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## **THE TRADITION OF MAKING FELT AS A PRACTICAL ART IN UZBEKISTAN**

**Abstract.** This article explores the development of felt-making in Uzbekistan as a form of applied art. It examines traditional felt-making technologies, its role in preserving cultural heritage, and how it has been adapted with modern innovations. The article also discusses the significance of felt in international markets, its contribution to the economy, and its role in promoting tourism. A thorough analysis of felt-making as a national brand and its increasing global demand is presented.

**Keywords:** Felt-making, applied arts of Uzbekistan, craftsmanship, economic significance, cultural heritage, technological innovations, tourism, national brand.

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**Introduction.** Felt-making in Uzbekistan dates back thousands of years and has played an essential role in the lives of nomadic peoples. For nomads, wool-based products, particularly felt, were indispensable for daily life, providing not only practical items but also a form of artistic expression. Traditionally, felt has been used to create rugs, clothing, and housing materials, especially the yurt, a symbol of nomadic life in Central Asia.

Today, the art of felt-making continues to hold significant cultural value while embracing modern innovations and technologies. This paper delves into the development of felt-making as a form of applied art in Uzbekistan, examining its historical roots, current practices, and future prospects in the global market. Additionally, it highlights the economic opportunities and the role of felt in promoting tourism in the country.

**Background and Literature Review.** Felt-making in Uzbekistan originates from the nomadic cultures of Central Asia, where wool processing and crafting techniques have been practiced for centuries. Historical evidence, such as archaeological findings from the 6th and 5th centuries BC, shows that early civilizations in the region had developed sophisticated wool-processing methods. These early techniques formed the basis for traditional felt-making, which evolved into a highly regarded craft passed down through generations.

Throughout the 20th century, felt-making, along with other forms of traditional craftsmanship, received significant attention in Uzbekistan. In the 1950s, the initiated by the government programs to revive and preserve folk arts, including felt-making. Scholars and ethnographers conducted extensive research into these crafts, helping to preserve traditional techniques while encouraging their integration into modern industries. By the mid-20th century, felt products were showcased in national exhibitions, gaining recognition both domestically and internationally.

In recent decades, felt-making has found a new life in international markets, with Uzbek artisans exporting their products worldwide. As a national brand, felt products are recognized for their unique combination of traditional craftsmanship and modern design. This has led to the development of new markets, especially within the tourism sector, where handcrafted felt products are in high demand.

**Methods.** The research employs several methodologies to analyze the development and current state of felt-making in Uzbekistan.

First, historical and analytical methods were used to trace the origins and evolution of felt-making in the country. This involved studying archaeological findings, historical texts, and ethnographic studies that provide insight into the development of wool-processing techniques and their significance in Central Asian culture.

Second, empirical methods were applied through interviews with local artisans and craftsmen to understand current felt-making practices and the integration of modern technologies. These interviews helped shed light on how traditional techniques have adapted to contemporary demands, including the use of eco-friendly materials and modern tools.

Third, an economic-statistical analysis was conducted to evaluate the economic impact of felt-making in Uzbekistan. Statistical data from various regions of the country were gathered to assess the contribution of felt-making to the national economy, particularly in terms of exports and its role in tourism development.

**Discussion.** Felt-making remains a vital part of Uzbekistan's cultural heritage and continues to thrive as an important craft in many regions of the country. While traditional methods are still preserved, modern technologies have significantly impacted the industry. New innovations, such as the introduction of eco-friendly materials and advanced production techniques, have enhanced the quality and appeal of felt products.

These technological advancements have opened up new opportunities for Uzbek artisans to market their products globally. Felt items, particularly those that incorporate traditional designs with modern innovations, have garnered interest from international buyers. This has been particularly noticeable in eco-conscious markets, where sustainable and artisanal products are in high demand.

In addition to its economic impact, felt-making plays a crucial role in tourism development in Uzbekistan. Tourists, especially those interested in cultural heritage and traditional crafts, seek out authentic felt products as souvenirs and collectibles. This has created a new economic niche for artisans, helping to preserve the craft while generating income from the growing tourism industry.

The international recognition of Uzbekistan's felt-making has also contributed to the country's cultural diplomacy. Exhibitions and fairs showcasing Uzbek felt products have received attention worldwide, further cementing the craft's status as a symbol of the country's rich cultural heritage.

**Results.** The research findings indicate that felt-making in Uzbekistan holds both cultural and economic significance. Artisans continue to produce high-quality felt products that cater to both domestic and international markets. The integration of modern technologies has improved the production process, making the craft more competitive on a global scale.

Tourism has played a key role in increasing the demand for felt products, particularly among foreign visitors interested in authentic, handmade goods. The success of felt-making in international markets has also contributed to its recognition as a national brand, elevating the craft's status and ensuring its future growth.

**Conclusion.** Felt-making in Uzbekistan is not only a vital part of the country's cultural heritage but also a significant economic contributor. The craft has successfully preserved its traditional

techniques while incorporating modern innovations, making it highly competitive in global markets. As a national brand, Uzbek felt products have gained international recognition, helping to promote the country's cultural heritage and economic development.

In conclusion, the future of felt-making in Uzbekistan looks promising. With continued support for artisans and the integration of modern technologies, this ancient craft will continue to evolve, contributing to both the cultural and economic landscape of Uzbekistan. The global recognition of Uzbek felt products underscores their value as a symbol of national identity and a driver of economic growth.

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