

Motivating Factors Influencing Women Entrepreneurs in choosing the Chikankari Business

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Abstract

Chikankari, a traditional handicraft from Lucknow has emerged as an entrepreneurial avenue for women not only in Lucknow but also in other parts of the country. Chikankari businesses have long been providing economic independence to not only the women entrepreneurs but also to all the women artisans associated with it. This study explores the key motivating factors that drive women to engage in the chikankari business, analyzing socio-economic, cultural, and personal determinants. A qualitative approach has been adopted to fulfil the objective of this research. Women entrepreneurs who have been in the Chikankari business have been interviewed. Apart from the financial independence that the women entrepreneurs gain in this business factors like demand for chikankari products, development of the local community, passion for the art, a sense of independence have also been identified as significant motivating factors to choose this business. Findings suggest that targeted policy interventions, training programs, and enhanced market access can further empower women in chikankari entrepreneurship. This study contributes to the discourse on women's economic empowerment and the sustainability of traditional crafts in contemporary markets.

Keywords: Women Entrepreneurship, Chikankari, Motivating factors

INTRODUCTION

a) Background of the research

A woman or group of women who start, plan, and run an enterprise—especially a business—are referred to as women entrepreneurs. The Government of India has defined women entrepreneurs as those who participate in equity and employment within a business enterprise. The nation's business and economy have grown significantly because of the rising number of women who are entrepreneurs (Nandal et al. 2020). Women-owned businesses are contributing significantly to society by creating jobs, changing the demographics of the nation, and serving as an example for the next generation of female entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurship development for the women helps them become more capable individuals and more influential members of the family and community.

India has a rich cultural heritage and is renowned for its many artistic forms. India's festivals, cuisine, clothes, and languages are incredibly varied and contribute significantly to the country's unique identity (Tripathi et al., 2022). Since Indian clothing is one of the most distinctive and cherished aspects of

Indian culture, it deserves special attention. Chikankari is one example of such a form and the city of Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh is commonly recognized as the origin of Chikankari art.

Women are known to be adept at multitasking and wearing many hats. Whether it is managing the home, parenting, or taking on different roles, they consistently exceed expectations. Chikankari business facilitates the creation of jobs for many people, especially for rural women and artisans of Lucknow as it helps them to simultaneously carry out their household as well as livestock activities (Verma & Verma, 2023). The Chikan embroidery sector is primarily run by women artisans on a contract basis, and it is primarily an informal, home-based industry (Tripti, 2020). The entrepreneur in Chikankari business is generally manufacturer, wholesaler, or retailer. They are typically regarded as the key player in the Chikankari handicraft market because they determine the appropriate fabric and design to use as well as the newest trends in the industry (Dwivedi & Kumar, 2023). Women entrepreneurs work as both manufacturers and retailers in most Chikankari business (Gupta, 2022).

b) Statement of the Problem

Indian handicrafts are always a reflection of the local materials and craftsmanship, reflecting the culture or community (Bardhan, & Bhattacharya, 2022). However, the market trends scenario is changing these days because of globalization, commercialization, technique, awareness, and competition. India is witnessing several successful women entrepreneurs who are ready to take calculated risks by using design interventions and technology to create new business milestones (Arafat et al., 2020). Chikankari has gained popularity worldwide and numerous factors can influence women's decisions to become entrepreneurs in Chikankari hand embroidery businesses.

The current study analyses factors that motivate and influence women entrepreneurs to choose Chikankari hand embroidery for their business as getting into this business may seem easy but in practicality it is not as easy as it seems.

c) Research Question

The research question for this study is to find out how women are motivated to enter the business of Chikankari hand embroidery and what specific factors influence them.

d) Research Objectives

1. To understand whether any personal determinants play a role in influencing the decisions of women to opt for chikankari business.
2. To understand the support system available to them for the growth of their businesses.
3. To understand the impact created by these women entrepreneurs on the society in which they operate.

e) Significance of the Study

The addition of chikankari into the One District One Product scheme of the government of Uttar Pradesh makes it important for us to understand the factors influencing women in selecting these businesses. Women have long been considered as agents driving the growth of an economy. The business of Chikankari is also dominated by women artisans. By understanding the motivating factors, personal determinants, the ecosystem in which these women entrepreneurs operate, more women can become a part of this system.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are several factors that motivate women entrepreneurs to choose Chikankari hand embroidery for their business. These factors are identified through literature review:

a) Financial factors:

Entrepreneurs in Chikankari who are successful can profit monetarily. The women entrepreneurs of Chikankari hand embroidery business have the potential to bring in money for the artisans and labourers who work on the same (Rinku, 2023). This economic effect may improve the community's general quality of life and women grow their businesses with the help of support in the form of grants, low-interest loans, or subsidies from the Government (Yadav et al., 2021). They are able to invest in the expansion of their Chikankari businesses and get past their initial financial obstacles through the support provided by the Government. The potential for financial gains is the main driving force behind women Chikankari business owners who can increase their household income and enhance their overall well-being through it (Dam & Pillai, 2021). Women entrepreneurs frequently give other women artisans an access to employment opportunities by empowering and employing them to promote economic development and reduce poverty.

b) Sense of Independence:

Women entrepreneurs feel more independent and powerful through the establishment and management of their Chikankari businesses (Venkatachalam & Neelam, 2021). They can take charge of their future, support their families, and achieve financial independence through it. The independence to run their Chikankari business as owners brings stability to their life and builds their capacity to invest in other projects or assets. Women are frequently free to produce distinctive and complex designs which gives them the freedom to showcase their abilities and express their creativity without being constrained (Giles, 2021). They tend to function independently on their own terms instead of working for huge companies. This helps them in setting their own priorities and make their business decisions themselves.

c) Demand in the Indian and Global market:

The hand-embroidered quality of Chikankari products has become a selling point as consumers' awareness and appreciation for handcrafted and sustainable goods have increased (Choudhary & Mishra, 2022). The growing worldwide interest in cultural diversity and the growing demand for handmade and traditional products have created new avenues for Chikankari entrepreneurs to expand their market reach nationally and internationally. This business has a huge scope for the export market, which boosts the nation's foreign exchange profits (Chaudhary et al., 2022). Encouraging women entrepreneurs to enter foreign markets has the potential to improve global competitiveness and economic growth. The intricate and elegant aesthetic designs attract customers, which makes designers frequently include it in their collections. Chikankari is a fashion staple that goes well with both formal and casual attire. Its widespread appeal adds to the product's ongoing demand in several market sectors. It appeals to a global audience because of its distinctiveness and rich cultural heritage and are now more easily accessible to a worldwide consumer base through online platforms (Dwivedi & Kumar, 2023).

d) Creation of jobs:

Women entrepreneurs in the Chikankari industry frequently employ experienced female artisans for the designer and latest embroidery and train other artisans through workshops from time to time (Rishab & Mridul, 2023). They offer courses to equip women with the knowledge and abilities required for Chikankari embroidery. Not only this, they also offer leadership positions in their companies such as supervising different departments of marketing, quality assurance, and production that helps in general management and expansion of their business. They have the potential to actively participate in their local communities, giving women the chance to enter the workforce and support the regional economy (Agrahari & Brar, 2016). This helps in setting an example to encourage other women entrepreneurs to

start their own business through a cascading effect to adopt an entrepreneurial mindset.

e) Passion for the art:

Chikankari art is something that many women entrepreneurs are extremely passionate about (Kalra, 2014; Manfredi, 2016). Their passion for this age-old embroidery inspires them to spread awareness of the art form as well as to protect it. It has its origins in Indian culture and women who are exposed to it form from an early age frequently form a close cultural bond with it. They are fueled by a desire to preserve and promote this cultural heritage (Nair & Chandramana, 2020). It allows them to express their creativity through this traditional and revered craft which later becomes a rewarding journey and a source of pride for them (Wason & Wason, 2016).

f) The unending growth and innovation in the industry:

The innovation trends explored in the Chikankari industry inspires women entrepreneurs to stay modern in the market and drive business growth by introducing new designs, styles, and products (Upadhyay et al., 2020). Their motivation for entering this business stems from the challenge of managing a company, formulating strategic plans, and finding success in a cutthroat industry (Sardana, 2016). The creation of distinctive and visually appealing clothes and the growth that the business brings provides a sense of fulfilment to women entrepreneurs (Sharma, 2015). It empowers them to make more money and grow significantly when their hard work is appreciated by the customers.

g) Development of the community and poverty alleviation:

Strong social responsibility is often a trait found in women entrepreneurs. They promote local women artisans, strengthen community ties, and aid in the economic growth of their communities (Agrahari & Brar, 2016). Families' financial circumstances can be improved by equitable and sustainable employment. Community-based skill development initiatives are provided by women entrepreneurs to enhance the knowledge, skills employability of the artisans. Adopting equitable wage policies guarantees that artisans are compensated appropriately for their abilities and labor (Rinku, 2023). This promotes a sense of dignity and respect in them which helps to lessen the poverty in the economy (Gupta & Devadas, 2013). Chikankari women entrepreneurs also make an investment in the health and education of their community by setting up health camps, facilitating access to medical facilities, or funding educational initiatives for the families of artisans (Singh & Shah 2022; Rishab & Mridul, 2023). By guaranteeing equal opportunities, women entrepreneurs foster a positive work environment and support programs that improve women's socioeconomic status.

h) Flexibility in the work schedule:

Particularly for artisans who work from home, chikankari businesses can offer flexible working hours (Ahmad & Anees, 2016). Giving them the freedom to select their own working hours promotes a better work-life balance and considers personal preferences (Rajesh & Manoj, 2015). Works and schedules such as design, marketing, or administrative work, Chikankari women entrepreneurs can offer remote work options. The use of a piece-rate payment structure enables artisans to complete their work at their own speed (Basole, 2016). This system, which is popular in the handcrafted sector, guarantees that artists receive payment according to the quantity of pieces they create and allows for workload flexibility. This adaptability may draw a wide range of talented people with different schedules. Flexibility in the work environment can be achieved by providing training programs that enable artisans to expand their skill sets (Agrahari & Brar, 2016).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

a) Research Design

The research design chosen for this study is a multiple case study design. The multiple cases in this research enabled us to know the factors motivating the women entrepreneurs and provided rich information for this study.

b) Sampling Technique and Size:

The women entrepreneurs were chosen through snowball sampling in Lucknow city. The sample size included eighteen women entrepreneurs for this study.

c) Data Collection

The data has been collected qualitatively through interviewing women entrepreneurs. In the qualitative case study, women entrepreneurs who ran their own business in the chikankari sector were interviewed. As a primary analytical method, the study used relevant literature to investigate the motivations behind women's involvement in chikankari business. A semi-structured questionnaire was selected for the study. The interviewees were required to meet the following requirements: 1) be women, 2) have owned a business of Chikankari 3) had been running their business for more than 2 years. The interview data was analyzed using a thematic approach. Both audio and video wherever permitted were recorded during the interview to improve the validity and reliability of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Women demonstrated an inclination towards entrepreneurship over the past few years. There are encouraging evidence that women are proving to be capable leaders. The factors that motivate women to pursue entrepreneurship in chikankari sector were interviewed in Lucknow city. The primary driver of women's involvement in entrepreneurship is financial factors. Women start their own businesses to increase their family's income. The findings of the interviews are analysed through semi-structured interview data collected from eighteen interviewees. Many women who pursue entrepreneurship has shown improvements in terms of their psychological well-being as well as their standard of living, i.e. rising income, growing savings, and significant control over financial resources. As some of the respondents describe:

“My business started with an initial investment of Rs 20,000 and now it has grown so immensely that I am able to support my entire family income through it.”

“The rural parts of Uttar Pradesh are still unreached by the large industries. The women who work with us use their skills to support themselves financially. It is just a little step toward their independence.”

“We have a strong desire to leave our family with a legacy that goes beyond material prosperity.”

“My strong conviction of economic expansion is what motivates me to concentrate on my business”

Women entrepreneurs were mostly motivated by the financial factors that helped them grow financially. Their conviction about the financial growth that this business brings to them helps them to keep moving forward and remain in this business for a longer time. Women also share their tales of how they overcame their challenges of being in business, demonstrated their abilities, and built prosperous companies in difficult circumstances too. They shared about how this chikankari business brought their life on track and helped them grow independently.

“I want to be acknowledged, independent, and involved in the development of new designs. That is the desire I want other Indian women to see. Only few women in our country hold formal jobs, so the

remaining women essentially search for alternative sources of income. I feel so stable in working towards my dream and feeling so independent.”

“Many artisans in India's Chikankari industry work independently, and the sector is mainly unorganized. I have witnessed a lack of consistency regarding both price and quality, which was difficult for us as a company to manage. But with time, it has started growing and there are lesser constraints now. I feel independent running my business and would like to continue it always.”

“I feel independent when I can design trendy clothes. I feel that I have the freedom to showcase my abilities and express my creativity.”

Women running Chikankari business work independently to support their families and other women artisans. Although they have faced several challenges in running their business, yet it gives them a sense of independence of bringing their dreams to realities. Amongst alternative sources of income, they choose to run their business successfully. They feel stable and autonomous of having the ability to take their own decisions and run their business on their own terms and conditions. There is a huge demand of Chikankari work in the national and international markets. Some respondents narrates that:

“Recognizing all the market opportunities available to us, I started building my business through Instagram and I started getting orders even from people residing outside India”

“There is a huge demand of Chikankari by women who like to tailor their clothes according to their designs. So, our customers reach out to us and give their suggestions on how they want their outfit to look like”

“As a brand, we want to uplift the artisans by creating a steady demand for their work and revitalizing the art form by making it relevant for younger customers”

“Chikankari can never fade away. The designs may change but the demand from India and outside always stays. It is everlasting.”

There was a positive response from the customers all over India and even internationally. They consider it as the purest form of clothing and the women owners keep getting orders through online and offline platforms. Women entrepreneurs feel motivated that the demand is everlasting even when there are times that they are not able to advertise their work. Customers keep coming to them for tailored designs and the work speaks for itself. Through fostering diversity and inclusivity, advancing social and environmental causes, and producing jobs, entrepreneurship is having a positive effect on the world. There are numerous jobs created by this sector through women.

“I began by giving jobs to women who were jobless and have since expanded to employ 100 people in Lucknow and collaborated with more than 3000 artisans, who are mostly women.”

“I believe that I am uplifting the artisan community by bringing attention to the traditional Indian artwork known as Chikankari and reaching a younger audience.”

“We are proud to have a management team that is entirely composed of women. I am surely setting an example for other women that if I can do it, even they can.”

As shared by the respondents, entrepreneurship fosters inclusivity in the economy by enabling individuals from a variety of backgrounds to succeed based on their abilities and ideas. Millions of jobs are being created globally by women entrepreneurs, and it has helped women tremendously. While interviewing the respondents, it was found that women feel proud to bring employment to the community and create jobs for other women and run their entire business through them. They have so much for the art of designing chikankari clothes that they indulge themselves into it completely.

“It was a chance for us to present our work and our passion for maintaining and advancing the age-old Indian craft of chikankari. Even celebrities enjoy wearing it and it never gets old.”

“I never stop working toward producing something worthwhile and my passion for this chikankari work is a piece of art that inspired me to launch my very own company.”

“I have a strong interest in all things done in this business even if it is about bringing my work on a digital platform. I think somehow the passion for this work worked as a perfect fit for me. I adore the countless opportunities it brings with itself.”

“Running a business is a woman's identity and passion; for men, it is [usually] about making the most money possible. Investing in female-owned businesses is more sustainable because, as a natural part of our identity, women tend to think longer term than men.”

“I just want to help women achieve their professional and personal objectives. I am actively pursuing women's leadership development and entrepreneurship through this business.”

There were endless stories by the respondents sharing how they are so passionate about Chikankari business and the growth their passion brought for them. Even when some respondents were just retailers, women shared how they pass their day admiring the kind of work they are into and they enjoy sharing their success with everyone around them. The customers are always happy about the purchases they make and it has been a long time while they are into their business. The growth is unending and there are always some new innovative designs coming through Chikankari work. Women entrepreneurs discuss about the work being so appreciated by the celebrities too these days.

“When purchasing chikankari, customers treat it like an investment rather than a simple purchase. It offers countless opportunities for creativity and the fusion of various motifs and techniques.”

“There are always new styles coming in Chikankari which was earlier restricted to cotton. The possibilities are endless as there is a lot of fusion these days, even in bridal outfits.”

“When we speak to our regular customers, they emphasize the need to innovate, implement, and inspire in order to uphold the legacy already established. So we believe that creativity is the new driver and that India has some of the most creative people.”

The respondents emphasized the need for an all-encompassing culture of innovation and stated that innovation is the right of many. The intersection of innovation and craftsmanship offers countless opportunities as legacy and modernity work together to transform the craft of Chikankari work. The transformative power of technology is bringing ancient chikankari crafts back to life in amazing ways. Modern tools breathe new vitality into age-old methods, allowing craftspeople to venture into creatively uncharted areas. Using immersive virtual reality experiences, technology is redefining the Chikankari crafting process and promoting a dynamic fusion of progress and heritage.

“NGOs are being included in sustainable development plans by government and women artisans are now utilizing their skills in areas like education, reducing poverty, environmental protection, and rehabilitation.”

“The women community learned the art of chikankari, which is the primary source of income for them around Lucknow's rural areas. There are several government agencies in Uttar Pradesh who support the skill upgradation training program for semi-skilled chikankari artisans who belonged to the ST/SC community or the district's impoverished areas in order to develop human resources.”

“The implementation of government programs for economic development was given top priority by the chairs of non-governmental organizations. It was often seen that the eradication of poverty and rural development was their main goal.”

India has entered a new era of economic development because of economic reforms brought about by globalization and liberalization. As such, community empowerment programs for the handicrafts sector through SHGs are essential to empowering the artisans and giving them a visible platform to help them become more competitive and efficient in the face of new challenges and establish viable, self-supporting businesses. The government's efforts are focused on enhancing organizations' capacity, which eventually resulted in NGOs' increased engagement in a variety of people-centered strategies for reducing poverty.

“Editing, modifying, and replicating the design is less flexible when designing by hand. Several designs can be made, stored in the library, and used as needed. But the work hours are supportive and flexible in this business.”

“I can better manage my time, take care of my family, and achieve my career goals with the flexibility my business offers to me. This increased adaptability is turning out to be a major factor in the rise of women artisans also joining our work.”

“Women are changing the face of entrepreneurship in India these days with flexibility, support, and an expanding network of like-minded people. This trend is expected to continue as more women realize that entrepreneurship can help them achieve a healthy work-life balance.”

Artists who are proficient in a variety of Chikankari designs may be able to select the projects they wish to work on more freely. Women entrepreneurs who sell chikankari can adjust their production schedules to meet demand variations. By giving artisans time off during slower times, this can help prevent them from overworking during busy seasons. Giving artists the freedom to express their creativity and alter designs can give their work more versatility. This can increase artists' sense of ownership over their work and improve their job satisfaction. Chikankari women entrepreneurs adjust to the changing needs of their workforce by holding regular feedback sessions.

CONCLUSION

The number of women entrepreneurs in India's economy is increasing, and their contributions should not be underestimated. Due to their ability to create jobs, accelerate development, and promote prosperity, these women entrepreneurs are vital to the Indian economy. They are regarded as India's economic cornerstone. Women's employment opportunities in Chikankari business can be increased, but they can also experience less strain from working two shifts a week. Women's participation in the Chikankari business has produced jobs and helped millions of families escape poverty. Women comprise a significant portion of the workforce in new-age sectors due to their superior leadership abilities and higher output levels. Their work ethic and excellent business sense have also brought attention to the importance of women in the modern workforce. There are several factors that motivate them to enter Chikankari business but the support provided by the Government has no boundaries. Women have put a lot of effort into making the workplace inclusive of people belonging from different communities and gender. Making an organization inclusive and gender diverse has been a clear organizational goal in recent years. They firmly believe that creative solutions are produced when distinct individuals work together.

There are several organisations that train women and connect them with buyers via an online platform. The city of Lucknow appreciates the outstanding work and acknowledge the significant contribution of women entrepreneurs within the Chikankari industry. Since small businesses account for thirty percent of India's GDP, supporting women entrepreneurs is more crucial than ever and will be essential to the

country's socioeconomic transformation. India will witness an increasing number of women leading the way in their communities, creating ground-breaking business models, driving change, and encouraging one another to create a better future for our nation.

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