



Crochet Art: A Sustainable Source of Income Generation

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Abstract

Crochet technique is an important form of handmade art that reflects cultural heritage, creativity and inherited skills, while also offering potential opportunities for livelihood generation. In the context of changing lifestyles, increasing mass production and declining interest in traditional crafts, there is a need to revive and promote crochet through contemporary approaches. The present article highlights the potential of traditional crochet as a sustainable source of income generation, particularly for rural and semi urban women. It discusses the scope for developing traditional crochet products through innovative designs, product diversification, sustainable use of materials and market-oriented strategies. Crochet-based products such as handbags, accessories, home décor, garments, toys and utility items can be adapted to changing consumer preferences and developed as small-scale entrepreneurial ventures. Skill development in areas such as product development, quality control and costing, packaging, branding and digital marketing can further enhance the economic value of the craft. The use of textile remnants, leftover yarn and other reusable materials can also support resource efficiency and waste reduction. Improved access to exhibitions, handicraft fairs, self-help groups, social media and online markets can expand the reach of crochet products and increase their commercial potential. Thus, integrating traditional skills with innovation, sustainability and entrepreneurship can help preserve crochet as a cultural heritage while creating flexible and sustainable livelihood opportunities for women and artisan communities.

Keywords: Crochet art, entrepreneurship, sustainable source, digital marketing

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Introduction

Traditional crochet is more than a decorative craft; it is an important component of cultural heritage and has considerable potential as a source of livelihood. For generations, women have used simple crochet techniques to create household articles, accessories, garments and decorative products. Traditional crafts represent forms of living heritage that transmit knowledge, skills, creativity and cultural identity across generations (UNESCO, 2003, 2019). However, changing lifestyles, mass-produced goods, changing consumer preferences and declining interest in traditional crafts have created challenges for the continuity and economic viability of many craft traditions. The revival of crochet through skill development, innovative product design, sustainable materials, quality enhancement, and market-oriented approaches can contribute to the preservation of traditional craft knowledge while creating new opportunities for income

generation. Such approaches are particularly relevant for women and traditional artisans, for whom craft-based activities can provide opportunities for self-employment and supplementary household income (Government of India, Ministry of Textiles, 2023; International Labour Organization (ILO), 2017). Integrating traditional knowledge with contemporary design and sustainable practices can further enhance the relevance and market potential of crochet products (Fletcher, 2014; Niinimäki, 2018).



Crochet as a Traditional Art

Crochet is a versatile handcraft technique in which yarn or thread is interlooped using a crochet hook to create fabric and decorative structures. Traditional crochet products often reflect local creativity, cultural preferences,

inherited skills and distinctive design characteristics. As a form of intangible cultural heritage, traditional craft practices are closely associated with the knowledge and skills transmitted within communities (UNESCO, 2003). The craft can be modernized without losing its traditional character. Contemporary designs can be developed by combining traditional crochet motifs and techniques with modern silhouettes, functional features, attractive colour combinations and innovative materials. Such an approach is consistent with sustainable design principles, which emphasize the development of products that respond to contemporary needs while considering environmental, social and cultural dimensions (Fletcher, 2014; Niinimäki, 2018).



From Traditional Craft to Income Generation

The revival of crochet can provide opportunities for home-based entrepreneurship and small-scale income generation. Products such as handbags, clutches, mobile covers, jewellery, plant holders, table accessories, cushion covers, garments, toys and home décor items can be developed according to consumer preferences and market demand. Diversification of craft products can increase opportunities for artisans to serve different consumer groups and reduce dependence on a single product category. Small-scale production allows artisans to begin with relatively limited investment and gradually expands their activities. Skill development combined with entrepreneurship education can strengthen the ability of individuals and groups to participate in income-generating activities and improve employment opportunities (ILO, 2017). Furthermore, the creative industries and handicraft sectors have potential to contribute to economic development when artisans are provided with appropriate skills, market information, product development support and access to markets (International Trade Centre, 2018). The handicrafts sector in India has an important role in employment and livelihood generation, particularly among traditional artisan communities. Government initiatives directed towards handicraft development, skill enhancement and artisan support and market promotion seek to strengthen the economic and social position of artisans (Government of India, Ministry of Textiles, 2023; Office of the Development Commissioner [Handicrafts], n.d.). Strengthening traditional craft skills while improving market access can therefore

contribute to livelihood development and the sustainability of artisan-based activities.

Role in Women's Empowerment

Crochet has particular potential as a women-oriented livelihood activity because it can generally be undertaken using relatively simple tools and can be adapted to flexible working arrangements. Training programmes can help women improve their technical skills as well as acquire knowledge related to product development, quality control, costing, packaging, branding, and marketing. Skill development and entrepreneurship are important components in strengthening employment and livelihood opportunities (ILO, 2017). Women can undertake crochet production individually or through self-help groups, cooperatives, producer groups, and small enterprises. Collective approaches can improve production capacity, facilitate knowledge sharing, strengthen bargaining power, and support access to wider markets. Handicraft development programmes and institutional support can further contribute to the strengthening of artisan livelihoods and entrepreneurship (Government of India, Ministry of Textiles, 2023; Office of the Development Commissioner [Handicrafts], n.d.). Integrating traditional craft skills with entrepreneurship, design development, and market-oriented training can therefore enhance



the economic potential of crochet while contributing to the continuation of traditional knowledge and skills.

Sustainable Use of Materials

Crochet can contribute to sustainable product development when reusable and waste materials are incorporated into production processes. Leftover yarn, fabric strips, textile remnants and other suitable materials can be converted into attractive value-added products. Such practices support the principles of reuse, resource efficiency, waste reduction, and circularity within textile and fashion systems (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2017; Niinimäki, 2018). The use of existing and discarded textile materials can extend material life and create additional value from resources that might otherwise become waste. Sustainable design approaches encourage consideration of material use, product longevity, resource efficiency and environmental impacts throughout the product

life cycle (Fletcher, 2014; Niinimäki, 2018). Handmade crochet products incorporating recycled or surplus materials may also appeal to consumers who increasingly value products associated with environmental responsibility and craftsmanship.

Connecting Crochet with Modern Markets

Market access is an important factor in making traditional crafts economically viable. Artisans can promote crochet products through local exhibitions, handicraft fairs, self-help group markets, social media platforms and appropriate online marketplaces. Participation in creative and cultural markets can provide opportunities for artisans to reach consumers beyond their immediate geographical areas and increase the commercial potential of craft products (International Trade Centre, 2018). Good product presentation, attractive packaging, consistent quality, appropriate pricing, effective branding and communication of product value can increase the commercial appeal of handmade crochet products. Storytelling can also be used to communicate the cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and craftsmanship associated with individual products. Connecting cultural identity with contemporary consumer preferences can help strengthen the market position of traditional crafts while supporting their continued practice (UNESCO, 2019).

Preserving Heritage through Innovation

The revival of crochet should focus on innovation rather than simply reproducing traditional designs. Traditional motifs and techniques can be combined with contemporary product concepts to respond to changing consumer preferences while maintaining the cultural identity of the craft. UNESCO (2003) emphasizes the importance of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage through the continued transmission and practice of traditional knowledge and skills. For example, traditional crochet techniques can be used to create modern handbags, home accessories, fashion accessories, sustainable gift items, toys and utility products. Product diversification and contemporary design can make traditional crafts more relevant to younger consumers and new market segments. At the same time, maintaining traditional techniques, motifs and knowledge can contribute to cultural continuity (UNESCO, 2003, 2019). Innovation can therefore serve as a bridge between traditional craftsmanship and contemporary markets. Sustainable design approaches further support the development of products that combine cultural value with environmental and

functional considerations (Fletcher, 2014; Niinimäki, 2018).

Conclusion

The revival of traditional crochet art provides an opportunity to connect cultural heritage, creativity, sustainability and entrepreneurship. Traditional craft practices constitute an important component of living heritage and their continued transmission can contribute to the preservation of cultural knowledge and identity (UNESCO, 2003, 2019). With appropriate training, innovative product development, sustainable material use, quality improvement, entrepreneurship development and market linkages, crochet can become a viable source of supplementary income and self-employment. The future of crochet depends not only on preserving traditional techniques but also on adapting them to contemporary needs and markets. The integration of traditional skills with sustainable design principles, product diversification, branding and digital and conventional marketing can improve the economic potential of crochet-based enterprises (Fletcher, 2014; International Trade Centre, 2018; Niinimäki, 2018). Empowering women and young artisans through skill development, innovation, entrepreneurship and effective marketing can therefore contribute simultaneously to the preservation of traditional crochet art and the creation of sustainable livelihood opportunities.

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