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## Sustainable Innovation in Fashion: Analysing ReCharkha's Eco-Friendly Business Model

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### Abstract

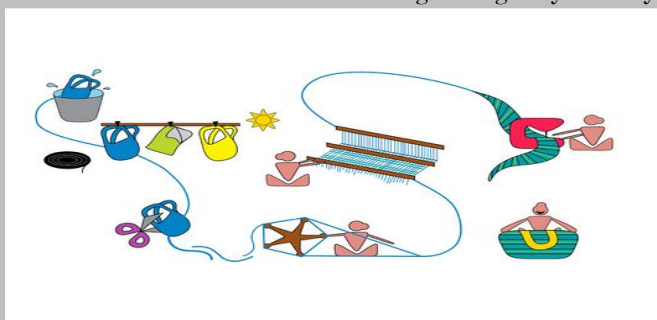
The fashion industry faces mounting pressure to address its environmental and social impacts, prompting innovative business models that prioritize sustainability. This study examines ReCharkha, an Indian eco-friendly fashion initiative, to analyze its sustainable business model centred on upcycling waste materials into high-value textile products. The research investigates ReCharkha's upcycling techniques, such as transforming plastic waste and textile scraps into handwoven fabrics, and evaluates their environmental benefits, including reductions in waste and carbon emissions. Additionally, the study explores ReCharkha's societal contributions, such as empowering local artisans through skill development and providing economic opportunities in underserved communities. There is a rising need for sustainable alternatives because the fashion sector is one of the biggest causes of environmental deterioration. The sustainable fashion business model of ReCharkha is examined in this study, with particular attention paid to its creative use of upcycling and the concepts of the circular economy. Findings reveal that ReCharkha's model aligns with circular economy principles, significantly lowering environmental footprints while fostering social equity. However, challenges like scalability and cost competitiveness persist. This research contributes to the discourse on sustainable fashion by highlighting practical of upcycling and offering insights for policymakers and entrepreneurs aiming to advance eco-friendly business practices.

The results show that reCharkha's concept empowers local people by creating jobs and promoting ethical production methods, in addition to promoting environmental sustainability. In the paper's conclusion, which also provides information on how other businesses might use comparable procedures to support sustainable development a circular economy.

**Keywords:** Sustainable fashion, up cycling, circular economy, Environmental Sustainability, ReCharkha, eco-friendly business practices, Carbon Emission, Environmental footprint.

### Introduction

ReCharkha is an innovative social enterprise that tackles socioeconomic and environmental issues by fusing traditional craftsmanship with sustainable approaches. ReCharkha, which was founded with the goal of empowering rural and tribal communities while also promoting environmental conservation, uses a creative business strategy that blends the traditional handloom weaving and spinning wheel (charkha) skills with the upcycling of plastic trash. It produces superior, eco-friendly goods while conserving cultural heritage with the incorporation of traditional handloom weaving techniques. This strategy not only lessens the impact on the environment but also encourages the resurgence of traditional crafts. With an emphasis on how reCharkha supports local craftsmanship, encourages environmental stewardship, and generates income for underserved communities, this research study examines the company's sustainable business methods. ReCharkha's main goals are to lessen the environmental impact of plastic trash and provide women artisans in rural and tribal communities with sustainable means of subsistence. ReCharkha is able to upcycle non-biodegradable plastic trash into handmade, environmentally friendly goods like utility items, home décor, and fashion accessories. In addition to being ecologically friendly, these goods help to revive India's long-standing, important cultural practice of traditional handloom and textile handicraft.



In order to lessen landfill waste and the total carbon footprint, reCharkha makes sure that garbage is converted into useful resources. It also encourages material reuse and recycling, which is in line with international initiatives to lessen plastic pollution. Additionally, the incorporation of local populations, particularly women, in the production process is a key component of reCharkha's business strategy, which creates job possibilities and empowers those who are frequently left out of the official economy. ReCharkha is a prime example of how sustainable business practices can bring about positive change through a combination of product innovation, social effect, and environmental sensitivity. In addition to manufacturing environmentally friendly goods, the company interacts and educates customers about the value of sustainability. ReCharkha aims to increase public understanding of the importance of environmental preservation and the worth of traditional crafts by providing workshops, immersive tours, and other educational programs and Developing Conscientious Customers By providing eco-friendly goods and encouraging sustainable living, ReCharkha informs and motivates customers to make decisions that benefit the environment. Every purchase encourages rural women artisans and promotes sustainable living.



### Objectives

1. Evaluate the Sustainability Framework of reCharkha's Business Model
2. To explore and analyze the methods and techniques used in reCharkha's upcycling processes.
3. To examine the environmental and societal impacts of reCharkha across various aspects.

### Research Methodology and Data Collection

A descriptive research methodology has been used for this research paper. This paper is totally based on secondary data. Secondary data has collected from ReCharkha website, journals, Articles & Newspapers.

- **ReCharkha's Upcycling Techniques:**

Upcycling methods to convert non-biodegradable plastic waste into functional and stylish products. Their techniques blend traditional craftsmanship with environmental conservation and social empowerment. Here's a detailed breakdown of their approach:

Step	Method	Environmental Benefits
<b>Collection</b>	Community driven waste Collection	Reduces landfill input
<b>Cleaning</b>	Biodegradable soaps, Manual drying	Low water and energy use
<b>Processing</b>	Manual strip-cutting , No chemical treatment	No emissions or toxins
<b>Weaving</b>	Traditional charkhas and handloom	Zero electricity usage
<b>Product Making</b>	Handmade, minimal resources use	Sustains artisanship and local jobs.

- **Impact of reCharkha Environment and Society :**

Aspects	Environmental Impact	Societal Impact
<b>Waste Management</b>	Diverts plastics from landfills	Educates communities on waste reduction
<b>Carbon Emissions</b>	Minimise carbon footprint	Promotes low-energy production models
<b>Resources Use</b>	Reduces water, Chemical, and energy usage	Develops local, sustainable economies.
<b>Livelihood</b>	Not directly Environmental	Create jobs for marginalized Groups
<b>Gender Empowerment</b>	Indirectly through Women-led Climate action	Strengthens rural women's social status
<b>Cultural Impact</b>	Preserves traditional eco-friendly craft	Revives heritage skills among artisans

ReCharkha has a deeply positive environmental and societal impact, blending grassroots ecological action with socio-economic empowerment.

It shows that sustainable businesses can simultaneously heal the planet and uplift vulnerable communities — but scaling this impact will require maintaining authenticity while expanding smartly.

- **Economical Sustainability :**

Elements	Description
<b>Revenue through product sale</b>	Generate income through the sale of bag, accessories, home décor and lifestyle products made up upcycled fabric.
<b>Corporate partnerships</b>	Offer sustainable gifting solutions , Creating additional revenue streams.
<b>Workshop and Eco-education</b>	Conduct paid workshop and awareness programs to educate and generate additional income.
<b>Self sustaining model</b>	Balanced profitability with purpose to ensure the organization can sustain and growth without relying heavily or donations.
<b>Scalable community model</b>	Train more artisan groups progressively to expand production in decentralised and scalable manner.

Since its launch in 2015, reCharkha's revenue has increased significantly. The following is the financial trajectory of the company:

- 2015-2016: ₹5 lakh
- 2016-2017: ₹14 lakh
- 2019-2020: ₹80 lakh
- 2021-2022: ₹1.2 crore
- 2022-2023: ₹2 crore

This steady expansion is a result of reCharkha's successful strategy of turning waste plastic into economically feasible goods.

All things considered, the financial results of reCharkha demonstrate how sustainable company methods can also effectively boost revenue.

### Finding

The investigation into reCharkha's sustainable business practices has uncovered number of notable findings regarding the effectiveness and impact of their activities. The findings highlight the effectiveness with which the company weaves sustainability into its core business model, profoundly impacting the local ecosystem and community.

1. **Effective Upcycling Techniques:** ReCharkha employs innovative upcycling methods, transforming discarded materials such as plastic waste and textile scraps into high-value, handwoven fabrics. These techniques significantly reduce textile waste, with the company diverting substantial volumes of waste from landfills annually.
2. **Environmental Benefits:** The business model aligns with circular economy principles, resulting in measurable environmental gains. ReCharkha's processes reduce water consumption and carbon emissions compared to conventional textile production. For instance, upcycling minimizes the need for virgin materials, lowering the ecological footprint of its products.
3. **Social Empowerment:** ReCharkha fosters social equity by empowering local artisans, particularly in underserved communities. Through skill development programs, artisans are trained in sustainable craftsmanship, enhancing their livelihoods. The initiative provides stable economic opportunities, contributing to poverty alleviation and gender empowerment, as many artisans are women.
4. **Cultural Preservation:** By integrating traditional handweaving techniques into its production, ReCharkha preserves India's cultural heritage while modernizing it for contemporary markets. This approach enhances the value of artisanal work and promotes sustainable consumption.
5. **Potential for Replication:** The model offers valuable insights for other businesses in emerging markets. ReCharkha's integration of upcycling, community engagement, and circular economy principles serves as a replicable framework for entrepreneurs and policymakers aiming to promote sustainable fashion.

### Suggestions

1. **Expand Product Diversification Using Local Materials:** While ReCharkha focuses on upcycled plastic, incorporating other sustainable materials like organic cotton or agricultural waste fibers could broaden its appeal. This aligns with India's rich textile heritage and the growing demand for eco-friendly materials, as noted in sustainable fashion startups in India.
2. **Strengthen Artisan Empowerment through Skill Development:** ReCharkha's model employs rural women artisans, but investing in advanced training programs for innovative weaving techniques or product design could enhance product quality and market competitiveness. This supports the social sustainability aspect of empowering local communities.
3. **Implement Circular Economy Practices:** ReCharkha could introduce a take-back or repair program to extend the lifecycle of its products, aligning with circular economy principles gaining traction in the fashion industry. This could reduce waste , as highlighted in sustainable fashion research.
4. **Collaborate with Influencers and Celebrities:** Partnering with Indian influencers or celebrities to promote ReCharkha's upcycled products can boost brand visibility and consumer awareness, especially among younger demographics like Gen Z. This strategy has proven effective in India's sustainable fashion market, where influencers drive eco-conscious purchasing.

5. **Develop Affordable Premium Lines:** To address the niche market challenge and higher pricing (20-30% above regular brands), ReCharkha could create a budget-friendly premium line using standardized designs to lower production costs while maintaining quality. This would make sustainable fashion more accessible, responding to consumer demand for affordable eco-friendly options.

## Conclusion

ReCharkha's eco-friendly business model exemplifies how sustainable innovation can transform the fashion industry by prioritizing environmental responsibility and social impact. Through its commitment to upcycling, use of eco-friendly materials, and promotion of traditional craftsmanship, ReCharkha addresses critical challenges like textile waste and carbon emissions while fostering ethical production practices. By integrating circular economy principles and engaging local artisans, the brand not only reduces its ecological footprint but also creates economic opportunities and preserves cultural heritage. However, challenges such as scalability, cost management, and consumer awareness remain. ReCharkha's approach demonstrates that sustainable fashion is not just a trend but a viable path forward, inspiring other brands to adopt innovative, planet-positive models. Continued efforts in education, transparency, and technological advancements will be crucial to amplify its impact and drive systemic change in the industry.

In conclusion, reCharkha's creative approach to sustainable business practices sets an example for other companies, demonstrating that social impact and environmental responsibility can coexist with business expansion and profitability. Future studies could examine how to scale these practices while boosting their environmental and social contributions, opening the door to a more ethical and sustainable business environment.

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## Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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