Crafting your identity
A comparative analysis of the platformization of craft on Instagram and Etsy

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ABSTRACT

Online digital platforms hold a significant amount of power in the sense that they decrease local boundaries and have opened up new global markets. Online digital products have the ability to change the nature of the products being sold on these platforms. This research had the aim to answer how online digital platforms have changed crafting practices and products and how this impacts the creators of the products. Additionally, this research looked at how online digital platforms cater to diverse cultural groups. Crafters are often dependent on these platforms in order to sell their products and to promote their businesses. This gives online digital platforms a significant amount of power. A multimodal critical discourse analysis with semiotic intertextuality and topic modeling was conducted to answer the research question: 'To what extent are online digital platforms increasing value for diverse artisans and their communities in the global North and the global South?

Platformization accelerates change. Trends and narratives such as sustainability and natural materials are often integrated in products because it is popular and a common narrative on online digital platforms. Additionally, creators inspire each other and collaborate in order to create new products. Moreover, there has been a shift towards a digital product, meaning that not the finished physical product is being sold, but instead a digital version of this product. Digital products facilitate in bringing different crafting techniques into the public sphere, placing cultural crafting practices out of their context. All in all, this facilitates in making certain crafting techniques and materials more popular. It can be stated that online digital platforms have changed the products and its attached dialogues and as a result have made the process of creating the product part of the product. The already existing power relationships between the global North and the global South are however still present in the platform economy. Hence, it is still more difficult for marginalized cultures to become popular. In the platform economy community and collaboration are the two main contributing factors whether a product will be popular or not. The online digital platforms of Etsy and Instagram did not themselves cater to the diversity of different cultures and groups in relation to crafting but promoted products which has already been proven successful by

means of algorithms. However, the crafting community did have the power to decide whether a product will become popular or not.

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Introduction

Online digital platforms have made it easier and more accessible for people with access to technology to sell handmade items online by providing access to a large potential customer base (Luckman, 2018). However, by decreasing local boundaries, diverse artisans and their communities had to adapt to fit into this changing landscape. The emergence of online digital platforms and the internet has opened up new global markets, but removed the objects on the market from the context in which they were made (Luckman, 2018).

This refers to transmutability, the shift from analog to online digital platforms. The content on these platforms feels less like property and more like fluid ideas, enabling individuals to extent, recombine and innovate the product (J Hughes & Lang, 2006). Therefore online digital platforms have the ability to change the nature of the products being sold on the online digital platforms. This means that the product that is being sold online is different from the one that would traditionally have been sold. Crafted products are often cultural in nature, by adapting the product it will lose some of its cultural value (J Hughes & Lang, 2006). Current research mainly focusses on digital products in relation to transmutability. There is however very little research on how online digital platforms have changed crafting practices and products and how this impacts the creators of the products.

Additionally, there is little research on how online digital platforms cater to the diversity of different cultures and groups in relation to crafting. Online digital platforms often claim to find inclusivity and diversity important (Krugh, 2014). However, it can be difficult to define how cultural differences translate to online digital platforms. Therefore, this research is needed to provide an understanding into the differences between crafting shops on platforms in the global North and global South. Additionally, it is important to note that artisans have often become dependent on these platforms to sell their products. This raises questions about the power relations between crafting artisans and online platforms. Therefore, understanding cultural differences can help in informing these platforms on how to tailor and localize to contexts and to build truly more inclusive online digital platforms. In short, this research will showcase the differences between groups and contexts and how platforms are being experienced potentially differently and perhaps even fostering structural inequality in the crafting arena.

The current literature related to craft on online digital platforms is very broad and tends to generalize different cultural groups. Moreover, it does not provide distinct nuances

into how online digital platforms approach cultural differences and how creators anticipate on this. Lastly, the focus of existing research is on how online digital platforms potentially exclude groups from their platform, but not on how the sellers on the platforms behave under these circumstances. Thus, to provide insight into how historical, cultural and socio economic differences translate into the online digital platforms, Instagram and Etsy the research question:

'**To what extent are online digital platforms increasing value for diverse artisans and their communities in the global North and the global South?**

Has been formulated. The research question will be answered by means of the sub questions:

1.) How has platformization changed the products that are being sold? And if so, what are the characteristics of this potential change?
2.) Do Etsy and Instagram cater to the diversity of different cultures and groups in relation to crafting?

Theoretical Framework

According to current literature it is more difficult to become successful on an online digital platform as a marginalized cultural group (Graham & Anwar, 2019). To gain an understanding on the potential influences on craft on platforms this literature review discusses previous literature related to craft on platforms from a cultural and economic perspective. The initial aim of this study is to see how interactions and engagement varies between different artisanal communities by undertaking a comparative analysis. In this literature review several key elements will be discussed. Firstly, global notions of craft to gain an understanding of how crafting practices can differ in different cultures and how this translates into online digital platforms. Secondly, the role of the platform economy will be discussed to define the impact of the platform itself. Thirdly, the significance of online digital communities and how this shapes crafting practices and communication on the digital platforms, and lastly Etsy will be described as an example of how platforms are used for entrepreneurial activities and how the nature of the platform itself can shape these activities.

Global notions of craft
Global North

Craft can be defined as a complex interplay of different elements. It can be considered a profession, a product or artifact, a culture, and lastly a creative intentional process of skill with different techniques and materials (Väänänen & Pöllänen, 2020). What overall characterizes craft is that it is accompanied with specialized knowledge, localization, ethics and authenticity, and continuation of tradition (Jolie, 2014).

However, notions of craft vary across cultures. Craft in in the global North can be defined as the production of a product of object which does not involve mass production. The emergence of mass production during the industrial revolution created a strong division between what was considered artisanal and what was considered mass manufactured (Luckman, 2015). Therefore, a distinction had to be made eventually resulting in the current definition of craft in the global North. Here craft can be defined as a product which does not involve mass manufacturing.

The history of craft in the Global north is often categorized into three segments. The first wave of craft began in the 1800s and had the goal to restore pleasure in labor which had largely disappeared during the industrial revolution (Black, 2018). In turn, the second wave took place in the 1970s and was strongly associated with hippie counter culture and feminism. Afterward, the third wave of craft emerged in the 1990's and was the start of the

merge between crafting practices and the internet. This was the start of a virtual gathering space with its own communities which form its own resistance against mass production and consumption (Black, 2018).

Notably, in the third wave of craft, globalization and digitalization in combination with the emergence of online digital platforms have enabled individuals to easily sell their handcrafted items online. A revitalization of craft making has taken place in the global North where selling handmade items for a profit is considered entrepreneurial and craft-making is considered a viable career path (Jakob, 2013). Additionally, crafting practices are often considered an antidote to the fast pace of modern life. Crafting is praised for its psychological benefits, amongst which are a sense of accomplishment, improved mood and increased confidence levels (Black, 2018). Generally, this perspective on crafting has been advocated to mediate in complex and profound issues of economic and social inclusion and is part of a wider trend in which an increase of creative employment in the global North can be found (Luckman, 2015). All things considered, this perspective on crafting takes on the assumption that crafting practices create an overall sense of value. It is however still unclear how online digital platforms facilitate in this increase of value.

Global South

In shifting our gaze to the global south, for instance Indian traditional art and crafts we find that they do not share the same history. Generally speaking, traditional art and craft are considered manifestations of cultural heritage. But, due to industrialization traditional art and craft are losing their current market (Pathak & Mukherjee, 2020) In India for example, crafting has value beyond its capacity to generate income. The craft traditions here are considered rare and irreplaceable resources and generally acknowledged as a means to preserve cultural meaning (Finger, 2004). In the long run, crafting practices involve more than just the transaction of handmade products but crafting represents the movement of multiple inputs, outputs and skills (Luckman, 2015). For the most part, crafting practices are more associated with a connection to community and familial history (Black, 2018). In short, it can be argued that craft in the global North, considering its current capitalistic nature and history put more of an emphasis on profit and individualism compared to the global South where crafting is considered more of a manifestation of collective cultural heritage (Pathak & Mukherjee, 2020).

These differences in crafting practices do not necessarily translate to online digital platforms, which are more focused on the capitalistic side of crafting. Online digital

platforms position themselves in a way which suggests that they offer an even playing field. Etsy is an example of a platform which aims to make the world more equal and generally a better place by acting as an intermediate and by offering accessible ways to engage in entrepreneurship (Close, 2016). The nature of the platform expresses itself in a wide variety of ethnic and class traditions. However, when taking a closer look at the sellers on Etsy there is a significant difference between Caucasian sellers and crafters of color with the same amount of popularity. Caucasian crafters on the platform are often self-taught amateurs while the people of color mostly had validated artistic backgrounds. (Lutz, 2019a). This raises the question whether the online digital platforms caters to different cultures and groups the same way.

Cultural heritage in crafting

Craft in general builds on knowledge and traditions. In essence, cultural heritage can be described as a common asset of the past which is part of a culture its origin and social relevance. Cultural heritage is a form of living culture that is passed down from generation to generation. Cultural heritage is dynamic, which means it can change over time. Overall cultural heritage contributes to social cohesion and identity. However, sharing information about ones cultural heritage is closely related to the knowledge which is available and the physical tools necessary to participate in creation making (Giaccardi, 2012). Nowadays, social media and online digital platforms are important in the transfer of knowledge regarding cultural heritage because it enables an individual to share techniques and other relevant aspects of communicating cultural heritage to a larger audience. The dynamic nature of cultural heritage combined with digitalization and the community culture on social media results in a significant change in how cultural heritages are being passed down and communicated (Wu et al., 2021). Online digital platforms can facilitate in sharing cultural heritage by sharing knowledge. Due to the global nature of online digital platforms knowledge and techniques can be shared instantaneously and globally. The effect of this phenomenon on crafting practices in relation to cultural heritage is unclear.

The platform economy as power brokers

The platform economy goes by many names, some of the most popular labels assigned to the platform economy are the creative economy, the sharing economy or the gig economy (Kenney & Zysman, 2016). In this research the term platform economy will be used to describe the growing number of digitally enabled activities and social interactions facilitated by online digital platforms. The platform economy consists of online digital platforms which

are a mix of software, hardware operations and networks. There are many different types of digital platforms but what they all have in common is an interface which caters to a broad set of users and a dependence on the digitization of value-creating human activities (Kenney & Zysman, 2016).

Online digital platforms have several distinct characteristics. Firstly, they offer new and attractively priced services to consumers and offer a good overview of the competition. Secondly, online digital platforms affect which players enter the market and modifies the communication between sellers and buyers (Nooren et al., 2018). As a result, online digital platforms have a significant amount of power because they have the ability to influence the transparency of the market and have access to a lot of personal data (Ruckenstein & Granroth, 2020).

One of the main characteristics of the platform economy is so called gig-work or online mediated contracting (Spurk & Straub, 2020). Gig work can be defined by its individualistic nature and offers more flexibility by means of for example flexible working hours and being able to work from different location. All in all, gig work generates fragmented work schedules and increasing levels of part-time work without the employer related benefits which previously characterized employer-based full-time work (Kenney & Zysman, 2016). As a result, the absence of a fixed income combined with the nonexistent safety net can be the cause for a high amount of stress for many individuals (Morgan, 2018). Additionally, according to Daskalova (2021) the employee has less leverage power in the gig economy, creating a change in the power dynamic between employer and employee. The level of power platforms have does not just solely influence the transparency of the market but can change the market as a whole. Kenney & Zysman (2016) even go as far as describing the platform economy as a reorganization of the current economy and compare the level of power which the platform owners have to factory owners in the industrial revolution. Crafting artisans are often dependent on online digital platforms and have to participate in the platform economy in order to make a profit. There is currently little research on the effect of participating in the platform economy on crafting practices and crafting artisans.

Hyper differentiation
Another feature connected to platformization and online digital platforms is hyper differentiation. Hyper differentiation refers to the availability of a large amount of products with slight differences. Online digital platforms allow buyers and users to be very distinct in the products that they sell. The nature of online digital platforms allows for a considerable

amount of niche categories which are often not available in an offline environment (Church & Oakley, 2018). This method of selling products reduces a product's cultural and historical connotations and can therefore reduce the value of the product (Morgan, 2018). However, hyper differentiation can also be a successful method of promoting products. When products are successfully differentiated the direct competition will be reduced because the product will appear unique and will be considered one of a kind (Clemons et al., 2003). Because crafting practices often reproduce a unique handmade product the right kind of marketing and promotion becomes relevant. Hyper differentiation is a common approach in promoting and marketing handcrafted items because when it is done successfully it can ensure a beneficial market position in which customers are willing to pay more.

Consumers in both the global North and the global South are sensitive to trends that refer to how unique and high in quality a product is. Natural materials are increasingly in demand by many customers and suppliers because of their sustainable credentials. The association that natural materials are more sustainable and overall better is a trend which suits the sustainability and anti-capitalism narrative. Additionally, natural materials are generally considered to be of higher quality and easier to recycle (Crocker, 2008).

Considering traditional hand-crafted products, there is still some controversy amongst crafters about using newer non-traditional materials such as polyester (Sharma, 2020). The materials and techniques used when creating a crafted product are often traditional and passed down from generation to generation meaning that using non-traditional products will change the product and the process of making it (Sharma, 2020). By doing so creators are often afraid the product will reduce in perceived value. Hyper differentiation focusses not only on the uniqueness of a product but also of the quality and the materials which have been used. The process of making hand-crafted items combined with the materials and techniques used make the product unique and therefore more valuable. For products which are hand-crafted but produced in large quantities, which is more common in the global South, the perceived uniqueness of the product on online digital platforms is reduced, making the materials and quality more important. Hyper differentiation has a significant effect on how users participate in the platform economy because they adapt the business practices which are the most successful on the online digital platform. This adaptation due to hyper differentiation can ultimately affect the crafted product.

Digital inequalities in the platform economy
While it has been argued during the emergence of web 2.0 that online digital platforms provide equal opportunities and will close the gap between rich and poor, the fact remains,

that workers and employers have very different opportunities to participate in the labor market (Croteau, 2018). Nowadays, the global labor market today is still shaped and characterized by uneven technological, political, social, cultural and institutional elements (Graham & Anwar, 2019). These elements translate into the online market and creative economy, digital inequalities tend to mirror already existing social inequalities in terms of socio-economic status, education, gender, age, geographic location, employment status and race (Lutz, 2019a). As a result, in our current socio-economic environment the already privileged benefit the most from the platform economy. This so called digital divide has three dimensions. The first level refers to who has access to the internet, the second to inequalities and skills and usage and lastly the third digital divide refers to differences in gains from internet usage (Dahlberg, 2015). The third level is the most relevant for this research because it refers to how certain individuals profit disproportionately from internet use and thereby increase already existing social inequalities (Lutz, 2019a). This reinforces a certain power dynamic where certain people benefit disproportionately from the platform economy. However, this narrative is very generalized and there is little research on whether this disproportion also applies to crafting artisan in the global North and the global South.

Social entrepreneurship in the crafts economy

The gig-economy has changed the boundaries of work time and leisure time (Snape et al., 2017). The lines between what is considered an activity for leisure and what can be considered labor have become blurred. For individuals whose work offers opportunities for creativity, goal achievement or satisfaction it can be difficult to distinguish work from leisure. New employment spaces where pleasure, autonomy and income coexist romanticize labor (Duffy, 2016). As a result, long work hours with little compensation have become normalized since a job doesn't necessarily have to feel like work anymore.

Crafting practices can be considered the type of work where creativity, goal achievement and satisfaction play a large role. However, crafting has become part of a multibillion dollar industry. The parties that profit the most from crafting are often not the people that make the items but the support companies and online digital platforms themselves (Godelnik, 2015). Due to hyper differentiation, all sellers on online digital platforms have to participate in venture labor in order to successfully sell products. Venture labor refers to how every seller on the platform is considered its own miniature enterprise or small business. Therefore, every individual must engage in forms of self-entrepreneurship and branding in order to be successful and differentiate from their competitors (Mumby & Kuhn, 2019). All of these elements create a dynamic market which values creativity and is

susceptible to social change.

One of the methods related to social change is social entrepreneurship. Social entrepreneurship refers to the notion that societal problems can be solved by management practices. These social entrepreneurs shed a light on prominent problems in society such as medical services, education, environmental problems and in the focus of this thesis, also the preservation of art and local handicraft (Singh, 2016). The emergence of online platforms has created the opportunity for local cultures to reach a larger audience to sell their products, sometimes facilitated by social entrepreneurship. On these platforms this is often leveraged on trends such as slow fashion, sustainability and feminism (Krugh, 2014). However, artisanal craftmanship sold on platforms might not necessarily be social entrepreneurship but more capitalistic in nature, creating an environment where not the creators but the intermediates and the platform itself eventually profits from the products sold. Individuals and communities with a higher economic status have better leverage on these platforms which therefore provides them with the ability to build exploitative practices where the individuals performing the labor do not get compensated evenly (Godelnik, 2015).

The role of community in crafting practices
Craft cultures and communities are often self-organizing systems with different communities that have a shared vision around crafting processes and materials (Talwar, 2019). Digital technologies provide opportunities for users to connect with each other, gain new insights and form meaningful relationships. These so called communities of practice allow users to connect to others, learn new skills and enhance their already existing abilities. The use of these online digital platforms has been proven to be efficient in forging new relationships through an online network (Holmes et al., 2014). In this online network, ideas are shared, feedback is given, opinions are stated and tips are exchanged.

What is distinct about the craft community, is that the community is perceived as a collaborative environment where trade secrets are being shared compared to a competitive one. This concept is known as knowledge collaboration, meaning that users can exchange knowledge and insights because they are under the impression that this action will benefit them personally. This sharing culture is influential in the exchange of information without animosity. However there are different motivations of being a member of these social communities. There is a vast distinction between members that use the community to increase sales, whereas there are also individuals that are in search of inspiration and motivation to learn new creative techniques (Blanchflower & Hodges, 2015).

A recurring theme in these crafting communities is the anti-globalization and anti-

sweatshop movements (Krugh, 2014). Crafting is generally considered sustainable and slow fashion, the opposite of fast fashion which is often concerned with exploitative labor practices. Another important element of crafting communities is that gender relations are crucial to understanding community organizations and social hierarchy. The division of labor in many cultures is often primarily structured by gender (Jolie, 2014). This affects crafting communities because gender is fundamental in the organization of different societies and structures craft production. In general, crafting practices are often more associated with women because they are often compatible with raising children (Adovasio et al, 2007). Flexible work arrangements used to be considered a way to emancipate women from patricidal employment structures. However, social inequalities and hierarchies do not cease to exist because the workplace is digital (Duffy, 2016). As mentioned before, social inequalities translate to online digital platforms and are frequently discussed in digital communities (Lutz, 2019a).

Crafting to make an impact
At this time in history online digital platforms are routinely utilized for communication. Online digital platforms allow individuals to interact, share, create and consume online content. The communicative nature of online digital platforms makes them good candidates for online digital activism. One form of online digital activism is called craftivism. The term craftivism was first coined by writer Betsy Greer in 2003 and refers to a strategy for activism which is nonviolent and centered around practices of craft. Craftivism typically incorporates themes such as feminism, sustainability and anti-capitalism (Fitzpatrick, 2018).

Craftivism aims to influence positive social and political change. This practice involves a combination of different crafting techniques with elements of social and digital engagement. The ultimate goal of craftivism is to shed a light on issues of social, political and environmental justice. Craftivism has the ability to strengthen social connections and enhance community resilience (Fitzpatrick, 2018).

Craftivism does not limit itself to a singular location and has been practiced across the globe. Some notable historical examples of craftivism are the use of domestic arts within the women's suffrage movement, Gandhi's strategy of hand spinning his own traditional garments to reject Western culture and lastly, the women of the Chilean Arpilleras who used embroidery techniques to protest a military dictatorship. Overall, craftivism can be used as a method to help citizens challenge the status quo by providing tools and strategies to gain attention and shed a light on the problems they wish to address.

Online digital platforms are an important element in promoting crafting projects, collaboration and in reaching a larger audience. Nowadays, when activists want to share their opinions and voice their views this is increasingly done in hybrid media environments. Online digital platforms offer participants new opportunities for speaking out, this lowers the threshold for involvement in collective action. All in all, craftivism is dependent on collaboration. To maximize the impact of a project it is essential to work with other creators, cultural institution, local governments or businesses. This will maximize the impact and the scope of the craftivism project because it enables the crafter to reach a larger audience.

Online digital platforms change the power dynamics of participating in online activism because it is easier and more accessible for an individual to participate (Bakardjieva et al., 2012). However, when taking a closer look at online digital activism there are certain exclusions and prominent systematic inequalities. In order to participate in online digital activism an individual is dependent on their technical competence and education, creating an hierarchy. This combined with the global digital divide means that even in something such a craftivism which strives for equality there is not an even playing field (Bakardjieva et al., 2012).

Etsy as online digital platform
The nature of a digital platform has a large impact on its users. Arguably the most popular digital platform related to crafting is Etsy. Etsy stands for Easy To Sell Yourself and is an e-commerce platform with the focus on crafting and vintage items. The platform, which originates from the United States was designed with an online open craft fair in mind in which sellers have personal storefronts in which they can list and display their items. However, the small and quaint atmosphere which can usually be found at craft fairs does not necessarily translate into what Etsy looks like today. Etsy started off in 2005 as a small online platform meant to solely connect buyers and sellers but has now evolved into a platform with several interactive features, AI software, 4.1 million active sellers and approximately 81 million buyers (Etsy, 2020).

Etsy originates from the early days of digital platformization, where platforms still restricted themselves to sectors with natural ties to the internet. They are part of a digital platform system where the owners of these platforms consider themselves gatekeepers and bridge builders. In brief, this means that they intermediate between parties on different sides of the platform. In the case of Etsy this is between the sellers and buyers. Etsy has made it much easier and more accessible for people to sell their handmade items online by providing

access to a large potential customer base (Luckman, 2015).

A distinctive characteristic of Etsy is that is a Certified Benefit Corporation. A Certified Benefit Corporation is a business entity that follows the line of traditional corporations with the additional feature that it has additional societal responsibilities and wants to pursue public benefits. It has been argued that this business model is a first step towards creating more socially committed commercial entities (Hiller, 2013). Etsy in essence has adapted this business model to appeal to their demographic which is known to support slow fashion and active in the anti-globalization and anti-sweatshop movements (Krugh, 2014). Crafting is generally considered sustainable and slow fashion, the opposite of fast fashion which is often concerned with exploitative labor practices. Therefore, the adaptation of a business model which integrates social responsibility was a deliberate choice.

Originally a North-American company, Etsy has changed their market statement multiple times, moving away from the US-market into a more global sphere. In 2013 Etsy described itself as: "a marketplace where people around the world connect to buy and sell unique goods" (Krugh, 2014 p.292). Etsy CEO Chad Dickerson thinks of craft as part of a more sustainable future that will improve from using both environmental and business practices. However, the marketing strategy put forth by the company about quitting one's day job to engage in full time production and sales can be qualified as misleading (Krugh, 2016). In 2015, only 30% of sellers on Etsy used the platform as their sole occupation and it has been asserted that many sellers have difficulties finding financial independence through Etsy.

This literature review was written with the intention of providing information on current literature on the most important elements of the research question. Firstly, the notion of craft was defined with further explanations on how crafting practices vary in the global North and the global South. Secondly, the literature review provided information on the platform economy and the role of online digital platforms in this type of economy. Furthermore, more information on online digital platforms their history and cultural differences was provided to give a closer insight on the dynamics of different cultures and groups that participate on online digital platforms.

Methodology

The following sections will explain the steps taken and the key decisions during the research in order to enhance the research its overall reliability and validity. This will consist of the research design, data collection, processing and analysis of the data and research ethics and limitations. Overall, this chapter will provide a comprehensive overview of what methods have been used to help answer the research question: 'To what extent are online digital platforms increasing value for diverse artisans and their communities in the global North and the global South? The research question is answered by means of the sub questions:

1.) How has platformization changed the products that are being sold? And if so, what are the characteristics of this potential change?

2.) Do Etsy and Instagram cater to the diversity of different cultures and groups in relation to crafting?

The first sub question answers how online digital platforms have changed crafting practices and how the platforms impact their creators. Online digital platforms have increased the accessibility for people with access to technology to sell crafted items online (Luckman, 2015). However, by decreasing local boundaries artisan often have to adapt to fit in a new global market. Because the crafted items are often removed from the context in which they were made, the items feel less like property and more like fluid ideas (Jerald Hughes & Lang, 2006). This means that online digital platforms have the ability to change crafted items, changing the product as a whole. Artisans have often become dependent on online digital platforms in order to sell their products. This raises questions about the power relations between artisans and online digital platforms. This research will answer how this dependency translates on online digital platforms and whether online digital platforms change the eventual products that are being offered on these platforms.

The second sub question answers how online digital platforms cater to the diversity of different groups and cultures in relation to crafting. It can be difficult to define how cultural differences translate into online digital platforms. This research provides insight into how online digital platforms cater to this diversity and into how artisans adapt in order to be successful on online digital platforms. Despite the overall deviant historical, cultural and socio economic differences between the global North and the global South. There are additional differences between them in relation to online digital platforms as well. Generally speaking, most online digital platforms originate from the global North. This means that the platforms are completely designed to cater towards the global North with an emphasis on the

United States (Bakardjieva et al., 2012). However, in the global and the global South there are different perspectives on crafting. In the global North the focus of crafting is more on leisure whereas in the global South the focus is more on preserving cultural heritage and community (Black, 2018). Despite this, both products are offered on the same online digital platform.

Furthermore, the global digital divide has a large impact on whether a crafter is successful on an online digital platform. In our current socio-economic environment the already privileged benefit the most from the platform economy (Lutz, 2019b). The global digital divide can refer to difference in technical literacy but also toward difference in gains from internet usage (Dahlberg, 2015). This reinforces a certain power dynamic where certain people benefit disproportionately from the platform economy.

In order to answer the research question it is important to adapt an appropriate research methodology for the collection of information. Since the focus of the research is on online digital platforms in relation to the crafting industry and the power relations between artisan and platform, a qualitative analysis will be the best fit. Qualitative analysis can be defined as the non-numerical examination and interpretation of observations, for the purpose of discovering underlying meanings and patterns of relationships (Wenzel & Babbie, 2014). This research will be conducted through a multimodal critical discourse analysis, semiotic intertextuality and topic modeling of Instagram posts and listings on Etsy.

The goal of the research is to provide insights into to what extent online digital platforms have increased value for artisans and to gain insights on how communities in the global North and the global South adapt to this digitalization. There is a real possibility that crafting artists do not have a legitimate choice in whether they have to use online digital platforms in order to sell their work. This forced adaptation to online digital platforms, combined with the systematic differences in which online digital platform cater to the global North and the global South can have significant consequences on crafting artisans and their work. By providing information on how different crafting artisans adapt to online digital platforms, online digital platforms could in turn work on proving a more open and inclusive platform. This research will provide information on how diverse artisans represent themselves on online digital platforms and how this varies between artisans in the global North and the global South. To illustrate these differences a comparative analysis has been conducted in this research.

Research design

Craft as a concept does not have the same connotations and definitions in different countries. Despite this, artisans from different cultural background still operate on the same online digital platforms. Because these artisans operate on a global platform which is easily accessible, it can be difficult to spot cultural and historical differences. To learn more about the differences between different cultural groups and how online digital platforms can effectively cater to diverse artisans and their communities research is needed. The decision to focus on the global North and the global South is based on the different cultural connotations these countries hold related to craft (Luckman, 2015). Additionally, there are significant differences between the global North and the global South in relation to the crafters their professional backgrounds, emphasizing the cultural differences and how these translate to online digital platforms.

Multimodal critical discourse analysis

There are several elements which vastly influence participation on online digital platforms. Firstly, artisans have become highly dependent on these platforms to sell their products and do not have any job security in the gig economy. Secondly, not every individual has the same opportunities to participate on online digital platforms because the global labor market is shaped by uneven technological, political, social, cultural and institutional elements (Graham & Anwar, 2019). Power is a returning element in how online digital platforms influence artisans and their communities. Because power has a large impact on how diverse artisans function on these platforms a multimodal critical discourse analysis has been chosen as method of analysis to decode power relations.

Critical discourse analysis looks at language as a societal process in which context is important when examining discourses and their hidden ideologies. In short, this means that in order to understand the underlying meaning to a text, the discourse has to be interpreted within their societal context (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). Critical discourse analysis is also a good method to discover which hegemonic ideas are dominant on online digital platforms.

Roderick (2018) argues that critical discourse analysis should not be restricted to just textual language but can also be accomplished through individual semiotic modes such as language, images and music (p. 161). Multimodality refers to the ways in which meaning is realized intermodally. Since a lot of the information communicated in relation to crafting is visual because it is the best fit to showcase skill or something handmade a multimodal discourse analysis was conducted in this research. Multimodal critical discourse analysis enables the identification of the relationship between ideology, language and power, revealing the covert of underlying messages behind Instagram posts and listings on online digital platforms (Machin & Mayr, 2012). In this research it is important to consider both visual and textual analysis since the elements that are going to be analyzed are accompanied by text and contributes to finding patterns that cannot be conveyed by imagery alone. Therefore, visual and textual elements will be combined to explore and compare different discourses withing the corpus.

Semiotic intertextuality

To provide more context about how products and artisans have changed due to platformization semiotic intertextuality will be applied. Semiotic Intertextuality refers to the relationship between text or images and means that all images and texts that are produced are influenced by images or text that came before (Rivas, 2017). The use of intertextuality creates familiarity and is already a widely used technique in the advertising landscape. It is a method to create connections by means of repetition which creates familiarity, stimulates consumers memory and creates associations amongst products (Rivas, 2017)**.**

Semiotic intertextuality is relevant to this research in relation to transmutability. In the shift from analog to online digital platforms the content on these platforms changed, individuals were more easily able to build on previously created content and were able to adapt, recombine and innovate new content which suited their narrative (Hughes & Lang, 2006). In short, transmutability refers to the manner in which a product or concept changes due to the nature of their environment. Transmutability has changed the production of crafted goods. The extent of this is still uncertain, therefore this research will facilitate in filling this gap. Additionally, because individual participants in the platform economy have to participate in venture labor, this method of advertising is relevant for users of the platform economy as well. Intertextuality is closely related to individual entrepreneurship, meaning that users of the platform economy will use popular trends or crafting methods in order to gain popularity and grow their business. Therefore, semiotic intertextuality will help define

how platformization changed the products that are being sold and how does this impacts their creators.

Topic modeling

To discover prominent themes within the corpus the text mining method topic modeling has been applied. Topic modeling is a visual text analysis which identifies the main themes in a text corpus (Diesner et al., 2015). Blei (2010) defines topic models as: 'algorithms for discovering the main themes that pervade a large and otherwise unstructured collection of documents' (p. 77). This research uses the tool Context to assign topics and Tableau to visualize them. Each theme within the corpus is represented by a vector of words, sorted by their strength association with a theme. The analysis will discover what topics the creators of the content had in mind while making the post of listing. Topic modeling reveals underlying themes within texts. Considering the nature of the research it will facilitate in uncovering popular dialogue amongst crafters. This information can be profitable for online digital platforms since access to this information can facilitate them in adapting the platform itself to the users their demands. Topic modeling will further enhance the analysis because it will illustrate how different users use online digital platforms, and what themes and topics are popular within the crafting community.

Data collection

The population of this research consists of artisans who focus on crafting practices in the global North and global South that operate in the platform economy. For this research the focus was on two specific platforms, Etsy and Instagram. The global North and the global South represent emerging and established markets on the platform economy based on geographic location. With the global North representing established markets and the global South emerging markets (Lutz, 2019a). The global North was represented by 53 Instagram posts and 50 listings from Etsy. The global South was represented by 51 Instagram posts and 50 Etsy listings. On Instagram and Etsy there was filtered on location and snowball sampling was applied to collect the data.

The sample drawn from this population is a non-random purposive sample. This means that the sample applies directly to the research question. The sample only consist of artisans whom have profit margins in mind, meaning that they are active operators in the platform economy. However, the sample does contain artisans of different phases in their careers to ensure an inclusive sample. Additionally, for the purpose of a comparative analysis the global North and global South have been selected. The selection criteria were as followed: a.) The artisans had to be part of an online community. b.) They had to be located in either the global North or South c.) They had to operate in the platform economy with profit margins in mind. To ensure that the posts were related to craft a few criteria related to craft that made the posts distinctive were applied. In order for the creative process to be called crafting the craftsperson had to transform a raw material into a finished product. Secondly, the craft had to have a cultural basis and the process of making the end product had to involve working with one's head, heart and hands. Lastly, the product had to be original and contain traces of the artists one hand since the product is unique and not mass manufactured. The precise keywords and search terms used for data collection can be found in Appendix A.

Etsy

Etsy has been around since the early days of platformization in 2005 and is one of the largest crafting platforms with 4.1 million active sellers and approximately 81 million buyers. The global nature of Etsy ensures a representation of both the global North and the global South and represents the capitalistic nature of crafting because the main goal of the platform is to sell products. Etsy does however originate from the United States. (Davis,

2013) Because of the popularity and size of the platform Etsy is still one of the first platforms which come to mind in relation to crafting. Therefore Etsy is included in this research.

Instagram

The same sampling approach will be applied for Instagram. Instagram is a medium which primarily uses photos and videos which are called reels as a communication mechanism. Whereas Etsy is used to sell products, Instagram is used more as a brand management tool and has less emphasis on buying and selling products, but more on building social relations. (Anagnostopoulos et al., 2018). This changing however, ecommerce is changing the nature of the platform, changing shopping experiences and favoring posts that have affiliate marketing in them. With new features on the platform Instagram is well on its way into becoming a new ecommerce platform. This new way of shopping has been labeled: 'Social shopping' which refers to how a social network can facilitate in sales. (Canning, 2020) Because of its social nature, Instagram can play a crucial role in building consumers perceptions and attitudes and provides the opportunity to directly communicate with followers (Hanna et al., 2011). Considering the unique and important nature of community forming for crafters the important role of a platform such as Instagram should not be underestimated and is included in this research.

Processing and analysis of the data

To process and analyze the data both multimodal critical discourse analysis, topic modeling and semiotic intertextuality will be conducted.

Multimodal discourse analysis

The purpose of multimodal critical discourse analysis is to reveal implicit meanings and to learn how these are translated on online digital platforms. The themes that have been used as starting points for the analysis are based on the literature from the literature review. The first theme will entail venture labor how participating in the platform economy affects mental health and work/life balance. Secondly, community practices in crafting as a whole will be analyzed. Thirdly, how cultural heritage translates into crafting practices. Lastly, activism in crafting has been applied as the last starting point for the analysis.

The analysis itself will consists of four steps. Firstly, the research will look at the denotations and connotations within the data. As a result, this will cover the descriptive and symbolic nature of the data. Moreover, denotations give an insight in how something is visualized and connotation looks at the meaning potential of these elements (Machin & Mayr, 2012). In addition, the objects in the data and what these objects represent will be researched. Thirdly, the setting in which the data is presented will be researched. The focus here will be on how these setting communicate general ideas, values, identities and actions. Lastly, the salience in the advertisements will be researched. In particular, the features within the data that are designed to draw attention will be researched. These elements often represent the central symbolic value of the data. The dimensions of salience consist of: Potent cultural symbols, size, color, tone, focus, foregrounding and overlapping. A more detailed description of the data analysis framework can be found in Appendix C.

Semiotic intertextuality

To recognize intertextuality there are five techniques: Direct quotation, indirect quotation, mentioning a person, document or statements, comment on or valuate a statement and using recognizable phrasing (Williandani et al., 2020). These methods will be applied to the sample in addition to the multimodal critical discourse analysis to provide more context to the research.

Topic modeling

The software programs Context and Tableau will be used for the visualization and analysis. The text from the global North and the global South will be run separately to demonstrate

the different themes within the different countries. The text will be collected in a txt. File and run through Context for the analysis. The software programs Context and Tableau will be used for the visualization and analysis.

Atlas.ti

To process the data the software ATLAS.ti will be utilized. This is a data storage, organization, management and qualitative analysis tool. This software will facilitate in the research because it provides the ability to structure the data which will eventually strengthen the analysis.

Research ethics and limitations

The content of this research has not originally been created for research purposes, this means that the research is unobtrusive and a reactive effect can be removed as a limitation (Wenzel & Babbie, 2014). However, qualitative content analysis is an interpretive method, which increases bias in the research. An exception to this is topic modeling. Because an algorithm is used in topic modeling there is minimal human intervention, making the method more inductive than traditional models of text analysis (Mohr & Bogdanov, 2013). However, the researcher is still responsible for interpreting the meanings within text of topic models and algorithmic bias can impact the research since algorithmic systems can yield socially biased outcomes since algorithms are still human made (Kordzadeh & Ghasemaghaei, 2021). Therefore, to several different methods of data collecting will be applied to increase reliability and decrease researcher bias. However, due to the location of the researcher which was in the Netherlands the algorithm showed more posts in the global North making it more difficult to find an even representation of the data. Despite efforts of the researcher to represent the global North and South evenly there is the possibility that the global North and the global South are not equally represented.

Another limitation is that the assumption was made that the data from the global South came emerging markets and the data from the global North was from already established markets. This decision was made because the research is focused on online digital platforms which have been created in the global North and still cater mainly to the global North (Bakardjieva et al., 2012). This does however not mean that every country in global South can be labeled an emerging market. A suggestion for future research could be to look at different countries separately to have a less generalized approach. This was however not possible within the scope of this research.

Results

This chapter presents the results of the multimodal critical discourse analysis followed up by semiotic intertextuality conducted to describe how crafting artisans have adapted to the online platforms Etsy and Instagram. Additional topic modeling has been conducted to get a better grip on the most popular discourses concerning the crafting community. A distinction between the global North and the global South has been made to illustrate the differences between marginalized communities and non-marginalized communities on online digital platforms.

This chapter will focus first on the prevalent discourses that were found in the global North, then on the discourses identified in the global south and concluding with the findings on how the global North and the global South compare in the presentation of crafting practices on online digital platforms. The results indicate five key recurring discourses which were identified across both regions in the same order. Firstly, venture labor will be discussed and how participating in venture labor often takes enjoyment away from activities when they were previously considered a leisure activity. Secondly, the prominent discourse of sustainability and slow fashion. Then, community communication, what is commonly discussed on online digital platforms and how does this involve the crafting community. Next, the implementation of cultural heritage and natural elements in craft. And finally the move towards a digital product on online digital platforms.

How participating in venture labor takes the joy away from hobbies

The effects of the platform economy were prevalent in the data. In the global North there was an ongoing dialogue on how being creative and turning a hobby into a business can be draining and overwhelming. This has the eventual effect that engaging in an activity for a profit takes away the joy from something which used to be relaxing and considered a leisure activity. In contrast, in the global South this was not an active narrative. The dialogue in the global South more often discussed the product itself and the materials used, and not the emotions and feelings of the creator. In the global South, craft was not considered a leisure activity and more focused on building a business model.

The platform economy is a facilitating factor in how the boundaries between leisure and work often become blurred. Figure 1 describes how online digital platforms can also put pressure on creators because they often compare their work and their pace with each other. The creative from the global North describes how she finds it difficult to find balance and how elements of online digital platforms can make it more difficult to find this balance due

to external pressure and the algorithm on the platform. This actively describes how Instagram has contributed to a disbalance between leisure and labor. In the end she states that Instagram is supposed to be enjoyable by saying: This is Instagram. Enjoy it! This reinforces the narrative that Instagram is supposed to be enjoyable, even though many creators use the platform to grow their business, something which is considered labor and does not necessarily have to be enjoyable.
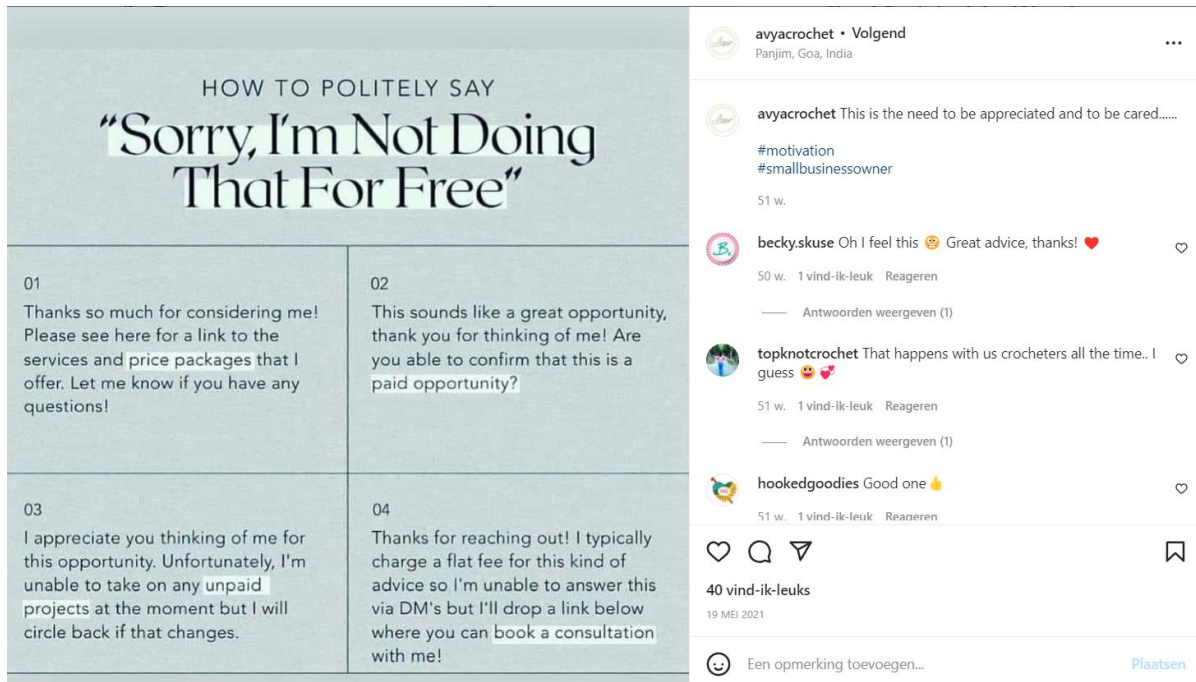

Figure 1

Post retrieved from Instagram @Renewal.collective

Another example of how the platform economy is a facilitating factor in how the boundaries between leisure and work often become blurred can be found in Figure 2. Figure 2 is a post from the global South which gives advice on how to deal with free solicitors and to politely say that they are not working for free. This post indicates that the creator or the network around the creators often deal with these issues and gives advice on how to navigate these problems on online digital platforms. The distinct implication that they are not working for free further establishes the point that their craft is considered labor and not a leisure activity which is done for free. As a matter of fact, enjoyment is not mentioned in the post at all further establishing that the creator is participating in business practices and not in leisure.

The two post signify a significant difference in participation on the platform economy. Whereas the post from the global North is more about the difficulties of participating on online digital platforms and finding balance, the post from the global South is more focused on how to become and remain successful on online digital platforms.

Figure 2

Post retrieved from Instagram @avyacrochet

Moreover, finding balance between work and leisure was often considered difficult for creators in the global North because for crafting creatives in the global North they were often the same thing. This can add additional stress when the crafting practices actually start to feel like work, and can take away the initial joy which is associated with the crafting process. Interestingly enough the complaints about work life balance and finding joy in labor were only discussed by creatives from the global North. These results are in line with the literature which states that the labor from crafters on Etsy from the global north often originates from hobbies and not professional artistic backgrounds (Lutz, 2019a). Crafters with artistic backgrounds more often consider their crafting labor and wouldn't complain as much because they will be conditioned to consider their work labor and not a hobby or leisure activity. Creators from the global North often have used online digital platforms to share their hobbies which eventually turned into a business. In global South this is often the other way around, whereas creators from the global South were already practicing their craft for labor with the intention of making a profit. Therefore, in the global South crafting to

make a living is often considered actual work and does not have the association that is always has to be as fulfilling and joyful as a hobby.

There is also a double standard regarding leisure and class in the West which originates from the industrial revolution. Leisure used to be a sign of culture in the upper class. However, for those not as privileged leisure was considered immoral and a source of trouble. This changed when employers realized that their employees would be more productive with an increase of leisure time, making leisure more accessible for the lower class. But, this narrative has changed. Leisure used to be positioned as luxury, the opposite of work. However, in the world we live in today being busy is considered a sign of high social status. The assumption that people would work less when they became wealthy is not true anymore in the global North now that being busy is associated with social status. (Arora, 2019). This could explain why so many creatives in the global North complain about being busy and their work/life balance, since it is a subconscious manner to portray ones social status.

Notably, the dialogue that crafting and the additional promotional activities that are necessary in order to be successful on online digital platforms took only place on Instagram. The Instagram posts were more community focused which made it a better fit for sharing ones hardships.

The discourse of sustainability and slow fashion, crafting to provide an alternative

Sustainable, or sustainability refers to sustainable development. Holistically, sustainability or sustainable development means to provide an increase in well-being for people and nature (Väänänen & Pöllänen, 2020). The sustainability discourse was identified as predominant in the global North and South. Popular hashtags on Instagram were: #slowfashionmovement #slowfashion #upcycled #sustainablefashion #repurposed #smallbusiness #shopsmall and #ethicalfashion.

On Etsy, sustainable and durable items were also popular. The materials were often mentioned in the description and title. Words such as recycled, remade, sustainable, upcycled, organic, natural and vintage were popular. Etsy also provides the option to search for items which are handmade or sustainable, categorizing them by means of an algorithm. Etsy promotes sustainable products by means of their blogs and categories.

Market & economy

Sustainability in crafting practices was visible in several distinct ways. Firstly, the focus was

on the market and the economy. In the global North, it was emphasized that the products were not mass produced, unique and created by individuals. By emphasizing that the products are not mass produced and created by individuals value was created. Part of this value is the impression of an unique one of a kind product. Figure 3 describes in detail how each individual product varies and can have imperfections. This is framed as a disclaimer but at the same time puts the emphasis on how each product is unique in its own way.
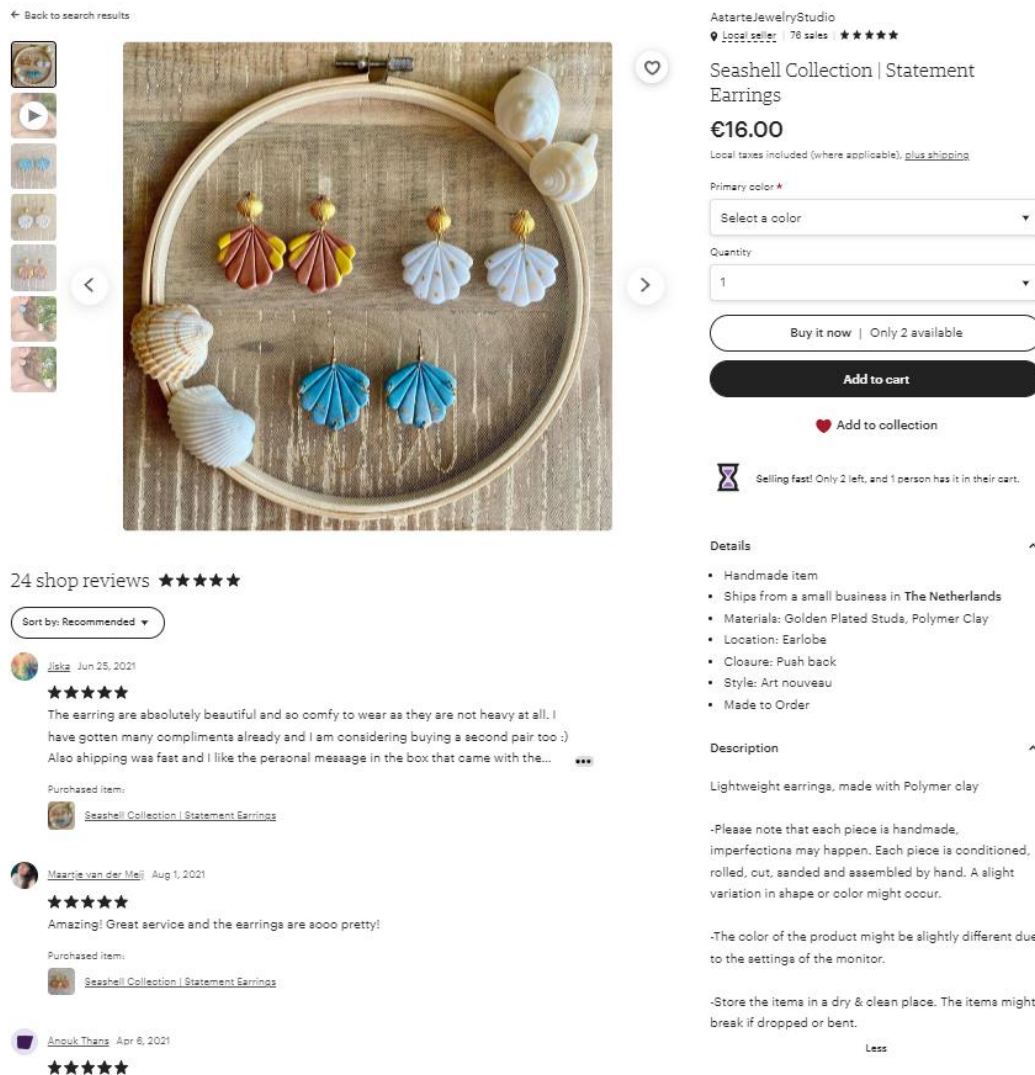
Figure 3

Post retrieved from Etsy @AstarteJewelryStudio

In the global South the products were also hand-made but the emphasis was not as much on the uniqueness of the product since often products were produced in bulk even though they were handmade. Therefore, in the global South the emphasis was more on cultural heritage and cultural preservation. Figure 4 for example describes in detail where the product originates from, the material and the circumstances in which the product was created.

However, the uniqueness of the product is not mentioned. In short, in the global North the emphasis was on the uniqueness of the products whereas in the global South the emphasis was on where the product was created and its origins.

Figure 4

Post retrieved from Etsy shop @Jungleculture

Something which was found in both the global North and the global South was slow fashion. Slow fashion was often mentioned with some crafters from the global North mentioning that they participated in "very slow fashion" hereby emphasizing the amount of time it takes to create a finished product. Mentioning slow fashion was often combined with the description of the process of making the product, hereby emphasizing the time and effort that goes into creating the finished product. The creators of the listings and posts made clear that they engaged in self-entrepreneurship by emphasizing their journey and hardships. Moreover, it

can be stated that the process of making the product is part of the product. It is common to share the process of making the product on online digital platforms to make the product more attractive and to emphasize that the product is handmade. Creators use this process to promote their product and their business, making the process of making a product part of the product by sharing this on online digital platforms. This finding is in line with Marxist literature on alienated labor (Musto, 2010). Figure 5 is an example of a product that is already being promoted while it is not finished yet. The creator is sharing the process of making the product, with a description of how she is experiencing the process. By doing this the creator is sharing the process of making the product with her followers while at the same time emphasizing that the product is handmade. By doing this the creator is making the process of making the product part of the product.

Figure 5

Post retrieved from Instagram @knits.bydeb

Materials & life cycle

In both the global North and the global South the materials and life cycle were mentioned and emphasized. Posts mentioned the quality of the materials and whether they were natural or not. Often, recycled materials were used. Additionally the life cycle of the products was often emphasized. Overall, there was a specific emphasis on how the clothes you buy are

meant to last, and buying from individual crafters or small businesses is a way to achieve this. Synthetic materials were often scorned and labeled as harmful to the environment and not durable.

Because synthetic materials were considered not sustainable and therefore not very favorable for customers, there was a revitalization of traditional materials in the global South. By using phrase such as 'traditional materials' the assumption that the materials were also sustainable were often made. Whereas in the global North the materials needed the distinct emphasis that they were natural and sustainable. Figure 6 is a good example of this scenario. Figure 6 is an Etsy listing from the global South. The materials are mentioned in the post but the focus is on the authenticity of the product. Hereby, the use of natural materials is implied and an extra on sustainability is not needed.
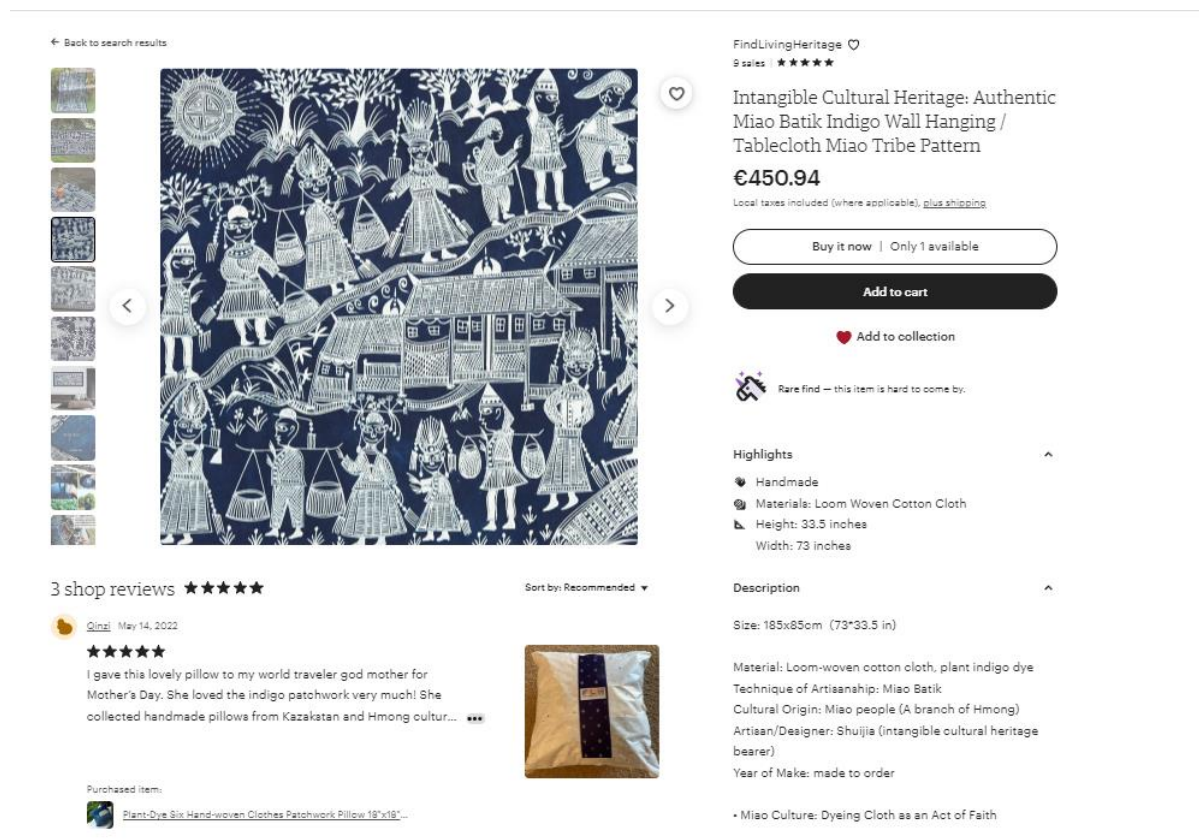
Figure 6

Post retrieved from Etsy @FindLivingHeritage

Figure 7 features a product from the global North. There is a detailed explanation on how sustainable the product is by mentioning that the product is repurposed, sustainable and vintage.
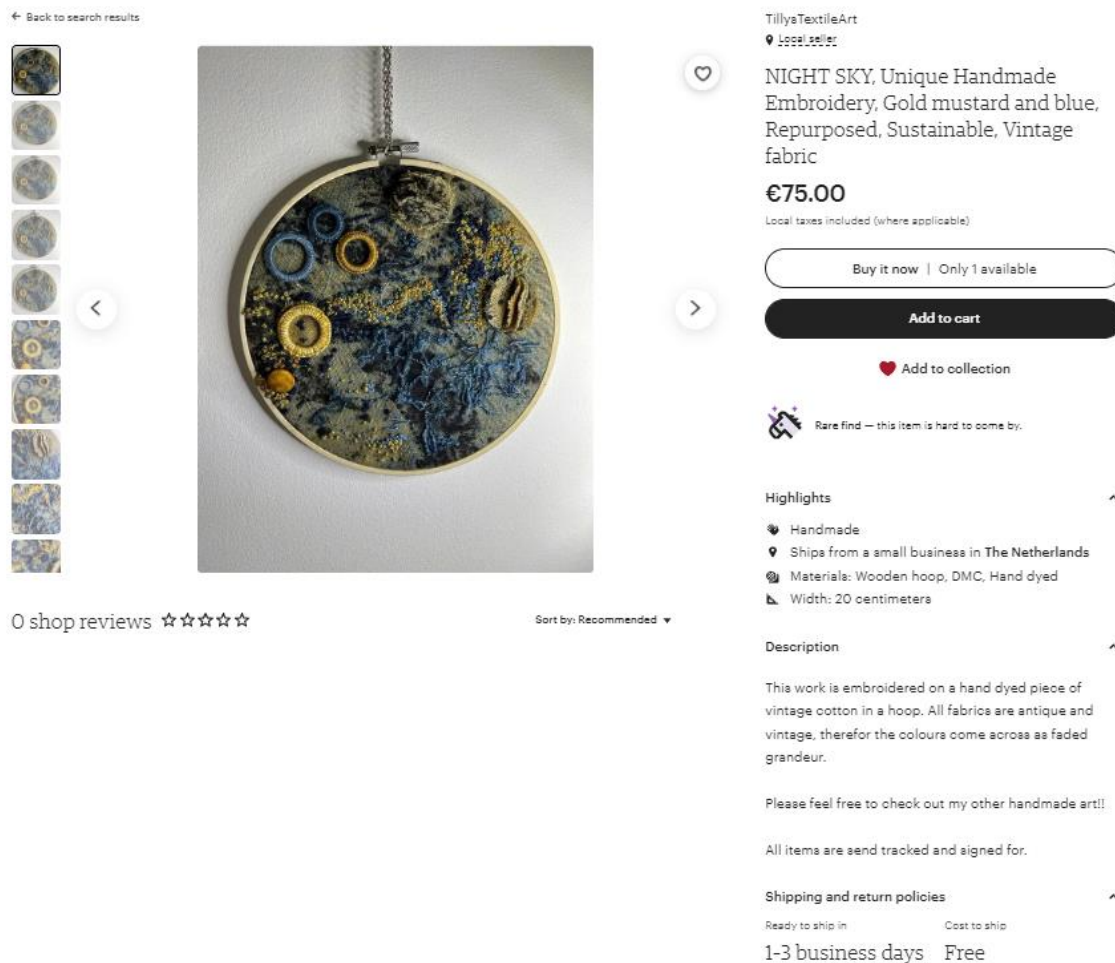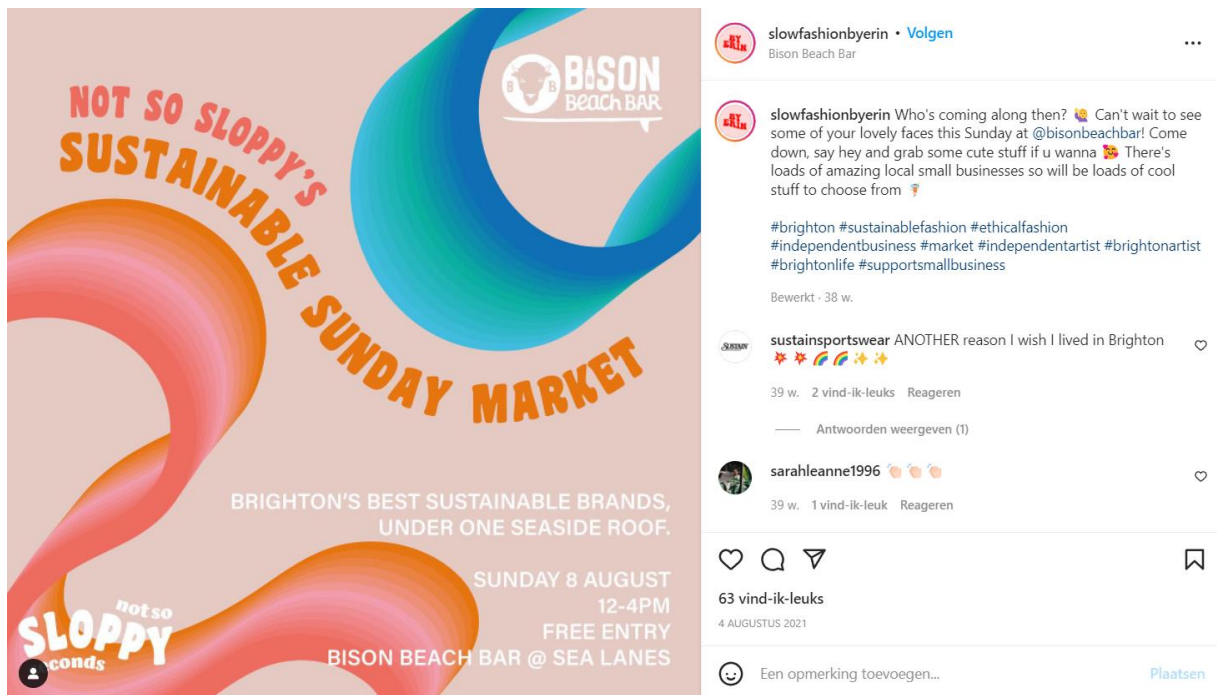
Figure 7

Post retrieved by Etsy @TillysTextileArt

Buying local

In the global North, there was an emphasis on buying local and supporting local businesses. Local and ethical are often related in the sense that buying local products has the connotation that is more sustainable and provides direct benefits to the local community (McCaffrey & Kurland, 2015). The connection between local and sustainable was prominent as can be illustrated in figure 8. The hashtags #sustainablefashion, #ethicalfashion and #supportsmallbusiness are all grouped together. The notion that buying local is more ethical and sustainable is an assumption which has been made across multiple posts. The buying local narrative was only prominent in the posts from the Global North, which can be explained by the welfare economics of buying local. Winfree & Watson (2017) state that by promoting local products the value of the products will go up. This compensates for the usually higher production costs of a product which is locally produced compared to a product which is not locally produced. In the context of crafting in the global North this

makes a lot of sense since the wages and cost of living here are relatively high. By promoting local products and by associating them with sustainability the higher costs and profit margins will be more justified. A product will be much more expensive buy because the buyer is under the impression that buying local is more sustainable and more ethical, therefore this higher price will be compensated. However, most of the creators in the data participated in the platform economy to sell their products and were selling worldwide, something which directly contradicts the notion of buying products locally. The rhetoric of buying local and producing locally goes directly against the platformization of the craft economy which by default nudges towards a scalable global audience. It also raises the question who is buying the products from the global South, and whether the concept of buying local products is as important in the global South as it is in the global North.

Figure 8

Post retrieved from Instagram @Slowfashionbyerin

Community communication, involving the community in the process of crafting

According to Talwar (2019), in the global North, online craft communities often have a shared vision around crafting processes and materials. Sustainability and slow fashion are for example important for the majority of the sample. The crafting community is unique in the sense that it views itself more of a collaborative environment where trade secrets are being exchanged than a competitive environment (Blanchflower & Hodges, 2015). This so

called knowledge collaboration was a returning element in the data. However, this might not necessarily reflect reality. For many creators, profit is important even though it is not explicitly being communicated in the posts. In the global North, the emphasis is on creativity and on how much they love crafting. Online digital platforms help their users in gaining new insights and forming meaningful relationships.

However, in the global South the emphasis is not as much on the creators their love for the product and the activity but also on tradition and how cultural elements can be found back in the end result. The activity of crafting on online digital platforms is still social in nature, but the focus is more on sharing the process and the end-result than on collaboration. For example in figure 9 the creator is actively sharing on Instagram but the post is not about collaboration but more about gratefulness that others support her crafting activities. She is also sharing cultural heritage by participating in the hashtag #aapiheritagemonth.

Figure 9

Post retrieved from Instagram @needle_or_thread

Figure 10 from the global North on the other hand illustrates collaboration with other creatives where the original creator asks for the help of other within the community to help creative a finished product.

Figure 10

Post retrieved from Instagram @mycrochet.jpg

In the sample from both the global North and the global South on Instagram the community is often involved by means of sharing personal stories and by expressing love to their followers. By continuously repeating the importance of the community this importance is being reinforced.

In the global North there were several distinct other ways in which the community was involved. Firstly, there was often asked for advice concerning craftmanship, secondly giveaways were popular in engaging the audience on Instagram and thirdly, pattern tests were a method of promotion and collaboration. In the global North, the role of community was communicated from a capitalistic perspective, meaning that the emphasis of the communication is not on profit but on how online digital platforms and it's corresponding community enable the user to practice and develop their craft. Craft is often portrayed as a passion and not as a business model, even though some crafters have profits in mind, their content is often communicated as a passion and a hobby. The distinction between users that use online digital platforms to increase sales and the individuals that are in search of inspiration is difficult to define.

In the global South, collaboration with other creators on online digital platforms was not as prominent and there was more of a focus on the promotion of the product instead of collaboration. Crafting artisans still showed appreciation of their following but this did not

translate into collaborations. Even though the crafting artisans here were aware of craft being a passion and not a business model, the capitalistic nature of selling products on online digital platforms was more prominent. Figure 11 for example involved the audience by wishing them a happy weekend and calling them friends. However, by mentioning a discount it is immediately clear that this pattern is not free and that the consumer has to pay in order to get access to the product.

Figure 11

Post retrieved from Instagram @mysquarehat

Influencer marketing

A method of making crafting more financially lucrative is by means of influencer marketing. An influencer can be described as someone who posts on social media in exchange for compensation (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). Successful crafters often participate in influencer marketing and collaborate with businesses in order to largen their community and make a profit. Despite the lighthearted nature of the collaborative Instagram posts, influencer marketing should not be underestimated. Top influencers can make over six figures for a single social media post making influencer marketing desirable for crafting artisans to generate extra income. This type of marketing changes the product, because the crafting artisan has to adapt to the company with which they are collaborating with. The tone of

voice, style and products itself has to fit with the collaborating brand image. This has an impact on influencers their creative freedom. Figure 12 is a good example of community communication on online digital platforms combined with influencer marketing. Firstly, the creator involves the community by thanking them for their love and support. Secondly, the collaborates with a company in order to boost her own engagement and at the same time creates more visibility for the company she is collaborating with.

Figure 12

Post retrieved from Instagram @hayhaycrochet

Pattern tests

Another method of collaboration in the global North which involves the crafting community is involving the community by testing out products before they are being launched online. One example of this process of creating a product is by applying so called pattern tests. By applying this method relatively popular crafters withing the community ask for the help of others by pre-launching their product and asking for advice and things that can be changed. In short, the creator of the pattern asks individuals to try out the pattern and to give input and advice in order to improve the product. This creates an open environment of collaboration in which crafting artists get to know each other better and enlarge their social network while simultaneously promoting their brand.

These pattern tests are a double edged sword. On the one hand there is collaboration and promotion of the brands on both sides, on the other hand there is a warped power

relation between the tester and the person asking for testers. The person that asks for help is often someone more integrated in the community and is therefore able to make demands of the testers. These demands can vary and cause friction within the community. The tester is basically performing free labor with additional demands from the original creators. These demands can vary. The most common demands are having to finish the pattern test within a certain time frame, not taking into consideration how time consuming craft can be. Secondly, pattern testers often have to promote the product on their own platform thereby promoting the original creator for free. Not abiding by these demands often has consequences such as the creator being scorned within the community of eventually having to pay the full price for the pattern**. Figure 13** is an example of a crafting artisan which did a pattern test and promotes the pattern on her own Instagram.
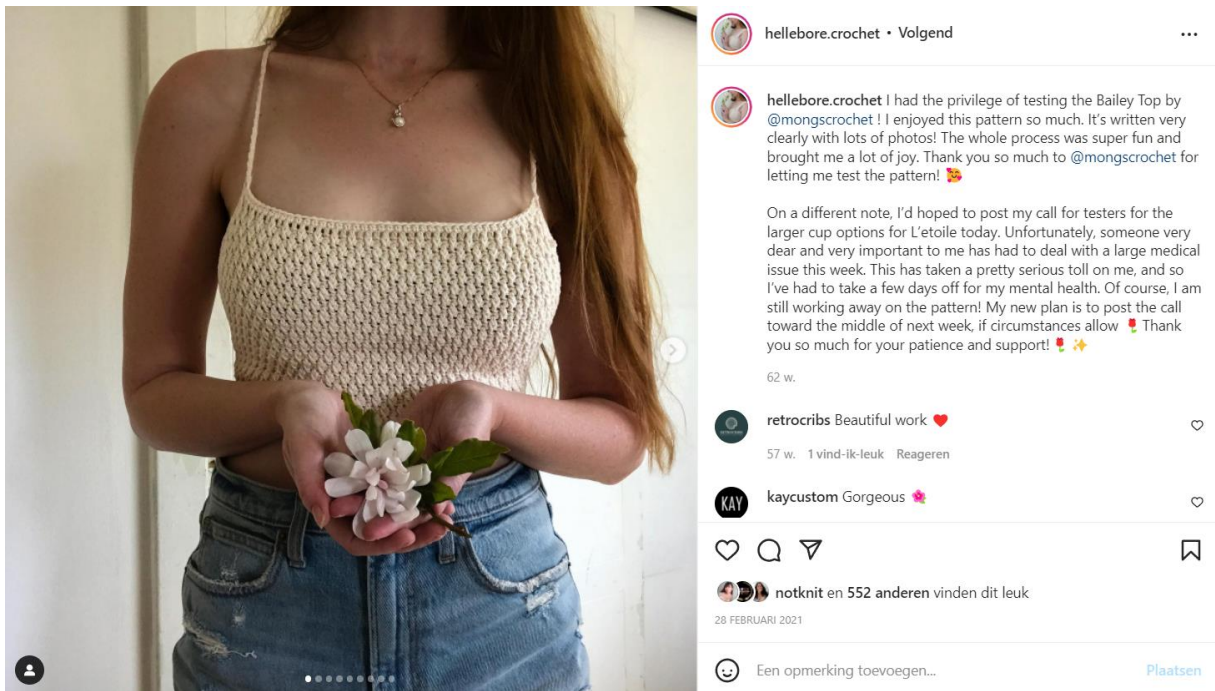
Figure 13

Post retrieved from Instagram @hellebore.crochet

Because collaboration is not as prominent in the global South pattern tests were not found in the data from the global South. Additionally, selling patterns on online digital platforms was more common in the global North whereas in the global South the focus was more on a finished product. In the data from the global South the emphasis was more on traditional materials, something which can be difficult to implement for a creator when following a digital pattern.

Implementation of cultural heritage and natural elements

In the data different types of storytelling were found, which often mentions the source of inspiration that was the basis for the eventual crafted product. These sources of inspiration overall had three different elements, implementation of cultural heritage, inspired by nature and the community itself.

Implementation of cultural heritage

In the global South there was a strong implementation of cultural heritage. The implementation of cultural heritage was in particular done by using traditional crafting techniques and describing their history and cultural value. Often, the creators described what inspired them to make the crafted product. This implementation of cultural heritage revealed itself in several distinct ways. First of all, by means of incorporating mythology and secondly by using crafting techniques which were passed down from generation to generation. In short, by sharing their cultural heritage crafters from the global South try to keep their cultural heritage alive and gain attention to techniques and stories that are unique to their culture and history. Generally speaking, information that the crafter shares regarding their personal story, history and heritage is shared in order to ensure that the craft stays alive and will not be forgotten. Figure 14 is an example of how indigenous traditions are still applied and make the product more unique and special.
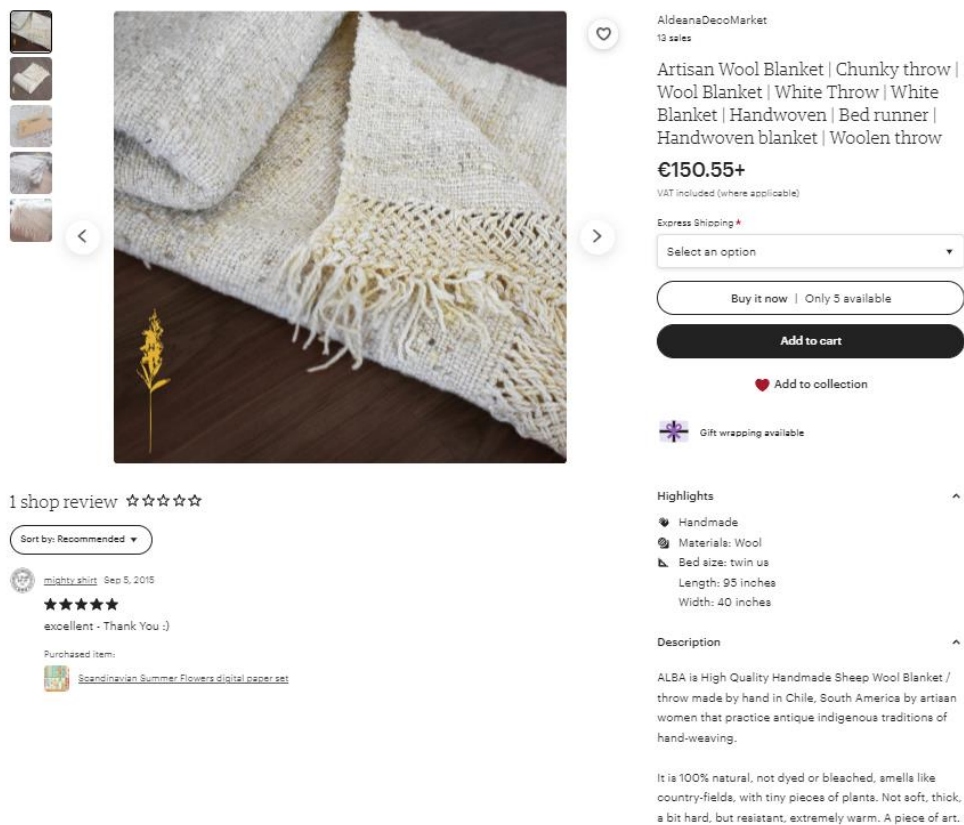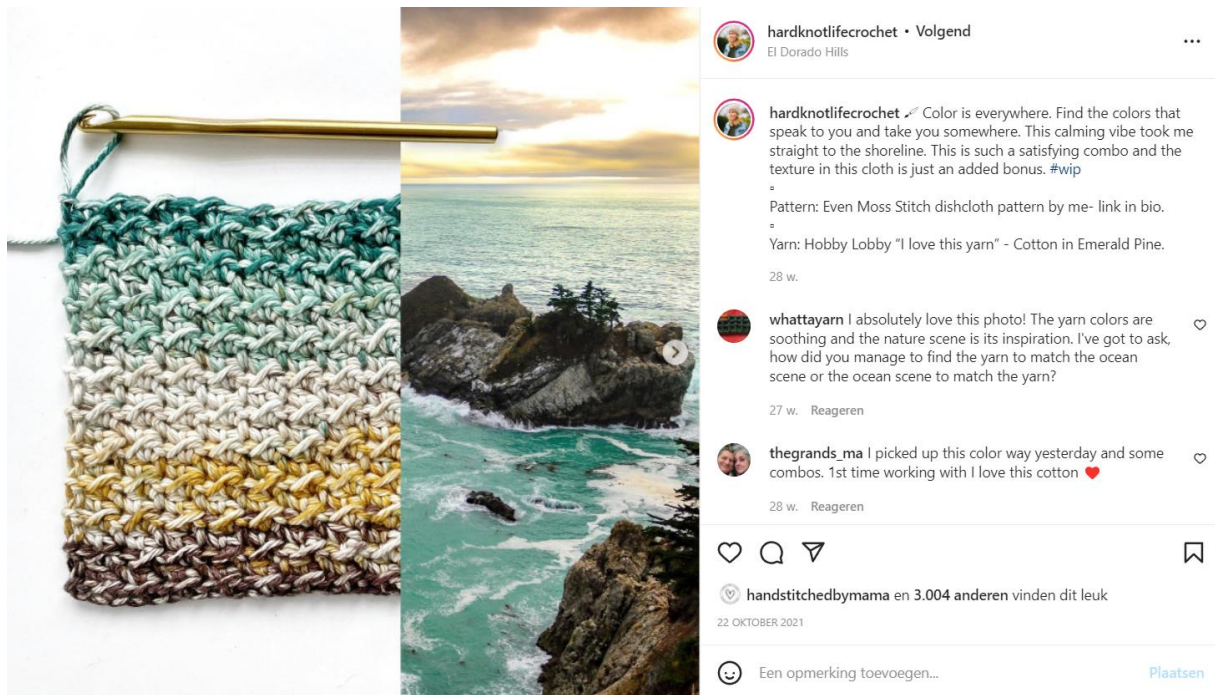
Figure 14

Post retrieved from Etsy @aldeanaDecoMarket

Inspired by nature

Nature was prominent in most of the data from both the global North and the global South. Generally speaking, there were two dimension in this. The first dimension refers to how nature inspired the creator in their craft and the second dimension refers to a trend in which natural products are more popular.

Nature inspired the creators in the usage of color, texture and the feeling nature evokes. Many of the pictures that were taken involved at least one natural element, some examples of this are the ocean, plants or the mountains. In figure 15 the creator describes how color inspired the eventual product. By incorporating her own feelings in the post she shares some of the process of how the product was made and which feelings this evoked.

Figure 15

Post retrieved from Instagram @hardknotlifecrochet

Another element connected to nature is the usage of non-artificial natural products. In the data almost always the materials used were mentioned. In the Etsy listings the materials were usually posted in the description and on Instagram by means of hashtags or in the description. Overall the usage of natural products was encouraged and seen as something positive. Acrylic yarn or polyester for example was not used a lot, instead most crafters encouraged using natural products such as wool, cotton, natural dyes, bamboo and wood. This is supported by Crocker (2008) p. 174 who states that natural materials are considered more sustainable and associated with traditional crafting methods. Newer materials such a polyester are not as popular as when they were first introduced. Nowadays these materials are associated with mass production and are generally considered cheaper and lower in quality.

Taking inspiration from the community

Moreover, in both the global North and the global South the community itself was important to crafters. Taking inspiration from the community was achieved by taking inspiration from others, collaboration and by using digital products and expanding them, thereby creating a new product. It is worth mentioning that the original crafting artisans had to be credited. Not doing this is frowned upon within the community. However, due to the decontextualized nature of the algorithm and virality it can sometimes be difficult to define where a design

comes from. To tackle this problem, crafting artisans often name their designs and post many pictures of the product and the process of making the product. Additionally, when buying a digital products buyers often have to sign a waver in which they state not to use the pattern for personal profit.

Figure 16 is a good example of how the community inspires each other in creating new products. We can see a crochet dress in which the creator used a pattern from another creator for a part of the dress. The other creator is credited here and therefore this product is the result of already existing products withing the community. This type of creative process was found a lot in the data, with creators taking inspiration from each other and using each other work to create something new. Additionally, the community is also influential in what materials are popular. As mentioned before, natural products are often used because they are in line with the slow fashion, sustainable mindset. This creates an increase of popularity of crafted products which are made with these materials. However, these natural products are often more expensive. This, combined with how time consuming crafting can be makes selling finished products online not always lucrative. This can be an explanation of why there has been a shift in selling physical product to selling digital products.
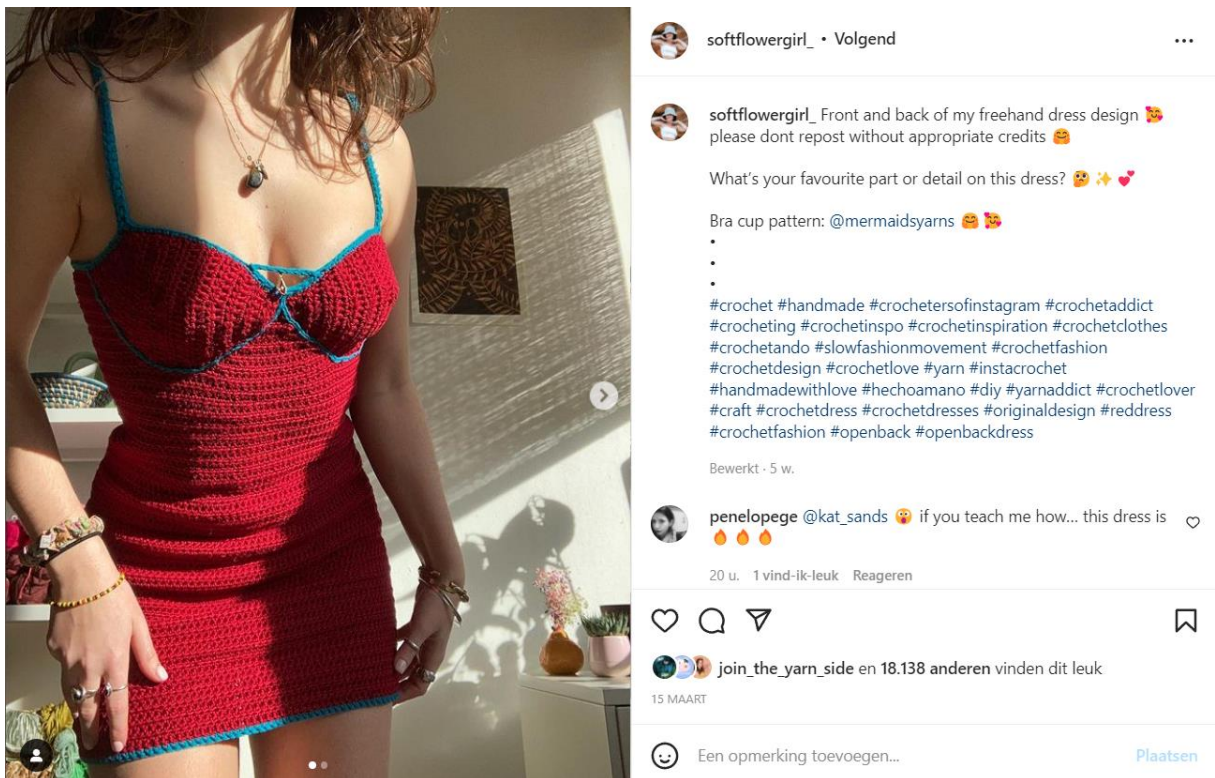
Figure 16

*Post retrieved from Instagram @softflowergirl_*

Lastly, Figure 17 is an example of an Instagram post in which all elements are applied. Collaboration, cultural heritage and how nature inspired the final product are all mentioned in the Instagram post. The caption expresses gratefulness to the community, collaboration and how the designs are related to nature.

Figure 17

Post retrieved from Instagram @lena.ladakh

Moving towards a digital product

In the data, pattern is the most common word in the data from the Global North, supporting the notion that selling patterns as a digital product has become more popular than selling finished physical products.

A finished end-product is often not lucrative because of the costs of materials and the amount of time it takes to produce a finished item. Crafted products are often extremely time consuming and it can be difficult to remain competitive on online digital platforms because of the extreme amount of diversity in products that are being offered on online digital platforms. Additionally, the move to a global market has the additional limitation that shipping is often involved to move an item from their seller to the buyer.

International shipping can be extremely expensive depending on the country it needs to be shipped to and can rake up the costs of a product significantly. On Etsy the algorithm

supports products which do not have shipping costs. This creates some issues, because for crafting artisans that want to sell their products internationally it can become extremely expensive to ship their items for free, minimizing their profit margins. However, in order for them to be visible on the platform they had to leave out the shipping costs in the price. As a result of these elements there has been a shift in selling hand-crafted end-products towards selling digital products such as pdf-files which people can print at home or tutorials which explain how a user can make the product.

Moreover, by adapting a digital approach users on digital online platforms bypass shipping costs and waiting time. This does have an significant impact on the creators and the buyers since they are not necessarily focusing on a finished end-product anymore. The products advertised are also aimed towards other creators with users that have the skill-set to create tutorials and users that solely try the tutorials out. Within this shift a user is not buying a finished product anymore but more of a manual on how to make the product. Often the buyers needs to have a certain level of skills already or needs to be open to learn new skills which is something that does not happen when buying an already finished product.

Digital tutorials do make it more accessible for buyers to learn new techniques. Furthermore, it enables sellers to share cultural methods of craftmanship that used to be confined to a certain cultural community and can be considered cultural heritage. By sharing these digital tutorials the crafting techniques are placed out of the context in which they were created and had previously usually also been confined to. Moreover, by creating these digital products these techniques are brought into the public sphere. However, because the community often has impact on what becomes popular and which products gain the most attention this also creates inequalities and gatekeeping practices. The community decides what is valued and often one needs to have certain skillsets in order to gain access to this community such as certain crafting skills, but also language and digital literacy.

Figure 18 is a good example of the move towards a digital product. The product consists of a digital pdf file which can be printed at home. By implementing this approach the seller avoids shipping costs.

Figure 18

Post retrieved from Etsy @DeepashreeArts

Regarding the online digital products, patterns were the most popular amongst knitters and crocheters. Creators often did specify that the finished end-product is not allowed to be sold, keeping the patterns from the public domain. Figure 19 is an example of a crochet pattern in which the user distinctly mentions that copying, distributing or creating a different tutorial using this pattern is not allowed. Nevertheless, actually enforcing this behavior can be difficult since proving where a design comes from is not always possible.

Figure 19

Post retrieved from Etsy @Iankabymee

Discussion

This section aims to answer the research questions of this study, briefly discuss the strengths and limitations of the method chosen and finally explore opportunities for further research.

Sub question 1: How has platformization changed the products that are being sold? And if so, what are the characteristics of this potential change?

The first sub question aims to answer whether and how online digital platforms have changed the products that are being sold. It is firstly important to see whether the products have changed or not because of online digital platforms and what the potential influence of online digital platforms is. To answer the first question, yes online digital platforms have changed the product that are being sold in several ways. Firstly, online digital platforms encourage collaboration which tends to influence crafting practices and crafting skills. Furthermore, by sharing the process of making the product on online digital platforms, the process becomes part of the product. Lastly, digital technologies and online digital platforms enable a shift from a physical product to a digital one. The global nature of online digital platforms comes with additional difficulties such as shipping costs and an increase of waiting time before the product arrives. To bypass these obstacles there is a shift to a digital product which is immediately accessible upon purchase.

Collaboration

In the global North, the popularity of products is not solely decided by trends but crafters are also inspired by each other. The craft community in the global North is perceived as a collaborative environment in which trade secrets are being shared (Blanchflower & Hodges, 2015). This concept which is called knowledge collaboration facilitated as a source of inspiration and popular products were often copied by other creators. Because of the large range of products which can be found on online digital platforms, users constantly compared products with each other. However, within the community there is a vast difference between users that are in search of inspiration and motivation in order to learn new creative techniques and users that use the community to increase sales.

A popular method of collaboration is by means of testing each other work before a digital product such as a pattern is put online. The original creators picks people to test a pattern and in exchange for feedback they get a free digital product. This method of creating a new product ensures that multiple people within the community are involved in the creation of the product. However, the original creator is responsible for picking the people

that will test the product. This gives the original creator a lot influence and sets a certain status and hierarchy within the community. How inclusive this sub-community of testers is, is dependent on the original creator that decides who is going to test the product. This is often someone that is popular within the community and has an already established business model. Participating in these pattern tests can facilitate a creator in becoming more popular and gaining more visibility. In a way, the original creator that picks testers works as some sort of gatekeeper within this community. Pattern testing can be considered free labor, but in exchange the tester gains visibility within the community. Additionally, because the original creator decides who is going to help test out the products he or she has the power to decide which styles and products will become more popular than others.

In the global South there wasn't as much online collaboration, the crafters did share their work and progress but did not work with other crafters in order to create a new product. Instead they shared what the product meant to them and the cultural connotations that are attached to the product. The potential effects of this should not be underestimated. Communication on online digital platforms has the ability to expand the influence of intangible cultural heritage, transform the intangible cultural heritage from regional culture to a wider range of culture, strengthen cultural communication and has extremely vital significance to the active promotion and dissemination of national intangible cultural heritage (Wu et al., 2021). Participating on online digital platforms exposes traditional crafting traditions and skills to a wider audience which has the ability to provide new ideas for the protection and inheritance of intangible cultural heritage.

Collaboration with established companies

Another way in which online digital platform influence craft production and crafted products is by means of influencer or collaborative marketing. A way to make an extra income is by collaborating with companies in exchange for money (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). This is very appealing for content creators since it can generate more money. Companies however get to pick and decide the crafter they wish to work with, meaning that self-censorship is common so that the crafter will appear more appealing to the company. It can be risky for companies to work with creators with a certain reputation and they are often scared that this will reflect on the company. Therefore when a crafter wants to collaborate with a company they often watch their language and mannerism and try to make their product as appealing for companies as possible.

Sharing the process

Another element of selling crafted products on online digital platforms has to do with the process of making the product. The process of making the product has become part of the product. Online digital platforms within crafting practices are used to share the journey of creating a finished product, and the effort and products that go into the finished product. By sharing the process creators often promote their own product and meanwhile engage in self-entrepreneurship. Online digital platform support this content because algorithms often pick up on certain trends and put certain content in the spotlight. On online digital platforms the community which surrounds a creators was vital to their success. Successful online creators were active in the community in several ways. Most creators tried to communicate their own distinct style and incorporated their personality in their work. In the global South this was done by incorporating cultural heritage, use of color, patterns and techniques. In the description the creator usually elaborated on why and how they incorporated these elements and what it means to them personally. Creators also shared the process of making something, making the process and the journey of the product part of the product. Instead of buying a finished product the consumer would know how much time, thought and effort went into the product because of online digital platforms. This was not just the case with finished physical products, but also with digital products. The creators of these products asked for help and advice of other creators and also shared this process on online digital platforms. Another method of connection with the audience was by expressing their love to the community and by having giveaways for extra engagement. With these giveaways the audience often had to share posts or comment on them in order to receive something in exchange.

Moving towards a digital product

Online digital platforms have changed the crafting market, putting crafting practices in a more global sphere (Kenney & Zysman, 2016). Because there is on ongoing trend focusing on buying local, and because shipping is not being encouraged on online digital platforms there has been a shift in buying an already finished product towards buying a digital manual in which the instructions of making this product can be found. Products such a patterns are not something new but have become more popular because it is also easier to find instructions and support in making something online. Beginner friendly patterns and instructions are common, and within these instructions there are thorough explanations to be found. Ranging from crafting techniques and the types of materials that provide the desired results. This shift in the market does not only affect the product, but influences the market as

well. Because of hyper differentiation there is a large availability of similar products (Church & Oakley, 2018). Creatives often stop focusing on finished products because selling digital products is more lucrative and does not have a limit. Selling digital products can be seen as a passive income, meaning that once it is finished it will continue to generate money. Digital products are also more accessible for an international audience, with creators often offering the instructions in multiple languages.

Creators that sell digital products have a different target audience and are usually already popular within the community. By selling digital products they try to appeal to other creators instead of people that want to buy a finished product. Digital products also facilitate in bringing different crafting techniques into the public sphere by making it more accessible for buyers to learn new techniques. Crafting practices are not passed down via connections within crafters their local vicinity but can become be exchanged worldwide. This places cultural crafting practices out of their context, but can also facilitate in certain practices and materials becoming popular with a large audience, something which is facilitated by online digital platforms. However, the community also has a large impact on what online digital products become popular.

Sub question 2: Do Etsy and Instagram cater to the diversity of different cultures and groups in relation to crafting?

The second sub question refers to online digital platforms themselves and how they cater to the diversity of different cultures and groups in relation to crafting. In the data the platforms of Etsy and Instagram themselves did not cater to the diversity of different cultures and groups in relation to crafting. The platforms use algorithms to decide whether something will be popular or not. However, the community itself has a large role in deciding what product are popular.

There were several reason why the online digital platforms themselves did not cater to the diversity of different cultures and groups active on these platforms. Firstly, even though the crafted items were listed on a capitalistic platform with the intention of making a profit, craft was still being framed as a hobby on the platforms themselves. The narrative that crafting is something relaxing was prominent. This made it more difficult for cultures in which craft is not considered a hobby but a viable source of income to make their mark on online digital platforms. Secondly, the trend of buying local products does not help these marginalized communities which are often not as visible on the platforms to begin with. The popularity of buying local on online digital platforms can be considered a contradiction on

its own, since one of the unique aspects of online digital platforms is that a consumer is not limited to local products anymore, but instead has access to products all around the globe. All in all, these aspects support the literature which states that digital inequalities tend to mirror already existing social inequalities in terms of status, education, gender, age, geographic location, employment status and race (Lutz, 2019b).

Furthermore, online digital platforms are still framed as a method of integration and a way to merge several crafting processes and products, in reality these platforms and the community are not always supportive of this notion. Online digital communities claim to be inclusive but still have a certain hierarchy in them, in which the most popular products are often from the global North. Most members in this community still follow prominent trends and adapt in order to fit in and gain popularity. This reinforces a certain power dynamic where certain people benefit disproportionately from the platform economy (Lutz, 2019b).

There are several topics which influence the inclusivity of the platforms because these dialogues are popular on online digital platforms. Not being able to participate in the dialogues influenced the visibility of crafters on online digital platforms. Firstly, sustainability and creating a positive impact. Secondly, being able to discuss ones work/life balance and lastly there was an emphasis on creativity and the uniqueness of a product.

Sustainability

One of the most important characteristics of online digital platforms is the sense of community they bring. Online digital platforms had a lot of influence on what products and trends were popular and crafters often jumped on trends or collaborations that fit a narrative that was popular in order to become more visible on the platform. Sustainability and slow fashion were topics that were often discussed amongst many creators in both the global North and South and by using the hashtags attached to these topic the creators jumped on the bandwagon.

Sustainability was one of the most common returning dialogues in the data. Crafted products aim to provide an alternative to mass produced, unsustainable products. By focusing on the market and the economy crafted products differentiate themselves by being sustainable, ethical and local. According to crafters themselves, buying local and sustainable products directly benefits the local community. One of the characteristics of sustainable and slow fashion is the integration of natural durable materials. Because of the popularity of sustainability and slow fashion, most creators integrated natural elements and products in their work, hereby changing the product. By using materials which are discussed online creators copy each other. Additionally they educate each other about the benefits of certain

product, increasing awareness and popularity. Many crafters integrate these natural, sustainable products in their work because it is popular or has been recommended by other crafters. This does however not mean that the creators do not support the sustainability and slow fashion movement but have simply become more aware of them because of online digital platforms. The popularity of these movements on online digital platforms play a significant role in educating creators and engagement with each other. Creators can find each other and connect because of the commonalities regarding their work.

The popularity of integrating sustainability in small creators their business model directly ties to how one has to adapt to popular trends in order to be successful. This is where the concept of venture comes in. Venture labor refers to how every seller on online digital platforms is considered its own miniature enterprise of small business. Meaning that every individual must in engage in forms of self-entrepreneurship and branding in order to be successful (Mumby & Kuhn, 2019). In the case of sustainability and slow fashion this can also be called social entrepreneurship because the business owners sheds a light on societal problems and offers the opportunity to help solve this problem (Singh, 2016).

Work/life balance

A common dialogue in the global North was that turning a hobby into a business can be difficult. Many crafting artisans in the data were grateful that they were able to turn their hobby into a living. However, the one of the side effects of this was that the hobby they originally saw as something relaxing and fun became a business model and therefore took the joy away from their labor. Additional responsibilities such as having to participate in venture labor was described as stressful and overwhelming at times. When having to participate in venture labor there is a strong emphasis on the individual and what sets the individual apart from their competitors (Krugh, 2014).

Additionally, in the platform economy small creators also had to indulge in other activities besides their craft such as interacting with the community in order to gain a following and participating in marketing activities. Selling crafting product online on online digital platforms has made this almost a necessity because otherwise it is very difficult for a creator to set themselves apart from other creators (Snape et al., 2017). Because most crafters in the global North that have become popular on online digital platforms do not have validated artistic backgrounds, this change in labor often is seen as a shock.

Interestingly enough, there were very little complaints on the overwhelming nature of having to participate in venture labor from the global South. Craft in the global South was much more considered actual labor than a creative process. Additionally, crafting practices

in the global South are more associated with a connection to local community and familial history and not as much on individualism (Michael Finger, 2004). The focus on individualism in the global North could be a potential cause of mental health issues such as feeling overwhelmed and being stressed because of a lack of direct support from their community.

Emphasizing creativity

On of the dialogues in the global North on online digital platforms was an emphasis on creativity and not on profit. The sample contained crafters that were active on online digital platforms and had profit margins in mind, meaning that they sell their products. However, this was often not communicated on the platforms itself. The focus of the posts was either on creativity, how much they love crafting, how the process took place and the uniqueness of the product. The focus was often also not on the finished product, but on how much time and effort it took to make the product and on how much the crafters love the product themselves. For the past 30 years in the global North, as a cultural practice craft focusses more on intrinsic fulfillment than commercial driven production. Before online digital platforms sufficient ways to generate profit were not very much established (Warren, 2014). As a result, now that these online digital platforms do offer these opportunities the economic development of crafting is not much developed yet, which is prevalent in the communication on these online digital platforms.

In the global South the emphasis was not on creativity but on the meaning behind the product and the materials and techniques with which the product was made. Additionally, the focus was not on the uniqueness of the product since some products are handmade but also mass produced (Pathak & Mukherjee, 2020). These elements made it more difficult for creators from the global South to gain popularity since they were not always able to participate in popular dialogues on online digital platforms.

Conclusion

Online digital platforms hold a significant amount of power in the sense that they decrease local boundaries and have opened up new global markets. Online digital products have the ability to change the nature of the products being sold on these platforms. This research had the aim to answer how online digital platforms have changed crafting practices and products and how this impacts the creators of the products. Additionally, this research looked at how online digital platforms cater to diverse cultural groups. Artisans are often dependent on these platforms in order to sell their products and to promote their businesses. This gives online digital platforms a significant amount of power. In this research the focus is on the online digital platforms of Etsy and Instagram. The reason why Etsy was chosen is because it is one of the most popular platforms related to crafting and has been around since the beginning of platformization and is therefore representative for many crafting practices worldwide. Instagram was chosen because it is used as a brand management tool. Considering the importance of community for crafting practices, Instagram was included in this research.

A multimodal critical discourse analysis with semiotic intertextuality and topic modeling was conducted to answer the research question: 'To what extent are online digital platforms increasing value for diverse artisans and their communities in the global North and the global South? Was answered by means of two sub questions:

1.) How has platformization changed the products that are being sold? And if so, what are the characteristics of this potential change?
2.) Do Etsy and Instagram cater to the diversity of different cultures and groups in relation to crafting?

The main findings can be found in the answers to the sub questions. Firstly, platformization has changed the products that are being sold. Platformization accelerates change and trends and narratives such as sustainability and natural materials are often integrated in products because it is popular and a common narrative on online digital platforms. Additionally, creators inspire each other and collaborate in order to create new products. By combining techniques and materials new products are being created. Thirdly, because of influencer marketing or the potential possibility of collaborating with companies changes the product as well, because creators adapt their product in order to appeal more desirable for companies that potentially want to collaborate with them. Lastly, there has been a shift towards a digital product. Meaning that not the finished physical product is being sold, but instead a digital

version of this product. Digital products facilitate in bringing different crafting techniques into the public sphere. Crafting practices as not passed down via cultural heritage anymore but can be exchanged worldwide. This places cultural crafting practices out of their context but also facilitates in making certain crafting techniques and materials more popular.

The online digital platforms of Etsy and Instagram did not themselves cater to the diversity of different cultures and groups in relation to crafting but promoted products which has already been proven successful by means of algorithms. However, the crafting community did have the power to decide whether a product will become popular or not. The current hierarchy on online digital platforms on which products from the global North are more popular was being reinforced by the narrative that crafting is a hobby, buying locally and the hierarchy of crafting communities itself in which members adapt to popular culture in order to fit in.

Online digital platforms offer the opportunity to share and collaborate with other crafting artisans. There were several popular dialogues within the data. Many crafting artisans in the global North discussed how difficult it was to turn a hobby into a business and were very candid about how draining venture labor can be. Participating in the platform economy made it difficult for many creators to have a healthy work/life balance. However, these complaints were only from crafters from the global North. The global south did not share these issues because craft here is more considered labor than a hobby. Creativity and sustainability were also often discussed by both the global North and the global South. Lastly, what made most crafters that participated in the platform economy successful was their community and relationship with the audience. Creators communicate personal stories, collaborate with others and incorporate their personality and style into their work. This entire process is posted on online digital platforms. By communicating the entire process of the work the process itself has become part of the product, adding additional value. Before the platform economy personal touches were important as well. Online digital platforms however offer the opportunity to share these elements in a very detailed way.

To answer the main research question: To what extent are online digital platforms increasing value for diverse artisans and their communities in the global North and the global South? We can state that online digital platforms have changed the products and its attached dialogues. The already existing power relationships between the global North and the global South are however still present in the platform economy. It is still more difficult for marginalized cultures to become popular. In the platform economy community and collaboration are the two main contributing factors whether a product will be popular or not.

This gives the community a significant amount of power deciding whether an artist will become popular on Instagram and Etsy.

Limitations and suggestions for future research

Several limitations should be noted when examining the findings of this research. Firstly, the qualitative attributes of the research limit the generalizability and transferability to different contexts and regions. If the study were to be replicated on different online digital platforms it is highly likely that the results will differ and other results will be identified. Even though Etsy and Instagram are very popular there are also other online digital platforms which crafters use. The assumption was made that the data from the global South came emerging markets and the data from the global North was from already established markets. This decision was made because the research is focused on online digital platforms which have been created in the global North and still cater mainly to the global North (Bakardjieva et al., 2012). This does however not mean that every country in global South can be labeled an emerging market. A suggestion for future research could be to look at different countries separately to have a less generalized approach. This was however not possible within the scope of this research.

Furthermore, another limitation in analyzing qualitative data with connotative and latent meanings is that even though the data was thoroughly analyzed and interpreted by the researcher, this does not provide certainty on how the intended audience would perceive this data. To increase subjectivity the researcher attempted to document the process of analysis in much detail. As a result reflexivity was ensured. This was achieved by documenting all the steps and analytical decisions in Atlas.ti. All in all, these limitations should be taken into consideration when researching this topic further. By incorporating analytical triangulation and by being as reflective as possible in the data analysis process a high level of credibility was achieved. Fundamentally, qualitative research is characterized by being highly subjective in nature and the results of this research should be interpreted with care.

Lastly, the research focused on the origin of the crafted products by did not have information on who actually buys the crafted products on online digital platforms. The global nature of online digital platforms enable crafters to sell their products worldwide. Information on who buys the products both from the global North and the global South would further enrich this research and provide more information about the power dynamic between both the buyer and seller and between the seller and the platform itself.

A better understanding of current values of craftmanship can facilitate in ultimately building more inclusive online digital platforms. In the global North crafting practices are

often considered as an alternative to draining corporate life. This indicates a shift in our perception towards work in general. Craft can also be a method to keep cultural heritage alive and online digital platforms facilitate in bringing these crafting practices to a larger audience. Online digital platforms have made users dependent on these platforms. Future research could focus more in depth on the extent of this dependence and how this further influences crafting practices. An additional suggestion for future research is to analyze other online digital platforms to see whether these results are also applicable on other online digital platforms since this research only focusses on Instagram and Etsy.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Data Collection Keywords and Search Terms

Table 1

Keywords and Search Terms

Keywords		
Handmade	Slow fashion	Yarn
Sustainable	Crochet	Patterntest
Handcrafted	Knit	Giveaway
Craft	Loom	Love
Global North	Handloom	Ethical
Global South	Weaved	Wool
Sustainability	Pottery	Smallbusiness
Handmade	Patterndesign	Craftcommunity
Fiberartist	Inspiration	Slowfashionmovement
Design	Upcycled	sustainablefashion
Reworked	Vintage	Slowfiber
Slowliving	Shopsmall	Handmadewithlove
Smallbussinessowner	Supportsmallbusiness	Weaving
Tapestry	Owncreation	Handmadestyle
Shopsmall	Ecofriendly	Fashionrevolution
Sustainabletextile	Artisanmade	Ethicalfashion

Supporthandmade	Yarnlife	Wearableart
Patterndesign	DIY	Creative
Supportlocals	Slowcraft	Natureart
Ecoart	Tribalarts	Ecology

Appendix B: Sample of the Data

← Back to search results

CarolasChoices
⚲ Local seller | 2,046 sales | ★★★★★

Silk hand embroidery Miao Chinese
ethnic minority reds pinks and blues
vintage

€65.00

Local taxes included (where applicable), plus shipping

Buy it now | Only 1 available

Add to cart

♥ Add to collection

✴ Rare find — this item is hard to come by.

🚚 Arrives by May 13-17 if you order today.

Highlights ⌃

🎀 Vintage from the 1940s
⚲ Ships from a small business in **The Netherlands**
🧵 Materials: silk thread, cotton

Description ⌃

Chinese ethnic minority Miao people finely embroidered silk piece of textile. For the connoisseur and collector. Finely worked in geometric patterns in pinks and reds and blues. Would have been made to fit on a piece of clothing or belt. Very reusable or just to have as part of your collection.

I collected this from a textile trip to South Western China end of the 20th C. This was from a mountain village. Was an interesting time as the visalges were emptying out as the young went to work in the cities. You could already notice the decline in making these objects as always in an industrial revolution. I loved this because of the use of colour and geometry, and so finely done. The village was very grey and depressing due to the poverty and this piece and another I bought there expressed their creativity.

592 shop reviews ★★★★★   Sort by: Recommended ▾

Marianne Mar 31, 2022
★★★★★
Another fabulous group of vintage buttons, mostly geometric forms, soft and subtle colors, excellent quality. I'm so happy with all my buttons -- my highest recommendation for Carola's Choices!

Purchased item:
Yellow vintage buttons mixed lot 14 assorted materials brig...

Sunny Nerja Feb 15, 2022
★★★★★
These buttons are beautiful! Excellent quality and they're subtle against my navy coat, but gorgeous when they catch the light. They were dispatched promptly, very nicely packaged and they... •••

Purchased item:

69

weaverstrail
2 sales | ★★★★★

EPIC RUG! Traditional Oaxacan - HANDMADE - Mexico!

€247.69

Local taxes included (where applicable), plus shipping

Buy it now | Only 1 available

Add to cart

♥ Add to collection

Rare find — this item is hard to come by, and 2 people have it in their carts.

Highlights

🏷 Handmade
🧶 Materials: Wool
📏 Length: 60 inches
    Width: 30 inches

Description

A medium accent rug with rich shades of dark green, red, and touches of green woven by hand on a traditional foot-loom from 100% hand-spun sheep wool.

The design is inspired by the mountainous landscapes in the south of México.

This rug was spun, dyed, and handwoven by Zapotec weavers in Oaxaca (Wah-Ha-Ka) Mexico.

1 shop review ★★★★★

Sort by: Recommended ▾

Susan Weltz Jan 18, 2022
★★★★★
Beautiful rug. I hung it above the fireplace to add color to the room.

Purchased item:
Women's Collective Mayan Rug

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67 sales | ★★★★☆

Intarsia Crochet Pattern | Christmas Crochet Pattern | Crochet Cushion Pattern | Fair Isle crochet | Crochet Colorwork | Crochet cover

€8.22   ✓ In stock

VAT Included

Buy it now

Add to cart

♥ Add to collection

Highlights

💾 Digital download
📎 Digital file type(s): 2 PDF

Description

*** This is a PDF pattern, NOT a finished item. ***

SANTA IS COMING is a set of 3 patterns, finished size 16x12" (40x30 cm), made doing intarsia and fair isle crochet. The pattern include the basic instructions and graph to make the cushions but also the basic rapport to make larger items such as throws, blankets, bed runners, etc.

*** This pattern also works for cross stitch.

*Skill level: intermediate (basic knowledge of tapestry crochet is required)
*Estimated time: 16 hours (each cushion)

::: ABOUT THE PATTERN

The pattern comes with the pattern graph of each cushion, the three cushion designs consider the same color palette.

The instructions of how to do intarsia and fair isle are NOT included, however a video link to learn the basic steps is linked to the pdf file.

7 shop reviews ★★★★☆

Sort by: Recommended ▾

Isabelle Dec 21, 2021
★★☆☆☆
I am extremely disappointed with this purchase. The pattern is pretty but there is very little explanation.
But what I find shameful is that the photos of the cushions or other products have bee... •••

🌐 See in original language

Purchased item:
Santa is coming, set of 3 crochet pattern | intarsia crochet |...

Sille Nov 26, 2021
★★★★★
It takes time to crochet it as there're so many colours being used at the same time but the result is definitely worth it!

Purchased item:
It is snowing, wall hanging tapestry crochet pattern | mosai...

Cristina Contreras Nov 16, 2021

HelleboreCrochetShop

⚙ Star Seller | 733 sales | ★★★★★

Pattern: Seashore Bralette (size 4 yarn)

€7.79   ✓ In stock

VAT Included

Buy it now

Add to cart

♥ Add to collection

⚙ **Star Seller.** This seller consistently earned 5-star reviews, shipped on time, and replied quickly to any messages they received.

Highlights   ⌃

☁ Digital download

📎 Digital file type(s): 3 PDF

Description   ⌃

Note: this is a PATTERN, not a physical top! Upon purchase, you'll receive digital files to create your own bralette.

This pattern shows you how to create the Seashore Bralette using size 4 (Worsted/Aran) weight yarn! This bralette is a fun and fairly quick work up. Create one for yourself or give one as a gift! Wear your Seashore Bralette while:
Collecting sea glass and driftwood for your next crafting

---

58 shop reviews ★★★★★   Sort by: Recommended ▾

⚙ **Buyers are raving!** Multiple people gave 5-star reviews to this shop in the past 7 days.

crchtvxnmk   Feb 14, 2022
★★★★★
The article meets my expectations.

🌐 See in original language

Purchased item:

Seashore Bralette Pattern (size 4 yarn)

← Back to search results

bytigerlilyahop

📍 Local seller | 2 sales

Handmade Crochet Bag | Turquoise and Lemon Combo | Sustainable Fashion

€45.00

Local taxes included (where applicable)

Buy it now | Only 1 available

Add to cart

♥ Add to collection

🔍 **Rare find** — this item is hard to come by.

🚚 Arrives by **Thu, Jun 2 – Wed, Jun 8** if you order today.

Highlights   ⌃

🧵 Handmade

📍 Ships from a small business in **The Netherlands**

🧶 Materials: recycled yarn

Description   ⌃

The unique & colourful 'combo' is the perfect day-to-night bag to spice up your outfit 🌈

DETAILS - The 'combo' is totally sustainable & unique in size and colour. 😊
The model is similar to a bucket bag & it's large enough to store all your valuables.
The chunky and double straps minimize stretching and thanks to their length you can wear the bag either as a shoulder bag or as a handbag.

DIMENSIONS - sizes may vary depending on the thickness of the thread but the approximate dimensions are H 20 x W 13 x L 28cm

COLOUR - Turquoise body & Lemon stitching and handles

---

0 shop reviews ☆☆☆☆☆   Sort by: Recommended ▾

JeggoCrochet
371 sales | ★★★★★

Knitting pattern / easy knit pattern /
crop top / pdf pattern / knitting pdf /
instant download / downloadable /
beginners pattern / pdf

€5.93
VAT Included

✓ In stock

Buy it now

Add to cart

♥ Add to collection

Highlights ⌃

☁ Digital download
🖊 Digital file type(s): 1 PDF

Description ⌃

Want 10% off your first order? Sign up to our newsletter
using the link below!

http://eepurl.com/hOMWAX

THIS LISTING IS TO BUY THE PATTERN ONLY - Upon
payment you will receive an email where you can
download the pdf pattern to make this crop top for
yourself. You will not receive the finished item.

This knitting pattern is suitable for advanced beginners.
You need to know basic skills such as casting on,
binding off, simple sewing skills, knit stitch, purl stitch.

This knit top is super versatile! Wear it cosy like me in
the photos, or wear it out with shorts or jeans. Because
this top is NOT made with cotton yarn, it provides a
warmer crop top than most traditional styles.

29 shop reviews ★★★★★

Sort by: Recommended ▾

Francesca Rossi May 7, 2022
★★★★★
Easiest pattern ever, it knits up in a few hours and the texture feels
like heaven!

Purchased item:
Knitting pattern / easy knit pattern / crop top / pdf pattern / ...

Kaari Bouma May 23, 2022
★★★★★
Mine looks like the one in the picture, US size S/M. I wish I knew how
many chains to start for a L or XL.

hardknotlifecrochet • Volgend
El Dorado Hills

hardknotlifecrochet 🤚 Handmade means hand care - I have these
printable care cards available in my shop makers! You can mark the
yarn content and wash settings for the recipient and can include
these care cards with your knit or crochet items. Have tried these
care cards? Add to your handmade gifts this year for a professional
addition to your most special items. 🙌 #wip
◦
Details: Print Ready PDF file for at home printing or print at your
local print shop with 4 different orientations to choose from. Also
includes "remove pom before washing" and "hang dry" options.
Who doesn't love options?!
◦
I'm Handmade - Handle with Care - printable care tags - link to my
shop in my bio.
◦
Yarn shown: HobbyLobby "I Love this Yarn" Brand - in sun gold,
ivory, gray beard and silver mist.

2 w.

hardknotlifecrochet #crochet_relax #crochetallthethings
#crochetinspiration #moderncrochet #mamamaker
#madeitmyself #whatimade #handmadeisbestmade

♡ ◯ ◁   🔖

1.327 vind-ik-leuks
23 APRIL

☺ Een opmerking toevoegen...   Plaatsen

72

73

mysquarehat • Volgen

mysquarehat The Cullinan Ruana Pattern is out 😁

Get your copy before Sunday to automatically have a disc0unt applied 😌 - the link is in my bio

Happy weekend friends!!

📷 @charnelloubser
🧶 @himalaya_yarns

#mysquarehat #moderncrochet #cullinancollection #cullinanruana #mosaiccrochet #mosaikhækling #mosaiccrochetpattern #psimadethis #crochetpattern #crochetdesign #ourmakerlife

4 d.

yarn.story interesting

2 u.   1 vind-ik-leuk   Reageren

mysquarehat #crochetaddict #crochetaddicted #handmadelife #crochet_relax #bhooked #crochetgirlgang

858 vind-ik-leuks

4 DAGEN GELEDEN

Een opmerking toevoegen...   Plaatsen

Appendix C: Data Analysis Framework

Table 2

Data Analysis Framework

Step	Documentation Method	Procedure
Study the image carefully	Quotations	Select each part of the image and create quotations to be analyzed.
Identify objects and attributes	Quotations	● Create a quotation for each object. ● Give each quotation a title (name of each object). ● List and summarize objects in quotation comment.
Identify setting	Quotations	Give quotations a name or title. ● List setting in quotation comment.
Identify salience	Quotations	Give quotations a name or title. ● List identified salience features in quotation comment: - Potent cultural symbols - Size - Colour - Tone - Focus

		- Foregrounding
		- Overlapping
List denotations	Image comment	List each of the objects and attributes previously identified.
List connotations	Image comment	Describe, interpret and analyze connotations in the image based on previous steps in the same image comment.
Preliminary coding of possible discursive patterns	Codes	Code the key message(s) or preliminary discourses communicated by each image.
Analyze intertextuality	Memo	Investigate all images per brand and document intertextual elements that are repeated and form a pattern.
Turning codes into discourses: Generate discourses	Codes and Code Groups	Investigate "discourses" or "patterns" identified in the codes and categorize codes per discourse into code groups.
Analyze intertextuality between brands in the global North and the global South	Memo	Investigate all images for intertextual elements that are repeated and form a pattern. First for the data from the global North, then for the data from the global South.
Review discourses generated		Ensure that the discourses identified are useful and accurate representations of the data. Here, return to the data set and compare the

discourses against it.

● Investigated if anything is missing.

● Are these discourses really present in the data?

● What can you change to make the discourses work better?

If encountering any issues with your discourses, you might split them up, combine them, discard them or create new ones: whatever makes them more useful and accurate.

Define and name discourses	Memo	Give each discourse a title that accurately reflects what it represents.

Appendix D: Code List and Code Groups

Table 3

Codes Grouped by Code Groups

Code Groups	*Codes*
Venture labor	• Free labor • Small business • Success • Leisure • Self-entrepreneurship
Mental Health	• Work/life balance • Joy in labor • Stress • Ethics
Sustainability and slow fashion	• Sustainability • Buying local • Slow fashion • Life cycle • Natural materials • Re-used / repurposed •
Involving the audience	• Advice • Patterns tests • Sharing the process • Importance of community • Inspiration • Collaboration
Cultural heritage	• Preservation • Origin of the product • Nature •
Digital product	• Pattern • Influencer marketing
Uniqueness of the product	• Imperfections • Emphasis on hand-made • Vintage

Appendix E: Results Topic Modeling

Table 4

Results topic modeling global North

Topic	Weight	Topic Members
Topic 1	12.964	Make – crochet – work – piece – pattern – love – shop – feel – yarn - time
Topic 2	3.0988	People – vintage – rise – top – glaze – trinketdish – load – shopsmall - garland
Topic 3	3.0934	Give – struggle – family – reach encourage – support – friend – knitter – cable - ganchillo
Topic 4	3.032	Rib – act – hold – forget – eye – enjoy – body – sun – win - give
Topic 5	2.6557	Leave – add – rosemary – diyembroidery – myfimo – incredible – yarnbomb – political – bead - happy
Topic 6	2.627	Freshawater – isn – knittersofinstagram – project – close – fit – photo – patchworkcrochet – affordableart - breathe
Topic 7	2.317	Small – feel – announce – embroiderylove – front – business – schedule – cottagecore – style - good

Table 5

Most common words global North

Most common words global North
pattern
crochet
time
love
yarn
make
shop
piece
work
feel

Table 6

Results topic modeling global South

Topic	Weight	Topic Members
Topic 1	1.5434	Make – crochet – pattern – work – love – feel – time – shop – piece - design
Topic 2	0.2983	Countdown – punch – slowlivingart – pit – plan – find – stuff – style - side - strik
Topic 3	0.2933	Reach – day – hand – knitclothe – rib – peace – polymerclaycreation – thedogwooddyer – waist - leaf
Topic 4	0.2767	Cable – bead – remember – good – dmcembroidery – family – mouse – conversation

		– population - yarnbomb
Topic 5	0.0976	Live – Uttarakhand – start crochet – hibiscus – crochetpattern – crochettop – pattern – aipangirlofbhimtal - apatani
Topic 6	0.0902	Plant – handmade – fabric – back – craft – bailey – top – cushion paper - link
Topic 7	0.0766	Pattern – great – tribe – dye – sale – doesn – valley – famous – plug - girl

Table 7

Most common words global South:

Most common words global South
make
crochet
design
piece
pattern
love
work
shop
time
feel