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**Study of the Crafting Industry in Croatia:
Insight into Individual**

By

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A Capstone Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in Service
Leadership and Innovation

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Abstract

This research explores several elements of the Croatian crafting scene; individual motivations of crafters, how the community functions and common business practices. The study is qualitative and part phenomenological, part ethnographic in nature. The main goal was to collect information and data that can act as a foundation for further research. The key methods were in-depth interviews with several Croatian crafters, observation at crafting events and content analysis of online sources and promotional material. The main findings showed that many crafters obtain artistic fulfilment from their art, some turned to crafting out of financial necessity and others were seeking independence. Many participants mentioned that there are a lot of creatives in Croatia who are only following a trend and trying to fit in. Individual motivations resulted in diverse insights but this was expected. Regarding the community almost all individuals that were interviewed maintained that there are a lot of subdivisions based on style, type of craft, and other distinctions. The same impression was observed at fairs and crafting events. As the research developed other themes emerged such as the role of the government in the creative scene and the need to educate crafters to be more Internet and business able. It was unexpected that the lack of support from the Croatian government would be such a common theme amongst all the participants interviewed. A lot of interesting themes were examined throughout this research and the goal of having substance to work from to help the crafting community progress and to help others understand the Croatian creative scene was accomplished.

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Introduction

Since the economic crisis of 2008 the rise of the crafting industry is evident throughout the world, including Croatia. Worldwide crafting has been recognized as an important and relevant industry. Unfortunately, Croatia is lacking a study to give context and insight into the location specific crafting experience, economic reality and motivation. From personal observation it is evident that the crafting industry in Croatia is growing since the crisis of 2008. There are specialized shops opening all over Zagreb, online businesses developing and craft fairs are being organised more frequently. From this it is clear that there is a demand and place in the market for crafting and this became the key motivation behind this research. In the current paper the general aim was to better grasp the extent of the industry, the reasons for its recent rise and the individual experiences of Croatian crafters. Exploring this relevant sector could open a forum for progress with meaningful research and insight to represent and support the community.

Specific Aims

Because of the clear rise of the crafting industry and the lack of research of this industry within the context of the Croatian crafting community the aim of the study was to gain insight into three main areas of the crafting industry. Understanding individual crafters was considered a crucial first step leading to more insight on the community as a whole. Finally, the business approaches of the individual crafters were considered to examine the role that the crafting

industry has in Croatia's economy. It is significant to note that the guiding questions and themes were applied to direct the research, not limit it. If at any point one theme emerged as more relevant than another this was deemed as the natural development of the research. The following were used exclusively as guiding questions due to the qualitative nature of the study.

1. What are the motivations of individual Croatian crafters?
2. How does the Croatian crafting community function as a whole?
3. What are current business models in the Croatian crafting industry? Are they considered successful?

Definitions

There are many varied definitions of crafting and crafters so to begin with, clear definitions were chosen to avoid misunderstanding over the term "crafting". These are used consistently throughout the paper:

- CRAFT – activity that includes making a personal product, often by hand. The product is "made and designed by the same person"; there are some exceptions such as designing clothing and having more than one seamstress (Campbell, 2005, p. 27). Alternative names: DIY, arts and crafts, indie
- SOFT CRAFT – craft focusing on usable objects a person can produce. Examples of soft craft are: knitting, quilting, collage making, doll making, small printmaking, clothing, card making, jewellery and body products (Glover, 2011, p. 17). Alternative name: small craft

- CRAFTERS – individuals who take on craft as an aspect of their identity (Glover, 2011, p. 16). People, who make, design and produce products by themselves. Alternative names: makers, creatives

In Croatia the literal translation of “craft” is seldom used related to the crafting industry and community. Common Croatian terms, literally translated, are “handmade culture” or “creatives”. These along with the alternative names listed above are used interchangeably but with the consistent definitions.

Literature Review

Most of the literature that was reviewed is not specific to Croatia but is relevant because it provides insight into general crafting practices and motivations worldwide. However, the fact that there is so little research available on this topic in Croatia only further reinforces the need for this study. The relevance and impact of the crafting phenomenon in contemporary society will be considered alongside literature that examines the main themes of this research.

Stephanie Levine claims that the craft industry had emerged and was growing before the economic crisis of 2008 and continued to grow regardless (Levine, 2012). One example of this is in Portland, where Cannon suggested that the crafting lifestyle and views are culturally recognized and embraced by the majority of the population (Cannon, 2009). Cannon asserts that the crafting community is united to the extent that it can sustain itself. The industry is less likely to be impacted by certain external factors because they often collaborate locally and the same cluster of people make and buy these products (Cannon, 2009). The arts and crafts industry has demonstrated that it is resilient and can lead to profit and therefore plays a significant role in contemporary society. Cannon argued that incorporating the following aspects of crafting culture would be lucrative: handmade, customized, long-term quality, the close collaboration between design and production, self-resilience and creative stimulus. Pink's writing supports this theory and suggests that future success relies on: design, storytelling, simplicity, empathy, play and meaning, or as he summarizes "fundamental human attributes" (Pink, 2006). The arts and crafts industry has demonstrated it is resilient and can lead to profit, especially in the Portland area.

Crafting has established its marketplace and therefore plays a significant role in contemporary society.

In one recent study that focuses specifically on Croatian crafters, the results propose that the use of Internet and financial reasons were critical in the development of the crafting scene (Podgorelec, n.d). However, the same study shows that 50% of crafters answered they have a creative drive and purpose for their craft and they wanted to make unique gifts for their family and friends. There are some limitations to this type of survey as one cannot be certain that participants have answered truthfully. The current research hopes to gain insight on a more personal and individual level than the mentioned survey. The claim that the internet is a major factor in the recent emergence of the crafting scene is supported by Johnson (2008), Levine (2010) and Glover (2011) who concluded that crafters can “gather, loan, promote, brand, sell, buy, trade, steal, modify, watch, listen, and etc.” online (Glover, 2011, p. 208).

In her research Anisef concluded that key motivations for crafting are: passion, need for a job, activism, loss of interest in mass goods, trends and sustainability (Anisef, 2010). These along with others were carefully considered and will be discussed in more detail. A significant amount of the literature claims that crafting began as a response to social, cultural and economic restructuring (Luvass, 2009). It is highly feasible that people reacted to the difficult economy and unstable job market by attempting to make their hobbies, and what they enjoy doing creatively, into jobs. Schmitz proposes that craft careers “may reflect disenchantment with stressful corporate life” and that a crafter can “literally take their living into their own hands” (The Patriot Ledger, 1997). Watson and Shove propose that crafting is an escape from mundane everyday life that

resulted as a “resistance to the alienating effects of contemporary society” (Watson & Shove, 2008, p. 75). Campbell took this concept one step further and conveyed that the rise in crafting can be explained as a result of people “retreating into a privatized world of self expression as a direct consequence of the decreasing opportunities for independent creative and expressive activity” (Campbell, 2005, p. 38).

Levine used the phrase the “intuitive why” to describe the fulfilment from working with one’s own hands and creating something tangible using your own abilities (Levine, 2012). Schmitz agreed that there is an appeal to working independently and creatively (The Patriot Ledger, 1997). There is a specific sense of purpose in this industry that is difficult to describe. Glover also mentioned the meditative quality of crafting as an intrinsic motivation (Glover, 2011). Glover concluded that creating something evokes satisfaction on a personal level for crafters and offers the sense of doing something for others, perhaps this is intensified because of the closer relationship a crafter can have with their customer.

There is evidently a need for self-expression and originality driving crafters and the same can be said of their customers. Levine, stated that crafters are conscious about what they are making and for whom while consumers are re-examining their purchasing habits (Levine, 2012). Consumers, as much as crafters, were and are still reacting to a general dissatisfaction. They are looking for products with individuality and a human touch. Consumers are rejecting mass production along with their crafters and demanding personal and unique products. Schmitz proposed that the early rise of crafting came out of a “response to the consumers’ desire for finely made, tasteful objects” (The Patriot

Ledger, 1997). On the other hand, Eric Nav is quoted as saying that “craft is no longer about objects but about relationships” (cited by Anisef, 2012, p. 5). This could either be in reference to the relationships between crafters or the relationship between crafter and consumer. It is a stronger and closer relationship than a consumer would have with a larger business. Because direct communication is possible and mass production avoided there is an ability to express ideas and work together to create the final product. Levine agreed that one could use craft to connect with others (Levine, 2012).

Another element that was discovered while reviewing the literature is the question of ethics and moral superiority. Blaszczyk proposes that even early craft was thought to have the “dignity and value of good design” (Blaszczyk, 1999, p. 264). Ellis is inconclusive on the topic but does note that “the conflict between standardization and individuality, the question of whether or not a unique, hand-crafter object is morally superior to a mass-produced one and the problem of defining what kind of design most benefits society” is still relevant (Ellis, 1991, p. 295). An ethical obligation is a possible motivation for crafters to be in the industry and a critical consideration for many consumers but it can result in a negative feeling of superiority. For the purpose of this research the question of art and craft as a “morally superior” identity appears to be incorporated in the topic of the community as a whole.

Luvass stated that “young people are highly selective in what they consume, how they consume it and the meanings they construct surrounding the objects of their consumption” (Luvass, 2009, p. 30). So why are so many young people selecting to buy craft products? The reviewed literature indicates that the crafting community encourages sharing and support, conveys individuality and

endorses sustainability. It can be said that there are diverse motivations for crafting and varied reasons for the success of crafting. It is important to observe that most concepts regarding crafting focus on visceral depiction and explanation. Because of this it is important to document many encounters with crafting. This is why it is relevant to record and investigate, as much as possible, the experiences of local crafters in Croatia.

Methods

Due to the phenomenological nature of the study a qualitative research approach was chosen. The research design included a combination of tools and was flexible throughout to accommodate any change necessary. The key tools that were used to collect information for all three research questions were observation, content analysis and in-depth interviews. The aim was to observe and interview crafters in their natural settings whenever possible; when it wasn't possible a neutral setting was chosen such as a café. These methods are appropriate because they allowed enough flexibility for this qualitative type of research to result in as much insight as possible. In-depth interviews provided the opportunity to discuss individual motivations of crafters. The research questions focus on individual reasons for crafting, the Croatian crafting community and typical business approaches of Croatian crafters. Considering the personal qualities of these questions in-depth interviews and observation were appropriate and respectful to the Croatian crafting community, allowing their voices to be represented. The observation method was chosen to assist the ethnographic aspect of this research. The observations were predominantly used to support insights gained during interviews and this was suitable.

The sample for the interviews was chosen by identifying crafters whom the researcher could approach with more ease and those that work with soft crafts like clothes, accessories, souvenirs, etc. One participant, Mica, designs bags and is part of a team of two that design their own clothing and have gained a certain level of success in the Croatian crafting market. Another participant, Željka, is also part of a team of two that design their own clothes, jewellery and small novelty items/gifts. J.M is a part time crafter who loves to make soap, bath

bombs and balms as her hobby. Ivona and Marina are two participants of the research who work together to produce a crafting magazine and two other participants are crafters who have chosen to focus on helping the crafting community. Andrea initiated the online platform, Woohoo.hr, which enables crafters to sell their products online. Lidija opened the shop Kloto to display and sell the work of her crafting association that she organised and leads. The crafters were chosen because they were accessible and had varying levels of success and varied crafts. The latter were selected to gain insight into the community, as they are simultaneously insiders and outsiders.

Each participant was interviewed once and contacted again if there was something unclear or if any follow up questions arose. Interviews were unstructured and informal in nature to allow crafters to feel comfortable speaking about their intrinsic motivations. Some guiding questions were asked such as "Why/how did you get into crafting?" "How do you feel about your place in the community?" "Did you have a clearly defined business plan when you were beginning?". It should be noted that guiding questions were used in one or two interviews and only if the participant felt uncomfortable or weren't clear on the topic of the research. Specific questions were kept to a minimum because it seemed more insightful to let crafters discuss their experiences in their own terms and without persuasion one way or another. Any tangent that strayed from the main guiding questions of the research was considered a positive way to gain insight.

In addition to voice recordings of the interviews personal notes were taken. Interviews conducted online were recorded in personal email and/or message history. This type of interview was also chosen because the research

was not confined to find one answer but instead encouraged individual crafters to represent themselves, and their community, as they wanted. The reason behind this approach was to promote a genuine representation and accurate data. Individuals were asked about their experiences with the relevant aspects of crafting. Researcher input and guidance was kept at a minimum.

The majority of the data collection consisted of published promotional (marketing) materials from crafters and online publications and profiles on several social websites. The published physical material was collected over time at craft fairs, local shops and crafting locations. Content concerning all the participants that were interviewed was considered for analysis: for example their Facebook profiles, Do!ts magazine and Woohoo.hr. The observation was done at various craft fairs by the researchers recorded with field notes. Between 10 and 15 observations were conducted at craft fairs or art events that occurred within the time frame of the data collection. I attended the events partially as a customer and in part as an observer. The two roles were separated depending on the event; some were attended in the function of a customer so that questions could be asked about the products, atmosphere, business norms, etc. and others were attended in the role of observer and interaction with others was kept at the lowest possible minimum.

Data analysis

Interviews and interview notes were analysed a few days after the interviews have taken place. Doing this prevented reaching any impulsive conclusions and allowed for time to contemplate before listening to the recordings again or looking over notes. Some key words and themes that were

sought out to benefit the categorization of findings were: *profit, intrinsic motivation, community and belonging, subgroups, competition, collaboration, co creation, trends, transparency, networking and job creation*. When going through the written notes key themes were categorized using colour coding and the same was done when listening to the recordings and writing notes. Due to the informal nature of interviews there were limitations to categorizing and presenting data and these methods were deemed appropriate. The key themes chosen encompass the guiding questions of the research and were therefore predominantly used for clarity rather than analysis. The same analysis tools were applied to field notes of the observations. The collected promotional material was examined for effectiveness to advertise the product and/or crafter, the aesthetic qualities, user friendliness, and other aspects that were not defined previously but were instead noted during analysis.

Results

By speaking to various people involved with crafting about their experiences the following was recorded. Crafters, an individual who manages a Croatian website platform to enable selling crafts, individuals who started a crafting magazine and those involved in crafting associations were interviewed. There was an attempt to categorize for this section but results are written out in almost the same form as the field notes for reasons of reliability and authenticity so will often be in a stream of consciousness structure. Interview notes and recordings address each research question to a varying extent. The initial focus of interviews was to find out individual reasons for crafting. The second point of discussion was often the crafting community. Observations at fairs were crucial for gaining impressions of the crafting community and to support any insight gained from interviews. Similarly, online observations and content analysis of promotional materials both present results in the form of my first impressions and later support the topics raised during interviews. The online observations and content analysis specifically considered business approaches and competence. Interviews provided various motivations for crafting and are discussed in more detail below. Observations offered a significant amount of support for themes raised during interviews. The most significant observations were that there doesn't seem to be a united feeling within the community and that many Croatian crafters are not successful with the branding and marketing of their products. Interviews with individuals who want to educate creatives regarding their business abilities verified that the majority are not educated enough to make their craft as successful as possible. An interesting topic that seemed to be a common frustration among all participants was the lack of

support from the Croatian government. Below are the results represented as they were before the analysis process.

Interview Notes

Željka Molnar is one part of the duo that designs and creates clothes under the name of Vintage Faith. She attended high school for Fashion Design and later University for Fashion Design that she dropped out of. She started crafting Fimo clay jewellery for herself when she couldn't afford some things she wanted from mainstream shops. After a while friends started asking her to make jewellery for them and she started selling this to others. She states this experience was unplanned and more of a hobby than a job as she could never live solely from the profits of her craft. She started Vintage Faith with a friend, Tina, and this was also spontaneous and unplanned. Željka claims to have very little business knowledge so Tina generally handles manages this aspect. Željka said she is not good at replying to messages from potential clients on Facebook on time even though she also stated that the majority of their sales are done through Facebook. At the moment she works as a stylist and has no future plans for her crafting, "still trying to make it". One of her own long-term goals is to own her own fashion brand.

Željka stated that Vintage Faith works well because her and Tina have very separate jobs that complement each other; she is more involved in the creative aspect and Tina tackles the business side. Željka was very clear in stating that the day H&M opened in Zagreb her sales dropped by 100%, they are now slowly increasing but it was an immense setback. However, she also stated that after an editorial about Vintage Faith was published in May in a Croatian

fashion magazine (Grazia) there was a sales boom. Although this slowly plateaued as well showing a fluctuating demand. According to Željka there is a lot of interest in her craft and the products she offers but there are also a lot of dropouts. Customers ask questions about price, size, etc. and then never respond again. Her and Tina target the younger market, the Internet generation and use customer feedback for advertising. However, it is important to note that Željka expressed very intense emotions when she spoke about how ungrateful and unappreciative the market in Croatia is for craft products. That crafters are only making ends meet and that the general population does not understand or appreciate how much of her own time and effort goes into the clothes and jewellery she sells.

Željka said that she put little to no thought into making her craft appeal to a niche market but that she was making things she likes and her target market was an afterthought. That she is passionate about her own design from beginning to end and to her it is more about personal fulfilment than customer satisfaction. Looking at her and her products side by side it is clear that she is selling an image, not just one product, and that it is genuine. This is also a claim she made, not merely an observation. However, she was clear in expressing that she had started to lose creativity at some point when people were ordering the same things over and over again. Also when people didn't show appreciation for her unique and handmade work she lost some of her drive and joy in crafting.

Željka views the crafting community as quite a pleasant place and goes to the Bazaars and craft fairs more for communication and networking than selling products. Often going as a customer and not a crafter exhibiting and selling her work. She says that often crafters share knowledge but has not experienced true

co creating yet, although she is not opposed to it in the future. Some negative experiences Željka has had within the art community, which includes some crafters, was at her high school and university where she did not feel too comfortable. She has now found her own group of crafters and artists most of whom happen to be self educated, take initiative and are intuitive with their business strategies. Another negative experience was with some crafting associations that Željka says used to be about helping but are now profit driven.

M designs and creates leather bags and is part of the ItoIto clothing design team. She is schooled as a building engineer and started making bags for herself. She recalled the story when she wanted a new bag that was too expensive so together with her mother, who worked in shoe production for Borovo, she made her first bag to meet her own needs. She claims to have had no strategy or plan but always preferred a more personal sales approach and always focused on quality instead of price. She claims that when she first started working with leather she visited several leather shops and the people there would not give her any advice. She said that the creative community in Croatia is competitive, envious, won't share advice and functions in clusters that are too scattered. M suggests the community be organised and led by an outsider with business experience.

M said that she makes the least sales on Facebook and prefers personal contact and meeting her customers. She said she has tried all types of sales but now functions exclusively on a personal and verbal level and she called this "honest sales". The highest price of one of her bags is 2000 Kuna and M claims that the bag design and production business was profitable for the past 5-6 years. There seemed to be an intuitive business strategy as M focused most on

repeat customers and word of mouth advertising without planning to. With ItoIto M and her partner decided that they would have simple designs for an H&M price and that this approach has been successful as the clothesline “sells itself”. They decided a maximum price for their clothing aware of the fact that they are not always one-of-a-kind pieces. M was clear in saying that if a shirt is sold for 150 Kuna her and her partner in ItoIto make 50 Kuna after all expenses. M stated that from design to production to finished product the process takes 2-3 weeks on average. M stated that previous cooperation had been difficult and unsuccessful with people who were too similar to her. Her partnership for ItoIto is successful and M expressed that she and her partner complement each other in the sense that she is more creative and her partner more business focused having a marketing background.

M is also involved in a project that hopes to bring the design, craft and art community online. She has organised crafting events in the past, four times per year, called Moda sa Šlagom (Fashion with whipped cream) that were successful. Crafters were not required to pay the organiser, there were no more than 10 crafters selected per event and the focus was on a positive collaboration not competition. All crafters chosen to participate had their own themes and crafts and were not there to compete. Her future plans are to make ItoIto an online business and to make it international and to continue organising crafting events. However, she will only invite crafters who have fiscal cash registers, this was a law recently passed in Croatia.

J. M is a part time crafter who makes soaps, bath bombs, and balms and has a full time job unrelated to her craft. She emphasized that crafting is currently only a hobby, something to do with her spare time and an opportunity

to express herself creatively. She commented that she isn't very creatively able so soap production was something more technical that she could handle. Dry skin and remembering her grandmother cooking soap gave her the idea to start doing it herself. J. M's first priority when she began crafting was to make sure that all of her ingredients were safe and that she had a full understanding of the laws and regulations that concern her craft because it falls under the cosmetics category. Her second priority is promotion of her product; something she stated she is still very much in the process of working out because she really feels this is more a hobby than a business. Currently she goes to crafting, art and DIY events to sell her products and advertises on Facebook. J. M said that people do express interest in her products but are often hesitant because they do not want to pay 10x the price of something they can get in the supermarket and that is perishable.

Commenting on the crafting community, J. M stated that she does not work with other but discusses projects and exchanges experiences. Sometimes she shares a table or stand with a colleague who makes similar products at events to cut the costs. J. M claims to get some of her materials locally and others from abroad because they are not available in Croatia.

Do!ts is a tutorial magazine with a focus on DIY projects and crafts created by Ivona, Marina and Nebojša. The first issue was published 1.5 years ago and was the Christmas edition that Marina and Ivona speak of and remember fondly. The magazine has four publications per year and is based on a "collaborative approach" according to Ivona and Marina. They asked themselves what they would want to read and hoped to involve their readers, so they now organise crafting workshops as well. For each issue they offer four or five

possible covers and readers vote to choose the official cover. They claim to have a very close group of collaborators and have some regular contributors. They have just opened a new location recently, over the summer 2013, where they hold their workshops and work on the magazine. Their workshops focus on the artistic elements of crafting as well as others such as legal aspects, social networking, branding, visual identity and photography of final products. Their magazine is printed and published online for purchase. They stated that their Facebook page has 9000+ fans and their online blog has a following of 10 000+ readers. They are very selective about their stories but more active and less restricted on the online blog. They claim to have an open door policy in their new office, which I can vouch for as I just knocked on the door and was allowed in to ask some questions over a cup of coffee.

Marina and Ivona claim that the crafting scene in Croatia is in development and has been growing for the last 1.5 years. They stated that two years ago there was only one craft/art/design fair per year. However, they feel that with the new law introducing fiscal cash registers that are necessary for all sales the crafting market will suffer. They claim that there is a lot of interest for advice and that crafters seeking to share or hear about new experiences contact them often. Marina and Ivona also said that they are not convinced about a positive community feeling yet but they have a future goal to help crafters network. They are both crafters themselves; Marina makes accessories and Ivona some products for children as she works in special education. They both contributed their own money for the magazine and have volunteers, as the magazine is not yet profitable.

Marina and Ivona commented on the access to and availability of crafting materials here in Croatia and said that there are very few local offers so local materials are rarely utilized. There is a limited and unreliable selection so many crafters have to find other ways. They also expressed that online there is less sharing of information and experiences amongst crafters while in person it is much more likely. When discussing the community feel Ivona and Marina agreed that they get surrounded by positive and passionate people, they enjoy networking and coming up with new ideas with new people and that they seek out those who find creativity fulfilling. Marina stated that there are more and more crafting associations but that there are tensions within and amongst them. They agreed that a huge issue for the conflicts between crafters and associations is a lack of communication. They personally prefer crafting events where the buyer is in direct contact with the crafter. Another comment they emphasised was that in Rijeka and Šibenik the crafting scene is getting more and more involved but that summer is a missed opportunity for crafters and Croatian economy.

Their favourite elements of their jobs at the magazine are having morning meetings, being self-employed and the passion they feel for what they do. They hope to raise awareness and they feel a sense of responsibility to help their own community.

Andrea started and manages the online platform Woohoo.hr that helps crafters advertise and sell their work and connect to their customers. She is a crafter herself but now focuses more on Woohoo that she started about 2.5 years ago with two partners. She studied economics and works in community management and marketing. She stated that when they started 2.5 years ago

there were less crafters, approximately 500 on their website, and now there are approximately 2000 registered on their website. She also stated that there has been a recent drop in the crafting market as they now have between 20 and 30 transactions per day through Woohoo, before they had between 50 and 100 transactions per day. According to Andrea 80% are students, younger people and/or unemployed and that 95% are women. Andrea stated that the average buyer on Woohoo is between 25 to 45 years old. She said that crafting in Croatia is not so financially fruitful and that accessories sell the most while art sells the least. Her estimate of the average crafter salary was 3-4000 Kuna per month. According to Andrea the majority of crafters that she works have very short-term thinking and have no definite plans to make crafting their careers.

She also commented on the fact that crafters in associations are in her experience cooperative and friendly but that there is a conflict between registered and unregistered crafters. Other conflicts Andrea mentioned were over copying and she stated that there were 3 lawsuits pending, at the time of the meeting, because of copying. Andrea mentioned that there are three main distinctions in the Croatian crafting community that sometimes cause conflict and these are those who work with soft craft, designers and creatives.

Andrea strongly emphasised that the majority of crafters do not have the ability to function online, have no Internet knowledge, do not use PayPal or Internet banking and rely heavily on Facebook. She referred to them as "internet challenged" so she attempts to educate them on how to advertise online, how to photograph products for optimal online sales and other elements of online interactions. Andrea claims that very few crafters invest in their brand but that those who do are more successful and those who find brand ambassadors are

even more profitable. According to Andrea not enough crafters do what they do out of passion or love for creativity. However, she also commented that buyers are careless and often drop out of sales after showing initial interest. This is why she set up Woohoo to be a third party and facilitator between consumer and crafter.

Another significant issue that Andrea felt was important to discuss was the lack of support from the government. She feels quite strongly about the new law recently passed that all transactions must be made through a fiscal cash register which is not available for all crafters to have. She said that many will join associations just to have this option but will otherwise have to sell discreetly. Andrea mentioned that the government could see the crafting market as an opportunity and expand this to souvenirs for tourists during the summer but that there is currently no interest from the government in handmade art. She also mentioned that some events, like Dan D for example (Day of Design), are out of reach for many crafters as a stand at the event can cost approximately 1200 Kuna. Andrea stated that very few crafters source their materials locally because there are not enough options to do so. Andrea hopes to expand Woohoo and crafting in the Balkan market but recognizes that there are many problems and expenses involved in achieving this.

Lidija is a crafter who now owns a shop and leads a crafting association. She was crafting in the 1990s when the profitability began to drop in Croatia and was given the shop location from her family. She considers herself self taught, creative and able to design. She crafts gloves, accessories, greeting cards, bookmarks, cups, shirts, and other products. She had a different themed shop previously with products from India, clothing, incense, etc. but this was seasonal

and because of this not profitable enough. She considers herself and her craft to be of the gothic style and makes sure that the image matches the product, the brand comes full circle. She states her work is one of a kind, costs on average 15-100 Kuna and takes on average 30 minutes to produce a finished product.

Her association is approximately 1 year old and has 100+ members and her shop has been open since May 2013. She states her association has few restrictions but she always wanted it and the people in it to be alternative. She claims it is a respectful community, no competition within the association and not a niche market but rather a theme that can accommodate all crafters within the association. Lidija seeks out members, or they contact her, through Facebook and she decides whether to approve them or not based on their style, genre, their passion for crafting and how well they get along. Lidija and others in the association organise workshops to practice new crafting techniques. With the association she has also organised some events and fairs that cater more to the gothic consumer and many members of the association will take products from each other to sell when they go to the coast over the summer. Lidija stated that there have been no issues over copying so far in the association and that there is more communication occurring than co-creation.

Lidija stated that she leads the association in a volunteer role as it was her own initiative to start it. She also stated that approximately 90% of the members are currently unemployed and so are trying to live from only crafting. However, according to Lidija this is not easy and almost impossible. The majority are between the ages of 24 and 40 and some are highly educated in the art field while others are self-taught. Lidija works part intuitively and part with a preconceived strategy of trying to promote the association in newspapers,

magazines, at the tourist agency and through word of mouth advertising. All members are encouraged to promote themselves and others in the association. All members are allowed to sell their work at other locations, they are not restricted to Lidija's shop or events. She considers her work and the association to be her artistic identity. Lidija also feels that there is respect between the different associations and no notable conflict or negativity. But she also commented that she has been in the scene for a very long time so has a history with many of the people in it.

Lidija's favourite aspects of crafting, running a craft shop and crafting association are working with people, her craft making other happy and the opportunity to express herself creatively. She hopes to expand but isn't sure of the likelihood because she does not feel any support from the government.

Observation Notes at Craft Fairs

- At times more crafters than customers
- Some crafters are friendly and welcoming
- Some behaving superior/elitist (better than, "cooler" than) to other crafters and even customers
- Many craft products are similar styles and techniques
- Appears like a good start but nothing to attract customer long-term or even for longer time on the day (Music, snacks, etc.)
- Majority of products well presented
- Crafters appear to be grouped according to their crafting style, personal style and personal relationships

- The relationship between different crafting trends is unclear but does not always appear constructive and friendly

Content Analysis

- Asked questions as a customer, several crafters take very long to reply to enquiries online (1-2 weeks). One did not reply at all.
- Majority of advertising on Facebook or through social platforms Woohoo.hr and krpa.hr
- Majority of profiles on Woohoo look similar, bland, typical, BASIC
- Facebook advertising evokes vague and scattered impression
- Many crafting Facebook profiles visited give off unprofessional impression and look bland, all look similar
- Very few distinct and consistent brand identities
- Very rarely saw good photography/presentation of products

Discussion

After collecting the data through in-depth interviews, observations at fairs and content analysis the data was analysed using coding and discussion. Content analysis was also recorded in the form of personal notes and impressions gained while examining crafters' profiles on social websites and promotional materials. Once data was collected there were a few days reserved for reflection to avoid hasty assumptions. All data that was in the form of personal notes was then analysed and colour coded according to the three research questions concerning the motivations of individual crafters, the Croatian crafting community and common business approaches. Following this the data was analysed and colour coded again focusing on any other themes that were clearly predominant but were not specific to any of the three initial themes. For the purpose of clarity the discussion will be divided under the three headings of individual motivations, community and business approach.

Individual Motivations

From speaking with individuals about their experiences it became clear that they all felt a sense of personal fulfilment from their craft. Many stated that they had a creative desire that had to be realized whether it was profitable or not. All of the individuals articulated that their crafting began as a personal hobby. Mica of Mica Torbica and ItoIto said that she wanted a bag that was too expensive and so together with her mother she decided to make herself a bag (M. personal communication, July 9, 2013). Željka of Vintage Faith also said that she started making accessories for herself because the offer in Croatia was either too expensive or very often she was unable to find exactly what she wanted (Ž,

Molnar, personal communication, July 2, 2013). Željka's experience was that when her friends and colleagues at school saw what she was making and wearing they asked for her to make it for them as well. Only later did she realize she could sell her craft to make some extra allowance during her student years. Andrea, who manages Woohoo.hr, commented that approximately 50% of crafters couldn't be financially secured only from their craft (Andrea, personal communication, July 2, 2013). Several crafters made similar statements and Lidija who manages the Kloto association claimed that 90% of the members are unemployed and trying to make their craft a financially viable business (Lidija, personal communication, July 2, 2013).

From these statements there seems to be a division in the motivations of Croatian crafters. Many are doing it for artistic expression and passion; one individual is even doing it alongside her full time job solely for personal fulfilment (J. P, personal communication, June 30, 2013). On the other hand, many seem to have been so negatively affected by the economic situation that their crafting is no longer a passion but a necessity. Results from a recently performed survey show that 18% of crafters are students, 29% are unemployed and 2% are retired (Podgorelec, n.d.). This could explain the percentage of crafters who have profit as a priority and/or necessity; perhaps they were seeking an opportunity for independence. The same study stated that 44% of creatives were employed and 4% self-employed, these results could explain the other half of the community who are solely passionate for crafting. Andrea stated that in her opinion the majority of the crafters on Woohoo.hr are not passionate about their craft (Andrea, personal communication, July 2, 2013). If approximately 50% of crafters are not financially secure only from their craft do

they continue to do it out of love? Lidija claims that she continues to craft because she appreciates working with people and seeing people enjoy her craft. These themes correspond with many discussed in the reviewed literature. Some crafters are truly passionate and could not do anything else while others were compelled to begin crafting because of the economic situation.

A study done previously provided the results that 50% of creatives stated that they have always been crafting, 51% expressed they wanted to make unique gifts for their friends and family, 20% said they were following the popular trend, 48% stated they wanted to do something that would distinguish them as an individual and only 17% claimed that crafting was the result of a lack of job opportunity (Podgorelec, n.d). The limitation of this survey is that there is no confirmation that participants answered honestly. It is possible that some would feel uncomfortable claiming financial reasons. However, from the varied results one can observe that many creatives claim to be crafting because it is their passion. From the interviews one can also observe that some of them might be dishonest about this because individuals within the crafting scene, like Andrea who works with many crafters and Mica, feel otherwise. They both said that they feel many crafters are not passionate about their craft but are only looking for profit or trying to depict themselves as artistic individuals.

Another theme that presented itself under the category of crafters' motivations is that of one's image. As mentioned, a survey showed that 20% of creatives started crafting because they were following a popular trend (Podgorelec, n.d). This can be interpreted as wanting to be hip and on trend, supporting the concept that crafting can be related to personal image. Observations at several craft fairs and online platforms often evoked a sense that

many young Croatian crafters are in the industry because of the image that is related to being a crafter. This is limited by a lack of scientific proof but there is literature to support the theory. Blaszczyk discussed the “dignity and value of good design” with reference to early craft advocates (Blaszczyk, 1999, p. 264). It is possible that this concept developed over time and resulted in some crafters thinking that it is a trendy and fashionable industry to be in. From the reviewed literature one can examine Ellis’ discussion on the idea of moral superiority in crafting but he also lacks conclusion perhaps because it is too relative to the individual (Ellis, 1991, p. 295). Currently one can only say that some crafters convey the impression that they are ‘in trend’ because of their work and in today’s society I believe this is a credible motivation for much of the younger population.

Community

Concerning the aspect of the Croatian crafting community there are a lot of diverse findings. Željka’s experience is very positive and in her opinion crafters are open to sharing knowledge and helping each other (Ž, Molnar., personal communication, July 2, 2013). It is important to note that she does not consider herself to be a full time crafter but does have a sense of belonging to the community. On the other hand, Mica has found that many crafters in the Croatian community are competitive, sometimes envious, occasionally petty and not very open to collaboration (M., personal communication, July 9, 2013). In her experience it was difficult to find a group of crafters that she could work with. Lidija from Kloto expressed that the members of her association are respectful, helpful and generally were friends before becoming members (Lidija, personal

communication, July 2, 2013). However, Lidija also expressed that she is very selective about who can be a member because she does not want to disrupt this respectful relationship. So on the one hand the members of the association are open, welcoming and sharing but on the other they are carefully chosen. They are not only selected based on Lidija's personal impression of them but also based on the style of their craft. Lidija stated that it is important to her that members of the association have an "alternative" style so that everyone can feel comfortable and creatively open. Perhaps one can conclude that there is harmony within the Croatian crafting community but it is divided into subcultures.

Andrea also mentioned divisions between subcultures that she has observed on her social platform (Andrea, personal communication, July 2, 2013). In her experience the most common divisions are based on style (alternative, girly, punk, indie, etc.), on whether crafters are registered or not and their chosen title (soft craft, designer, creative). Andrea's experience is supported by observations at craft fairs and other online platforms. Personal observation shows that crafters are often grouped together depending on their craft style, personal style and previous relationships. Mica's recommendation is that an outsider, not a crafter, with business knowledge would be the best type to lead the crafters to success (M., personal communication, July 9, 2013). Concerning the Croatian community and culture in general everyone interviewed claimed that there is no support from the Croatian government. One could argue that this could be one of the key reasons for the Croatian crafting community being divided. However, some crafters expressed that they would like the crafting community to unite and flourish despite the government issues but that this is

unlikely. Observing the way they spoke about this idea exposed that the crafting community in Croatia is not so strong. Some individual crafters feel that they would like to unite and co-create but that it is not possible because the majority of crafters have other priorities and don't see the benefit in uniting as a larger community.

This result, that the crafting community in Croatia is not as united and strong as it could be, was considered a possibility but its significance emerged as the research developed. The theme of community and belonging was second to insight about individual crafter motivations. However, observation exposed that many crafters feel this is the area that needs the most research and improvement. Recommendations for further research are to focus only on the topic of the Croatian crafting community and to examine the psychology behind their behaviour on a deeper level. The insight the crafting community could gain from understanding more about how the community functions as a whole is valuable to all studies concerning crafting worldwide. The reason for this idea comes from the Portland example mentioned in the Literature review. Cannon discussed how the creative and DIY lifestyle has helped the entire community of Portland even positively impacting the economy (Cannon, 2009). Another benefit that the Croatian crafting community could gain from actively working on improving the relationships between crafters is that they would have a stronger voice. All the individuals interviewed agreed that they would like the crafting scene in Croatia to progress but they also agreed that they could not accomplish this easily in such small cliques. Uniting would provide the entire community with a stronger voice and they could have more impact and possibility to achieve what they wanted.

Business Approach

Two crafters, Mica and Željka, stated that they had no business plan when they began crafting (M & Ž, Molnar, personal communication, July 9 & 2, 2013). They both required a partnership with someone who is more business focused to develop their craft as a business. However, observation and interview notes deduced that they both had an intuitive business strategy. One possible idea is that one can attribute this to them thinking of themselves as buyers and not only crafters. They considered, on both a subconscious and conscious level, how they like to be approached as consumers and applied this to their crafting careers. Likewise many crafters commented that they have hopes that the future of their crafting business will be profitable but are lacking the necessary skills and knowledge to create a strategy for this. A recommendation for further research is to examine globally successful business strategies that can be applied to crafting and to investigate how certain elements would function in Croatia. Likewise, the interview data shows that the majority of crafters rely on Facebook, Woohoo.hr, krpa.hr and craft fairs to advertise their work. An investigation of other possibilities to advertise would be insightful.

Andrea expressed that 2 or 3 years ago the crafting scene in Croatia drastically increased in popularity with an average of 50-100 sales occurring daily through her social platform. This is supported by a recent survey that showed 91% of crafters believe the crafting scene is developing (Podgorelec, n.d.). However, Andrea also claims that now there are on average 20-30 sales per day so currently there is a drop in popularity. This could be the result of many crafters lacking a business strategy but this would need to be investigated more.

According to the same study on Croatian creatives 31% attributed lack of jobs as a reason for the development of the crafting industry. 44% of crafters decided that the Internet was a crucial aspect of the crafting scene booming in Croatia most recently. This is supported by Johnson and Glover's research that the Internet is a key factor in the popularity of the craft scene (Johnson, 2008 & Glover, 2011, p. 208). Other reviewed literature supports this theory that the global community of crafting can not only offer a sense of belonging but new business opportunities as well.

Everyone interviewed expressed that their experience with the Croatian government's role in the crafting scene was negative. There was no support and on the contrary with new laws about exchanges and receipts the government was making it more difficult for crafters to thrive. One must note that through observation this topic seemed to be one of the top priorities for the future of crafting in Croatia. However, it was deemed too vast to be covered appropriately in the scope of this research. It would be extremely beneficial for the crafting community and the Croatian economy to investigate this further.

The support that crafters in Croatia are lacking is not an unrealistic expectation as can be seen from the Portland example and some others (Cannon, 2009). In Portland the government not only supports the scene but a large majority of the population has taken on a DIY lifestyle and have seen significant benefits from this. Even locations that do not actively support the crafting society are not going against them. In Croatia recently a law was passed regarding fiscal cash registers that is not only a huge detriment to many businesses that do not function in this manner but a significant difficulty for crafters as well. As the research went on this third question did not lose significance but it became clear

that it deserves its own research. At this point, it appears more beneficial to focus on collecting and discussing the primary information like motivations and community because there needs to be a foundation to work from to encourage further research on the crafting scene in Croatia. Because of this the discussion on the topic of business capability and strategy will be narrow.

However, the fact that so many crafters seem to be Internet and marketing challenged was not really considered a possibility at the start of this research. It is somewhat related to their business abilities but should be noted because it was mentioned in several interviews. Željka and M both found it easier to team up with a partner who is more apt at using social websites, networking and advertising. The Do!ts team and Andrea are trying to educate creatives in the basic elements of selling online like how to photograph products effectively and social networking etiquette, as well as more focused topics like the legal aspects of crafting and specific tools of marketing. The lack of interest or education on online transactions became increasingly clear when the researcher contacted two crafters with interest in a product of theirs and did not receive a reply at all from one and for a few weeks from another. Similarly, by just looking through Facebook profiles, blogs and promotional materials at fairs (brochures, business cards) it became increasingly clear that many crafters in Croatia find it difficult to translate their identity into advertising, especially online. It is possible that this resistance to business and online skills happens when one makes a distinction between being creative and being business savvy, many do not believe these can co-exist. Or perhaps, other than Do!ts, Andrea and a few others, there are little to no opportunities to educate oneself.

Limitations and Recommendations

Concerning the interviews there were certainly limitations. First, because of scheduling issues many crafters had gone abroad over the summer and were unavailable for interviews. Second, it is difficult to categorize and analyse data that is so personal and specific to individuals. A larger sample is recommended to examine the ratio of this divide between crafters who are seeking personal fulfilment and those that have profit as a priority. Additionally, the concept of image related purposes for crafting and a sense of moral/social superiority was an unexpected observation. With more research I would discuss it further as I see significance in it. However, this topic would be suitable for it's own psychological study and is too extensive to observe in length currently.

A recommendation for further research is to examine the concept of moral superiority within the craft industry in more depth. The Croatian crafting community is not as united as the one described in Portland. Many reasons were discovered that could be attributed to this. Primarily, Croatian crafters are divided into subgroups based on several varied elements. Secondly, the practice of co-creation and transparency is perhaps less developed in Croatia than in other parts of the world. It is recommended for the topic of the crafting community in Croatia to be a separate study, allowing for more in depth data. Likewise, business approaches appear to be less developed than in some other geographic areas covered by the literature reviewed. However, there is an intuitive business approach that has proven successful for several of the crafters involved in this research. Another recommendation for further study is the impact and influence of the Croatian government because almost all individuals who participated in the research mentioned this. The theme of crafters' business

approach was used as a guiding question but was rather inconclusive under the scope of this research. Rather than removing it completely I would like to note that it is relevant but became less applicable to this paper as the research developed.

Key limitations of this research were time and scope. The validity of the research could be considered a limitation by some because of its relative and individual manner but I would argue that the participants were only encouraged during interviews to speak openly about their experiences, they were not guided in any specific direction. Their experiences were noted down as they explained them in person and for this reason I would not question the validity of the study. I believe that this information is valuable and therefore attempted to collect and present it in the most appropriate and beneficial manner. The researcher attempted to stay as neutral as possible but the aim was to represent and interpret with no claim to be entirely objective.

Conclusion

This research began with the following three guiding questions:

1. What are the motivations of individual Croatian crafters?
2. How does the Croatian crafting community function as a whole?
3. What are current business models in the Croatian crafting industry? Are they considered successful?

All three were investigated further using in-depth interviews, observation methods and content analysis. Due to the qualitative nature of the study other themes emerged that were unexpected. For example, all participants that were interviewed spoke strongly about the lack of support crafters receive from the Croatian government. Also it was surprising how many participants stated that the majority of crafters in Croatia are not linked well online (with customers and other crafters) and are not knowledgeable enough to make their branding and marketing successful. One participant, Andrea, even said that she tries to help and inform crafters through workshops and her website but that many are not interested. It was a surprising result to find out that many creatives are not experts at online sales. This is surprising as a lot of crafting transactions occur online so one expected, and incorrectly assumed, that this would be a common skill.

To summarize the individual motivations of Croatian crafters, the research gained insight into very different reasons for crafting. This is also evident in the literature reviewed and is not specific to Croatia. The individuals interviewed started crafting to satisfy their creative ambitions and often to make clothes or accessories for themselves that they could not afford to buy. However, many participants commented that they feel other crafters in Croatia began

crafting out of a financial need or a desire to be financially independent. Another interesting concept that was not considered extensively prior to the interviews is that some creatives are merely following a trend and attempting to be “cool” by crafting. These results might not appear to be definite but provide clear insight into the motivations of several crafters in Croatia. This is important as a foundation for all other questions and research regarding crafters because before one knows how something is or how to improve it we must know *why* it is.

Regarding the second guiding questions the results concluded that the Croatian crafting community is not as united as it could be. Some claim this is because there are many creatives who are crafting for negative reasons and others blame Croatian government and culture for not being conducive to a united community. The boom of crafting resulted in positive and profitable practices worldwide but appears to have plateaued in Croatia recently. However, this is an area that would require further research before concluding on specific reasons for this happening. Another interesting concept that arose is that an outsider could be the person to unite Croatian crafters and help the scene develop positively. This was a suggestion from Mica who believes it is possible for a new individual with business knowledge to move the crafting scene forward.

To conclude with the final guiding question regarding common business approaches of Croatian crafters it was surprising to learn how necessary it is to educate and help Croatian crafters with their branding and marketing tactics. Perhaps one could say that this was the most crucial discovery because this is one that can be improved almost immediately. Andrea, Marina and Ivona have

already realized that there is a need for education and are conducting workshops and trying to support their fellow creatives. Also, if other crafters follow in this trend of educating and being educated it could be a uniting factor resulting in a stronger community.

This research provides more insight into the world of Croatian crafting. It is a contribution to the many studies that examine crafting worldwide. It is nowhere near as vast as it could be and several others studies could and should be conducted to understand and benefit crafters. However, it does encompass a lot of new insight and covers a significant amount of ground. This information is important because there are aspects of crafting that have proven to be beneficial for both the individual and the economy. With the knowledge that crafting is a positive addition to a culture it is impossible to ignore it and crucial to delve deeper.

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