

# Technology Adoption Among Women Crochet Entrepreneurs

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**Introduction and Background** Artisan entrepreneurs combine creative vision with traditional manufacturing and small-scale production techniques [17]. Today's artisan entrepreneurs have access to a broad range of technologies. Artisan entrepreneurship has increased in the last decade due to a shift to an entrepreneurial economy following the 2008 global economic crisis, the increased social value of the do-it-yourself lifestyle resulting from the "Makers Movement," the proliferation of online social networks, and the affordability of creative tools [1, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18].

Artisan entrepreneurs who successfully navigate online access to the global marketplace are more likely to sustain their businesses [4]. Increasing the success of artisan entrepreneurial ventures may impact local communities positively through wealth and job creation [5, 6]. Bouette and Magee's typology of artisan entrepreneurs identifies three groups. The "Artisans" are "driven by the desire to derive a sustainable living from their craft" but also "had strong internal barriers to traditional growth."



Crochet is an artisan craft that can only be produced by hand. While crochet artisan entrepreneurship relies on traditional handiwork, it exists in the context of new and rapidly changing technologies including online marketplaces and social networks, digital photography and videography, and 3D printed tools.

### Research Question and Methods

How do crochet artisan entrepreneurs navigate the process of introducing new technologies into their businesses?

A qualitative, collective case study approach [3, 7] was used. A purposeful, criterion sample [3] of five women-identified owners of home-based crochet artisan microbusinesses who were "Artisans" in Bouette and Magee's typology was selected through the author's professional networks. Semi-structured interviews were conducted over Skype in February, 2018 using a postmodern approach [15].

### Participants, Results, and Case Vignettes

Participants ranged in age from 40-56. Their businesses had been operating for five to ten years. Each participant earned at least 85% of her personal income from the business; however, depending on her marital status and spousal income, the percentage of household income from the business ranged from 10% to 100%. Three participants were sole proprietors and two owned limited liability companies.

Angela looks for automation or technologies to "save time, make things easier to do without doing them by hand, or [to] add value" for her customers. She learns through peer-to-peer support in Facebook "Mastermind groups where people share information...and ask questions and help one another out."

Diane sees her "biggest hurdle [as] actually understanding all the technology that is available." Her technology decisions are based on "word-of-mouth, networking, and finding out what's been working for other people, where their problems have been, and seeing how much their business model might be like mine." To learn to use technologies she has adopted, Diane seeks out "courses at conferences or online, short tutorials." If that doesn't work, she reads through the manuals.



Elizabeth considers herself "to be technically challenged." Her selection process is "almost a hundred percent [based on] somebody I know using [the technology] successfully and telling me how it would help me." Elizabeth learns to use new technology through "trial and error." She "keep[s] digging at it until it works [and] without trying to wear out my welcome, asking the people who recommended it in the first place what specifically they think is the best thing for me to do. And, when all else fails, YouTube."

Faelwyn enjoys adopting new technologies in her personal life, but takes a more conservative approach in business because "it's really easy to...jump on every bandwagon." She wants to "see if I can legitimately expect to make the money back that I'm going to spend on it." She learns by "just playing with it and whenever I want to do something, I'll Google 'how do I do this with this specific thing' and in finding the answer to that question, I learn 20 other things...I pretty much just stumble through it. I'm not a big tutorial person... I don't... read books or manuals on it, I just kind of fake it 'til I make it."

Gillian weighs the "combination of price and whether or not it will save me time, or, if it will help me promote my business" before adopting a technology. She learns by "just div[ing] in and play[ing] with it."



### Conclusion

The artisan microentrepreneurs interviewed used different criteria for determining whether new technologies should be adopted into their businesses. While Angela primarily focused on time-saving technologies and Faelwyn sought technologies to increase her income potential, Gillian weighed the investment cost against the potential to save time while promoting her business. Diane and Elizabeth were less likely to seek new technologies to solve business problems and relied on industry peers to make recommendations before investing in new technologies. Angela and Elizabeth preferred informal, peer-to-peer learning while Diane favored learning through traditional methods such as structured courses or manuals. Faelwyn and Gillian were the most confident about technology and enjoyed learning through hands-on engagement with new tools.

References available at <https://bit.ly/2URTnmP>  
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