the previous studies claim that individuals with a lower entrepreneurial motivation would develop a significantly lower propensity to commit in their business. Therefore, one research question might ask: "Should entrepreneurial motivation be considered as an entrepreneurial trait that leads to business commitment and growth?"

Malaysia Craft Industry

Historically, the development of the Malaysian craft industry has been related to the study of Malay social history and economy in terms of an art-based industry (Wan Hashim Wan Teh, 1996). Wan Abdul Kadir Wan Yusof (1982) also argues that the process of diffusions and assimilations in Malaysian culture previously has highly affected the utilisation of creativity and innovation in craft products. Meanwhile, Mohd. Taib Osman (1983) and Wan Hashim Wan Teh (1996) added that the activity of Malaysian craft-tradition began before independence. In fact, the development of the craft industry in Malaysia was rather slow in the 1970s to 1980s. This was because the craft industry had been regarded as a traditional, village, or cottage industry which involved the activities of the craftsmen at home. They were also closely associated with intensive labour, family business, manual operations, and on a small business scale (Wan Hashim Wan Teh, 1996). However, since the 1990s, the craft industry has grown impressively and modern industrial practice has been adopted and practiced in the Malaysian craft industry (Kraftangan Malaysia, 2008). Unfortunately, the growth of the modern craft industry has been seen as a problem to the craftpreneurs in a traditional craft industry (Hatta Azad Khan, 2006). The traditional craftpreneurs in micro

business have to compete with the modern products available in the markets. These modern products are believed to have higher quality and price as compared to the traditional craft products. In Malaysia, the market for the craft products has been remarkable as there has been a distinct revival of interest and demand for those products. The batik industry has been seen to enjoy a revival as new batik products with traditional decorative motives could fit the urban lifestyle (Ismail Mat Amin, 2006).

Consequently, most craftpreneurs in micro and small business are not doing well and they do not have any strategic vision to upgrade their business and to compete with other modern craft products as they are also not ready to take risks in their business (Wan Hashim Wan Teh, 1996). McClelland (1961) has rightly concluded that individuals with a lower entrepreneurial motivation would have a lower propensity to take risks. In contrast, individuals who set their own vision in a business will have a sense of need for achievement and they are willing to take any risks in their business (Casson, 1982). According to Miller (1998) and Stoner (1985), a good enterprise has its own goal-setting in order to develop business strategies. However, most Malaysian craftpreneurs do not really possess entrepreneurial personality and business strategies, such as: self-confidence, the ability to take calculated risks, the need to research about their environment, and desire to get feedbacks about their performance (Ma'rof Redzuan *et al.*, 2010). In addition, those craftpreneurs who have strong entrepreneurial motivation and achievement in their vision, often find ways to sustain their entrepreneurial personality and succeed in their business within the craft industry (Wan Hashim Wan Teh, 1996; Hatta Azad Khan, 2006).

Malaysia's next phase of development involves social-economic rather than capitalist-economic development, and thus, entrepreneurial ability is an essential ingredient as an individual changes agent, in order to have the ability of clarifying the strengths and opportunities of a business (Ab Aziz Yusof, 2009). According

to Hansemark (1998), the discipline of entrepreneurship also became the subject of an increasing amount of research and theoretical development in a context of constructing the grounded knowledge in economic business. Meanwhile, Dean (2007) has added that the potential contribution of sustainable entrepreneurship could extend into improving the general sustainable development of business and environment. Fundamentally, sustainable entrepreneurship can be defined as the continuing commitment by businesses to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce, their families, the local and global community as well as future generations (Cohen, 2006). Meanwhile, Basu *et al.*, (2009) also argued that the term of sustainable entrepreneurship is the continuing commitment of business to behave in an ethical way and contribute toward economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce, their families, and the local and global community, as well as future generations.

In addition, the field of entrepreneurship has been approached from many perspectives and by many disciplines to expand the conceptual and theoretical sustainability entrepreneurship. According to McClelland (1961), the concept of entrepreneurial motivation is part of an entrepreneurial personality, which is significantly associated in sustaining the development of business commitment, such as: high achieving individuals in self-confidence, ability to take calculated risks, the need to research their environment and the desire for feedback about their performance. Furthermore, Littunen (2000) argued that individuals who have a strong entrepreneurial motivation are among those who want to solve problems themselves, looking for improvement, set targets and strive for those targets through their own efforts. In terms of growth performance, the measurement of the growth of an emerging small businesses is a complex study, with no generally-accepted criteria (Naman *et al.*, 1993). A variety of measurements have been utilised to evaluate the criteria of small-growth performance, such as:

sales volume, profit levels, number of employees, number of customers and increases in market share (Altinay *et al.*, 2008). However, Altinay *et al.*, (2008) have added that many external factors, which are influenced by the criteria in a growth performance, such as: culture, education, sojourning orientation, communication, and ethnic labour.

In recent years, the study of entrepreneurial motivation toward the sustainable entrepreneurship involving business commitment and growth has become crucial in the United Kingdom and the United States in reducing unemployment during an economic recession (Dobbs *et al.*, 2007). Similarly, in other countries sustainable entrepreneurship was used as an application to overhaul an economic downturn. Cohen (2006) also agrees with this statement and postulates that there is a widespread recognition that sustainable entrepreneurship is the engine that drives the economy of most nations.

Instead of entrepreneurial motivation, business commitment has also become a more commonly-used measure of entrepreneurial personality towards business performance. Basically, the term commitment in a business management has been defined as the relative strength of an individual's identification with an involvement in a particular organisation (Swales, 2004). Given the importance of entrepreneurial commitment, Lamsa *et al.*, (2000) investigated the relationship of entrepreneurial personality in entrepreneurial motivation involving business commitment. The study indicated that entrepreneurial achievement was a significant factor in developing entrepreneurs to be more committed in their business. Consequently, Gurol and Atsan (2006) have developed the concept of business commitment in their study which highlighted the relationship to business growth. The study also indicated that business growth is highly influenced by business commitment.

Hypothesis

Based on discussion of sustainable entrepreneurship in achievement motivation and the

Table 1: The variables and indicators in the questionnaire.

Variables	Items in a Questionnaire	Number of Items	Citation
Sustainable improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To increase the business performance. To overcome our weaknesses. Fully adopt our strength into a business. 	3	Littunen, 2000
Sustainable target setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To set a vision and mission. To make sure the objective of every units achieve the target. To identify our strength before setting a strategy. 	3	McClelland, 1961
Sustainability despite challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capable to face a business challenging. Capable to reduce business challenging. Maturity becomes confidence to face business challenges. 	3	Rotter, 1966
Sustainable problem solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Willing to face any problem. I will solve the problem independently. I will not depend on anybody. I will collect information before solving the problem. Problem does not become a barrier in a business. 	4	McClelland, 1961
Business commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Committed to develop business strategic Committed to study the business environment Committed to build business networking Committed to study the market 	5	Allen and Meyer (1990)
Business growth/Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achieved the business plan Growth in product selling Increasing in business profit Expanded the market share 	5	Altinay et al, 2008; Naman et al, 1993

literature of business commitment and growth, three major hypotheses has been developed in this research. There are:

Hypothesis 1:

There is a significant relationship between sustainable entrepreneurship involving entrepreneurial motivation (e.g. sustainable improvement, target setting, problem solving, and despite any challenges) and business commitment.

Hypothesis 2:

There is a significant relationship between sustainable entrepreneurship in entrepreneurial motivation achievement (e.g. sustainable improvement, target setting, problem solving, and despite any challenges) and growth performance.

Hypothesis 3:

There is a significant relationship between business commitment and growth performance.

Methodology

In an effort to assess the sustainable entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial motivation involving business commitment and growth performance, a survey method was adopted to collect primary data directly from the respondents. Therefore, a questionnaire method had been chosen as a medium in this survey to collect data through face-to face interviews and through the mail. A researcher designed the questionnaire, which had two sections. The first section of the questionnaire included the items of an entrepreneurial profile. Meanwhile, the second section of the questionnaire included variables to be measured. All the items in the second part used the Likert scale as the measurement of perceptions. Table 1 shows the variables and items that were used in the questionnaire.

Table 2: The Population and sample of study.

Zone of Operation	Populations		Sample	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
West-Coast Malaysia	136	10.0	31	8.2
East-Coast Malaysia	297	22.2	80	21.1
East Malaysia	439	32.6	112	29.7
North-Peninsular Malaysia	447	33.2	123	32.4
South-Peninsular Malaysia	28	2.0	33	8.7
Total	1347	100	380	100

According to the statistic produced by Kraftangan Malaysia (2008), there are 1,347 entrepreneurs from the whole of Malaysia are registered. In order to give an equal chance to all of populations in Kraftangan Malaysia, the researcher has made a decision to use a *Simple Random Sampling* to study the perceptions of respondents toward the relationship between entrepreneurial motivation, business commitment, and growth performance. According to Sekaran (2005), there are 302 respondents needed to represent a 1,400 population. However, this study selected 380 samples to be representative of the total number of population which involves 1,347 from five zones of operations. There are: North Peninsular-Malaysia, East-Coast Malaysia, West-Coast Malaysia and South Peninsular-Malaysia and East Malaysia. Table 2 shows the numbers of population and sample that was broken down into zones of operation.

Data Analysis

Fundamentally, the data was entered and analysed with the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software program (version 16.0). Fundamentally, this study used path-analysis to measure the interrelationship between sustainable entrepreneurial motivation (independent variable), business commitment (intermediary variable), and growth performance (dependent variable). As part of this study to identify the actual path-model in a significance relationship between variables, multiple regressions were used to test the hypothesis 1, 2, and 3. However, a descriptive analysis on entrepreneurial profile

Table 3: Reliability results.

Section	Variable	Number of Cases	Number of Items	Reliability Coefficients ALPHA
Sustainable improvement	Independent	380	3	.685
Sustainability despite challenges	Independent	380	3	.698
Sustainable target setting	Independent	380	3	.686
Sustainable problem solving	Independent	380	4	.717
Business commitment	Intermediary	380	5	.811
Growth performance	Dependent	380	5	.811

was first conducted before inferential analysis in order to know the frequency and percentage of items in demographic and business profiles.

Reliability

As well as to study the consistency and stability of the questionnaire, reliability becomes important in this study. The first run of the test which was administered to 380 respondents, yielded the cronbach alpha which was applied to several variables in this study. It indicated that most of the variables that were investigated in this study were found to be highly reliable as illustrated in Table 3.

Entrepreneurial Profile

The second analysis conducted in this research is to identify the description of entrepreneurial profiles among craftpreneurs who are already identified as samples in this research. The total number of respondents is 380 and the number of female entrepreneurs is slightly higher than male. There are 193 female respondents who represent Kraftangan Malaysia, equivalent to 50.8%, as compared to the number of male respondents that make 187 of the creative entrepreneurs and equivalent to 49.2%. By far, the majority of craftpreneurs in Kraftangan Malaysia are Malays, which contributed to the amount of 320 (84.2%) of the total number of respondents. Then, it is followed by other races that contributed about 60 respondents which is equivalent to 15.8%. In terms of education, the bulk of respondents have at least completed secondary school education, which comprises

Table 4: Frequency and Percentage of Entrepreneurial Profiles.

Items	Frequency and Percentage	Items	Frequency and Percentage
Gender		Race	
Male	187 (49.2%)	Malay	320 (84.2%)
Female	193 (50.8%)	Non-Malay	60 (15.8%)
Education		Zones of Operations	
School	240 (63.2%)	North Peninsular-Malaysia	123 (32.4%)
Certificate	82 (21.6%)	East Malaysia	112 (29.7%)
Diploma	44 (11.6%)	East-Coast Malaysia	80 (21.1%)
Degree	12 (3.2%)	West-Coast Malaysia	31 (8.2%)
		South Peninsular-Malaysia	33 (8.7%)
Types of Products		Market	
Batik	102 (26.8%)	District market	97 (25.5%)
Ceramics	83 (21.8%)	State market	160 (42.1%)
Forest-based Sector	80 (21.1%)	National market	98 (25.8%)
Crystal	72 (18.9%)	International market	20 (5.3%)
Wood Carving	26 (6.8%)		
Songket	6 (1.6%)		
Leather	4 (1.1%)		
Pewter	3 (0.8%)		
Silver	1 (0.3%)		

240 (63.2%) of the total respondents. There are 82 respondents (21.6%) that have certificates in a variety of fields followed by those who have a diploma that is equivalent to 44 (11.6%). There are only 12 respondents in the degree levels or 3.2% in Kraftangan Malaysia. However, no entrepreneurs possess a master or PhD in this sampling. In terms of zones of operation, the highest number of respondents are North Peninsular-Malaysia which contributes towards the frequency of 123 respondents (32.4%), and it is followed by East Malaysia which comprises 113 respondents (29.7%). East-Coast Malaysia represents 80 respondents (21.1%); West-Coast Malaysia 31 respondents (8.2%); and South Peninsular-Malaysia 33 respondents (8.7%).

According to Kraftangan Malaysia (2008), this agency has already divided the craft products which are produced by Malaysian craftpreneurs into nine types of products. They include: batek, ceramics, wood carving, forest-based fibre, pewter, songket, silver, crystal, and leather. Nevertheless, from a total number of respondents, the number of craftpreneurs in the batik sector has become as the premier in this industry which has contributed 102 respondents (26.8%), and it is followed by ceramics with 83 respondents (21.8%), 80 respondents (21.1%) in the forest-based fibre sector, 72 respondents (18.9%) in the crystal sector, 26 craftpreneurs (6.8%) in

the wood-carving sector, 6 respondents (1.6%) in the songket sector, 4 craftpreneurs (1.1%) in the leather sector, 3 respondents (0.8%) in the craft-pewter sector, and 1 respondent (0.3%) in the silver-making sector. However, most of the craftpreneurs in Kraftangan Malaysia are involved in the state market level which has 160 entrepreneurs and is equivalent to 42.1%. It is followed by 98 respondents in the national market level (25.8%), 97 respondents in a district market level (25.5%), and only 20 respondents in an international market level (5.3%). Table 4 explains the frequency and percentage of entrepreneurial profiles.

Path-Analysis

Path-analysis consolidates the relationship between independent variables, an intermediary variable, and a dependent variable. Therefore, this paper analyses the interrelation between three variables. There are: sustainable entrepreneurship in entrepreneurial motivation (independent), business commitment (intermediary) and growth performance (dependent). Fundamentally, the analysis of interrelation in a path-model is divided into two layers of study. The first layer discusses the relationship between the independent variables (e.g. sustainable improvement, sustainability despite challenges, sustainable

Table 5: The significance value of 1st. layer

Model	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	1.014	.210		4.832	.000
Sustainable improvement	-.015	.059	-.014	-.254	.800
Sustainability despite challenges	.249	.057	.249	4.330	.000
Sustainable target setting	.273	.056	.269	4.864	.000
Sustainable problem solving	.244	.053	.254	4.587	.000

Note: Dependent Variable: Business Commitment

Table 6: The significance value of 2nd. Layer

Model	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	.950	.271		3.508	.001
Sustainable improvement	-.189	.074	-.144	-2.562	.011
Sustainability despite challenges	.168	.074	.141	2.283	.023
Sustainable target setting	-.026	.072	-.021	-.356	.722
Sustainable problem solving	.111	.068	.097	1.630	.104
Business Commitment	.648	.065	.541	10.028	.000

Note: Dependent Variable: Growth performance

targets, sustainable problem solving) and the intermediary variable (business commitment). Meanwhile, the second layer will discuss the relationship between the independent and intermediary variables and the dependent variable (growth performance).

a) First Layer of Path-Model

The R-square value of this layer shows that the results is a moderate level ($R^2=0.433$) and is considered as a success in explaining variation in the state of sustainable entrepreneurial motivation and business commitment. Table 5 explains that three out of four variables involve a significant relationship with business commitment. There are: sustainable despite challenges ($B=0.249$, $p=0.000$), sustainable target setting ($B=0.269$, $p=0.000$), and sustainable problem solving

($B=0.254$, $p=0.000$). Hence, these significance factors will extend into the second run of a path-analysis.

b) Second Layer of Path-Model

Meanwhile, the result of second layer show that R square value is slightly lower than first layer ($R^2=0.383$). In fact, this layer has shown that three out of five variables are significance. They are: sustainable improvement ($B=-.144$, $p=0.011$), sustainability despite challenges ($B=0.141$, $p=0.023$), and business commitment ($B=0.541$, $p=0.000$), as shown in table 6. Therefore, there are two variables of independent and the intermediary variable included in the second run of analysis.

Furthermore, Figure 1 shows the results of the relationships between the independent,

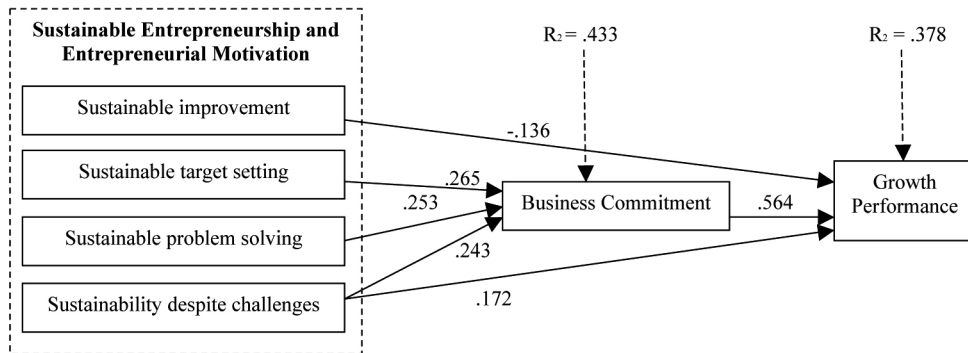


Figure 1: The Path-model for entrepreneurial motivation, business commitment, and growth performance.

intermediary and dependent variables. The results of the second run of multiple regression attempts to illustrate that three of the independent variables have significant association with business commitment. There are: sustainable target setting ($B=.265, p=.000$), sustainable problem solving ($B=.253, p=.000$), sustainability despite challenges ($B=.243, p=.000$). Only two of independent variables have significant association with growth performance. There are: sustainable improvement ($B=.136, p=.011$), and sustainability despite challenges ($B=.172, p=.023$). Lastly, the result of association between business commitment and growth performance show that beta value is .564 and significance value is .000.

Discussion and Implication

Sustainable entrepreneurship in the craft industry is a new government policy to encourage craftpreneurs to be more entrepreneurial and adopt a higher commitment in their activities. The new planning urges the Malaysian craftpreneurs to be more sustainable in business orientation in order to be more competitive when contending with international competitors in the home-grown market (Rais Yatim, 2006). As mentioned by Hatta Azad Khan (2006), a good infrastructure in industry becomes useless if we cannot produce good humans in business management who are actively involved in the craft industry. Therefore, entrepreneurial development programmes in the craft industry play important roles to train a number of craftpreneurs to sustain them within the craft industry.

In addition, Simpson *et al.*, (2004) has argued that an application of ASK model (attitude, skill and knowledge) in an entrepreneurship training will provide craftpreneurs to be more sustainable in entrepreneurship as well as have high personality traits, be knowledgeable and skillful. As mentioned by previous researchers (Simpson *et al.*, 2004; Nieman, 2001; Ibrahim & Soufani, 2002), attitude, skill and knowledge have become very prominent components in the ASK model involving any entrepreneurship development programme. Moreover, a number of theoretical, philosophical and conceptual entrepreneurial approaches have been discussed by various academics and policy-makers, involving human development and sustainable entrepreneurship.

Kraftangan Malaysia as a government agency has aggressively promoted the traditional skills, craftsmanship and sustainable entrepreneurship among the Malaysian craftpreneurs. In fact, this agency also assists craftpreneurs towards the use of modern methods of production; and promotes handicraft products. These findings become useful and valuable to Kraftangan Malaysia to develop the entrepreneurial training programme in the context of sustainable entrepreneurial personality development and business performance in the craft industry. Basically, a good craftpreneur is an individual who is knowledgeable and skillful in enterprise management, good in entrepreneurial motivation and has the ability to sustain their business in a competitive environment. The main content of this model is

to clarify the best practices and means to provide good sustainable entrepreneurial motivation, as well as demonstrate competence; sustaining in better improvement, target setting, problem solving, and challenging tasks.

Conclusions

The results gathered in this study showed that sustainable entrepreneurial motivation with the four major elements of a business (e.g. sustainable improvement, target setting, problem solving, and despite any challenges) are critical in helping the craftpreneurs in the Malaysia craft industry sustain their business commitment and growth. Furthermore, the findings of path analysis postulate that the factor of business commitment is significantly becoming an intermediary variable in association of sustainability in target setting and problem solving toward growth performance. On the other hand, the business commitment becomes as a moderating variable in association of sustainability despite challenging tasks and business performance.

The findings in this paper also conclude that business commitment is considered an essential factor involving the relationships between sustainable entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial motivation and growth performance, as well as mentioned by Littunen (2000); McClelland (1961); Rotter, (1966); Allen and Meyer (1990); Basu *et al.*, (2009); and Cohen (2006). Furthermore, the findings of this study are also applicable to a wide range of craft industries in Malaysia. It can be use to increase the level of motivation in the craft industries, which may help the craftpreneurs to increase their business commitment and expand the business operation. The Kraftangan Malaysia and others government agencies can utilise this finding as a foundation to plan and create better policies, procedures and programmes of sustainable entrepreneurship in the craft industry.

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