

Master Arts, Culture and Society - Master Thesis (CC4050)

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Master Thesis

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Fig. 1. Alternative front cover for this Master Thesis. Illustration by author of this article. An edited version of this image was used to promote the call for participants through Instagram.

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Introduction and research question

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While crafts practices have never ceased to exist as a whole, there have been historical patterns in the decline and widespread re-discovery of crafts. Crafts have been popularized in recent years, both by craftspeople as well companies such as crafts tool suppliers (Jakob, 2012) and this era has even been marked the 'third wave' of the activistic crafts movement in the global West (Luckman, 2015; Hofverberg et al., 2017). The reason for this new interest in crafting has been attributed to wanting to perform well simply for the sake of doing good work (Sennett, 2008); wanting to do something more hands-on and satisfactory than an office job (Ocejo, 2017); and a combined multitude of reasons such as wanting to express oneself creatively, finding an audience that appreciates the craftsperson, enjoying social connections in the respective craft community (Jakob, 2012), feelings of nostalgia for the analogue, advocating for more appreciation for traditionally unpaid labour by women, the easy access to resources with the popular use of the internet, and the rise of *craftivism* or crafts-based activism (Luckman, 2013). Another dimension to this deliberate return to crafting in recent years has been attributed to efforts to the experienced importance of sustainability in not only economic or social terms, but also ecological: craftivism argues for empowering workers, as well as taking responsibility for the environment (Hofverberg et al., 2017).

At the time the aforementioned authors produced their research, surely, they had not anticipated crafts to get popularized even further to the degree it has now, or at least not the conditions under which it happened. The worldwide spread of the COVID-19 virus in 2020, and the lockdown that was put into effect in many countries to help prevent spread of the virus, has been an incentive for many to delve into crafts (Fairley, 2020). Many people – largely those without jobs labelled 'essential' by their own governments – have suddenly ended up with more free time to use at home. As the import of (and thus, availability of) goods originating from countries that are in a lockdown has become limited, it makes sense that more consumers turn to locally produced items, re-usable goods and even create things themselves. In effect, there has been a surge in seeking and developing creative, hands-on hobbies to pass time (Machemer, 2020) and to deal with isolation when attempting to perform social distancing (Wood, 2020). Arts and crafts activities are encouraged to children and adults to positively stimulate the brain, which is especially needed in the pandemic: being occupied with crafting keeps you focused and forms a good distraction when needing to do something at home (McKeever, 2020). Some people state that they are finally able to pick up a hobby they couldn't before due to duties to fulfil in the ever so rushed everyday life. Now, there is finally time – for those with the time and other means, that is – to do something with their niche interest and start making (Andersen, 2020). Not just experienced craftspeople, but also many who are newly

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introduced to sewing, have taken it upon themselves to make fabric, washable face masks (Wood, 2020). For the Netherlands, there are additional incentives for people to start sewing masks, as the Dutch government has made wearing non-medical grade face masks mandatory in public transport per June 1, and released a tutorial for making fabric versions (Rijksoverheid, 2020).

The paragraphs above address the relevance to this research on a societal base: we see a movement in which crafts is being repopularized, which is not a process that stands on its own, but is shaped by broader phenomena and shifts in the public awareness of things such as personal connections and environmental sustainability. Of course, the crafts activities that people delve into during the pandemic are still discussed as predominantly hobbies that were somewhat borne out of unprecedented circumstances. It is good to consider experiences of craftspeople beyond the realm of learning a craft and making things, but also to look at the business decisions of craftspeople who try to sell their own handmade works. The e-commerce platform of Etsy (etsy.com), intended for vintage and handmade products, offers an international market for these kinds of sellers.

This research theme was in part inspired by my own involvement with an Etsy shop that I opened in 2019. I noticed that I was not informed on how running an Etsy shop was like for other Dutch sellers, as well as how business decisions are made by vendors and the owners of the Etsy company. My knowledge was limited to my own experience and not yet well-informed by literature and empirical research. I also initiated this research because existing studies on Etsy, while informative, have described the platform by its technologies that are from years ago, and texts such as that of Jakob (2012) have addressed how new changes in Etsy's system and business interests lead to critique from its sellers. It is thus understandable that new technologies and policies have been introduced on etsy.com in the meantime, and that these have changed or shaped the way Etsy is perceived and enjoyed by sellers. Another thing that is missing in academic studies on Etsy, is a focus on shops and practices based in European countries. This is odd, considering the platform and the re-emerging trend in crafts is described as a phenomenon characteristic for the global West (Luckman, 2015), but throughout the literature on Etsy, there is few mention of markets in any specific Western countries aside from the United States and the United Kingdom. I argue that is important to look at the case of one particular country that is formerly underrepresented in literature, in order to be able to find differences to the Etsy marketplace in the US and possibly unravel discussions that do not take place in US-focused studies.

I focus on Etsy crafts sellers located in the Netherlands specifically, to compare the Dutch – and by extent, European – context to that of situations in the United States, which is where the company is based. In 2018, the Netherlands ranked third in Europe for its high usage of e-commerce

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platforms - 80% reported to make use of online markets that year, as opposed to the European average of 60% (De Best, 2019). In 2019, consumers in the Netherlands spent around 25.8 billion euros on online retail. The Netherlands has developed a domestic e-commerce market with platforms such as bol.com and Coolblue, and with no or few presence of the corporation Amazon. Dutch buyers are less likely than some other European countries to buy products from foreign e-commerce sellers for this reason (De Best, 2020). These numbers, of course, do not specifically focus on sellers, nor on crafts, handmade, DIY goods and the likes.

Research question and overview

To sum up, there is a lack of studies on Etsy sellers outside of a US-centric context, the various motivations to craft are central in literature on the theme, and digital crafts economies are especially relevant nowadays. I wonder what makes Dutch craftspeople decide to be (and stay) using Etsy and what their experiences are with running a shop on it. My research questions are as follows:

‘What are the personal motives of Dutch craftspeople to create their products and sell those via Etsy? And how do they draw boundaries between amateurism and professionalism on the platform and in their own business practices?’

This research offers insight into the relationship between online marketplaces, boundary-drawing between what is considered amateur or professional, and people’s motivations to make and sell crafts. In relation to professionalization and personal motives to create and sell, the issue of upscaling production, whilst keeping something a ‘craft’, is also a central theme in the research. The empirical research for this thesis is conducted through semi-structured interviews with 12 Netherlands-based Etsy shop owners (Appendix A) and qualitative analysis of the data. During the research, the global implications of the virus COVID-19 and its resulting counter-measurement policies took place. This caused interviews to take place at long distance by phone and video calls. It also resulted in a larger part of the thesis work to take place from home as opposed to the university, which was an inconvenience and caused a delay in the progress of data gathering and analysis. The pandemic was also considered in the interview questions, as it can have implications for the course of participants’ health and their Etsy businesses. While the issue is not a main focus of this research, the theme was discussed by participants in terms of shipment restrictions, changes in sales, free time, et cetera.

In the theoretical section following this, I first share what the literature tries to explain are the motivations that drive craftspeople. I then move onto explaining the positives and negatives that come into play in making use of the platform of Etsy. Then, I address the question of amateurism and

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professionalism on the platform of Etsy and on crafts as a whole. After that, I explain the methodological measures taken for this qualitative research. Then I discuss the operationalization of interviews and reflect a bit on them. I end the methodological section by explaining how I approached data analysis. In the chapter for results, I first discuss a few general findings that were not elaborate enough to dedicate a longer. Then, the findings are divided by four dimensions: feeling rewarded and valuing one's crafts; experiences of Dutch craftspeople on Etsy on the platform itself; the dimension of socializing; and lastly, boundary drawing. In the conclusion I summarize these findings and sometimes reflect on how some results differed or resembled the literature. I also share limitations to the research and recommendations for future studies. Lastly, I add some final notes to thank people involved in this research.

Crafts and motivations for making crafts

It is important to first form a well-informed definition of craft. A much-cited book is *The Craftsman* by Richard Sennett (2008), in which he astutely notices how it is difficult to translate crafts into different languages. He also explores the three dimensions of judgment, skill, and motivation, all which concern craft. A person becoming skilled over time in what they do habitually is viewed by the author as an innate, inevitable process, as we learn from the practices we are accustomed to doing. The same goes for what he refers to as judgment or *human judgment*: critically thinking about the quality and aesthetic value of a work, even whilst producing it, is a natural act for humans, which contributes to a greater enjoyment of crafts. Sennett characterizes craftsmanship by the desire to perform well at a job for its own sake – motivation is thereby shaped by the desire to be skilled. The author sees this engagement as representative of an ancient human nature. At the same time, this natural tendency to craft had also been obstructed throughout modern history because of capitalism. Factors obstructing people from feeling enjoyment in their work include the mechanization of the workplace, and ideologies that presuppose workers must either contribute to society or compete with others. The introduction of robots, as well as these cooperative and competitive incentives imposed on humans have caused crafts to be undermined, he argues, because people are not actively encouraged to just produce for the production in itself and be conscious of what they are doing.

The Marxist concept of alienation comes into play here. Alienation, when discussed in regard to capitalism, is the position of the worker to their work. It is called this way because the labour is objectified and the worker is not connected to what they produce: they produce solely for a wage and for a commercial object of which the worker cannot overview the full production process. (Tucker, 1978). In crafts, the worker is moved by motivation, commitment and the pursuit of practicing and improving a skill and is thus not removed from their labour in this way. The Arts and Crafts movement and the DIY movement (do-it-yourself), starting in respectively the late 19th and the late 20th Century, have been a direct response to alienation felt in capitalism. The DIY movement (often related to punk and anarchist communities) was informed by Marxist theory and in turn, celebrated voluntary handmade production which made labour valuable for the person committing to it. While starting in different eras, both the Arts and Crafts movement as 'DIY' were initiated as an alternative to the division of labour that was created under capitalist conditions. (Lowndes, 2016; Krugh, 2014; Cumming & Kaplan, 1991). In both movements, crafts are advocated for, in order for workers to no longer feel alienated over their labour, or to gain 'material consciousness' (Sennett, 2008: p. 119).

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Sennett illustrates that there can be endless types of professions in crafts: it can be that of a goldsmith, carpenter, potter, or something less traditional such as a programmer. There are many types of craftwork, but what unites them all is the crafters' motivation for the work itself, devotion to do work of high quality, and this work in turn offers value and satisfaction to the craftsman (Sennett, 2008). While this sounds rewarding to the worker, craftsmanship is very time-costly labour and it is more beneficial to make use of production partners to relieve workload. Additionally, many craftspeople cannot price their products in such a way that their labour is valued fairly in economic terms. Luckman (2015) describes the issue as being on two ends of a spectrum: there is the population of customers, who want to purchase luxury goods such as decorative items at an affordable price point, while craftspeople work with expensive materials and put a lot of labour in the creation of their products. It is therefore difficult to balance between what the consumer wants and what the craftsman deserves to earn. It is not uncommon for craftspeople to eventually outsource part of the production processes to factories or other parties to save on costs, time, and effort, which could otherwise become too demanding. This however leads to a division of labour and allows for faster, larger scale production – thereby working towards the capitalistic outcome, which is what proponents of crafting seek to counter. (Krugh, 2014; Jakob, 2012).

For me to argue that commitment to becoming skilled, feeling rewarded by the efforts put into your own work, or an attempt to partake in markets alternative to capitalistic ones, are the main determining factors of what it means to be a craftsman, would of course be too general and ignores newer understandings of crafts. Ocejo (2017) studies four different kinds of crafts which have by tradition been perceived as ones executed by the working class (he interviewed distillers, barbers, bartenders, and butchers), but have in recent years been enjoyed by middle class people. All of these jobs are characterized by high-skill, manual labour. Ocejo tries to find out what motivates these people to get trained in jobs formerly seen as low status. His results find various motivations and trends that explain this phenomenon, which can mainly be summed up as shifts in patterns of taste of consumers, processes of gentrification which stimulate aestheticizing low-status things in order to make them marketable, and the idea of what constitutes 'good' jobs has changed. While these new groups of craftspeople from his study promote the idea of democratized opportunities for careers and entrepreneurship in your own niche, the socioeconomic backgrounds of said craftspeople are actually not very diverse and are already in a better position than those who do not have the 'choice' (due to lack of resources, time, status) to do anything but a labour-intensive, working class job. 'Crafts' and 'authenticity' are used to sell one's own goods or services, because this makes consumers inclined to pay more. Additionally, these new, gentrified forms of craftsmanship are, as

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opposed to traditional working class jobs, performed by people who take on multiple roles: next to making a good or serving customers, these 'hip' craftspeople also position themselves as brand owners who partake in marketing and networking among companies (Ocejo, 2017). Ocejo thus shows that crafts are no longer by definition removed from capitalistic markets. His research also looks at shops which depend on labour done by a *collective* of people, so whereas people might want to pursue skilled work for personal enjoyment, this does not mean the job is solitary. An important distinction between his and my study, though, is that he mainly studied craftspeople who have established a successful business. In my research, however, this recognition in the field, or economic profit, is not a given for participants, of whom not all have Etsy as their primary job.

The positives and negatives of Etsy

Etsy, intended for mainly trading vintage goods and crafts, has obviously been thriving over the years: in 2018, the platform had over 39 million buyers and 2,1 million sellers that were active within those 12 months, whereas in 2012 those groups consisted of respectively 9,3 million and 830,000 users (Clement, 2019b; 2019c). However, a growth in the crafts world does not per se lead to success for all craftspeople. A good example of a debate surrounding this issue would be in 2011, when Etsy promoted itself as a contributor to a large increase in sales for crafts sellers (Jakob, 2012). However, when looking closer at the statistics for what kind of sales were made on the platform, it becomes apparent that the profit accounts for mainly craft supplies, rather than finished products made by craftspeople. Creative Etsy sellers were dissatisfied with not being represented in this economic growth despite the claims of the owners of the online marketplace (Jakob, 2012). Another criticism among sellers was that they did not see Etsy providing enough means for shop owners to grow in their business and develop a more professional status (Fuller et al., 2013; Jakob, 2012).

Etsy is a US-based, but supposedly internationally oriented, online marketplace where handmade, vintage, and supply products are sold and bought. In its mission statement, Etsy describes itself as "a place where creativity lives and thrives because it's powered by people" and as a platform with a low threshold by stating that it built "a place where creativity lives and thrives because it's powered by people" (Etsy, n.d.-a). However, it is not free for sellers. Per each 'listing' made, or each item that is separately listed in an Etsy web shop, sellers pay \$0.20. (This same amount in dollars is also asked of Dutch sellers.) For each transaction made, a fee of 5% of the selling price is charged for the seller. Listings expire periodically and vendors can choose to renew listings automatically or do this manually. In both cases, the vendor will pay \$0.20 again for each renewed

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listed item. (Etsy, 2019a). These might seem like small fees, but it is good to consider that there are still some financial barriers, in order for Etsy to make profits off its vendors. There are more paid features to Etsy, which have been introduced over time, such as: off-site advertisements; the *Etsy Plus* membership for sellers; and encouraging sellers to offer free shipping of orders. Shultz (2011) also forms a criticism to the claim that the internet makes way for more equal access to distribution of creative products, by stating that internet access and usage is divided unequally across the globe.

Not many researchers have written about etsy.com and its userbase, and at large there has been a lack of empirical social studies on the selling of creative works on the internet. One of the authors who do cover this matter is Luckman (2013), who looks at the relation between Etsy as a market and its female users who make yarn crafts from home. Etsy has a prominent userbase of women who do their Etsy-related work at home, so this offers a good insight on its userbase and the perception of crafts as women's practices. This is similar to the gender distribution of consumers as well: 81% of the platform's buyer population is female, according to a survey in 2017 (Clement, 2019a).

Pace et al. (2013) note that Etsy, next to being a place for commercial trade, also functions as a space where creatives seek out like-minded people to be inspired by and where they can create their own community. Indeed, Etsy offers the opportunity for interaction among and between sellers and customers, through facets such as its forum page (Etsy, n.d.-b) and a messaging system. This social aspect, which thus takes place on a larger level than the one-on-one exchange of goods and money between buyers and vendors, was taken into account in my interviews. It is important to note that whereas Etsy presents itself as a social sphere, the way 'community' is experienced, may differ from the company's mission statement and also differ between sellers.

Fuller et al. (2013) address that, whereas Etsy originally communicated ethics that acts as a counterpoint to mass production and the negative effects it entails, these ethics have started to disappear over time as competition in Etsy's marketplace is unequal. Next to the aforementioned policies that Etsy pushed over the years, as well as the statistics on the size of its userbase, that indicate its company is growing rapidly, it had also replaced a more local alternative. Jakob (2012) mentioned DaWanda as European competitor to Etsy, but this website has ceased to exist in the meantime after his writing. The German-based crafts e-commerce site DaWanda could have been regarded a smaller competitor to Etsy, but it did not make the profits it foresaw, reportedly even making a loss of 1 million dollar in 2017 and had to close in August 30. (Dobush, 2018). Though Etsy technically did not acquire the business or take over the employees of DaWanda, it did accompany former DaWanda sellers to import their shops and listings to Etsy without additional fees. After the

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announcement of the German website's termination, Etsy had also stated to expand its market to Central Europe, which was where many DaWanda users were located (Dobush, 2018; Etsy, 2018). European markets on Etsy itself however are barely mentioned nor studied in academia. This study offers insight into what it means for Dutch sellers to operate their shops on a US-based e-commerce shop. Krugh (2014), Jakob (2012) and Sennett (2008) all make considerations on the supposed political emancipation that results from engagement in crafts. While Sennett is evidently critical of the effects of capitalism on workers throughout his writings, he at the same time views the revival of craftsmanship as it is proposed, as a utopian ideal, as poor working conditions and low quality of production are still possible in craftsmanship (Sennett, 2008).

Krugh (2014) and Jakob (2012) would find the proposed alternative to capitalist relations of production through crafts unlikely and utopian. While Etsy does encourage people to buy locally through the website's options for search results, and promotes the idea of sustainable, handmade products, the professionalization of craftspeople or beginning creative amateurs is hard to achieve while attempting to make everything yourself – some craftspeople on Etsy turn to outsourcing part of the creation process through a production partner, that is, another manufacturer. If outsourcing production ties to increasing one's production and if this makes one stray from partaking in what crafts are intended to represent, then this raises the question of how craftspeople can professionalize, while still keeping their work 'handmade'. Etsy had noticed a trend in sellers making use of manufacturers to produce their designs and its director has discussed trying to further internationalize the business and help connect designers to manufacturers more easily (Jakob, 2012; Tabuchi, 2015). Etsy now allows selling products labelled 'handmade' that were (partially) manufactured by another party, as long as the store owner still plays a vital role in the realization of the final product (Etsy, 2019b). Such manufactured products, sold for low prices at high volumes, started to show up first among the search results for 'handmade' and these changes in the market make selling hand-produced crafts a lot more difficult (Jakob, 2012).

Amateurism and professionalism in crafts

Returning to what I shared in the introduction on the crafts revival, a platform such as Etsy, which has relatively low barriers to entry, is ideal for amateur craftspeople to enter the market – though crafting might be seen as a concept similar to amateurism on its own. Authors such as Ocejo (2017) look mainly at business practices by those who are quite strongly established and are experienced entrepreneurs. However, not every craftsperson selling their work might have reached

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this status or perhaps does not even wish to turn crafts into a profession. Luckman (2013: p. 260) addresses an important issue:

“A marketplace such as Etsy profoundly complicates how we think about craft-based activity in terms of amateur versus professional divisions, because while all makers on Etsy are seeking to be paid for their work, the level of turnover of, and therefore income derived from, the activity can vary greatly.”

Luckman here associates being a professional with an income, but viewing a professional as synonymous with money or a job is only one interpretation. Stebbins (1977) describes how the term ‘amateur’ is since modern times put in opposition to the ‘professional’, based on various assumptions, such as that the latter is more skilled. Additionally, ‘amateur’ refers in one sense to a person devoted to an activity they love partaking in, while the term is also used in a negative judgement when referring to a supposed ‘dabbler’, who is inexperienced and superficial. An important distinction made is that professionals’ main occupation and income has to do with the activity they partake in, whereas for amateurs, they do not make a (sufficient) living of it and rely more on leisure time for their activity (Stebbins, 1977; Kritzer, 2007). In line with this, Jakob (2012) notes that in handmade production, crafting an original product is rewarding for the maker, but the profit made off crafts only rarely leads to a liveable income. It then comes to no surprise that the Etsy marketplace consists for a large part of students and stay-at-home moms looking for an extra income to sustain themselves (Luckman, 2013). If a liveable wage were to be the main condition for being a professional, this raises the suggestion that many creative Etsy vendors are amateurs. Fuller et al. (2013) describe in their study on Etsy that the term ‘amateur’ is applied in social sciences to a large proportion of online activity, as, indeed, displaying or selling your work has become more readily accessible through the internet.

Methods and data

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This qualitative study has been done in part by studying literature and by conducting an empirical research. Initially I had considered doing a quantitative research, in which I would create a database of Dutch crafts sellers, or attempt to send out surveys to be able to compare different variables to people's answers. Upon meeting with my thesis supervisor, I soon however realized that it was wiser to do a qualitative research instead as I have more experience in that. Considering I wanted to know people's personal experiences, motivations, and illustrative anecdotes, doing semi-structured interviews with mainly open-ended questions actually makes a lot more sense than presenting respondents with a list of statements and Likert scales.

Sampling

Initially, I tried to promote my call for interview participants via an Instagram post on my illustration account, hoping to reach more Dutch craftspeople there through the use of popular tags (see Appendix B). I got approached on November 31, 2019 by the account Handmade In Holland (@handmadeinholland), which promotes Dutch small businesses for handmade goods. The owner of the account suggested to help me and shared my post onto her Instagram. I had hoped that this method would result in a good start in the sampling process, considering the increased visibility via a bigger account (with a couple of thousands of followers) and with the idea that people are more open to being contacted on social media. One Etsy craftsperson who found me through Instagram has shown interest and referred me to another two potential interviewees, so I thereby tried to snowball sample. Only the former of these three people found through Instagram has been interviewed. This first interview happened in real life, but considering the circumstances of the pandemic, I had to change my methodology for sampling and interviewing. Not wanting to make a second Instagram post with a slightly edited description, I turned to contacting people directly on Etsy.

I next looked for participants by making use of Etsy's search engine: while keeping the text field of the search bar empty, I looked for any results that showed up. Etsy automatically shows you listed items that are for sale. It is also possible to look for shops through the search engine, but this requires a specific key term matching a shop name and I preferred to get an idea of what a store sells by viewing its items first. In the menu on the left of the page, one can filter by 'item type'. This section is divided by the categories *handmade* and *vintage* and the concept of what is handmade is linked closely to crafts. However, search results for handmade goods are not completely accurate – I did see products appear that were mass-manufactured, re-sold (new, not vintage), or stolen designs.

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Etsy's seller policy states that handmade goods must be "made and/or designed" by the seller (Etsy, 2020a) and information about 'production partners' must be stated clearly (Etsy, 2019b), but these policies are dismissed by some sellers. Considering the unreliable results for the category 'handmade', I did not make use of this filter. I did make use of the filter for shop location (first South Holland, later on the Netherlands) and sorted item results according to what was listed most recently, to not only show items from popular or successful shops. I further filtered the listings manually by looking at the item and shop description in case of doubt. While doing this, I asked critically:

- Does the seller use the term 'crafts'?
- If not, is what they make associated with crafts (e.g. knitting, jewelry making)?
- Do they state who designed or made the products?
- Are there tangible products sold or are these solely tutorials or patterns?

The shops sampled and basic relevant information thereof were kept track of in a personal notebook as well as an Excel file. Each shop owner (aside from the aforementioned ones found on Instagram) was contacted through a private message on Etsy in English or Dutch, accordingly to which language they appeared to be more fluent in.

Out of the 104 people contacted, 101 were approached via Etsy and 3 via Instagram. 38 people responded, of whom 21 showed interest after my first time approaching them, 20 contacts reported not be participating, while 66 were unresponsive. Among the people who messaged me back and showed interest, 4 were unresponsive after a follow-up message from me, another 4 respondents eventually changed their mind and decided to not partake in the research, and 1 person had to be turned down because I had gathered enough participants by then and had moved on to analysis. I ended up with a sample of 12 Dutch craftspeople with an Etsy shop.

The criteria that I used for sampling, have been changed in response to the partial lockdown and also to try to keep an open mind for useful results. Appendix B shows outdated criteria: the participants had to reside in South Holland (to save on travel expenses) and – preferably – be able to do an interview in English. These criteria were changed as social distancing was encouraged due to covid-19 and as it turned out, interviews in Dutch were possible too. For the rest, criteria did not change this drastically. Gathering potential participants to contact happened in 4 waves: the first time, I looked for craftspeople on Etsy in South Holland; the second round, I looked for people located in the Netherlands; the third round and fourth round, I also included shops that showed up due to advertised products, as this might actually be an interesting topic of discussion.

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It is hard to create a clear-cut definition of crafts that can be applied to every case and has no outlier to the rule. As I mentioned before, Sennett (2008: 20) highlights how it is even hard to properly translate *craft* to other languages, finding some terms more limiting and less inclusive of multiple understandings of what it means to be a craftsperson. I, as well, had issues discerning how to address the concept in Dutch interviews. In hindsight, this could have been an opportunity to ask a participant what they think crafts means in Dutch. On the other hand, this would mean the 3 interviews would not include this question, making the sample asked about this issue 1/4th smaller. My definition of a craftsperson as I initiated this research, is not strictly based on skill, devotion, income, and so on, though I did take these matters into account in the conversations when inquiring about motivations for crafting. Rather, I noticed in the literature that the work described in articles on crafts is manual labour – in the form of a tradable good, this is advertised as ‘handmade’. This term appears to be taken for granted: the perception of something being this or not, is somewhat subjective. Etsy (2019b) states in its policies for the trade of handmade goods, that

“Handmade on Etsy is a spectrum. On one end, we have makers — sellers who are literally making their items with their own hands (or tools). On the other end, we have designers — sellers who design their items but rely entirely on outside assistance or another business to help physically produce them.”

Both ‘makers’ and ‘designers’ are thus considered under the category *handmade* on Etsy. When starting this research, I had not anticipated to see this interpretation being used by the platform itself. In my definition of crafts, and ultimately in my process of sampling craftspeople, I maintained this idea of more flexibility in what is considered handmade by the shop owner, whilst at the same time trying to establish that the vendors I found, do feel addressed when discussing craftspeople (more on this in the ‘sampling’ section in the methodology). The definition for crafts that I maintain is thus most akin to that what concerns the handmade. Like Luckman (2015: 17), I too use the term *crafts* to refer to various things, such as an object (the thing made by someone considered a craftsperson), category (e.g. ‘*the Dutch marketplace for crafts*’) or process (to craft; this refers to handmaking something). Due to the nature of Etsy being based around the trade of goods, the crafts I discuss generally concern products rather than services.

In relation to the initial struggles to find a good definition of handmade or crafts, I found throughout the data gathering, sometimes whilst holding an interview, that a few participants I spoke to were not the *main* creator of the items sold in the shop, but that the other shop co-owner was more of a maker (see appendix A). These participants were luckily able to answer questions about the other shop member (who in each case was family) in full detail. This issue does show that

it's not unusual for shops to be run in teams, which also became apparent as I looked at the shop pages of contacts I approached.

Interviews

Empirical research was conducted through 12 semi-structured interviews with Dutch craftspeople who run Etsy shops. The total duration of the interviews takes up around 10 hours and 50 minutes (see appendix A for an overview of the duration of individual interviews), which is according to the methodological guidelines for thesis research I was presented with (Janssen et al., 2016). 1 interview was held in person, whereas 11 were long-distance interviews, held by phone calls and online video calling conversations. The audio of the conversations were recorded by me, which every participant has provided informed consent for. I incorporated theoretical concepts, as well as more introductory or general questions to get to know a shop (owner) better, into my interview guide (Appendix F). Due to the qualitative nature of this research, I tried to make as many questions as possible open-ended. All interviews were recorded with either my phone or laptop and transcribed manually through the website of oTranscribe (otranscribe.com), which allows for text editing, audio rewinding, creating time stamps, etc. in the same program.

Appendix F shows the list of questions from the interview guide. Questions were based on my research questions, as well as on the concepts that I elaborated on in the literature and wanted to know more about. It is hard to address all concepts employed in the creation of interview questions, as multiple refer to similar topics so that participants could reflect on earlier answers. I can, however, give some examples of how interview questions were inspired by literature.

Being part of a community is argued by Pace et al. (2013) and Jakob (2012) to be an important factor for participating in crafting. I incorporated this dimension into question 11, which asks if the interviewee has contact with other craftspeople, and in question 16 which asks the interviewees about their personal impression of Etsy's userbase. Ocejó's (2017) book *Masters of Craft* is the product of interviewing craftspeople and observing their workspace, which provides not only a description of *what* a person does, but also *why* they do it, how they experience crafting and what things they deal with when producing. This is incorporated into various questions that ask about the place where the person produces, what tasks and considerations are involved in the working process, and questions if the person sells works outside of Etsy as well. Questions about a participant possibly having a production partner (q. 7), the possibility of growing in your business while staying true to what you love to do (q. 25) and thoughts on outsourcing part of the production

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(p. 26) were made with consideration to the degree to which a crafts person would still think of something as their own work, and by extension, as a result of craftsmanship. Questions created to inquire about where participants draw the boundary between amateurism and professionalism and how they position themselves in that scale or spectrum (questions 17 -19) and how suitable Etsy is for craftspeople aiming to professionalize (q. 23). were inspired by Luckman's (2013) notion of a division of amateurs and professionals within the Etsy marketplace. His observation was however based mainly on the level of income a seller derives from their Etsy shop, whereas I wanted to leave room for alternative interpretations of what it means to professionalize on the platform. Some questions that were still in the first two interviews, were later on left out because they were bound to be answered in earlier questions or on the hand, too vague and unanswerable. The order of the interview guide was also rearranged somewhat per the thesis supervisor's advice, to allow for a more natural flow of conversation.

Data analysis

While in the process of gathering data, I started to analyze the transcripts by coding and consequently interpreting the codes. I labelled segments in three phases according to the approach argued for by Corbin and Strauss (1990): open or initial coding, axial coding, and focused coding. When performing open coding, the researcher stays close to the original data and labels anything which is deemed relevant or interesting. In axial coding, relations are drawn between labels based on the patterns noticed in the data. During focused coding, the researcher reformulates and groups together codes and looks more at what can be left out of the analysis, thereby being more selective (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Boeije, 2010). For coding, I made use of the qualitative data analysis software *ATLAS.ti*, which is useful for labelling, interpreting, and comparing multiple documents for the same research project. I applied a thematic analysis to the interviews. Thematic analysis is not most commonly paired with the Straussian manner of coding, as only the latter is rooted in the tradition of grounded theory, while the former means that the researcher bases codes on theory. However, these two combined methods were deemed the most suitable for my research, as coding is still largely based on the data itself, regardless of how texts are coded. Clarke & Braun (2014) provide a good resource for those wanting to do a thematic analysis, and argue that this starts by, indeed, open coding, and that even as themes are formed that are deemed relevant to the research, they are made by looking at and comparing data continuously.

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When coding, the researcher looks for themes in the text. Themes come in part from the researcher's prior understanding of the phenomenon being studied through reading existing theory, but moreover, themes are based on the empirical data itself. The act of discovering themes is also called open coding (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). During this phase of open coding, I looked at the following dimensions based on my research questions, in order to answer them well:

1. **Making:** Themes that describe motives for making their work. More specifically, I looked at segments in the data that describe what Etsy sellers value in their work process and explain why this is valuable to them. Factors such as their experience of the workspace(s), availability of time, thoughts on pricing, and training in skills were considered when coding segments that could lead to answers on motives for making. Note that while 'making' and 'selling' are separated in this list of categories for the sake of clarity, they were not always discussed exclusively or differently in the interview answers.
2. **Business practices:** Themes that describe the sellers' views on Etsy (not just positive or negative, but also what factors makes them decide to stay on the site or consider other options). The platform is looked at as a social space, a company, and a market. In the interviews, places alternative to Etsy to sell crafts, such as physical markets and own websites, were discussed and compared to the affordances of Etsy.
3. **Boundary drawing:** themes that describe how amateurism and professionalism on Etsy are perceived. Normative judgments of their own and others' business approaches reflect on this, even if the terms 'amateur' and 'professional' are not always used explicitly. On the other hand, when these terms are used unprompted to describe something, the citations were coded as the label itself through the 'in vivo' function in ATLAS.ti.

I coded segments as long as they referred to one specific phenomenon without the interviewee changing the topic of conversation in between lines. I also coded some terms or lines from the texts directly as quotes, to easily trace back what participants had said about them. For example, each unique mention of the website Pinterest was coded as the term itself, to be able to later on find back for what purposes Etsy sellers make use of the website. Early on in the coding process, I categorized codes into 'code groups', which effectively form lists of labels that share common themes or frameworks. Also see appendices I, J, K for visual examples of how these categories eventually looked.

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Moving onto the second phase of coding, I started to merge codes that were too similar to one another. Additionally, I removed codes that were not remotely relevant to the research despite seeming to be useful at first. This phase did not happen in one moment; it was a matter of going back into the data many times, looking at segments with a certain code, reading above and below those sentences or words and check if anything was said about those parts elsewhere in the interview. This lead to me connecting codes to related other ones within the same interview through ATLAS.ti, which was, again, continuously updated and revised upon, until all relations noticed between codes within – and rarely, if the codes referred less to specific segments but more to more general themes – interviews were incorporated. Appendix H shows how these various relations would look, both in a list and in a code tree.

I eventually ended up with the following list of code groups. They serve as categories that inform the content and structuring of my findings, but they were also useful indirectly, to easily trace back codes via these titles.

- Crafts vs. what it is not
- Defining amateur
- Defining own creative role
- Defining professional
- Discussion of places to sell
- Growth / success shop
- Learning / inspiration
- Platform: negative
- Platform: positive
- Pricing
- Social
- Value perceived in own craft

Examples of the categories above are at times shown in appendices and explained by means of quotes and discussing the general patterns, as well as the most occurring codes found in them. The categories stated above are all at the very least used for ease of data analysis, but most of them are discussed in the findings within the broader dimensions that contextualize them. For example, in the section where I discuss findings on boundary drawing, and to answer the second research question, I look at primarily the categories ‘Defining amateur’ and ‘Defining professional’. Mainly the categories ‘Pricing’ (referring to segments that address the concern of pricing items on Etsy), ‘Value

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perceived in own craft' and 'Learning / inspiration' are addressed in the dimension that considers motivations of participants to partake in crafts, which I ask about in my first research question, and so on.

Findings

First off, some general findings: I had anticipated environmental sustainability, named early on in the thesis, to be mentioned by more participants than it did (4 in total). It was not always explained further why it is important to participants and this made me decide to not focus on this theme too much or add more theory. Effects of the COVID-19 pandemic had very different effects for participants and their shops, and the minor results I did make were quite obvious when thinking logically about effects you see elsewhere: some people ended up with more leisure time, whereas others were affected negatively and found it hard to grow in their business when there were international shipping restrictions. Changes in the amount of sales that have been made since the pandemic differed too vastly to say anything relevant about it, though it is interesting that the item types do play a role according to two interviewees: one suddenly sold more of the patterns they offered besides their handmade (tangible) items, while another interviewee sold more items and explained it by people buying more 'gift' type items for items to send while social distancing.

Based on the theory, interviews, research question, and codes, I have divided the findings by four dimensions, each of which address several relevant themes. First, I discuss findings on what factors make crafts valuable or rewarding to oneself. This gives an idea of what motivations matter to participants for making crafts. The second dimension is about considerations on using Etsy. This part seeks to show how experiences of the sellers interviewed shape perceptions of the platform, and why Dutch sellers decide to keep using it. The third dimension discusses the role of socializing in participants' their interest in what they do as craftspeople on Etsy; the need for a community and reasons for seeking contact are explained. The fourth and last dimension explains how participants draw boundaries between amateur and professional craftspeople, and how these distinctions sometimes do not seem to be clear at all: other terminology seems more appropriate sometimes, making progress until a professional is possible, and crafts are regarded intrinsically more as either one of the two sides of the 'scale' in some cases.

Dimension 1: 'value'

The activity of crafting itself: being busy, being in a flow

One reason that made various participants enjoy crafting can be best described as 'being in a relaxed state of mind' or perhaps in a *flow*. Flow theory, much like earlier mentioned literature on crafts, looks at the way people are intrinsically motivated to do something. Someone is in a state of flow not just when enjoying the task(s) they partake in, but also simultaneously while being proposed with (doable) challenges, instant feedback, focusing on only the specific activity, and by gradually

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learning how to improve in the activity (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). Commonly used examples of activities that tend to go along with a flow-like state are painting and playing video games, but it might as well apply to things like knitting, embroidering, or making jewelry. It must be noted though, that the segments corresponding to the idea of the moment of crafting being relaxing or a fun activity in itself, do not refer to skill or being skilled. Appendix C shows a table with quotes corresponding to the code 'Value: relaxing'. There were similar instances (though with different codes) in which interviewees described their joy in crafting as residing in being occupied with the activity itself. One participant placed the relaxation felt while crafting within a larger framework of enjoyment of being busy, as she views it as something that only calms you down, but also gives energy and makes it easier to keep going (this relation is shown on the top right part of appendix L).

Finding value in economic value: pricing items

The way in which participants feel financially rewarded for their craft, in terms of the pricing of items and the various costs involved, differed. Some feel more confident in their prices and earnings than others and this depends partially on knowing how to calculate good prices, and partially on how confident someone feels in offering their products for a higher price as they felt they were too new to Etsy or had to improve a lot. There did appear to be a general impression across participants that many craftspeople on Etsy charge too little money for what they produce. After telling me that the prices she asks for her items are still a bit too low, interviewee Nicole added that her prices were even lower in the past. She explained the reason for asking so little money before, with 'because I'm a 'hobby mom' kind of a thing, you know?' (this is also the last relation in the list in appendix H). It occurred only once that someone expressed that other craftspeople on Etsy are charging customers too much for what they have to offer. Some people were alright for the time being with asking prices that do not reflect on a minimum or living wage but less than that, as it is already rewarding to know people want to buy their creations. Being financially rewarded for your work is, quite literally, also emotionally rewarding.

Appreciating your work more because of others

Comparisons to other craftspeople and creatives at large is central in how participants felt rewarded for the work they do. This is reflected more subtly in people's confidence in pricing, as is written in the previous paragraph, but also in other ways. The highlighted section in appendix L that is titled 'Self-appreciation based on comparison to others' groups together various codes from the 'value perceived in own craft' category, on the basis of them all sharing this characteristic. These comparisons to others that lead to more appreciation of one's own work, happen through, for

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example, having your creations being showcased at an event with a prestigious brand, which was the case for one participant. Hereby she benefited from the social capital of others by association with them and she ended up feeling prouder of her work. This happened outside the realm of Etsy, however, and it makes one wonder how likely it is for sellers to gain more status by making successful acquaintances on the platform – it does not seem to be a platform intended for networking.

On the other hand, comparison to fellow craftspeople can also take a role in evaluating one's own work as better than others. This is clearly tied to the value of quality, but also to struggling to work together with a production partner. The latter lead for participant Brenda to deciding to not work together with a production partner anymore; they both had a different style of crocheting, that lead to products not looking like hers anymore. Another example of someone valuing oneself more by comparing to others, thereby realizing one's own potential and uniqueness, is shared by Anne in the following way⁹:

"...so yeah, I kind of found out that not everyone is as creative as I am. And... that I, you know, should really do something with that. So... and that's why I- hm, that's when I kind of uhm... You know, went for it, so to speak."

– Anne

'Keeping it fun': preventing stress and customers' requests

There is a certain point at which crafting stops being rewarding. Various participants had experience with doing orders for custom items, being commissioned by a client to make a fully personalized work, or being requested to produce a large quantity of one product for an interested party. This leads to the crafting process being repetitive and limitations are placed on creative freedom: items in large quantities must look the same and the aesthetics of custom items as a whole must appeal to the customer's wishes. Essentially, too high demands take away the very joy of making, selling, promoting, etc. something yourself. Participants dealt with this in different ways. One participant talked about closing the shop after a certain amount of custom orders, so she can still manage it in terms of time, energy, and enjoyment of the crafts. Some people choose not to do (or only do a few) custom orders for this reason. Some shop owners I interviewed, do offer custom items, but these are not offered in an Etsy listing and sales are handled in private messages elsewhere. Some other people outsourced part of the production to avoid overexerting oneself over too large orders, as well as have more of a guarantee at quality which is harder to achieve with some of the tools at home (e.g. printing machines).

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Though she was glad to be rid of the stress of doing impossibly large orders all by herself, Wilma did in a way miss the flexibility of being able to ‘switch’⁸ and offer something different than the standard product that is listed. So even though custom orders pose some difficulties, there is good reason to want to take customers’ requests and do a customizable order. Ayse, who is personally more involved with handling sales and taking customer questions than her sister-in-law, was interested in learning more about jewelry making so she has the option to adjust items in case someone has the wish for a different size or material. Shop owner Moniek links customizing items to her valuing environmental sustainability because she does not want customers to receive things they do not want to have (which would only lead to more waste or cluttering).

Dimension 2: Experiences on the platform

How people get introduced to it

The level of familiarity participants had with Etsy before opening up a shop there, differed per person. Some had heard about the platform through creative friends or acquaintances, others found Etsy by deliberately looking online for what website is most suitable for handmade goods, while other interviewees were already making use of its marketplace as a customer. Whether discovering Etsy happens because of another person or not, there is something to be said about how, for these various forms of first introductions to Etsy, they each are preceded by the person already being aware of their interest in crafts. When asked about possible points of improvement for the platform of Etsy, two participants shared – albeit with some hesitance to the claim, as there are now already many users – that the company should advertise itself more, so that more people can join. Regardless of whether this suggestion should indeed be followed, there is a truth to it: Etsy hosts advertisements for items in its own search results and now also offsite, but does not put a strong focus on advertising its service as a whole outside its domain. Thus, the platform reaches mainly those who are already interested in handmade (and otherwise ‘unique’: upcycled and vintage) products and have to find Etsy through social connections or researching their options.

The concern of search results and advertisements

The issue of a shop’s ranking in search results, particularly on Etsy, is brought up by various participants in this research, even if an interviewee is not personally ranked low. Fuller et al. (2013) state that Etsy distinguishes itself from other internet start-ups due to its business model not relying on revenue from advertisements, but instead asking for a fee for each item listing and each

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sale made by its vendors. Seven years after that article, this is not entirely the case anymore. Now, Etsy vendors nowadays do run paid advertisements for their items in the search results page on the website. The platform had also branched out to offer sellers to show advertisements on Google. Participant Valinda addressed that she notices more visitors to her shop are indeed directed through Google (Etsy shop owners are able to view such statistics in a private 'Shop Manager' function). The issue is that this group of visitors does not buy from her shop, making this option useless for her sales. Earlier this year, the company of Etsy has announced to change this advertisement model, removing the option for sellers to choose to advertise on Google, and instead Etsy (2020b) now advertises items by its sellers 'offsite' across multiple platforms. Vendors on Etsy are charged 12 or 15% on items that are bought within by 30 days by visitors that got there through advertisements in search engines and social media. This does not count the fees Etsy already charges on items and shipping costs. This new model has immediately led to controversy in the community (Kastrenakes, J; Yeo, 2020). Though offsite advertisements happen out of the control of sellers regardless, there is a need felt by some participants to do ads, because these can help prevent a shop from being pushed back in the search results. Some participants in this research were aware of this as well. The factors that determine what items show up first in Etsy search results, or even show up correctly at all, are unclear. Interviewee Anne addressed the issue in the segment below:

"I mean, it looks like... Etsy is... you know, trying to get more money out of their sellers. So I think that's kind of the problem, I would say. (...) This is still THE website to go to if you want to sell your handmade stuff. Or to buy someth- to buy some handmade stuff, so. It's... yeah it also feels like you have to be on Etsy."

- Anne

The quote illustrates how the new policies are not perceived as useful or sensible, as a result of Etsy increasingly favouring its own profit over the people who made it profitable in the first place. Across the interviews, there were different observations with a similarly critical point of view on the direction of the company: people discussed that it prioritizes its own growth and prioritizes buyers over sellers. In discussion of Etsy urging sellers to offer free shipping so they gain more sales and get prioritized in search results – an idea which was not made with overseas shops in mind – Etsy is said to favour Americans over others. This is an issue because Dutch craftspeople do not possess a large enough domestic customer base to focus only on that and international shipping is costly. The quote above also addresses points that make the platform so attractive: Anne (as well as a couple of other interviewees) make more sales on Etsy than elsewhere, and in relation to that, it is regarded the most suitable place to sell and buy in a crafts marketplace online. There can be a decent amount of

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competition, which of course applies to some specialized markets more than others, depending on how niche or popular the market is. This brings me to the next issue.

Suspicion of certain sellers

Throughout various interviews, there was a distrust of (and distaste in) certain shops: grouped together are codes such as 'mass produced = bad' and 'garbage', which were based on the negative perceptions by participants on certain shops on Etsy. These particular shops appear to have popped up in more recent years and sell things which are not handmade, nor considered good at all. In the last point of this chapter on experiences with the platform, in discussion of its available marketplace, it is mentioned that one participant sensed unfair competition with larger shops on Ebay that mass-manufacture products. This issue does occur on Etsy too, however, and these suspicious or unwanted shops are associated with Chinese sweatshop-like producers. In some mentions these shops are tied to mass-manufactured or re-sold goods, but this is not the case for every one; sometimes the specific characteristics of these items were unclear (which might in part be because it is unclear where those very items came from) but they were at least not considered truly crafts or unique. Participant Katja¹⁰ applies this concern with authenticity to a context outside of Etsy onto the difference between 'imperfect' (but good) handmade items versus store bought:

"Yeah, it is real, it is not perfect, but real I will say. You know, it's all dif- and it's not perfect because it's all different, so the [necklace] chain is different and the thingy is different... Yeah, that- there is a need, and when you go to the Action, everything is the same."

- Katja

Reasons to stay on Etsy – it works

When discussing Etsy in a positive light, participants referred mainly to the web design, its ease of use, and the degree to which it facilitates a lot for sellers by providing useful information and services that make running a shop easier. Some examples of useful information being provided are possibly more obvious, such as the Etsy Seller Handbook ([etsy.com/seller-handbook](https://www.etsy.com/seller-handbook)) which was mentioned in interviews and which shows an overview of guides and articles that can help Etsy sellers to grow their business. Another self-evident example of Etsy offering help that was mentioned was the forum on Etsy ('Etsy Community'). Though one participant found it harder to find this back, some others shared to make use of it and enjoy the option. One example for the facilitation of information and easy-to-use technical services, and the combination thereof, I had not thought of, even while having run an Etsy shop myself. Appendix D shows a screenshot of a way in which Etsy

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guides vendors who are trying to learn and find ways to make their shop more appealing, which was brought up as an example by two participants in this research. The image shows, through icons and text, various suggestions on how to photograph and display your item in the photos that are used in the listing (it suggests a 'primary photo', showing 'every angle', 'details', the item 'in use', and so on). The tips are incorporated into the available slots for product photos, which are movable to offer easy customization of the order of images. The image also shows tips on techniques for shooting an attractive photograph. Perhaps this section of the listing page did not even occur to me as an outstanding form of guidance or technology, as I was so accustomed to the website functioning well in terms of user-friendliness.

Reasons to stay on Etsy – it has the marketplace

Another advantage of using Etsy – that makes opening and maintaining an Etsy shop appealing – is that it already has an existing crafts marketplace. While other online spaces such as *Amazon Handmade*, *Marktplaats* and *Ebay* are also possibilities for Dutch craftspeople to trade products at as well, the focus of these platforms as a whole is more on other kinds of products, such as new, mass-produced products or second-hand items. Etsy, while now also catering to a vintage market, at the very least still presents itself as a place for handmade goods:

“So- yeah. It's this- it's this specific kind of marketplace for handmade products. Uhm, so, yeah, that's why I chose Etsy.”

- Anne

And as interviewee Nicole addresses, you have to compete with other kinds of markets that are at a vastly different size when making use of general e-commerce places like *Marktplaats* or *Ebay*:

“So eh- I started at Markplaats. And I sold some things. Ehh, I tried Ebay. But then you have to compete- Ebay is also for my type of business. But then you also have to compete with the Chinese market- or the commercial- not only Chinese, also German...”

- Nicole

So even if *Ebay* is also a possibility for her 'type of business', jewelry, the unfair competition makes it less attractive. After this segment, she explains that the competing markets from those countries concern mass-manufacturing. This of course allows for faster production, at a higher

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volume, and affordable prices due to low marginal costs, which does indeed pose difficult competition for smaller shop run by only one or a few people.

On the flip side, interviewee Marcel shared that Etsy is so targeted to a specific type of *audience* that “probably look for what you are making”¹, thereby highlighting how like-minded, interested customers are just as important as fair competition between sellers. Having your shop be found is experienced to be more difficult when using more general retail websites, that are not made with the intention of facilitating crafts or handmade markets, or when hosting your own web shop. Participant Ayse highlights this by stating ‘if you do it with Etsy then you get also the leverage that people search from Etsy’, and Alice tells on a similar note that if you host your own website, you need to “find a way to promote yourself on social media so people know how to find you”.²

Reasons to stay on Etsy – it is international

It is not just beneficial for Dutch sellers that Etsy has an existing marketplace of supposedly like-minded people to offer; its strength also lies in how *international* this marketplace is. Participant Moniek shared that the large size of the platform and wide reach (i.e. American customers) would not have been easy to achieve without Etsy³. This wide reach of the market is useful, as Valinda shared that Etsy is ‘not very big in the Netherlands’⁴ and within three other interviews, participants addressed that the Dutch market for crafts is very limited, so it is hard to speak of a ‘local’ market on Etsy – one interviewee did refer positively to the items in search results on Etsy when looking for handcrafted products from. The local market was not explicitly referred to as large, but the capital city might at least offer enough to be able to find some competition and inspiration from local sellers. Three participants in this research had shared a similar experience with being able to ask a higher price for items on Etsy as opposed to local markets, which two of them link to a form of the common conception of many Dutch consumers being greedy or overly cautious with spending money, while one participant explained that Marktplaats on the other hand, is a place where customers are used to negotiating prices.⁵ This illustrates that the right kind of marketplace that is found in Etsy, is appreciated in multiple facets that come into play when running an Etsy shop from the Netherlands: one competes with other craftspeople, is already provided with a larger international audience and even the transaction itself is nicer when customers value products more fairly.

Dimension 3: The role of community

No contact, some contact, seeking contact

There is some difference across participants in regard to reportedly having contact with other craftspeople, but the social sphere to their practice is nonetheless of importance. 9 out of 12 participants in the research responded that they do not or 'not really' have contact with other craftspeople. For the majority of both this group and the other 4 who responded that they do have this contact, socializing does not per se happen on Etsy. It also occurs for some that contact with fellow craftspeople is sought throughout multiple spaces by one person: one could seek this at physical markets for handmade goods or at a creative work station, while still making use of a local Facebook group or other online space. It is remarkable that some stated to not have contact with other craftspeople, while later on sharing what they had recently discussed with others in an online group for local craftspeople. Some participants were still looking for a nice online group to join and talk to, for example to exchange feedback and experiences with running an Etsy shop. One person shared that she *wanted to* talk to other people on Etsy, but could not make use of the 'Etsy Community' forum function because she was unable to find it on Etsy, after the website went through another update.

Motivations to seek a community

Appendix G displays a coding tree of the labels used for segments that address having or wanting to have contact with other groups and the sense of community, as well as motivations and values that explain why these Etsy sellers seek contact. What can be considered a community differs a bit: it can be a community of practice that shares tastes, it can be the people who follow you on social media and show support for your shop through likes or making their own posts, a community can be those in the 'Etsy Community' forums where they act as mentors, it can be the userbase of Etsy at large (code '*platform: positive – feels part of community*') and so on. Socializing and feeling included in a certain social group are intertwined with various motivations.

Motivations to seek a community: the audience as community

Firstly, maintaining contact with customers is important for both finding value in one's own crafts and for presenting oneself as professional. These types of motivations are not exclusionary to one another for each interviewee that shared them. For example, participant Marcel found it important for a business to treat customers well and this relates to his experience with valuing the strong bond with devoted customers (some of whom are so familiar that they exchange postcards).

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Various participants also addressed the need for good feedback on Etsy to attract more customers and be competitive. Some struggled with gaining sufficient feedback as it is not required for buyers to do provide it, which is easier to receive one-on-one at physical markets, while seller Maria highly appreciated receiving photos from customers who wore the headwear she made. This was not only beneficial for her shop, but she also discussed how it made her get to know her customers better.

Motivations to seek a community: helping each other

Secondly, a prominent motivation for seeking contact with other craftspeople and, ultimately, being part of a community, is to learn from others and be inspired. Craftspeople in this research have learned how to improve their business by utilizing the forum on Etsy, seeking suggestions from other (experienced) Etsy sellers, and comparing how sellers write item descriptions, take pictures, and otherwise present their store. Participants also seek inspiration by following Etsy shops, Instagram accounts, and keeping track of general style trends within the types of craft they specialize in.

Motivations to seek a community: sheer curiosity

Lastly, there is of course also an interest in interacting with other craftspeople, be it on Etsy, Facebook, at a physical market or elsewhere, purely out of interest in them and their work, or just finding the interaction fun without having any additional motivations. This reasoning was however used rarely by interviewees, as the desire for – or necessity of – contact with like-minded people was explained and (perhaps subconsciously) linked to other things deemed important, i.e. finding inspiration.

It is interesting that throughout the interviews, communicating to other Dutch craftspeople on Etsy is not once talked about as happening through direct, private messages between the owners on the platform itself. Etsy's system for private messages seems to be reserved for customer enquiries, which might explain the low response rate during my sampling process. It is possible that this is also the reason for how the people I spoke to in interviews are shop members who are used to handling messages from customers, irrespective of whether these shop members are the main creator of the products when working in a team (which has been addressed in the methodology section).

On a similar note, liking the idea of teamwork with more shop members, or just creatives who can help out, was named by 6 interviewees that partook in this research. Working together with another individual or a few people– which would usually not count as a 'production partner' in Etsy's

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policy – can help a person to grow their business and relieve some workload. However, and perhaps more importantly, other members of these teams are family members or other people considered close in someone’s life. For example, when participant Marcel discussed what he liked about the collaborative work he and his wife did for the shop, it was done with both a love for the craft and for the simple enjoyment of watching his wife being occupied with creating something she is skilled at. This is reminiscent of the earlier mentioned incentive of participants of wanting to see what other craftspeople do out of curiosity, except in this case, the people involved know each other well.

Dimension 4: boundary drawing

The terminology

Participants showed an obvious discomfort or hesitance to applying the terms ‘amateur’ to something, not wanting to come off as too judgmental. But this judgment was still expressed when an item, shop or seller’s practices did not meet one’s own quality standards. This then was by some interviewees related back to reasons as to why their own business practices were better, while other participants who sensed they themselves are still amateurish in some ways made comparisons to where they, as well as others in their field of crafts, can improve.

Distinctions between what makes one a professional or amateur in crafts were discussed throughout interviews and not just solely when explicitly asked about where the participants draw the boundary. The term ‘hobby’ was used a considerable amount to refer to amateurism, crafts, or both. Some used the term ‘hobby’ in a positive way, others placed it in a more negative context, though judgment of hobbyism was sometimes more ambiguous. The images in appendices I and K include codes that refer to the various things that are interpreted as a hobby: it can refer to crafts, running Etsy as a side job, and be tied to amateurism.

Different standards for two terms that might not be fully antonyms

Looking beyond definitions and terminology used by interviewees, it is also good to take a look at what associations with amateurism and professionalism are made and how these relate to other factors named in the same interviews (as seen in appendix H) and sometimes contradict one another across interviews (in comparison between appendix I and J). There were various interpretations of what is amateurish and professional, but these interpretations were not completely synonymous to one another, even within the same interviews; people use different standards for each side of the amateur-professional scale, so perhaps it is more of a spectrum. A

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participant stated at first, for example, to not be a professional, but later on explained why they are professional in a way, or argue that education or an income is not important for being a professional craftsman, but later on explain how it does add to someone's credibility as a professional.

Where does the 'skill' reside in high-skill labour?

Interestingly, while the literature discussed skilled craftsmanship so much, being skilled in making the product itself was actually not that important for professionalism in the data. Being a 'professional' is much more than just making a good product: materiality is not the foremost factor determining if you are a professional in your field. Rather, as the image in appendix J shows, things such as the presentation of the shop, actively advertising yourself, being able to earn from your shop or not, being knowledgeable on how to run your shop, quality checking products before shipping them, having well thought out prices for items, and having expertise in your field through years of experience, are discussed more by more interviewees. Nicole explains that because owners of crafts shops on Etsy like hers "run a business like a multinational, like a huge business", doing everything themselves, they need to learn how to run a business like larger companies would. Of course, this is not completely in contrast with the literature, as authors like Ocejo (2017) do cover the various additional tasks that the craftspeople in his study have to do in order to sustain and grow their businesses.

Professionalization and growth

When I asked participants about their thoughts on how suited Etsy is for craftspeople professionalizing, the general response is that is possible, though some were unsure and questioned if Etsy would be the best place. Participant Monique⁶ for example, shared that Etsy in itself is a market for mainly amateurs because of the focus of the company:

"Well, I think that it- that Etsy concentrates more on... uh, on... yeah, on the hobbyists, so to speak, who try to sell their stuff. Yeah, and so that there is- there is of course a part, uh, professional (...) but I think it's mainly amateurs."

– Monique

This observation, in which Etsy caters to the hobbyists, clashes with the aforementioned concern multiple participants shared, that Etsy prioritizes its own growth and that it allows new large businesses that do not seem to be handmade or in any way related to crafts and raise suspicion. Moniek⁷ shares the opinion of various participants that it is possible to professionalize on the platform as a craftsman, but that it should not be the only place to reside your shop in:

“But I think that, at any rate, it is smart to not only be on Etsy- something like that, but to cast a wider net. Because yeah, and I definitely see- I again feel too dependent on what Etsy comes up with and decides. And if it is really your eh, your livelihood, then you don’t want to be dependent of 1 place.”

– Moniek

The quote above shows that the unwarranted changes in Etsy’s policies and technologies lead to a sense of insecurity – it is better to thus make use of ways and places to sell and promote as well to not lose all your customers in case something goes wrong. While there are these concerns to professionalization while on Etsy, the ability to grow your business and learn enough to climb up the ladder as a starting amateur was discussed in a positive light. In other words, to be an amateur does not mean having a lack of future perspectives.

Discussion

Let me return to my research questions: *'What are the personal motives of Dutch craftspeople to create their products and sell those via Etsy? And how do they draw boundaries between amateurism and professionalism on the platform and in their own business practices?'*. To address the first half of the first question: by no means do the motivations of the participants in this research cover the full scope of reasons Dutch craftspeople, or craftspeople at large, could possibly name. Even while writing about the findings based on data from my relatively small sample, I found that there were too many incentives and factors that weigh in to include them all at once. Some people were also cited more than others, and though they were all counted in the data, it was hard to decide which person's quote to use as an illustration to an argument. In my introduction, I already mentioned the variety of ideas informing people to be involved in crafts. One thing which was highly relevant for various participants, as well as in the writings of Sennett (2008), was the enjoyment of the moment and activity of crafting itself. This is connected to feelings of relaxation, being in a flow, and becoming energized by doing something fun and creative. Starting this research, I had – perhaps pre-emptively – expected to hear from interviewees how much energy it costs to run an Etsy business as an individual or small team. And it did get addressed; as shared before in the findings, there is a point where a crafts project demands too much work, and allows for too few creative input, thus stops being enjoyable. But what I had not taken into account, and cannot seem to find being explored in academic literature either, is that craftspeople can be fully capable of checking in with their own levels of energy and find a balance. They do this by negotiating the amount of orders they accept, the types of items they make so there is still enough of an own style, and some outsource part of the production that are not emotionally rewarding.

The craftspeople I interviewed clearly did not start crafting *solely* with the intent of making money from it, which also shows in how many either under-priced, or discussed how there are many people in the field who ask too little money. This is in line with Luckman (2015) addressing the issue of craftspeople finding it hard to ask the correct price their goods and services are worth. But participants did feel like being financially rewarded, whether this is because someone is happy others are showing interest in buying their creations or because they make an income from the shop.

Another factor that plays into motivations for crafting, is the influence of other people. This can work in a demotivating way by valuing other craftspeople as better than oneself, but also in a beneficial way for the self, i.e. when realizing one's own unique qualities when comparing to others. Being associated with successful creative businesses can have positive effects on your own status and

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pride, which reminds of Ocejo (2017) addressing how the craftspeople in his study now also actively try to network around other prestigious businesses. The question is, though, if Etsy itself is suitable networking practices.

Despite several people initially indicating they do are not in contact with other craftspeople, the need felt to seek out a crafts community is a strong motivation both for trying to grow as a business on Etsy, as well as to build more personal relationships with like-minded people. This is why the desire to socialize is both a motivation for crafting, as well as selling: it covers both the physical and online reality. The way people discussed groups that they interacted with or looked for indicated that there is not one social group at play: social media followers, trusted customers, local craftspeople, and strangers in help forums all belong to forms of crafts communities, in a way. Staying in touch with customers is important to get to know your audience better, but also to gain positive feedback and be competitive. Contacting people inside and outside Etsy was highly appreciated when covering the theme of learning and teaching each other new style ideas and approaches to run a shop. And then there is also an interest in other craftspeople an sich; just wanting to know what others are up to is a reason.

When touching upon reasons for Dutch craftspeople to sell on Etsy, it is vital to consider reasons for why someone would want to sell elsewhere. There have been various controversies about Etsy's sudden changes over the past years. Fuller et al. (2013) portray Etsy in a positive light when highlighting that its business model is not based on ad revenue and instead only on small fees for listings. Now, however, this statement is outdated, as the company has added more fees and implemented several advertisement models, the most recent model for offsite ads leaving sellers without a choice or agency, and anyone can be charged a large percentage for an advertisement they did not ask to promote. The website has allowed in shops that probably cross the boundaries of what is still considered 'handmade' and are highly successful with mass-produced and new resold items, which leads for participants in a sense of distrust in these shops and an unequal competition. These large shops on the platform that are ambiguous about their practices were placed outside of the realm of crafts. This is reminiscent of how Fuller et al. (2013), Krugh (2014), Jakob (20120) and Sennett (2008) critically discuss how crafts are valued as a countermeasure to capitalism, as they question the potential of the crafts economies in Etsy to truly emancipate its sellers.

Selling elsewhere instead of Etsy would be perfectly sensible, if it were not for the fact that it does not have a crafts-focused e-commerce platform that is equally popular, as direct competitor. Though it depends on what craft someone is specialized in (e.g. a niche catering to a highly specific taste vs. just generally knitting), there is not as much of a decent 'local' Dutch crafts market as there

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would be in the United States. This is reflected in Dutch people's issue with the company favouring sellers who offer free shipping, which is simply not feasible for Dutch Etsy shops.

Still, Etsy has this marketplace, a widespread international one at that too, which offers many potential customers that would normally not buy from you domestically. Additionally, Etsy facilitates a lot of information through functions such as its handbook and by incorporating instructions into the pages only the sellers can visit, which is nice when starting out or trying to improve. Overall, the web design and technical user-friendliness of Etsy was valued by participants. So even if the supposed focus of Etsy on the handmade or unique items has become questionable over time, it still is a shop that craftspeople who want to sell their goods will turn to due to lack of alternatives. This does not mean that Etsy is the only place Dutch craftspeople make use of: social media and trading in physical spaces are not out of the question and can happen alongside running an Etsy store. It can even offer more security, so people do not depend on only one platform for sales.

Etsy is regarded as a place with low barriers of entry, allowing for many amateurs to join it and open up a shop without prior expertise. This made me wonder how users of the platform itself actually draw boundaries between amateurship and professionalism. There was a discomfort expressed when asked about these terms, but throughout interviews, people's personal judgments on aesthetics and business practices were shared nonetheless. These were related to their own practices, both when describing oneself as amateur or professional. And the characteristics for these terms were not polar opposites; often enough, different standards were upheld for the labelling something as either of the two. The two concepts are fuzzy, and not set in stone either. While Etsy can be regarded as something intended for amateur craftspeople, various participants believed that there is a possibility to professionalize when making use of the platform. However, this does not rule out that people make use of multiple spaces to promote and use their shop, and it might be advisable to do so considering the insecurity that consistent new, unwarranted policy changes pose. Perhaps, rather than this dichotomy of the amateurs versus professionals on Etsy, it is rather these large shops with ambiguous methods and these very Etsy policies that form a concern in boundary drawing of aesthetics and ethics. More so than factors such as income, skill, quality, or expertise, the question of whether a seller posing its production as 'handmade' is genuinely that might be more urgent.

This research has a few limitations. Firstly, research on a small sample of people that results in one form of data, could benefited greatly from an additional source of data. For example, to be able to create a database of what Dutch craftspeople on Etsy are selling, could give an idea of how

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the markets compare to e.g. the American ones, which reveals differences or similarities between tastes and preferences between countries. Another example of useful data would be the web pages of Etsy shops themselves, which can be studied through content analysis and this would reveal information about how sellers try to market themselves to an audience through text and imagery. A second limitation is that my sample consists of people specialized in various crafts. My focus is not on materiality of the product or a specific niche on Etsy as I was not that particularly familiar with any that would have a large group of sellers on Etsy. So, to look at only one type of crafts would not make much sense. On the other hand, when all participants in a research on crafts markets are within the same field, their answers might be easier to compare and generalize. Lastly, approaching the sampling and interviewing processes was difficult at times because I was unsure how to translate crafts, craftspeople, craftsmanship, et cetera to Dutch, and it is still difficult, even if I settled for a definition akin to handmade. For future social science studies that look at this theme from within a setting that is likewise not dominantly Anglophonic, or concerns any other seemingly untranslatable concept, I highly suggest to establish a clear definition in advance of sampling, even if the data eventually shows alternative interpretations.

Final notes

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Appendix A

Overview of shops and shop owners studied

Interviewee*	Type of products	Duration interview (h:m:s)**
Anne	Interior decoration, accessories – handmade – various – braided macramé, embroidery	0:53:50
Nicole	Jewelry – handmade – mainly necklaces in ‘boho’ / ‘ethnic’ style with rough colourful beads, also African fabrics	1:33:23
Maria	Headwear – handmade - various types of hats and fascinators – more high-end / luxury	1:03:03
Wilma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temporary tattoos, press-on nails – own designs • Other shop: wooden fantasy miniatures for garden – handmade – made by partner 	1:27:32
Brenda	Baby toys, baby mobiles – handmade – crocheted	0:41:10
Moniek	Jewelry – handmade – minimalistic / graphic earrings in glass and wood	0:57:34
Monique	Various (fabric) – handmade – guitar straps, crochet patterns – now also face masks	0:27:36
Valinda	Various (fabric) – kitchen and bathroom utensils, all re-usable / zero-waste – mainly handmade	0:30:35
Alice	Illustrations – original paintings / drawings, prints	0:40:05
Katja	Jewelry – handmade and modified existing jewelry – various types of jewelry in gold and silver	0:41:13
Ayse	Jewelry – handmade by other shop member – mainly earrings and necklaces with organic shapes	0:42:13
Marcel	Glass beads – handmade; collaborative designs, partner makes final product – fantasy / fairy themed	1:12:13

* = All participants have provided content for the use of their names in the research, either during the spoken conversation or during correspondence on Etsy / Instagram.

** = Times shown refer to the duration of the recordings of the interviews, which I tried to do as accurately as possible. However, one interview had technical issues in the first minute, so that part got lost, though I did ask

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for a rephrase of the participants' introduction. So in reality, the length of conversations might have differed slightly, but not vastly.

Appendix B.

Author's advertisement / request for interview participants for this research. Posted on Instagram ([instagram.com/p/B8zLFCjnrUh/](https://www.instagram.com/p/B8zLFCjnrUh/)) on February 20, 2020. This post was made prior to worldwide covid-19 measures and did not reflect on later adjustments to the methodology.



Post description is as follows:

Looking for Dutch (Zuid-Holland) Etsy sellers for thesis!

Hello everyone, I (Colleen) am doing my Master Thesis on Etsy sellers, for my Arts and Culture-related studies at Erasmus University. The intention of my research is to find out how people from South Holland who make and sell their handmade products through Etsy, view themselves in relation to terms like 'amateur' and 'professional'. I also want to know what role Etsy plays in their experiences. For this, I want to interview people in real life and in English. Though this costs extra time for my project, I might be able to do some interviews in Dutch, so feel free to ask me if you would rather do it

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in Dutch. I focus on sellers in South Holland to save on travelling expenses and time, which can otherwise get very costly.

If you are and/or know an Etsy seller who meets these requirements, or think you do, please send me a private message! That's it, thank you! And if you would like to share this with family or friends, please do! :) Thank you! - Colleen

Illustration by me (@colleenillu)

*#etsy #etsyseller #etsysellers #etsysellersoninstagram #etsyvendor #craft #crafts #artsandcrafts
#craftspeople #diy #etsystore #masterthesis #colleenillu #artsandculture #etsyseller #etsyshop
#thesisinterviews #artistsofinstagram #dutchcrafts #dutchetsyseller #dutchetsy #dutchcraftsmanship
#dutchcreatives #etsywinkel #studygram #kunstencultuur #artsandculture #knutselen #vakmanschap
#hetjaarvanhandgemaakt*

Appendix C

Code: Value: <i>relaxing</i>		
Interviewee:	Quote:	Explanation:
Nicole	“and, you know, I like to- and I make jewelry (...) I like to be eh, meditative on my own. (...) Just being- that my head is quiet. (...) So if- if all the... craziness in the world stops for a while, I'm happy.”	Also refers here to having more free time due to covid-19
Maria*	1: “You also don’t have any fights or anything, I don’t know, it’s so. It’s- it’s the- truly the happiest way to live life. (...) Sooo relaxing.” 2: “Try to just take my mind off things with the- with the sewing. Isn’t that great fun.”	Quote 1 also relates to her liking working from home together with her partner. Quote 2 is in response to being asked about effects of the pandemic for oneself
Brenda**	1: “Yeah, for <i>me</i> it works like a sort of meditation-esque thing, huh? Mindfulness thing.” 2: “And then it’s really nice when you have a job where you’re really stuck in your <i>head</i> , to have a counterpart to it where you work more with your <i>hands</i> . (...) So this is also relaxation to me.”	Quote 1 is in response to being asked about the positive effects of crafting for oneself since starting with this craft Quote 2 is in response to the same question but is preceded by a paragraph describing the other regular job
Alice***	1: “Yeah, but yeah, I, the illustration is to me a lot in... uhm, comes from a sort <i>flow</i> .” 2: “at a certain moment I started with a stupid mandala and I strongly felt that meditative thing again, of losing yourself in- in crafts and because I don’t see a mandala as art or design either.”	Quote 1 is followed by a detailed description of what she does when in a state of flow Quote 2 is in response to the question about positive effects of crafting for oneself
Marcel****	“And I notice for Iris, she can just sit and uhhh, puts up a song or a podcast and uh, she’s just nicely burning, so that also gives her a lot of uhhh, uhhhm, a lot of rest”	Describing what he notices his partner (who creates the final product) values in crafting, the ‘burning’ refers to a technique used when making glass beads.

Original quotes:

* = “Je hebt ook geen ruzie ofzo, ik weet het niet, het is zo. 't Is- 't is de- echt de gelukkigste manier van leven die er is. (...) Zooo relaxed.” “Probeer maar gewoon m'n gedachten te verzetten met dat- met dat naaien. Is toch hartstikke leuk.”

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** = "Ja, voor *mij* werkt het als een soort van meditatie-achtig iets, hè, *mindfulness* iets." "En dan is het heel fijn om als je een baan hebt waarbij je heel erg in je *hoofd* zit, om daar een tegenhanger bij te hebben waarbij je wat meer met je *handen* bezig bent. (...) Brenda: Dus dit is ook voor mij gewoon ontspanning."

*** = "Ja, maar ja, ik, het illustratie gaat bij mij heel in... Uhm, pas uit een soort *flow*" "op een gegeven moment ben ik met hele stomme mandala begonnen en ik voelde een heel erg weer dat meditatieve van je verliezen in-in *crafts* en want ik zie een mandala ook niet als kunst of als design."

**** = "En ik merk bij Iris, die kan dus ook gewoon gaan zitten en een uhhh, zet een uh muziekje of een podcastje op en uh zit ze gewoon lekker te branden, dus dat geeft haar ook heel veel uhhh, uhhhm, heel veel rust"

Appendix D

Cropped screenshot of tips and suggestions provided by Etsy to its sellers. Screenshot taken by author of this thesis on June 25, 2020 from the page intended for adding a new listing through the 'Shop Manager' function. This web page is only accessible to Etsy shop owners.

Add a new listing

Photos

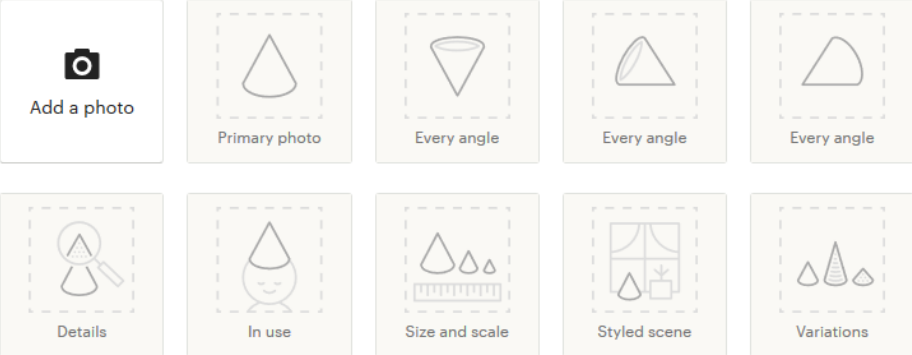
Add as many as you can so buyers can see every detail.

Photos *
Use up to ten photos to show your item's most important qualities.

Tips:

- Use natural light and no flash.
- Include a common object for scale.
- Show the item being held, worn, or used.
- Shoot against a clean, simple background.

Link photos to variations
Add photos to your variations so buyers can see all their options. [Try it out](#)



Icons illustrating photo suggestions:

- Add a photo
- Primary photo
- Every angle
- Every angle
- Every angle
- Details
- In use
- Size and scale
- Styled scene
- Variations

Appendix E

Notes: Original segments from translations in text. Provided to clarify

Original text:

1 = "Nou, wat dat betreft was Etsy voor ons een uh hele uitkomst, gewoon uh. 't is gewoon heel gericht, gewoon ook een heel, een doelgroep die heel gericht is, die heel zoekt, die waarschijnlijk zoek wat jij maakt." – Marcel

2 = " (...) en een eigen webshop lijkt mij, uhm, daar zitten zoveel haken en ogen aan. Dan heb je al die verkoopvoorwaarden, welke- je moet jezelf natuurlijk zien te verkopen op social media, dat mensen je weten te vinden, ik ben er nog niet helemaal klaar voor." – Alice

3 = "Ik vind het een heel fijn- eh, dat het een heel groot platform is... dat je daardoor mensen bereikt die je anders niet zelf bereiken zou. Ja, mensen uit Amerika zou ik anders niet zo snel bereiken. En via Etsy kan dat wel." - Moniek

4 = "Dus, ja, E-Etsy is in Nederland niet zo groot, dus meeste mensen snappen niet waar ik het over heb als ik Etsy zeg." - Valinda

5 = "Maar toen zag ik het in een keer, de *prijs*. Ik was te goedkoop. (...) Vooral voor Amerikanen, die moeten ge- die willen geen goedkope spullen. Niet- ook Nederlandse mentaliteit is *compleet* anders." – Maria; "Marktplaats, nou ja dat zei ik natuurlijk net al, hè, dat is leuk, daar willen mensen onderhandelen met je maar dat wilde ik niet." – Brenda; "En uh, nou ja de standaard opmerking uh voor uh, van heel veel Nederlanders was 'oe wat duur'! En uh, 'op Alibaba kun je ook glaskralen kopen-'" – Marcel

6 = "Nou, ik denk dat het- dat Etsy zich toch meer... uh, richt op uh... ja, op de hobbyisten, zeg maar, die hun spullen willen verkopen. Ja, en dat er dan- er is natuurlijk wel een deel, uh, professional. (...) maar ik denk dat het vooral amateurs zijn." - Monique

7 = "Maar ik denk dat het hoe dan ook slim is om dus niet alleen op Etsy te we- net zoiets, maar meer breder in te zetten. Want ja, en zeker zie ik- voel ik me wel weer iets te afhankelijk van wat Etsy bedenkt en bepaalt. En als het echt je eh, je kostwinning is, dan wil je niet afhankelijk zijn van 1 plek." - Moniek

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8 = "Nou, je kan veel makkelijker schakelen dan nu. En ik kan veel makkelijker gewoon zeggen van, nou Okay, je wil 'm wat groter hebben, je wil 'm wat kleiner hebben, je wilt uh, iets anders hebben, die *custom* functies zitten bij mij voor de tattoos er dus niet meer in." - Wilma

9 = "Anne: "- so yeah, I kind of found out that not everyone is as creative as I am. And... that I, you know, should really do something with that. So... and that's why I- hm, that's when I kind of uhm... wat is het goede woord... [Transl.: *What is the right word...*] You know, ging d'r vol in, zeg maar [Trans.: *went for it, so to speak*]. " – Anne

10 = "Ja, het is wel echt, het is niet perfect, maar wel echt zal ik trouwens zeggen. Weet je, het is allemaal an- en het is niet perfect omdat het allemaal anders is, dus het kettinkje is anders en het dingetje is anders... Ja, dat- daar een behoefte is, en als je naar de Action gaat, is alles hetzelfde, dus."

Appendix F

Interview guide. This is the last version; minor adaptations have been made to earlier versions when finding some questions were not relevant. All questions on the guide are in English and have been translated to Dutch (live) during 9 out of 12 interviews.

A. May I have your consent to be audiotaped during the interview?

B. And do you prefer your name to be revealed in my research, or do you want to be anonymized?

Thank you so much for helping me with my research. Again, if at any moment you want to pause or have a question, feel free to let me know.

1. First of all, could you introduce yourself?

2. Okay, so this might sound like a strange question but I think it's very relevant right now. How have you been? Are you doing well?

3. Can you tell me in your own words what kind of things you sell through your Etsy store?

4. I see you've had your shop since _____. And were you making _____ before that period too?

5. What made you decide to sell your work? And why through Etsy?

6. Have you had any type of formal training to develop your skills (in _____)?

- *Examples:* internship, an arts education

7. Do you have a production partner for your products?

8. I would like to know more about the place where you produce your crafts. Please tell me something about that.

9. I wonder what tasks and considerations are involved in your crafts. Could you tell me how you go through the process in your work?

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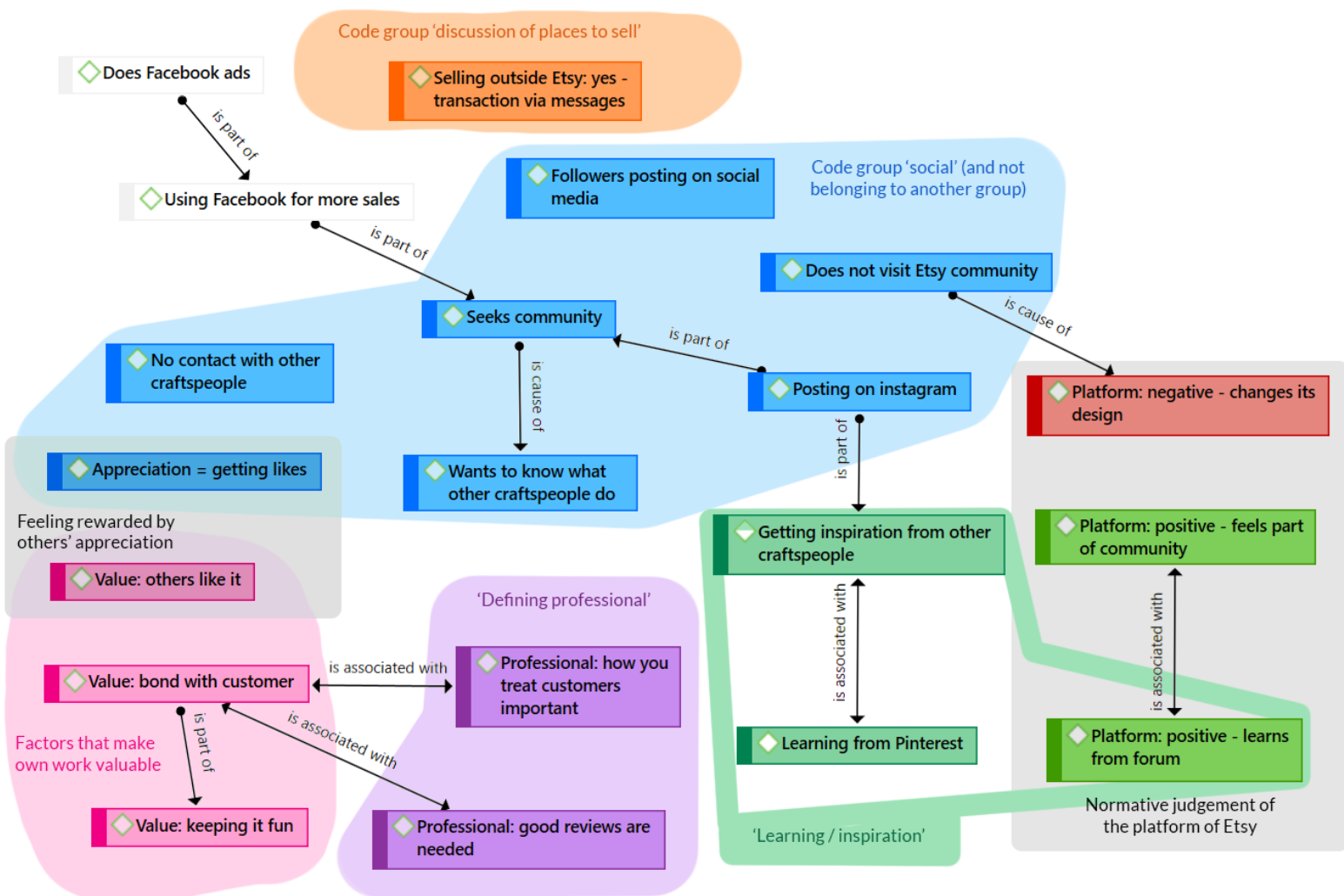
10. A lot of small businesses have been affected by the current pandemic, some worse than others. What effects did it have on your shop?
11. Are you in contact with other craftspeople? (If yes: What consequences did the virus have for them?)
12. I've looked at your Etsy page and saw (around) _____ items listed on there. Would you like to have more listings on there in the future, or do you want to maintain this amount? Or maybe lower it?
 - a) *More:* How do you plan on producing and selling more? What would need to change, for there to be more products?
 - b) *Maintain current amount:* What are the challenges to keeping around the same amount of products?
 - c) *Or in case of less items:* May I ask why you want to have less listings in your shop?
13. I wonder about the pricing of your items. Do you think you ask a fair price for them, in return for the time and effort they cost? (Why (not)?)
14. What is the most valuable part to your craftwork? (Examples: the production, materiality, the finished product) Can you tell me why this is so valuable?
15. The arts and crafts movement and DIY movement have advocated for pursuing a skill out of pure passion and commitment, to counter the type of labour that is done in capitalism. Working on these skills and creative outlet through arts and crafts would make people feel more connected to their work. What positive effects of your creative work for yourself have you noticed?
16. I wonder how you view the userbase of Etsy. Who do you think uses Etsy and where would you place yourself?
17. Crafts are often brought up in discussions about amateurs versus professionals, either in terms of skill or income. What would make a professional craftsperson to you?

18. How do you perceive amateur craftspeople to be?
19. Where would you place yourself on the scale from amateur to professional?
- Can you tell me why you consider yourself this?
20. Can you tell me what your experiences with using the platform of Etsy have been like thus far?
21. Do you sell your works outside of Etsy too?
22. (If not answered in q17) Have you ever thought of using another place or way to sell your works?
- a) *If not:* What makes you confident in using Etsy?
 - b) *If so:*
 - (What place(s)?)
 - What are the benefits of that place as compared to Etsy?
 - What made you decide to keep using Etsy?
23. Do you think Etsy is the right place for craftspeople to become professionals?
24. Are there any ways in which you think the platform should improve to cater to its sellers?
25. Do you think it is possible for a craftsperson to grow in their business while remaining true to what they love to do?
26. Have you thought about outsourcing part of your production?
- (Why (not)?)
27. I think we can almost round up. Do you have any final questions, or things you might want to share?

Thank you so much.

Appendix G

Selected codes and relations between them, that are relevant to discussions of having contact with a social group (i.e. audience, craftspeople) and the sense of community. Most codes belong to a code group (category) and sometimes, multiple groups at once, while the top left two codes do not belong to any code group and show a chain of purely business-oriented motives to interact with a community. The code on the top ('selling outside Etsy: yes – transaction via messages') refers to contact with customers for the sake of making sales on other digital platforms, custom orders for example, but does refer to segments that show the sellers are very open to being approached less formally and in a more personal manner. Phrases between brackets on the coloured fields are code group names, the other phrases are clarifications.

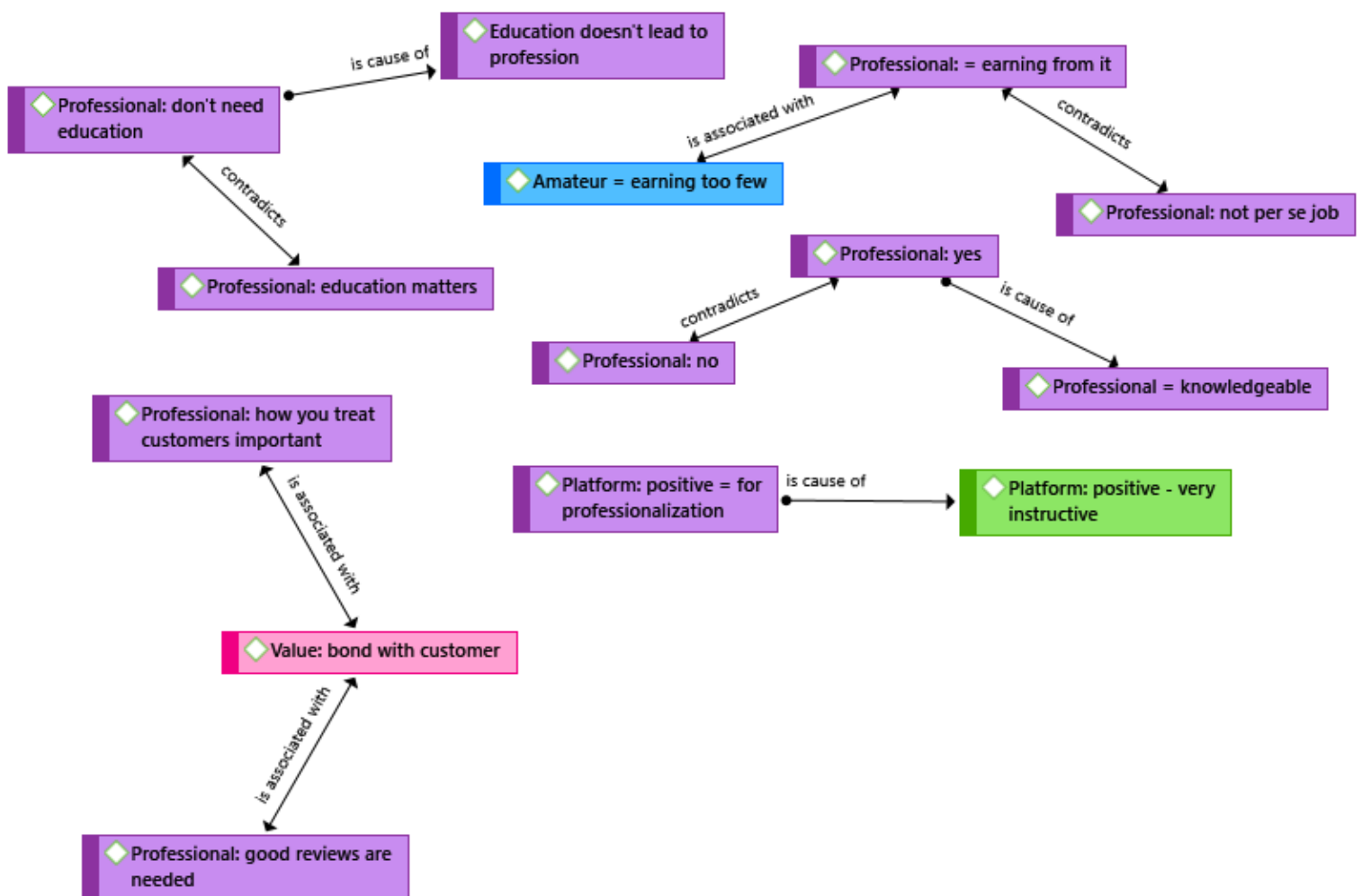


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Appendix H

Links (relations) between labels concerning amateurism and professionalism. One code in the column on the left in the first image does not show fully but it says 'Professional: how you treat costumers important'.

Source	Relation	Target
● Amateur = earning too few	● is associated with	● Professional: = earning from it
● Platform: positive = for professionalization	● is cause of	● Platform: positive - very instructive
● Professional: = earning from it	● contradicts	● Professional: not per se job
● Professional: don't need education	● is cause of	● Education doesn't lead to profession
● Professional: don't need education	● contradicts	● Professional: education matters
● Professional: how you treat costumers im...	● is associated with	● Value: bond with customer
● Professional: no	● contradicts	● Professional: yes
● Professional: yes	● is cause of	● Professional = knowledgeable
● Value: bond with customer	● is associated with	● Professional: good reviews are needed
● Value: own vision	● contradicts	● Professional: income not important
● A work of love	● is a	● amateurs
● Pricing: not high enough	● is cause of	● 'hobby mom'



Appendix I

All codes in category 'defining amateur', in order of most grounded (amount of times coded). For clarification, I added the amount of interviews each code occurs in in a column of blue text left to the amount of times they are used in total.

Show codes in group Defining amateur				
Name	Grounded	Density	Groups	
Amateur = hobby	5	9	0	[Defining amateur]
Hesitance to be judgmental	4	9	1	[Crafts vs. what it is not] [Defining amateur]
Amateur = bad presentation shop	4	5	0	[Defining amateur]
good amateurs	3	3	0	[Defining amateur]
Amateur = only for joy	2	3	0	[Defining amateur]
Amateur = earning too few	2	2	1	[Defining amateur]
Amateur = negative word	2	2	0	[Defining amateur]
Amateur = not thinking things through	1	2	0	[Defining amateur]
A work of love	2	2	0	[Crafts vs. what it is not] [Defining amateur]
Amateur = prices too low	1	2	0	[Defining amateur]
Amateur = does packaging badly	1	2	0	[Defining amateur]
Amateur = not good photography	2	2	0	[Defining amateur]
Amateur = imperfect	1	2	0	[Defining amateur]
Amateur = people make it	1	1	0	[Defining amateur]
Amateur = knutselen	1	1	0	[Defining amateur]
Amateur: not determined by amount of sales	1	1	0	[Defining amateur]
Perfectionist (= good amateur)	1	1	0	[Defining amateur]
Amateur = less good products	1	1	0	[Defining amateur]
Amateur = has less access to means	1	1	0	[Defining amateur]
Userbase: most people amateurs	1	1	0	[Defining amateur]
Amateur = start-up	1	1	0	[Defining amateur]
Amateur: was one	1	1	0	[Defining amateur]

Appendix J

Selected codes in category ‘defining professional’, in order of most grounded (amount of times coded). For clarification, I added the amount of interviews each code occurs in in a column of blue text left to the amount of times they are used in total. The group / category was a bit large, so I only included the codes being used by 2 or more interviewees to not get lost in data on too specific things.

Show codes in group Defining professional					
Name	Grounded		Density		Groups
◆ Platform: positive = for professionalization	5	7		1	[Defining professional] [Growth / success shop]
◆ Professional: = earning from it	4	6		2	[Defining professional]
◆ Professional = knowledgeable	3	5		1	[Defining professional]
◆ Professional = quality checking	3	4		0	[Defining professional]
◆ Professional: don't need education	3	3		2	[Defining professional]
◆ Professional = how you present yourself	3	3		0	[Defining professional]
◆ Professional: well thought out prices	3	3		0	[Defining professional]
◆ Expertise important	2	3		0	[Defining professional]
◆ Professional = marketing	2	3		0	[Defining professional]
◆ Professional: income not important	2	2		1	[Defining professional]
◆ Successful: social media important	2	2		0	[Defining professional]
◆ Professional = experimenting	2	2		0	[Defining professional]
◆ not sure if Etsy is right for professionalization	2	2		0	[Defining professional] [Growth / success shop]
◆ Professional: = perfecting	2	2		0	[Defining professional]

Appendix K

All codes in category 'Crafts vs. what it is not', in order of most grounded (amount of times coded).

For clarification, I added the amount of interviews each code occurs in in a column of blue text left to the amount of times they are used in total.

Search Codes

Show codes in group **Crafts vs. what it is not**

Name	Grounded	Density	Groups
● ◇ Hesitance to be judgmental	4	9	1 [Crafts vs. what it is not] [Defining amateur]
● ◇ Mass produced = bad	4	8	0 [Crafts vs. what it is not]
● ◇ authentic	3	5	0 [Crafts vs. what it is not]
● ◇ Crafts = hobby	3	3	0 [Crafts vs. what it is not]
● ◇ 'garbage'	3	3	1 [Crafts vs. what it is not]
● ◇ A work of love	3	2	0 [Crafts vs. what it is not] [Defining amateur]
● ◇ you don't want to be 'fröbelen' at home	2	2	0 [Crafts vs. what it is not]
● ◇ Hobby = positive word	1	1	0 [Crafts vs. what it is not]
● ◇ Knutselen = fröbelen	1	1	0 [Crafts vs. what it is not]
● ◇ Crafts = delightful	1	1	0 [Crafts vs. what it is not]
● ◇ Hobby = negative word	1	1	0 [Crafts vs. what it is not]
● ◇ Hobby = side job	1	1	0 [Crafts vs. what it is not]
● ◇ Crafts = natural / human	1	1	0 [Crafts vs. what it is not]
● ◇ klooien	1	1	0 [Crafts vs. what it is not]
● ◇ Value: lesser products from China	1	1	2 [Crafts vs. what it is not]
● ◇ mislukte	1	1	0 [Crafts vs. what it is not]
● ◇ Etsy aims at hobbyists	1	1	0 [Crafts vs. what it is not]
● ◇ Value: countering multinationals	1	1	0 [Crafts vs. what it is not] [Value perceived in own craft]

Appendix L

Code tree of all codes referring to the ways in which crafts are rewarding or valuable to the person, and connections to related codes. The codes marked yellow relate to segments that discuss making custom items.

