

Title :

Designing an Ethical & Responsible Business Framework for Multi-Cultural Collaborations with Traditional Textile Craft Artisans Worldwide.

Overarching Research Question :

What business model design can facilitate collaboration of traditional textile craft artisans with contemporary fashion brands/designers and support the long-term scalability of an artisan-led fashion brand while accommodating diverse working conditions and production capacities?

Project Type :

Research Paper- 17000 worded Dissertation

Research Output :

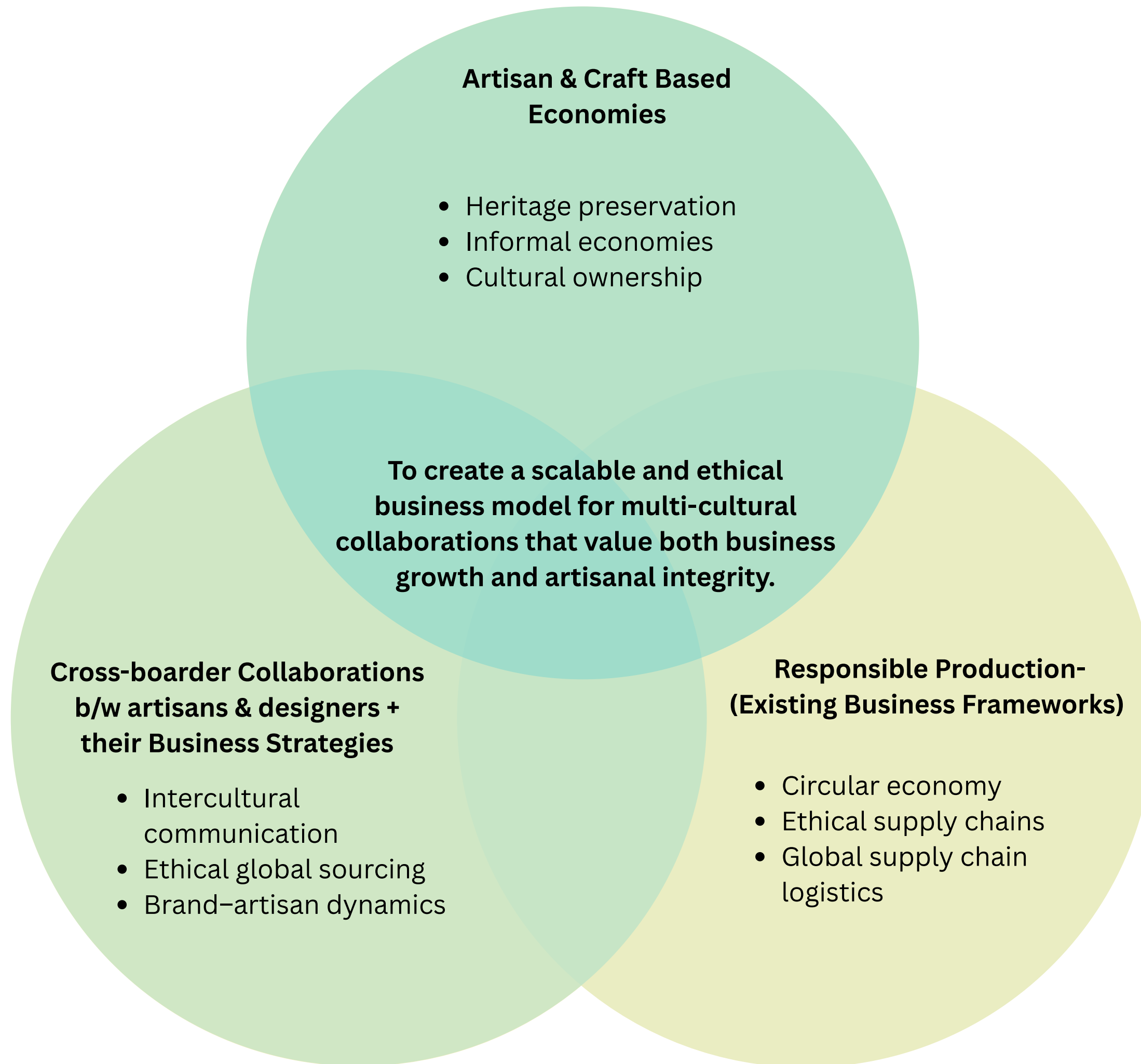
A written business framework, based on thorough primary and secondary research.

Research Aim :

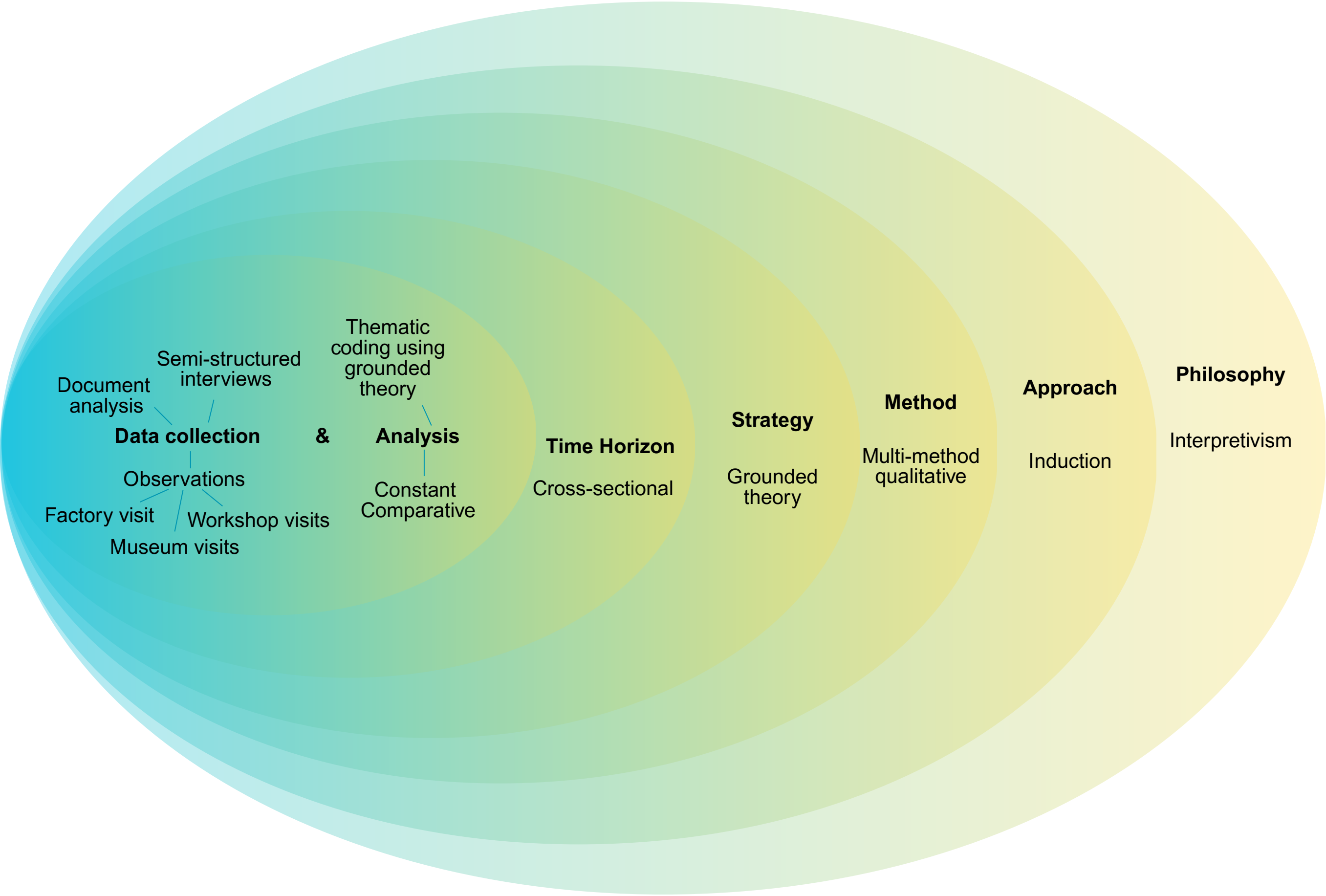
To develop an ethical and sustainable business framework that enables contemporary fashion brands to engage in culturally sensitive, multi-cultural collaborations with traditional textile craft artisans worldwide; supporting the preservation of craft heritage, ensuring equitable partnerships, and creating products that resonate with global audiences.

Objectives :

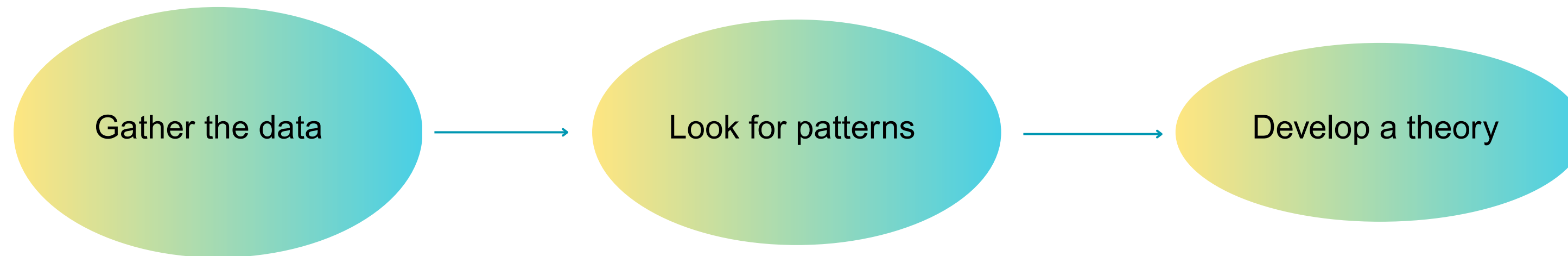
- Critically examine existing models of artisan–business collaborations through secondary research, emphasizing ethical, sustainable, and cultural practices.
- Evaluate and apply relevant theoretical frameworks, such as supply-chain management, global logistics, post-colonial design ethics, and corporate supply-chain case studies; to underpin a new business framework.
- Conduct semi-structured interviews with traditional textile artisans in India and Austria to explore their experiences, expectations, and challenges in cross-border collaborations.
- Gain insights from fashion entrepreneurs and founders of ethical brands on practical strategies for building and sustaining equitable artisan partnerships.
- Design a culturally sensitive and operationally feasible business framework that supports transparent, fair, and scalable collaborations between brands and global artisanal communities.



Research design explained using Saunder's Research Onion



As shown in the figure below, the inductive approach of the study adopted a progression from data to theory, which entailed moving from specific observations retrieved through primary data collection methods, to more general propositions or theories about those observations. In the final chapter of the study, the findings from primary research are combined with the knowledge gained from secondary research, to build a well-informed business model framework.



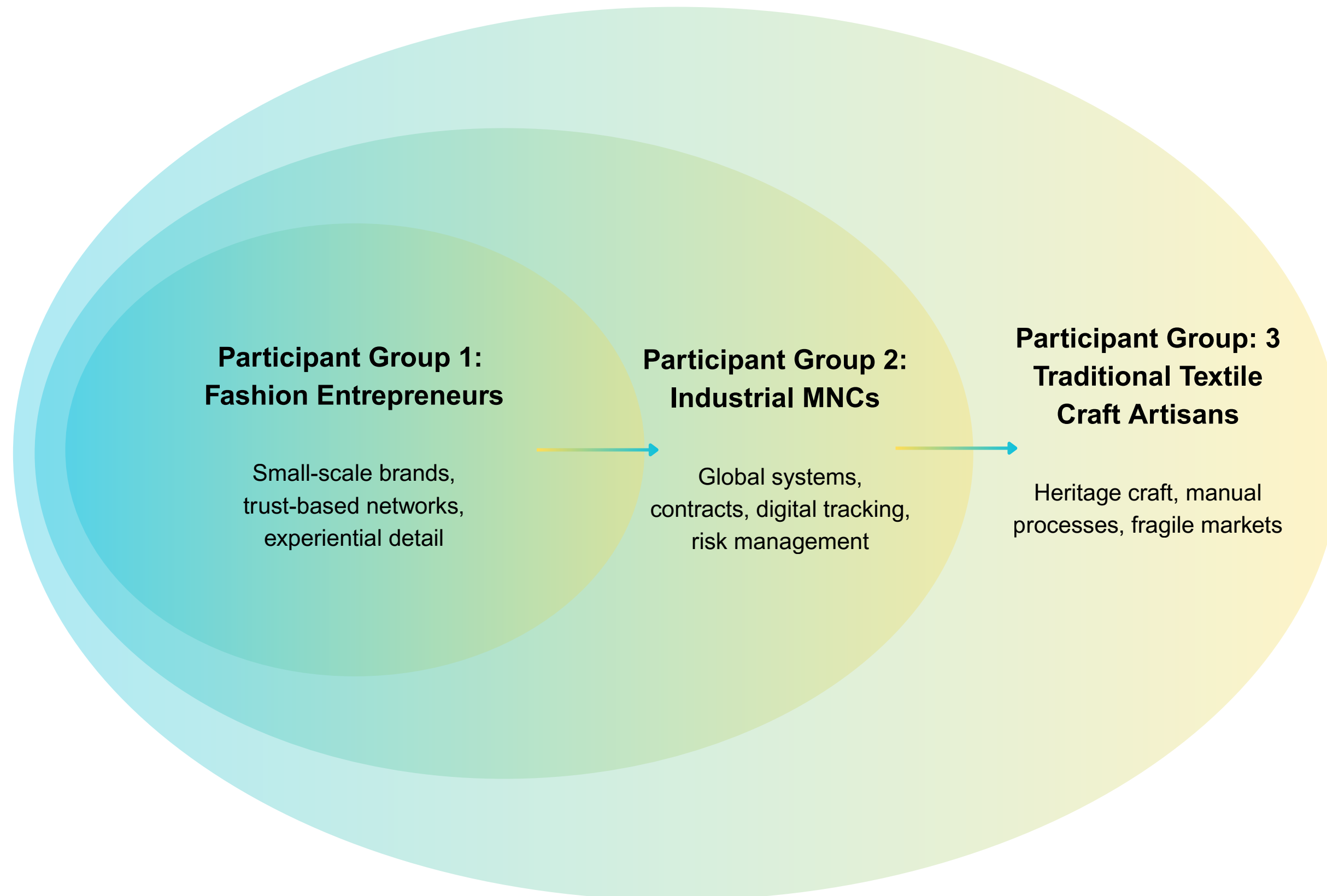
The figure below shows the three groups of participants that were interviewed in this study. The first group included Austrian entrepreneurs accessed through an industry contact and one Indian brand approached by email. Research in Austria was conducted in person, while Indian interviews were online due to time constraints. Analysis of these initial interviews revealed gaps, leading to the inclusion of two MNC supply-chain managers which helped to compare small-scale and large-scale supply systems. Here, grounded theory strategy of research was applied by collecting, coding, and analysing partial data to guide subsequent collection. Furthermore, to deepen insights from the first Indian brand, three additional Indian traditional textile craft artisans were interviewed.



The table on the right shows the details of the three groups of participants that were interviewed in this study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with brand founders in India and Austria, Indian supply-chain professionals, and textile artisans. Using an interview guide with predetermined open-ended questions allowed participants to share experiences in their own words while leaving scope for follow-up probes. Interviews were audio recorded with consent, ensuring accuracy for transcription and analysis. As mentioned before, participants were drawn from three professional groups. The table on the right displays these colour-coded groups: fashion entrepreneurs (green), industrial MNCs (blue), Indian artisans (yellow) with the names of their textile handicraft practice mentioned in brackets. This table informs what each participant is addressed as, in the research project; their job titles; and a rationale for their inclusion.

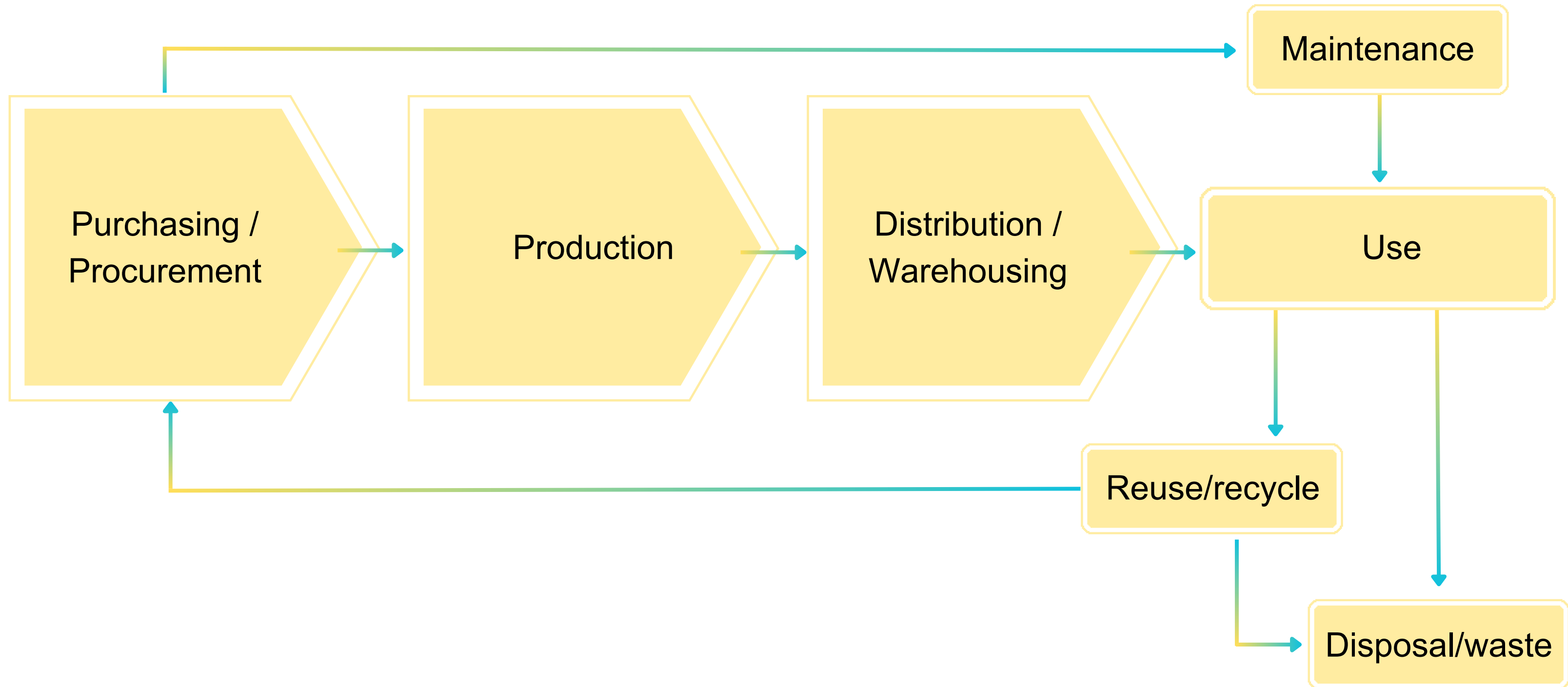
Participant name reference	Participant Category	Occupation/Job Title	Rationale
SH	Fashion Entrepreneur	Owner	Benchmark existing collaboration models
JS	Fashion Entrepreneur	Owner	
NS	Fashion Entrepreneur	Owner	
SS	Fashion Entrepreneur	Co-owner	
PS	Industrial MNC	Head of Sales	Translate large-scale operational insights
UM	Industrial MNC	Head of Purchasing	
IK	(Ajrakh) Artisan	Head Artisan	Capture divergent craft processes and cultural contexts
SA	(Batik) Artisan	Head Artisan	
AJ	(Sanganeri) Artisan	Head artisan	

The figure below shows the progression of the study; it highlights the knowledge gained from the three participant groups that were interviewed. Each participant group was a stage built on the last, ensuring the framework was shaped by emerging themes rather than assumptions.



A suggestive supply chain for the business model framework that was found through secondary research.

Reference: Waters, D. & Rinsler, S. (2014) Global Logistics: New Directions in Supply Chain Management. 7th edition. London: Kogan Page.

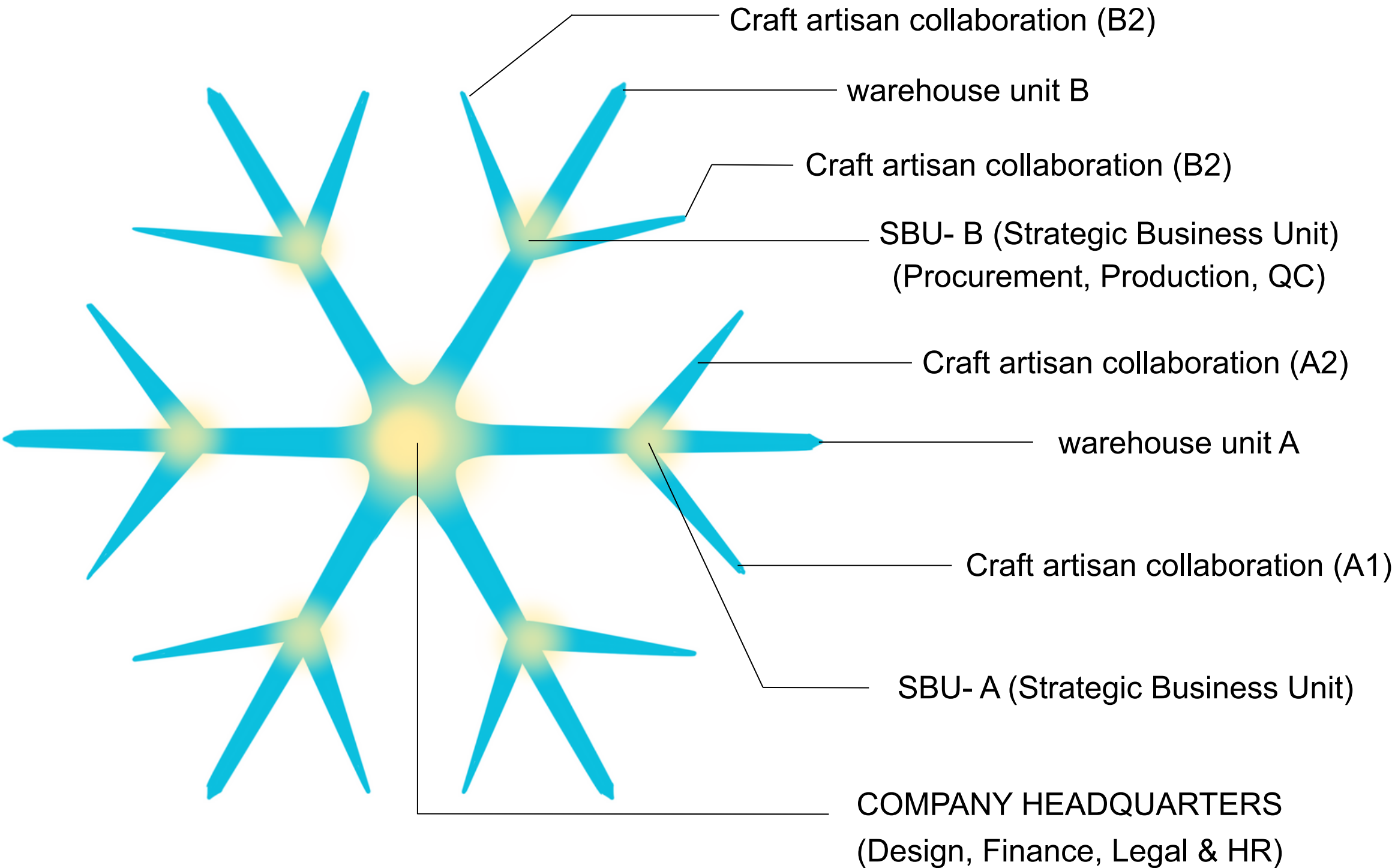


The business model framework developed through this research translates field findings into a practical structure for designers and brands collaborating with traditional textile artisans worldwide. Centred around a metropolitan headquarters, the model ensures access to institutions, funding, and professional networks while managing design, finance, legal, and HR operations.

From this hub extend multiple Strategic Business Units (SBUs), each situated in the origin country of a collaborating craft. Every SBU oversees local sourcing, production logistics, and quality control, transforming handcrafted textiles into finished garments aligned with design specifications from the headquarters.

Locating SBUs within craft communities bridges gaps in communication, logistics, and trust by employing local representatives familiar with cultural contexts. Each unit may work with one or more crafts or ethically combine compatible traditions, fostering both cultural sensitivity and creative innovation.

Initial collaborations follow strict Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) through field visits for value alignment and ethical assurance. To reduce environmental impact, sampling can be executed digitally using software such as Clo3D. Each SBU also maintains its own warehouse with RFID tagging to monitor inventory globally; offering a transparent, decentralised, and scalable model for ethical cross-cultural fashion production.



Framework explained using the Business Model Canvas.

