

Women Entrepreneurs in the Creative Economy (Fashion, Art, Handmade Business)

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Peer Review Information	Abstract
Type: Article Received: 11 July 2026 Revised: 13 Aug 2026 Accepted: 07 Sept 2026 Published: 06 Oct 2026	The creative economy has become an important contributor to entrepreneurship and employment generation in India. It includes industries based on creativity, culture, design, innovation, and artistic skills such as fashion businesses, handmade product enterprises, and independent art ventures. Women entrepreneurs are increasingly participating in this sector because it offers flexible working opportunities, lower entry barriers, and the ability to convert creative talent into sustainable income. This paper studies the role of women entrepreneurs in the creative economy with special focus on fashion, art, and handmade businesses. It highlights business opportunities, digital transformation, financial barriers, market competition, and social challenges. The study finds that digital platforms, social media marketing, and customer preference for handmade and sustainable products have created new growth opportunities. However, women entrepreneurs still face challenges related to finance, scaling, and balancing family and business responsibilities. The research concludes that stronger policy support, digital skill training, and financial access can improve women's participation and long-term business success in India's creative economy. Keywords: Women Entrepreneurship; Creative Economy; Handmade Business; Fashion Entrepreneurship; Art Business; Digital Marketing; India.

How to Cite This Article

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Introduction

Women entrepreneurship has become an important part of economic growth and social development in India. Women-led enterprises support income generation, create employment opportunities, and contribute to financial independence and leadership. Within this broader entrepreneurial environment, the creative economy has gained particular importance because it is based on creativity, culture, design, skills, innovation, and artistic expression. Fashion enterprises, art-based ventures, handmade products, jewelry, home décor, textile and handloom activities are important examples of businesses through which women can convert talent and traditional knowledge into commercial opportunities.

The creative economy is especially relevant to women because many of its activities can begin on a small scale, can be operated from home or through flexible work arrangements, and may require lower entry barriers than large-scale industries. This gives women opportunities to build independent businesses while using skills that may already exist within families and communities. Such businesses can also contribute to preservation of cultural traditions, local crafts, and regional design practices while generating income and employment.

Changes in customer preferences have further strengthened the market for creative businesses. The source document notes increasing demand for handmade, customized, unique, sustainable, and eco-friendly products. This demand creates opportunities for fashion, art, craft, handloom, and customized-product enterprises. At the same time, digital platforms and social media have changed how small entrepreneurs promote and sell their products. Women entrepreneurs can display products, connect with customers, receive feedback, and access markets beyond their immediate geographical area.

In Maharashtra and other parts of India, women are increasingly participating in fashion boutiques, handmade-product businesses, art ventures, jewelry and accessory businesses, home décor, and textile-related enterprises. However, the growth of these businesses is not without challenges. Limited finance, strong market competition, insufficient digital skills, lack of marketing knowledge, and difficulty in scaling the business can restrict long-term success. These issues affect the ability of women-led enterprises to invest, expand production, improve market access, and compete effectively.

The present study therefore examines women entrepreneurs in the creative economy with particular attention to fashion, art, and handmade businesses. It considers the opportunities available in these sectors, the challenges faced by entrepreneurs, the contribution of women-led creative enterprises to economic activity, and the role of digital platforms and sustainable practices in supporting business growth. The study has special relevance to Maharashtra and is intended to provide insights useful to women entrepreneurs, students, researchers, entrepreneurship-development programs, and support organizations.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the role of women entrepreneurs in the creative economy.
2. To identify business opportunities available for women entrepreneurs in fashion, art and handmade businesses.
3. To analyze the major challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in the creative sector.
4. To examine the role of digital platforms and online marketing in business growth.
5. To study sustainable business practices adopted by women entrepreneurs.
6. To suggest practical measures for strengthening women-led creative enterprises.

Review of Literature

The literature relating to the present study covers women entrepreneurship, the creative economy, innovation, digital entrepreneurship, and sustainable entrepreneurship. Women entrepreneurship theory explains the role of women in establishing and managing enterprises and connects entrepreneurial participation with economic independence and empowerment. The creative economy concept focuses on businesses in which creativity and cultural or artistic skills become sources of economic value. Innovation theory emphasizes the use of new ideas, designs, products, and business practices, while digital entrepreneurship explains the growing use of social media and online platforms in business development. Sustainable entrepreneurship adds the importance of eco-friendly practices and long-term business growth.

Hasanah et al. (2023) found that artisan and handmade businesses are growing within the creative economy and identified creativity and innovation as important for business success. This is relevant to the present study because handmade and craft-oriented enterprises form a major part of women-led creative businesses. Raman et al. (2022) explained that women entrepreneurship supports economic development and sustainability through innovation and employment generation, reinforcing the wider economic importance of women-led enterprises.

Yadav et al. (2023) examined women entrepreneurs in the handicraft industry and identified both opportunities for income and employment and continuing difficulties related to finance and marketing. These findings are directly relevant to the present research because financial constraints and market competition are also identified as major challenges in fashion, art, and handmade businesses. Zai and Kumar (2019)

similarly found that education and business support can positively influence women entrepreneurship, while financial barriers may restrict business expansion.

The source synopsis also refers to earlier work indicating that digital platforms help women entrepreneurs promote products, connect with customers, and increase market reach. This is particularly important for creative businesses because products can be displayed visually and marketed through online channels. Digital tools can therefore support customer reach, product promotion, market expansion, and communication, especially for small enterprises that may have limited access to traditional marketing channels.

The literature also points to the importance of local culture, traditional knowledge, creativity, and sustainable practices in women-led creative industries. Creative businesses can preserve handicraft skills and local design traditions while creating new commercial value. At the same time, demand for customized, handmade, and eco-friendly products can support sustainable entrepreneurship and provide market differentiation for small businesses.

Despite the available literature on women entrepreneurship and business development, the source document identifies several gaps. Limited studies examine women entrepreneurs in the creative economy as a combined field; fewer studies consider fashion, art, and handmade businesses together; and there is limited focus on the relationship between digital platforms, sustainable practices, and business growth in women-led creative enterprises. The synopsis also identifies a specific need for research with relevance to Maharashtra. The present study is positioned within these gaps.

Research Methodology

Research methodology provides the systematic framework used to collect, organize, analyze, and interpret information for the study. The present research focuses on women entrepreneurs in the creative economy, particularly those involved in fashion, art, and handmade businesses. The study uses both descriptive and analytical research. The descriptive component explains the existing situation of women entrepreneurs, while the analytical component is used to interpret business opportunities, challenges, participation patterns, digital-platform use, and economic contribution.

Sources of Data, Sample and Data Collection

Both primary and secondary data are used in the study. Primary data are collected directly from women entrepreneurs through a structured questionnaire, supported by simple interviews and discussions to obtain business-related information. Secondary data are drawn from books, research journals, government reports, websites, and published articles. The study sample consists of 50 women entrepreneurs from fashion, art, and handmade businesses in Maharashtra. This sample forms the basis for the respondent-level percentage analysis reported in the study.

Statistical Techniques

The source study uses simple statistical techniques including percentage analysis, tables and charts, and average/mean. Percentage analysis is used to present the distribution of respondents and the relative contribution of different categories. Tables and graphical presentation are used to make the results easier to compare and interpret. No additional statistical values are introduced in this journal version.

Hypotheses

- H1: Women entrepreneurs in the creative economy significantly contribute to economic growth and employment generation.
- H2: Digital platforms have a positive relationship with business growth among women entrepreneurs in fashion, art and handmade businesses.
- H3: Financial and marketing barriers significantly affect the growth of women-led creative enterprises.
- H4: Sustainable business practices positively influence customer preference and business performance.
- H0: There is no significant relationship between digital platforms, business challenges and the growth of women entrepreneurs in the creative economy.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The data analysis presents the participation of women entrepreneurs in selected creative businesses, the opportunity structure of creative work, the economic contribution of women-led enterprises, and use of digital platforms. All respondent counts and percentages below are retained exactly from the source document.

Table 1. *Types of Creative Economy and Opportunities for Women Entrepreneurs*

Sr. No.	Type of Creative Work	Opportunities for Women Entrepreneurs	Percentage (%)
1	Fashion & Apparel Design	Income generation, brand creation, self-employment	30%

2	Handmade Crafts & Handicrafts	Home-based business, cultural preservation, employment creation	25%
3	Jewelry & Fashion Accessories	Financial independence, creativity, market expansion	15%
4	Art & Digital Design	Online entrepreneurship, global customer reach	12%
5	Home Décor & Customized Products	Small business development, flexible work opportunities	10%
6	Textile & Handloom Products	Preservation of traditional skills, community employment	8%
	Total		100%

Interpretation: Fashion & Apparel Design represents 30%, followed by Handmade Crafts & Handicrafts at 25%. Jewelry & Fashion Accessories account for 15%, Art & Digital Design for 12%, Home Décor & Customized Products for 10%, and Textile & Handloom Products for 8%. The distribution shows that fashion and handmade businesses occupy the largest shares in the opportunity table while all six categories contribute to women's income, self-employment, creativity, market expansion, and skill preservation.

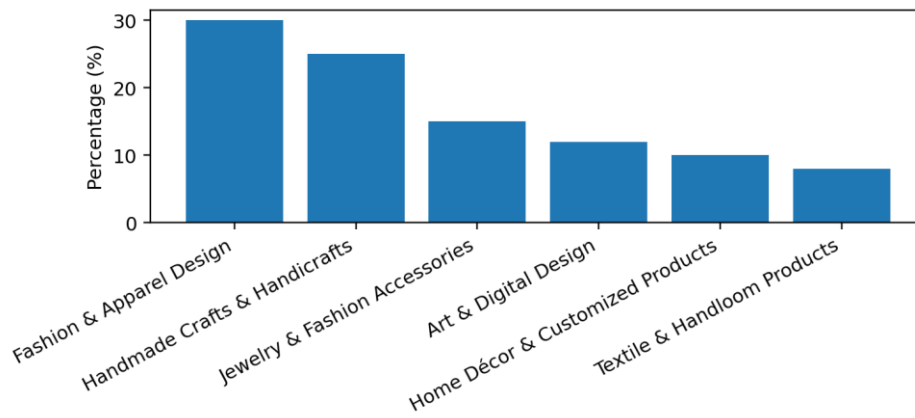


Fig. 1. Creative Work and Opportunities for Women Entrepreneurs

Table 2. Economic Contribution of Women Entrepreneurs in the Creative Economy

Sr. No.	Economic Contribution Area	How It Helps the Economy	Percentage (%)
1	Employment Generation	Creates jobs for women and local workers	30%
2	Income Generation	Increases household and national income	25%
3	MSME Growth	Strengthens small and medium enterprises	15%
4	Export & Market Expansion	Promotes handmade, fashion, and cultural products globally	12%
5	Rural Development	Supports rural and semi-urban entrepreneurship	10%
6	Tax Contribution & Formal Economy Growth	Adds to government revenue and formal business sector	8%
	Total		100%

Interpretation: Employment generation (30%) and income generation (25%) are the strongest contribution areas in the source analysis. MSME growth contributes 15%, export and market expansion 12%, rural development 10%, and tax contribution and formal-economy growth 8%. Together, these categories show the stated contribution of women-led creative businesses to employment, income, small-enterprise development, markets, rural entrepreneurship, and the formal economy.

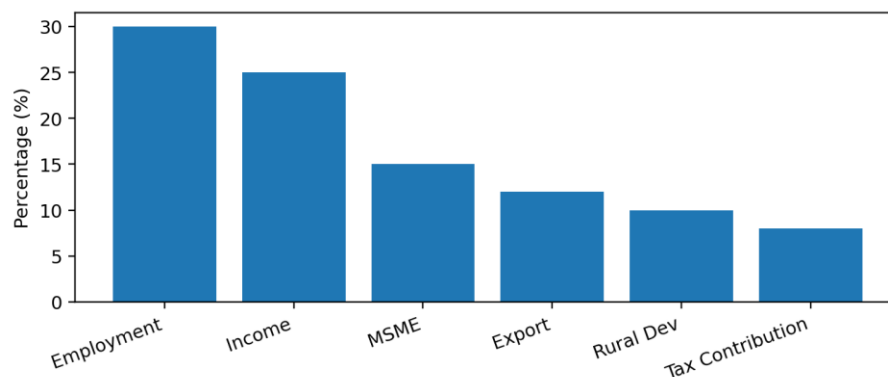


Fig. 2. Contribution of Women Entrepreneurs in the Creative Economy

Table 3. Type of Business of Respondents

Type of Business	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Fashion Business	22	44%
Handmade Products	18	36%
Art-Based Business	10	20%
Total	50	100%

Interpretation: Out of 50 respondents, 22 women (44%) are involved in fashion business, 18 women (36%) in handmade products, and 10 women (20%) in art-based businesses. Fashion has the highest respondent participation, followed by handmade products and art-based businesses.

Table 4. Use of Digital Platforms

Response	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	40	80%
No	10	20%
Total	50	100%

Interpretation: The source data show that 40 respondents (80%) use digital platforms, while 10 respondents (20%) do not. This supports the study's emphasis on the role of social media and online platforms in promotion, customer reach, and business growth.

Results and Discussion

The findings show that women entrepreneurs are actively participating in the creative economy through fashion, art, and handmade businesses. Respondent-level data indicate the highest participation in fashion business at 44%, followed by handmade products at 36% and art-based business at 20%. This pattern is consistent with the source discussion that fashion and handmade sectors provide strong opportunities for income generation, self-employment, creativity, and flexible business activity.

The opportunity analysis also indicates that Fashion & Apparel Design (30%) and Handmade Crafts & Handicrafts (25%) account for the largest shares in the creative-work table. Jewelry & Fashion Accessories, Art & Digital Design, Home Décor & Customized Products, and Textile & Handloom Products also contribute through market expansion, online entrepreneurship, flexible work, traditional-skill preservation, and community employment. These results show that the creative economy offers women more than one type of business pathway.

The economic-contribution table shows employment generation at 30% and income generation at 25%, followed by MSME growth at 15%, export and market expansion at 12%, rural development at 10%, and tax contribution and formal-economy growth at 8%. The study therefore

associates women-led creative businesses with employment, household and national income, growth of small and medium enterprises, expansion of cultural products into wider markets, and support for rural and semi-urban entrepreneurship.

Digital platforms are a prominent growth factor in the study. The source table records 80% of respondents using digital platforms and 20% not using them. The findings section further states that social media and online platforms are positively related to business growth because they improve product promotion and customer reach. This observation is consistent with the literature reviewed in the synopsis, which highlights the growing role of digital entrepreneurship for women-led creative businesses.

The study also identifies continuing barriers. Financial limitations and market competition can restrict expansion and investment, while insufficient digital skills can reduce the ability of entrepreneurs to take full advantage of online promotion. At the same time, the source analysis notes that customer demand for handmade, customized, and eco-friendly products supports business growth. Creativity and innovation are described as positively related to customer attraction and market growth.

The source document records acceptance of all four stated alternative hypotheses. H1 is accepted on the basis that women entrepreneurs contribute to income and employment generation. H2 is accepted because digital platforms and social media are reported to improve customer reach and promotion. H3 is accepted because financial and marketing barriers are identified as major constraints on growth. H4 is accepted because customer preference for handmade and eco-friendly products is linked in the study to business growth and performance. These interpretations are retained without adding new statistical tests or values.

The findings broadly align with the literature presented in the synopsis. Earlier studies cited in the document emphasize the role of creativity, innovation, digital platforms, employment generation, sustainability, and business support, while also identifying finance and marketing as recurring constraints. The present study adds a combined focus on fashion, art, and handmade businesses with relevance to Maharashtra.

Conclusion

The study examined women entrepreneurs in the creative economy with special focus on fashion, art, and handmade businesses. The findings indicate that women are using creativity, traditional skills, design, and business knowledge to create income, employment, and entrepreneurial opportunities. Fashion and handmade businesses show the strongest participation in the respondent data, while art-based enterprises also provide meaningful opportunities for women-led entrepreneurship.

The study also shows that women-led creative enterprises contribute to employment generation, income generation, MSME growth, market expansion, rural development, and the formal economy. Digital platforms and social media have become important tools for promotion and customer reach, as reflected in the 80% digital-platform-use figure reported in the source. At the same time, financial limitations, market competition, digital-skill gaps, and scaling difficulties remain important challenges.

Customer preference for handmade, customized, sustainable, and eco-friendly products creates additional opportunities for women entrepreneurs. The overall evidence in the synopsis suggests that continued support through finance, entrepreneurship training, digital literacy, marketing assistance, networking, exhibitions, e-commerce, and sustainable business practices can strengthen women-led creative enterprises. With appropriate support, women entrepreneurs can further increase their contribution to economic growth, employment, innovation, financial independence, and social development.

Recommendations

The source study recommends entrepreneurship training programs, easier loan and funding facilities, exhibitions and networking events, support for digital marketing and e-commerce, skill development and digital literacy, government marketing support, stronger business networks and partnerships, continuous business-development programs, and encouragement of sustainable and eco-friendly practices. These recommendations are retained in condensed journal form because they directly address the challenges and opportunities identified in the study.

Limitations

The study is limited to women entrepreneurs involved in fashion, art, and handmade businesses and is based on a sample of 50 respondents. Its main geographical focus is Maharashtra, so the findings may not represent women entrepreneurs in other regions. The accuracy of the study depends on respondent information, and time and resource constraints limited wider data collection. The source also notes that only selected aspects such as opportunities, challenges, and digital business growth were examined in detail.

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