

Module 2: E-Commerce

Lesson 3

Women in the craft sector

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Unit 3	Women in the Craft Sector
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Module: Learning Outcomes

Module 2- E-commerce

Introduction text: *This Module is about the role of women in the craft sector. Women have played a significant role in the creation and preservation of traditional crafts, but they are also driving innovation and creativity in the field. Despite this, women face challenges such as limited resources and discrimination. However, women in the craft sector contribute to sustainable and socially just practices, and it's important to support their leadership and representation in the field.*

Knowledge

Statements of what a learner knows:

Skills

Statements of what a learner understand:

Competences

Statements of what a learner is able to do on completion of a learning process:

Introductory video

Please provide here the script for the short video.

Unit 3: Women in the craft sector

Topic 1: Historical overview

Women have played a vital role in preserving traditional crafts and passing them on from generation to generation. The craft sector has been an essential part of human culture for thousands of years, and women have been at the forefront of this sector, playing a vital role in preserving cultural heritage, promoting sustainability, and generating income.

In this module, we'll explore the historical significance of women in the craft sector, their contributions to cultural heritage and economic development, and how we can empower and support women in this vital sector



Topic 1: Historical overview

In many cultures, women were responsible for making clothes, household items, and decorative objects, using local materials and techniques passed down from their mothers and grandmothers.

These crafts were not only functional but also carried symbolic and cultural meanings, representing family, identity, and social status. Very ancient example of women and handcrafts are the Navajo weavers in the United States or the Kuna women in Panama.



Topic: 1.2 The Navajo weavers



The Navajo weavers are indigenous people who live in the southwestern United States, primarily in Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah. The Navajo women have a long history of weaving, dating back at least 300 years. In the 19th century, Navajo weavers began to incorporate commercial wool yarn into their traditional weaving techniques, creating distinctive designs and patterns. The Navajo weavers are known for their complex and intricate designs, which often include symbols and images that represent their culture and spiritual beliefs. Today, Navajo weaving is a vital part of Navajo culture and a significant source of income for Navajo communities.

Topic: 1.3 Kuna Women

The Kuna women in Panama are indigenous people who live in the San Blas Islands off the coast of Panama.

The Kuna have a long history of textile arts, including embroidery and appliqué. Kuna women traditionally wear molas, a type of blouse made from several layers of brightly colored fabric that are sewn together and then cut and appliquéed into intricate designs.

The designs often include images of animals, plants, and geometric shapes that represent Kuna mythology and beliefs. Kuna women also make other textiles, such as hammocks and bags, which are sold to tourists and provide a significant source of income for Kuna families.



Topic: 1.3 Women in modern design

In the 20th century, women began to enter the fields of art and design, using new materials, technologies, and aesthetics to create innovative and impactful works.

Women designers such as Ray Eames, Charlotte Perriand, and Zaha Hadid have left a lasting legacy in architecture, furniture, and fashion design.

An example of contemporary women designers in the craft sector are Tanya Aguiñiga, who uses traditional weaving techniques to create modern furniture, and Ilse Crawford, who emphasizes sustainability and social impact in her design practice.



Topic: 1.4 Tanya Aguiñiga

Tanya Aguiñiga is a Mexican-American artist and designer who has gained recognition for her work in the contemporary art and design worlds. She is known for her innovative use of textiles and fibers in her artwork and furniture design. Aguiñiga often incorporates traditional techniques such as weaving, knitting, and felting into her work, creating pieces that are both functional and visually striking. Her focus on working with textiles reflects her personal connection to her Mexican heritage and her interest in exploring themes of identity, migration, and belonging.

One of Aguiñiga's most significant projects is her ongoing series of "performance craft" events, in which she sets up a mobile craft studio in public spaces and invites participants to join her in creating textile-based artworks. These events often involve members of immigrant communities or other marginalized groups, providing them with a space to express themselves creatively and connect with others. Aguiñiga sees her work as a way to build community and empower individuals to take control of their own narratives. The events also challenge traditional notions of art-making, as they emphasize the process of creation and the collective experience of making art rather than the final product.

Aguiñiga's work has been exhibited in museums and galleries around the world, including the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, the Museum of Arts and Design in New York City, and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. Her work has also been featured in numerous publications, including *The New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *Artforum*. Aguiñiga has received numerous awards and grants for her work, including a United States Artists Fellowship and a Creative Capital grant.

Overall, Tanya Aguiñiga's work in the craft sector is significant for its use of traditional techniques to address contemporary social and political issues. Her focus on community building and empowering marginalized groups through art and design reflects a larger trend in the craft sector of using craft as a means of social and cultural activism. Aguiñiga's work challenges traditional notions of art-making and demonstrates the potential of craft to serve as a tool for building connections, fostering dialogue, and creating social change.

Topic: 1.5 Ilse Crawford

Ilse Crawford is a highly respected designer and creative director, renowned for her work in the fields of interior and product design. Born in Germany in 1962, Crawford studied at the School of Art and Design in Basel, Switzerland, before moving to the UK to obtain a degree in history from the University of Sussex.

Crawford's career began as a journalist, writing for a variety of publications including The Sunday Times, House & Garden, and Elle Decoration. It was during this time that she developed an interest in design, and she later became the founding editor of Elle Decoration UK. Her experience in journalism gave her a unique perspective on the design industry, which would later inform her approach to design.

Crawford's work is known for its focus on creating environments and products that are both functional and emotionally engaging. She has a deep understanding of the role that design can play in shaping people's experiences and emotions, and her work is often described as humanistic and empathetic. Crawford's approach to design emphasizes the importance of creating spaces and products that respond to the needs and desires of the people who use them.

In 2001, Crawford founded Studioilse, a multidisciplinary design studio based in London. The studio's work spans a variety of design disciplines, including interior design, product design, and branding. Crawford's vision for the studio was to create spaces and products that promote well-being and emotional connection, as she believes that design can have a profound impact on people's lives.

Ilse Crawford's work in the design sector is significant for its focus on creating spaces and products that are not only beautiful, but that also promote emotional connection and well-being. Her work demonstrates the potential of design to have a positive impact on people's lives and to contribute to a more humanistic and empathetic approach to the built environment.

Topic 2: Economic and Cultural Impact

Throughout history, women have been the primary producers and sellers of crafts, creating income and employment opportunities for themselves and their communities. Today, the craft sector is a major contributor to local and global economies, generating billions of dollars in revenue and creating millions of jobs



Topic 2.1: Economic impact

The craft sector is a significant contributor to the global economy, with estimates suggesting that it is worth hundreds of billions of dollars annually. Women play a critical role in this sector, both as producers of crafts and as consumers. According to the United Nations, women make up the majority of the world's informal economy, and the craft sector is no exception. Women artisans and craftspeople are often responsible for the majority of production in this sector, especially in developing countries.

In many cases, the income generated by women in the craft sector provides a vital source of financial support for their families and communities. This income can be especially important in areas where other economic opportunities are limited, such as rural or impoverished regions. Women in the craft sector often use their earnings to invest in education and healthcare for themselves and their families, as well as to support local businesses and community development projects.

Despite the significant economic contributions of women in the craft sector, they continue to face a number of challenges, including unequal pay, lack of access to resources and training, and limited opportunities for advancement. Addressing these challenges and promoting the economic empowerment of women in the craft sector is crucial for creating more sustainable and equitable economic growth. By supporting women's entrepreneurship and promoting their access to markets, financing, and training, we can help to unlock the full economic potential of the craft sector and promote more inclusive and equitable economic development.

Topic 2.2: Cultural impact

The craft sector has a long history of cultural significance, with crafts often being tied to specific cultural traditions and practices. Women have played a significant role in this history, with many cultural crafts being passed down from generation to generation through women's social and cultural networks.

Women's contributions to the craft sector have helped to preserve and promote cultural traditions and practices, as well as to create new ones. Through their work as artisans and craftspeople, women have helped to create and maintain cultural heritage and identity, often by incorporating traditional techniques and materials into their work.

In addition to their role in preserving cultural traditions, women in the craft sector have also been agents of cultural change and innovation. By adapting traditional crafts to new contexts and exploring new techniques and materials, women have helped to create new cultural expressions and identities.

The cultural impact of women in the craft sector is not limited to their work as producers of crafts, however. Women are also significant consumers of crafts, and their purchasing decisions can have a significant impact on the cultural value and significance of crafts. By supporting women artisans and craftspeople and promoting the value of their work, we can help to ensure that cultural traditions and practices are preserved and celebrated for generations to come.

Topic 3: Woman in sustainable crafts

Women play a crucial role in sustainable crafts by incorporating sustainable practices into their work, promoting environmental awareness and conservation, and advocating for social and economic justice.



Topic 3.1: How women support sustainable crafts

Using Sustainable Materials: Women in sustainable crafts often prioritize the use of environmentally friendly and sustainable materials, such as natural fibers, recycled materials, and low-impact dyes. By using these materials, they reduce the environmental impact of their work and promote sustainable production practices.

Promoting Local Economies: Women in sustainable crafts often work with local materials and producers, promoting the growth of local economies and supporting small-scale producers. This approach helps to reduce the environmental impact of production and supports sustainable economic development.

Topic 3.1: How women support sustainable crafts

Advocating for Social Justice: Women in sustainable crafts often use their work as a platform for advocacy and activism, raising awareness about social and economic issues and advocating for justice and equity. This includes advocating for fair labor practices, promoting women's economic empowerment, and advocating for environmental conservation and protection.

Fostering Community: Women in sustainable crafts often work in collective and cooperative settings, fostering a sense of community and promoting the sharing of skills and knowledge. This approach helps to build resilience and support sustainable practices.

Topic 4: Challenges Faced by Women in the Craft Sector

Despite their important contributions to the craft sector, women face a number of challenges that can hinder their ability to succeed and thrive. These challenges are significant, but with support and advocacy, women in the craft sector can overcome them and achieve success and recognition for their important contributions to the cultural and economic landscape.



Topic 4.1: Challenges Faced by Women in the Craft Sector

Gender Bias and Discrimination: Women in the craft sector often face gender bias and discrimination, which can limit their opportunities for employment, recognition, and advancement. This can include unequal pay, limited access to training and resources, and a lack of representation in leadership positions.

Limited Access to Resources: Women in the craft sector often face limited access to resources such as funding, raw materials, and tools, which can hinder their ability to start and grow their businesses. This is especially true for women in developing countries and marginalized communities, who may face additional barriers to accessing these resources.

Topic 4.1: Challenges Faced by Women in the Craft Sector

Lack of Visibility and Recognition: Women's contributions to the craft sector are often undervalued and overlooked, with their work being seen as "craft" rather than fine art. This can limit their visibility and recognition, making it difficult for them to access markets and gain the recognition they deserve.

Balancing Work and Family Responsibilities: Many women in the craft sector face the challenge of balancing work and family responsibilities, which can limit their ability to dedicate time and resources to their craft. This can be especially challenging for women who live in rural areas or who lack access to affordable childcare and other support services.

Limited Market Access: Women in the craft sector often face limited market access, with their products being undervalued or overlooked by larger retailers and markets. This can make it difficult for them to earn a living wage and grow their businesses.

Topic 5: Women in Craft Leadership

Women are breaking barriers and transforming the sector by bringing new perspectives, advocating for social and environmental justice, and empowering women artisans. Women are playing a vital role in transforming the craft sector and promoting a more just, sustainable, and equitable world. Their contributions are helping to empower women artisans, promote innovation and collaboration, and create a more vibrant and diverse cultural landscape.



Topic 5.1: How women contribute in Craft Leadership

Advocating for Social and Environmental Justice: Women in crafts leadership are using their platforms to raise awareness about social and environmental issues and advocate for change. This includes advocating for fair labor practices, promoting sustainable production practices, and advocating for the protection of natural resources and biodiversity.

Empowering Women Artisans: Women in crafts leadership are working to empower women artisans by providing training, resources, and support to help them start and grow their businesses. This includes providing access to funding, tools, and materials, as well as training in business management and marketing.

Topic 5.1: How women contribute in Craft Leadership

Promoting Innovation and Collaboration: Women in crafts leadership are promoting innovation and collaboration by bringing together artisans, designers, and other stakeholders to share skills and knowledge and create new products and designs. This approach helps to promote creativity and foster a sense of community and collaboration within the craft sector.

Advocating for Women's Rights and Gender Equality: Women in crafts leadership are advocating for women's rights and gender equality, working to eliminate gender-based discrimination and promote women's economic empowerment. This includes advocating for equal pay, promoting women's leadership and representation in the sector, and advocating for policies and programs that support women's economic and social empowerment.

Transforming the Sector: Women in crafts leadership are transforming the craft sector by challenging traditional notions of craft and promoting new approaches to production, design, and marketing. This includes incorporating new technologies and sustainable practices, promoting diversity and inclusion, and challenging gender stereotypes and biases within the sector.

Learning Activity 1: Women in the Craft Sector

Educational goal	Type of activity	Content	Additional materials
<p>To understand the contributions, challenges, and impact of women in the craft sector.</p>	<p>Individual exercise / Sharing with others</p>	<p>Create a mind map or concept map that visually represents the key themes and ideas related to women in the craft sector.</p> <p>Choose one woman that inspires you in this context, and research more about her background, work, and contributions to the craft sector.</p> <p>Write a reflection on the importance of women in the craft sector and the ways in which their work contributes to sustainability, cultural preservation, and social justice. Share your work.</p>	<p>Computer or mobile device, internet connection, notebook or paper, pen or pencil.</p>

Evaluation

Question 1:

How are women in crafts leadership promoting innovation and collaboration?

- a) By working only with women artisans.
- b) By incorporating new technologies and sustainable practices.
- c) By refusing to adapt to new ideas and techniques.
- d) By working alone and not sharing skills or knowledge.

Correct answer: b) By incorporating new technologies and sustainable practices.

Question 2:

What is the economic impact of women's participation in the craft sector?

- a) It has no impact on the economy.
- b) It provides employment opportunities for women and generates income.
- c) It is only essential for the cultural value of the craft.
- d) It has a negative impact on the environment.

Correct answer: b) It provides employment opportunities for women and generates income.

Question 3:

What are some of the challenges faced by women in the craft sector?

- a) Limited access to training and resources.
- b) Lack of recognition and support.
- c) Gender-based discrimination and bias.
- d) All of the above.

Correct answer: d) All of the above.

Question 4:

What is the role of women in sustainable crafts?

- a) To promote the use of non-renewable resources in crafting.
- b) To ensure that crafts are produced without regard to the environment.
- c) To promote the use of sustainable practices and materials in crafting.
- d) To promote waste and pollution in the craft sector.

Correct answer: c) To promote the use of sustainable practices and materials in crafting.

Summary

- Women have played a significant role in the craft sector throughout history, often using their skills to support themselves and their families.
- Women continue to make important contributions to the craft sector today, both in traditional crafts and in innovative new forms of craft.
- Women's participation in the craft sector has important economic and cultural impacts, providing employment opportunities and preserving traditional knowledge and skills.
- However, women in the craft sector also face significant challenges, including limited access to training and resources, gender-based discrimination, and lack of recognition and support.
- Women are also leading the way in promoting sustainability and social justice in the craft sector, through their work in promoting sustainable practices and materials and in collaborating with other artisans.
- To promote greater gender equality in the craft sector, it is important to support women's leadership and representation, and to work to overcome the barriers and challenges that women face.

References

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- "Ilse Crawford." Studioilse. <https://www.studioilse.com/>.
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- "Women's Handicrafts: Potential for Sustainable Rural Development." International Labour Organization. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---ifp_skills/documents/publication/wcms_118329.pdf.
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