CHIARA GIACOMUZZO

Linktree* for *Makers*

app for contemporary craftspeople.

The application of ***ergonomics*** to support emerging ***young*** makers in the ***passion*** economy, optimizing their ***selling journey.***

Supervisor Roberto Dadda
Co-supervisor Paolo Negri

Politecnico di Milano School of Design
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Tongji University
College of Design and Innovation
Advanced Media and Communication Design

Master Degree Thesis
A.Y. 2022 — 2023

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Master Degree Thesis
A.Y. 2022 — 2023

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Abstract

ENG

In response to the anthropocentric era in which we live, there has been a new interest in the world of craftsmanship in recent years, which took the form of a movement that the author defined as contemporary craftsmanship.

A new generation of artisans is emerging with it, which overturns the traditional definition of the artisan in favor of talents with heterogeneous backgrounds and transversal skills, according to a new, fluid and hybrid concept of the contemporary maker.

At this juncture, there are extraordinary examples of digital micro-entrepreneurship that, by addressing a young and passionate audience, promotes ethical consumption and a new concept of newness, no longer determined by the fact that the product is unused, as with industrial ones, but by its uniqueness and unrepeatability.

Often, however, the tools and platforms used by these makers do not meet their real needs, so some of them, created for different purposes, are converted in a certain sense, not always with successful results.

It leads to the research question: how can optimal interaction based on the application of ergonomics and usability support this new generation of makers? The project aims to create an application to support emerging hybrid makers, meet their needs, and aggregate a young community engaged in craftsmanship and sustainability themes.

ITA

In risposta all'epoca antropocentrica in cui viviamo, negli ultimi anni si è registrato un rinnovato interesse nel mondo dell'artigianato, che ha assunto la forma di un movimento definito come artigianato contemporaneo.

Una nuova generazione di artigiani si sta consolidando, che vede l'abbandono della tradizionale definizione di artigiano in favore di talenti dai background eterogenei e dalle capacità trasversali, in comunione con un nuovo concetto, ibrido e fluido, di maker contemporaneo.

In questo scenario, emergono straordinari esempi di micro-imprenditoralità digitale che, rivolgendosi ad un pubblico giovane e appassionato, promuove un consumo etico e un nuovo concetto di nuovo, non più correllato all'inutilizzo del prodotto, come accade per quelli industriali, ma determinato dalla sua unicità e irripetibilità.

Spesso, tuttavia, gli strumenti e le piattaforme a disposizione dei makers non rispondono alle loro reali necessità, così che strumenti progettati per scopi differenti vengano convertiti in un certo senso, non sempre con risultati di successo.

Questo ha condotto alla domanda di ricerca: come un'interazione ottimale, basata sull'applicazione dell'ergonomia e dell'usabilità, può supportare questa nuova generazione di makers? La tesi mira perciò a progettare un'applicazione che supporti i nuovi makers ibridi emergenti, rispondendo ai loro bisogni e permettendo di aggregare una community giovane interessata ai temi dell'artigianato e della sostenibilità.

Intr
duct

PART ONE

to—
tion

Rediscovery of handicrafts

1.

1.1. Contemporary framework

In the new millennium, we are witnessing an increase in interest in craft products and the craft sector in general, as confirmed by the dramatic growth in the volume of craft objects bought annually, which has quadrupled, bringing the sector into the mainstream market. (cfr. Mcintyre 2020)

This phenomenon can respond to the numerous calls to action made by organisations such as Greenpeace, the Green Parties and the United Nations, which have highlighted humans' impact on the environment in recent years.

We live in an anthropocentric age, a term coined by Nobel Prize winner Professor Paul Crutzen to describe "the time during which human actions have a drastic effect on the Earth and its ecosystem" (Gasparin 2020).

The current models of production, distribution and consumption have stimulated and been stimulated by a culture of overconsumption and exhaustion of natural resources, causing a series of problems: climate change, biodiversity loss, natural resources degradation, ethical issues, increased poverty in disadvantaged communities, waste management problems, excessive and inefficient energy use and due to the off-shore production, increased vulnerability for many developing countries in which globalised products are manufactured. Besides, central governments have often "asked to switch to chemical products to increase the productivity of the fields" (Gasparin 2020), putting the consequences of this consumption pattern on the back burner in the name of productivity that cannot be disappoin-

ted. The politics of consumerism has affected the production and sales chain and the consumer's expectations (cfr. Friel 2020), who, to grab the most advantageous price, is willing to come to terms with an ever-lower quality of products. In addition to the awareness campaigns carried out by organisations, in 2019, several governments pronounced a climate emergency, catalysed by extreme weather, school children, climate activism and social media pressures. Finally, the COVID-19 pandemic made it necessary to reconsider the pre-COVID-19 business system.

All the factors mentioned above have contributed to new growth of the creative industries and sanctioned a change in consumer taste and demand for unique and quality products in the face of the homologation brought about by mass production and globalisation.

We are witnessing an increased interest in artisanship (i.e. the practice of skilled work with materials, by hand or with tools, to produce quality products grounded in the material culture of a place) as a critical contributor to sustainability, cultural identity and wellbeing. A growing number of consumers seek products that are not unique and of high quality but also "come with a story of the artisan and the community from which it originates" (Frater, Hawley 2018).

Environmental sustainability is a crucial element of ethical consumerism, and brands and organisations that demonstrate commitment to reducing environmental impact have been particularly valued. For this reason, many big brands, especially in the clothing sector, have wanted to associate a part in the conception or creation of industrial products with a craft intervention to increase the value of the artefacts.

At this juncture is the rediscovery of craftsmanship as an economic model that responds to consumer needs by guaranteeing transparency on production and a level of sustainability unattainable by industrial production. The passion

for handcrafting thus becomes social transformation and sustainable innovation.

1.1.1. Market trends & insights

The current rediscovery is referred to as the *third wave*. The global craft market stood at USD 647.57 billion in 2020. (cfr. Francis, Hoefel 2018) Each craft product, artistically representing the culture and tradition of the country, exhibits distinct qualities and is perceived as a symbol of status by consumers. Moreover, handicrafts require low capital investment, provide employment opportunities for artisans, and serve as a prominent means of foreign exchange earnings. For these reasons, handicraft products play a crucial role in the economy's overall growth and will increase demand for handicraft products over the next five years by 10.9 per cent to USD 1,204.7 billion. (cfr. Expert Market Research 2020)

An explosion in reality television programmes accompanied this third wave of craft: based on successful - and generally relatively inexpensive - formats; different programmes can appeal to a wide range of markets representing everything. Some examples are The Great Pottery Throw Down (UK, BBC 2015-2017, Channel 4 2019-), Blown Away (US, Netflix 2019-), MAKE! Craft Britain (UK, BBC). (cfr. Luckman 2020)

1.1.2. Contemporary fairs and events

Despite the very high level of digitisation, what may come as a surprise is the constant presence of organised events and physical fairs that

promote craftsmanship in different ways and at different levels. From more significant events, such as "Homo Faber" organised by the Fondazione Cologni, to smaller events like "Festivalet" in Spain, to "London Crafts Week". Usually, those participating in these events have a more structured business, with higher sales volumes and a consolidated production organisation.

During the research, however, there was a large number of more informal occasions such as markets or micro-fairs during which groups of young artisans, often organisers of the event themselves, showcase their products and tell their story. In the space of a few months, hundreds of such events will take place in Milan, some recurring like "Friendly Market" or "Neighbours Market", some organised by the makers themselves, like "Artigiane in Fiore", "Secondhand is my first choice" or "Cascina Nascosta", and others that have depopulated with their first edition like "Pattyland Market". All these examples show the makers' constant need to meet their audience, but above all, to give a face and a story to the products they sell. This is precisely what handmade products are all about: telling and handing down a story, promoting values, empathising with those who spend time to produce an object that becomes your own, as if you were adopting it, taking it home to take care of it and cherish its preciousness.

Homo Faber

"Homo Faber" is a biennial exhibition that brings together the best of Europe's artistic crafts at the Giorgio Cini Foundation in Venice and a flagship event of the Michelangelo Foundation. The first edition in 2018 attracted more than 60 thousand visitors from all over the world, showcasing works created by hundreds of art masters and designers and offering visitors an engaging pro-

gramme of live workshops, installations, exhibitions, lectures and film screenings. The exhibition event was an interactive experience during which the public could talk to the craftsmen, virtually enter the workshops of the masters and watch the restorers at work. “Homo Faber” was not an exhibition, a market place or even a fair because there was no commercial aspect to the event. This last detail is an interesting phenomenon and demonstrates the need, not only on the part of artisans, to communicate the crafts of our times in a new way. Homo Faber wants to be a tribute to the talent and creativity behind magnificent handmade objects but risks relegating craftsmanship to the perception of a luxury and inaccessible market. (cfr. *homofaber.com*)

1.2. From guilds to makers: a historical approach

The origins of the craftsman are very ancient, to be found in Greek myths, particularly that of Hephaestus. Homer recounts that after Hera conceived him, she noticed his ugliness and deformity and decided to throw him down from Mount Olympus.

Two nymphs found him and nursed him, teaching him blacksmithing, which is why he became famous throughout Greece: for his skill in working with metals.

His workshop, located at the foot of the volcano Mount Etna, was populated by terrible Cyclopes, who assisted, as faithful apprentices, all of the god’s engineering projects: from jewellery to weapons to traps and contraptions.

In today’s culture, the ideal of craftsmanship

differs somewhat, although some characteristics remain unchanged. In the common ideal, the character who par excellence responds to the canons of the craftsman is Geppetto, a lovely, lonely old man who, from a piece of wood, creates a puppet that magically comes to life in what we all know as Pinocchio.

Let us now see how the figure Sennett defines as *homo faber* has evolved over the ages.

1.2.1. Medieval workshops and guilds

From the Middle Ages onwards, the craftsman's workshop was his home, a space where work and life mingled, not too far from what happens today with smart working.

However, we should not imagine a place with a familiar and relaxed atmosphere, as the medieval workshop was still part of the trade guild system, in which the skills and technical knowledge dictated authority imparted to the apprentices.

Besides skills, what distinguished the medieval craftsman's authority was his Christianity. Starting with the story of Jesus as the son of a carpenter, religion exalted craftsmanship to such an extent that it led to the birth of new artisan saints and to large self-sufficient communities in monasteries that promoted craftsmanship.

Between the 12th and 13th centuries, with the development of cities, the craftsman's workshop underwent a metamorphosis, embracing a more secular vision of work. In this context, guilds of arts and crafts began forming associations whose task was the practical and direct transmission of knowledge from one generation to the next.

In the *Livre des métiers* of 1268, we find over a hundred arts and crafts guilds organised into seven groups, including jewellery, weaving, me-

tals and furriers. In mediaeval guilds, the male authority took the form of a triadic hierarchy of masters, salaried workers and apprentices. The workshop was likened to a family in which love was not the bond but respect. The head of the family (master craftsman) based his authority on transferring technical skills according to the learning method of imitation.

Children started at an early age of 6 or 7 as very young apprentices; priority was given to the children of the master, although studies have shown that very few workshops passed from one generation to the next. (cfr. Rosser 1997)

The medieval urban craftsman adhered to the Christian morality that saw leisure and idleness as temptation and sin. Of course, this concern was not limited to the male element of society but extended to women, who had to engage in activities such as weaving and embroidery to combat female temptation.

Here we begin to grasp the origins of the gendered connotation that we still see applied to various forms of craftsmanship today, and which at the time, in any case, excluded women from membership of guilds, relegating them to the care of the home.

Art historians Margot and Rudolf Wittkower argue that the figure of the Renaissance artist emerged precisely from the community of medieval craftsmen.

Delineating the boundary between these two spheres, craft and art, is not easy; however, there is a tendency to perceive the craftsman as someone who creates for the community while the artist as someone who creates for himself, for personal expression. According to the two scholars, solitude characterises almost always the latter, which led him to a more autonomous social position to claim the originality of his works. In reality, we know that artists, more than anyone else, especially during the Renaissance, were subservient to the powerful kings and princes on whom

their art depended. It is precisely on the idea of the tormented Renaissance artist that the idea of homo faber as "creator of himself" is founded: the artist sets his course.

The workshop became the artist's atelier, where assistants and apprentices orbited around the master. So, what is the difference now? Whereas in the Middle Ages, guilds tended to exalt the place of production rather than the craftsman who produced the artefact, in Renaissance culture, it became increasingly important for ateliers to claim the originality and signature of their products. The fact that artefacts were no longer merely functional for their purpose but went far beyond their usefulness in form and technique drew attention to the artefact and the craftsman.

The craft workshop and its evolution shows how it formed strong bonds between the people involved: in the Middle Ages, based on ritual and religion and later in the Renaissance, on originality and autonomy.

However, what indeed determined a caesura in the evolution of craftsmanship was the advent of machines in modern times, which we will explore in more detail in the next section.

1.2.2. The advent of machines

The 18th century was a crucial year for the craft sector and its role in society up to that point. It all began in the 1600s, when more and more craftsmen arrived in the cities and, thanks also to international trade, Europe experienced what was described by Simon Schama as "the discomfort of abundance" (Sennet 2009) that instilled solid theological concerns about the danger of material seduction. This unease became even stronger in the 18th century with machines' advent. However, the writers of the Enlightenment

were most worried about the machines' productive capacity and their influence on the experience of making. These themes and concerns are still alive today after so many centuries of history.

The Industrial Revolution changed the role of artisans on a social level: workshops and laboratories continue in the thousands of forms necessary for everyday life but paved the way for another institution: factories. With the consolidation of machines in the 19th century, the craftsman increasingly emerged as their antithesis. In fact, in the beginning, in the Age of Enlightenment, people look in amazement at the machine as an anthropomorphic automaton capable of replicating *human* abilities, such as Vaucanson's Flautist. However, when Sennett's *mirror-tool* is replaced by a robot, an efficient and tireless machine, wonder gives way to fear. Machines thus begin to define the rhythms of production, making them humanly unsustainable, as well as the conditions of quality, bringing them to perfection. The figure of the craftsman is increasingly set against industrialisation, in which he sees his inevitable end. In fact, by the 19th century, machines were increasingly tending to take the place of high-cost skilled labour to limit costs, excluding the most skilled workers and adding to the affliction of unemployment that of de-skilling.

One of the most passionate detractors of the rise of industrialisation in the Victorian era was the English writer John Ruskin. He aimed to demolish the material overabundance that characterised modernity and reaffirm the sensory reaction that handmade objects elicited with all their irregularities. Ruskin's "The Stone of Venice" (1853) and, in particular, the sixth chapter in the second volume entitled "The Nature of Gotic", became the bible of an entire generation of craftsmen.

In this haphazard essay, Ruskin identifies the main characteristics of Gothic architecture, ta-

king the city of Venice as a reference, going on to define to which particularities he owed his predilection for this style.

He thus admires the *wild* and *rough* details as *loving acceptance of the imperfections of humanity*.

As Ruskin himself states

> if you will make a man of the working creature, you cannot make a tool. Let him begin to imagine, to think, to try to do anything worth doing; and the engine-turned precision is lost at once. Out come all his roughness, all his dulness, all his incapability; shame upon shame, failure upon failure, pause after pause: but out comes the whole majesty of him also. (Ruskin 1903: 192)

The excitement of Ruskin was taken up in Britain by a young university student, William Morris, who was thunderstruck by Ruskin's writings and what had hitherto remained a dramatic lament became the manifesto of the Arts & Crafts movement.

From the beginning of civilisation, the goals of craftsmanship have been accuracy and perfection; now, machines have subverted values by making them affordable for everyone. What Ruskin believes differentiates machines from man is his ability to create, his imagination capable of producing works and artefacts that bear those imprints, those *impressions of human labour*. According to Ruskin, what represents the most remarkable dichotomy in history, the endless war between man and machine, can only have one outcome. Ruskin unhinged the assumptions of that progress put on display during the London Exhibition of 1851: a peana in honour of modern machinery and industrial products, housed in a building that embodied the aesthetics of machine work. Count Dunin's Man of Steel was emblematic of that progress, a robot - no longer a replicating automaton-like Vaucanson's - which had the features of Apollo Belvedere and, through a complex mechanism, was able to transform itself

in 30 seconds into the giant Goliath. A machine that celebrated the strength of the machine, no longer displaying human skill but surpassing it in size and power.

Ruskin considered standardisation, seriality and perfection, the *gifts* of machines, as entirely antithetical to man and therefore worthless. He urged the rediscovery of that *face-to-face* relationship proper to workshops and laboratories, which was lost in the vastness of the factory, repossessing craft processes and techniques. Thanks to the Arts & Crafts movement at the turn of the century, those ideals were firmly established, to the point that craftsmen held the highest positions in schools of applied arts and design.

In the years leading up to the First World War, the focus shifted to the role of industry, rather than that of craft, until the formation of the "Design and Industries Association" (DIA), founded on the model of the Deutscher Werkbund in 1907 which aimed to promote the best in art, industry, craft and commerce, but which in its respective Britishness based its ideals of industrial production on craft ethics and aesthetics.

1.2.3. Crafts in the contemporary era

It makes one wonder how Ruskin and Morris state that the strengths and *superiority* they identify in men are relevant even today, where machines and factories have given way to cobots and mechatronics. Nevertheless, even today, just as in Victorian-era Britain, we find a movement that identifies craftsmanship as the answer to standardised production, promoting a revaluation of artisanal crafts in a strongly *post-industrial* momentum, as Granelli (2011) argues.

This rediscovery of craftsmanship does not

look back nostalgically to the past: it is not an attachment to community values, of caring for the environment or workers as Ruskin perhaps too romantically did. However, it has to do with that *joie de faire* of Dissanayake, with that characteristic impulse of Gauntlett's (2013) maker to make and share things, to that *homo faber* of Sennett (2009). He who is unable to separate thinking from making, who finds a thrill in producing something with his own hands, who finds in making the pleasure of making.

Moreover, this new making revolution involves not only artisans or makers but also consumers, who today are increasingly attentive to what they buy in search of unique and original products. This trend, somewhat anachronistic compared to the evolution of global markets and mass production, represents a

considerable opportunity for rescuing a sector born and bred together with man.

In reality, the values that have always characterised the supporters of craftsmanship remain unchanged and are more alive today than ever. The recent wave of interest in the world of craftsmanship outlines peaceful activism, a sort of *gentle resistance*, making it a vehicle of communication for social and political issues, so much so that we can speak of *craftivism*, a term forged by Betsy Greer joining craftsmanship and activism. (cfr. Gauntlett 2013: 81-82) By craftivism, we mean a political choice to resist established consumerism, refusing to buy things because they are easily accessible but deciding to make them oneself (or choosing a sustainable alternative). A gentle revolution also leads one to reconsider those practices we have seen in the previous paragraphs defined as feminine since the Middle Ages, such as embroidery or crochet, as genderless.

An example of the result of this movement is the phenomenon of *yarn bombing*: the activity to cover elements of urban space with crochet work

so that women can re-appropriate those public places from which they were historically excluded. Among the many yarn bombing projects is the recent one that covered Milan's Piazza del Duomo with a blanket made from more than 5,000 squares of knitted or crocheted fabric sewn together with a red thread. The "Viva Vittoria" project aims to combat gender-based violence and support the reintegration into society of women who have suffered violence.

So the supporters of craftsmanship and the recent rediscovery of various craft practices have much in common with the values of sustainability, environmentalism and anti-consumerism: they reject the idea that the answer to all our needs can be bought in a shop. This does not mean that all makers or craftspeople reject all things commercial, but that most, especially the younger generation, see in this practice an approach that extends to everyday life, "seeing in the values of craft and creativity a positive vision of making and reusing". (*ivi*: 84)

1.2.4. Case study: Tom Daley effect

Thomas Robert Daley is a British diver who also represented Great Britain at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. In recent years he has been at the centre of the *Tom Daley effect*, as referred to by the Guardian.

Indeed, the Olympic athlete had a hit on social media when he was portrayed before a competition during the last Olympics while knitting. Tom said that this passion, which originated at home during the lockdown, is a great help to him in finding concentration and easing tension before competitions. The young athlete's photo soon went viral on social media, so much so that he

created an Instagram profile dedicated to his creations: @madewithlovebytomdaley. His success led first to selling his creations on LoveCrafts.com, a UK-based platform for selling handicrafts, and later to creating an independent brand. The brand's mission, which takes its name from its social profile, "Made with Love by Tom Daley", is to introduce everyone to the world of knitting, offering kits for making different patterns differentiated according to the level of the user from beginners to experts.

Tom is the crest of a movement that exploded in the UK, and beyond, during the pandemic. In fact, according to the UK Hand Knitting Association (UKHKA), around 1 million people have taken up knitting since the start of SARS-COVID19, with the number of knitters in the UK alone reaching 7 million. (cfr. The Guardian 2022) According to SalesForce, the number of small businesses born during the pandemic would be record high, registering a year-on-year increase of more than 24%. (cfr. SalesForce 2021) Moreover, the subversion of the stereotype that knitting or crocheting are purely feminine practices undoubtedly contributed to Tom Daley's success, showing how craft has no gender. Tom is an LGBTQ+ rights activist and becomes a symbol of a revolution that starts with young people and finds an opportunity for fulfilment in the handicraft.

Three crafts-people generations in comparison

2.

2.1. Craftsmen versus Workers

2.1.1. Fordism paradigm

The advent of machines and, in particular, the second industrial revolution increasingly contrasted and defined the difference between artisan and manual labour. Starting with Adam Smith's considerations in The Wealth of Nations for manufacturing production, the model consolidated later by Henri Ford that we know today as *Fordism* developed.

Adam Smith, in fact, after visiting a small pin factory, theorised about the division of labour and its rationalisation into smaller, less complex tasks. In the factory in question, Adam Smith observed that by dividing the production of a single pin into 18 minor tasks, the workers' productivity was much higher than the output of the individual workers over the entire production process. He states that maximising this division of labour could increase the productivity of the manufactory. (cfr. Smith 1776)

Following the same principle, Henri Ford, in 1913, developed a production system based on the assembly line, which put into practice the principles of scientific organisation of labour developed by Taylor: *Taylorism*. The production model reduced the production time of an automobile, the Ford T, from twenty to one and a half hours. This approach led to increased in production and consequently decreased in production costs, making the product accessible to a broader public

and adding the possibility of product customisation, paving the way for the mass market. At the beginning of the 20th century, the Fordism model aroused the enthusiasm of promoters of a new production model on an industrial scale but also scepticism of criticals who perceived it as a denial to individuals of capabilities. Moreover, in economic terms, Fordism did not turn out to be as efficient as people thought it was since the workers did not know the entire production process, and consequently, if something did not work, they could not intervene, and the whole assembly line had to stop. In fact, in that system, it did not matter whether the worker was learning; he was neither encouraged to learn nor would he be satisfied to do so. The Toyota model, for example, was set up differently, whereby workers were rotated so that they knew all types of tasks, from the simplest to the most complex, fulfilling one of the aspects the worker lacks, according to Sennett, as we shall see later. For a century, Ford's model became not only a standard for the United States and Europe but also the lintel of an economic paradigm — Fordism indeed — that characterised the entire century.

2.1.2. Differences between craftsman and worker

At this juncture, we can delineate the boundaries between labourer and handicraft work. Someone who used to take care of the entire production process of a pin, referring to Adam Smith's manufacture, now merely unwinds the wire, sharpens it, or contributes to the creation of the head. Sennett proposes three aspects, also taken up later by Micelli (2016), to be considered to define the boundary between artisan and worker labour, identified respectively in autonomy,

relationships and social recognition.

Autonomy means the worker's freedom and "understanding of technical and economic processes" (Sennett 2009). The worker responds to the task entrusted to him without necessarily understanding the meaning and logic of his contribution within the framework of general production. On the other hand, the craftsman dominates the entire production process or at least relevant parts. The autonomy that characterises the craftsman's work determines in extremis the quality and possible customisation of the product, which depends on the craftsman's skills and talent.

The second aspect is the relationship established with the customer: the craftsman knows the customer's needs and, in a certain sense, takes charge of them, dialoguing directly with the recipient of his work. So the craftsman has a particular responsibility for his work, which does not affect the worker and gives the first possibility of valuable social and economic interactions.

The last aspect that Micelli identifies as qualifying the craftsman's activity concerns his social recognisability: he creates a recognisable identity for his creations that does not touch the assembly line, which on the contrary, almost leads to the depersonalisation of the worker. The craftsman, therefore, defines practices and dispositions of mind and attitudes that identify him on a social level and insert him into the community; as Sennett says, craftwork is a premise of conscious citizenship. (cfr. Micelli 2016)

These considerations do not aim to devalue labourer work as such but attempt to define the boundaries of a profession that is difficult to encapsulate in a definition — a profession as old as humankind and survived until today's society not without changes and evolutions. In the next chapter, we will see how the need to explain the meaning of the term craftsmanship is contemporary and current, taking the Italian context as an

example.

2.1.3. The context in Italy: three mistakes

Italy has handled the issue of craftsmanship and production differently than other European countries, but the presence of tiny enterprises at the basis of Made in Italy has probably made this subject more complex.

Artisanal meaning has been at the centre of a debate and evolution in recent decades, contrasting it with the definition of industrial.

The first obstacle to understanding and correctly interpreting this term derives from the fact that in Italy, "artisan" denotes not so much a type of production as the size of production: so if it is a small enterprise, regardless of what and how it produces, it is artisanal. In fact, according to the framework law for handicrafts (dating back to 1985), a handicraft enterprise is one that, according to various size limits, given by the number of employees according to the sector in which it is located, "carries out mainly personal work in the production process [...]". This linguistic misunderstanding has caused some companies to lose sight of the specificities of their product, reconceiving definitions that did not belong to them. Thus large companies, especially in the luxury clothing market, have leveraged the craftsmanship of their products as a marketing strategy, making the connection between craftsmanship and luxury (and inaccessibility) increasingly solid. On the other hand, extraordinary Made in Italy realities, which made craftsmanship their core business, has claimed the title of industrial enterprises to attest to their progress and relevance, confusing business managerialization with the industrialisation of mass

production. Moreover, this juxtaposition has led to the consolidation in the shared imagination of the artisanal enterprise as something minor, linked to tradition and anchored to a local context as opposed to an industry dominated by innovation and aimed at an international context. The truth is that with the advent of new technologies, a generation of digital artisans has emerged, able not only to use digital tools to communicate and promote their products but also to revive in a contemporary way a manufacturing tradition otherwise destined to disappear.

This savoir-faire revolution movement coined the term thinkering as a union of thinking and tinkering, as an approach of "thinking by doing things" and reflecting on what I have done to create something new. it is based on this approach that we learn in the so-called knowledge society identified by John Seely Brown. This idea is a response to Sennett's homo Faber and Enzo Mari's artisan doing: one does not merely know how to do things but can imagine new things by knowing how to do them.

To return to the Italian context, unfortunately, the revaluation of the craft profession has been perceived as a nostalgic battle against the challenges of the contemporary economy, which slows down the progress of a country that should be investing in other industries. Instead, broadening the discourse to a broader picture, the value of artisan work as knowledge, culture and creativity emerges, the revival of which constitutes a real opportunity concerning the international scenario.

2.1.4. Teo Musso and the success of Italian crafts beers

In the late 1980s, many beer companies, as Moretti or Ichnusa, were sold to the Canadian Labatt group and now to the Heineken group. The reason is straightforward: Moretti could not compete with large multinational groups controlling the European and North American markets as a small company. Moretti's case is just one example of many other brands that made the history of the Italian food industry and succumbed in the face of large multinational groups: it was a way for the brand to survive despite the market.

With the acquisition of the brand, the factory closed its doors and moved to some building in the industrial area and today it has four production plants spread across Italy.

The rise of craft beers in Italy began in the late 1990s, more precisely in 1996, thanks to the intuition of Teo Musso, who, with his microbrewery, Le Baladin in Piozzo (Cuneo, Italy), was one of the pioneers of this new market in the Italian scenario.

Teo Musso's *rock* profile corresponds to the idea of *future craftsman* that Micelli (2011) promotes: he stands out for his eccentric personality. He is a frontman, an all-around manager, always looking for something new. Teo Musso's success was to have exploited a lack in Italian beer culture, taking inspiration from a Belgian model and proposing a new Italian product that could stand out. In particular, Musso's goal was to create a successful product abroad from a 100% Italian supply chain, leading consumers and the market to consider beer a product of the earth and not of the machine. Musso has made craft beer a well-known product, paving the way for hundreds of

small brewers who now have a place in the market that was unimaginable a few years ago.

What factors have determined the success of craft beer and Italian microbreweries? Micelli (2013, Prologue) tries to outline some of them: first and foremost, indeed, the flavour, which, not subject to a pasteurisation process, can cover a broader spectrum than the industrial product. As far as production is concerned, as has already been mentioned, the industrial revolution has made it possible for even small and medium-sized companies to access technological tools and equipment: even today, we can find self-production kits for making beer at home. However, what undoubtedly marks the success of craft beers is the meeting of market demand that the industrial sector cannot respond to, as well as consumers' willingness to demand product variety and more excellent knowledge of ingredients, which also makes them willing to pay more. (*ivi*: 11)

Another necessary clarification concerns the relationship between craft products, beers in this case, and the territory. A product's local rootedness does not determine its *localism* or proximity economy: it does not limit its success internationally. Craftsmanship, linked to the territory resources, is the distinctive feature of a new slice of the market that sees its application in many sectors of what has been appreciated abroad as *Made in Italy*. The objective is no longer to chase the competition of large companies and economies of scale but to meet the consumer by responding to the variety he demands. This type of company, therefore, does not communicate on traditional mass channels but once again meets the consumer in places of aggregation, in communities of enthusiasts.

The case of Teo Musso is much less exceptional than we think; there are and have been thousands of artisans who have had the same success, and in the next chapter, we will define their cha-

racteristics and potential.

2.1. Craftsmen versus Makers

2.2.1. Post–fordism paradigm

As mentioned at the beginning of the previous section, the Fordist model has raised the scepticism of many. On one side, economists and sociologists have examined the limits of mass production, but the lack of attention to talent and the specificity of the individual has decreed its demise. The imposed standardisation and indifference to demand needs have made it an unworkable model in every sector.

The movement that highlights its limitations and overcomes the model imposed by Ford in 1913 is called *post-Fordism*, but it perhaps has deeper reasons that are worth exploring. Today, profound technological transformations have also influenced the modes of production, according to the *third industrial revolution* (cfr. The Economist 2012), and how people consume has also changed.

Manufacturing technologies guarantee a variety of production and customisation that was unknown until a few years ago; on the other hand, the web and digital tools allow consumers to inform themselves and access a variety of previously unimaginable products, according to what Micelli defines as a "culture of variety" (Micelli 2013).

The model developed by Ford envisaged mass production and quantity. Now the focus shifts to

customisation and variety according to the previously mentioned model, based on the Kanban management system developed by Toyota, defined as JIT (Just in Time), according to which waste is reduced to zero because "the right parts needed in assembly reach the assembly line at the time they are needed and only in the amount needed" (Ohno 1978: 27).

2.2.2. Who are the *craftsmen* today?

After outlining the characteristics that differentiate artisans from workers, it is necessary to understand who artisans are today. To do so, we resort to various nomenclatures proposed over the years. Starting with Enzo Mari, a pillar of Italian design, who points out how artisan work somehow survives in the industrial assembly line, identifying three examples that can be defined as *hinge* figures between craft and industry. (cfr. Mari 1981)

The first typology is the mould makers, those figures who make the production tools and shapes that subsequently mould the material. The second type is prototype makers, similar to what Micelli defines as *translator craftsmen,* i.e. those able to create a connection between mind and hand, design and execution, realising the product starting from the drawing and its design. This second typology, we can say, respects the ideal of the common imagination's craftsman and the archetype of Geppetto and perhaps also the myth of Hephaestus.

Mari identifies the last typology of artisans in those who connect the project to the context, citing the example of those who work in amusement parks or television construction sites. In this case, the project cannot be defined a prio-

ri, as ***prototypists,*** so craftsmen must respond to context, place, or client needs at the moment. The process of realisation and the skills required are the same as those practised by Micelli's ***adaptive craftsmen,*** who can respond in every respect to the client's needs. The three typologies outlined by Enzo Mari are craftsmen who link different processes in the production chain to achieve a quality product, in any sector, from furniture to mechatronics, and who are often referred to as ***specialised workers*** in Italy's so-called "pocket multinationals".

Micelli adds a further to these figures: the ***creative craftsmen*** who, compared to those identified above, are closer to artists. At this point, another distinction takes shape: between craftsman and artist, for which Sennett comes to our aid, envisages three fundamental differences: the first has to do with subjectivity. In the case of the artist or creative person, the latter is closely linked to the individual. In the case of the craftsman, on the other hand, subjectivity is subordinate to the long tradition handed down through shared gestures and knowledge that are therefore collective. The second difference identified by Sennett concerns time: that of the craftsman is a long time, given by a gradual and incremental learning process that is consolidated only through experience. On the other hand, the artist's time is connected to a sudden moment, linked to the intuition of an instant that leads to creating a work of art. The last difference, according to Sennett, is related to autonomy: while the craftsman can leverage his trade to credit prices and quality, the artist cannot invoke conventions that regulate certain activities.

The reconstructed distinction leads to an initial segmentation of the artisan figure, which only emerged in the post-industrial era: before the advent of machines, all artisans belonged to a single category, and the differences between these figures were not so marked as now. However,

the contemporary scenario has further complicated the definition of the peculiarities of different craftsmen. For this reason, institutions that have tried over the years to codify craftsmanship come to us: the International Charter of Artistic Craftsmanship, signed in 2010 by more than 50 signatories, including the Cologni Foundation, the national CNA (Confederazione Nazionale dell'Artigianato e della Piccola e Media Impresa, the national confederation of craftsmen and small and medium-sized enterprises), Confartigianato. The Charter aims to create synergies in the field of artistic craftsmanship on a European and international scale and define it.

The last figure identified by Micelli is the digital artisans. They are the protagonists of the contemporary scenario as children of the third industrial revolution, the digital one, which envisages more intelligent software, more innovative materials, and new digital manufacturing techniques — "those technologies that directly connect the computer and the network with the production activity" (Micelli 2013: 41) — but above all more effortless access to digital tools for manufacturing. The result of the artisans at this juncture would be an interest in recovering traditional values and practices reconciled with a vocation for innovation that sees the use of the web and digital channels as the key to a new evolution of craftsmanship. The emblem of this new generation of artisans is the exceptional phenomenon of Etsy, a digital platform that today has 90 million users and a turnover of above 700 million dollars (cfr. Etsy 2022), aimed at the online sale of handmade products and which has given voice and tools to the makers' movement born in America in the 1960s.

If today the term DIY (Do It Yourself) has entered common parlance and is automatically associated with the domestic context and precisely with *doing it yourself* or DIY, its roots go much more profound. The rediscovery of manual la-

bour first boomed in 1960s America as an alternative counterculture movement in response to the American education system, considered by many to be too notional and abstract.

As philosopher Alan Watts says

> ...if you will examine the system of education through which most of our children are compelled to pass, you will discover that it imparts almost no knowledge whatsoever of any kind of material competence. Our education is exclusively bookish, and is designed, on the whole, to train people to be bureaucrats, bankers' clerks, insurance salesmen, teachers, and — we hope — intellectuals. (Watts 1975)

This gave impetus to the DIY movement, which in addition to being a critical approach to education, aimed to recover a connection with objects and materials and the satisfaction of being able to create something with one's own hands. Frauenfelder, a former journalist, applied this approach to many aspects of his life, giving rise to the magazine "Make", which is still a reference point for thousands of makers and where they share experiments, attempts and innovations every month. This movement aims to subvert "the culture of consumption based on media conditioning" and "regain possession of a material culture that does not see us as mere consumers, incapable of expressing project quality" (Micelli 2011: 28). The movement of makers, of those who make things responds to the "cultural materialism" that Sennett (2009) speaks of and according to which it is only by experiencing things that we can re-appropriate the world around us. From this perspective, it is important to point out that the spirit that promotes "Make" magazine and the entire makers' movement does not shy away from globalisation to look back with nostalgia to the past.

On the contrary, it sees digital tools as the key to success, the diffusion of innovations, and the creation of a community, just like the Linux de-

velopers mentioned by Sennett (2009). For these makers, the Internet is the medium through which craftsmanship is communicated — not where it necessarily takes shape.

The idea and political value that craft practice takes on come to expression in the Craftifesto written by Amy Carlton and Cinnamon Cooper, founders of an annual craft event in Chicago

> Craftifesto: the power in your hands!
> Craft is powerful
> We want to show the depth and breadth of the crafting world. Anything you want can probably get from a person in your own community.
> Craft is personal
> to know that something is made by hand, by someone who care that you like it, makes that object much more enjoyable.
> Craft is political
> We're trying to change the world. We want everyone to rethink corporate culture & consumerism.
> Craft is possible
> Everybody can create something!!
> (Craftifesto manifesto 2008)

It becomes clear then what makes crafts so attractive that justifies their rise in recent years: it is not just something that "makes us feel good" and "is good for self-esteem" (Gauntlett 2013: 82), but a movement and a community with attractive values — such as creativity, culture and sustainability — that people want to be part of. The exceptional case of Matthew Crawford is an example of what is called the *happiness economy*: the director of a well-known Washington DC think tank which gives up everything to open a motorbike repair shop is the ultimate emblem. He recounts how the "brain of those who do manual work is more ductile and used to improvising. In a word, it is more brilliant" (Guantlett 2013). The example of Crawford's self-repairing motorcyclist embodies what is made explicit in the Self-Repair Manifesto of the Dutch Platform21 group, which openly declares not only that the culture of repair is the high road to sustainability, according to the

2.2.2.1. Manifesto of Craftifesto by Amy Carlton and Cinnamon Cooper

slogan "Stop recycling. Start repairing." (Micelli 2011: 30), but also that repairing is a perfect way to develop and learn technical-engineering skills (cfr. Koivu 2009).

Therefore, we are not dealing with mere hobbyists, as DIYers are identified in the common imagination. They are true successful craftsmen who are opposed to *symbolic analysts* and who synthesise and evolve the typical characteristics of craftsmanship identified above: autonomy becomes entrepreneurship, the ability to interact evolved into a customised product, and the ability to rework tradition comes into cultural production. The same framework law for handicrafts speaks of a *craftsman entrepreneur* as one who "personally, professionally and as owner, carries out the handicraft enterprise, assuming full responsibility with all the burdens and risks inherent to its direction and management and predominantly carrying out his work, including

manual work, in the production process" (Lgs. 1985).

For the entrepreneurial possibilities of this kind of enterprise, we certainly have to thank Nobel Prize winner Muhammad Yunus, known as the 'banker of the poor' who gave birth to the Indian microcredit phenomenon that over the years has landed in Europe, becoming a sort of self-reforming, different and complementary formula. It is "a small loan granted on trust to poor people, with no guarantees to present to banks" (*www.grameenbank.com*), which, especially in the Italian context, has constituted an opportunity for almost 4 thousand (Bricco 2017) beneficiaries among artisans and small entrepreneurs, women and young people interested in developing an idea.

2.2.3. Relationship between craftsmanship and design

Gropius's Weimar School certainly marks an evolution in artistic craftsmanship: the Bauhaus aimed to bring together all artistic disciplines — architecture, applied arts and crafts — with a view to the *Gesamtkunstwerk* or *total work of art*. At this juncture, the artisans' manual skills and knowledge of materials were combined with the creative flair of artists, defining the concept of modern design. Projects such as InternoItaliano and DoppiaFirma originate from the union between craftsmanship and design, highlighting the topicality of craftsmanship and at the same time stressing its necessary evolution for survival in a world dominated by industrial production.

Alberto Cavalli, Executive Director at the Fondazione Michelangelo, suggests overcoming the

conflict between craftsmanship and technology, which conceives of them as two opposites, as two parallel lines that cannot meet: the former as an anachronistic activity worthy of Geppetto's workshop and the latter as synonymous with avant-garde and progress. The reality is quite different, so much so that Sennett defines the developers of the Linux operating system as 'craftsmen of the web', and Micelli investigates the world of digital craftsmen, who have made technology a tool and not an ideology. On the contrary, craftsmanship aspires to its evolution and shares with design respect for the values that make the work of a human being conscious and creative.

The craftsperson, therefore, plays a fundamental role in the industry; it is essential to interpret current changes in the true homo faber spirit that uses manufacturing experience to influence the future. Today, due to our environmental challenges, we must focus on producing durable products to reduce waste and adopt models that are more aware of environmental impact: in this perspective, craftsmanship can undoubtedly make a difference. (cfr. Domus 2021)

2.2.4. Case studies: Internoitaliano and DoppiaFirma

INTERNOITALIANO — GIULIO IACCHETTI

One of the first projects to make the value of craftsmanship explicit is the InternoItaliano by Giulio Iacchetti, presented during the 2014 FuoriSalone in Milan. The project uses a distributed production system that gives voice to Italian craftsmanship that preserves a wealth of knowledge and skills to create *happy objects*. Iacchet-

ti defines them as such because they were born from the collaboration of a designer who designed them and a craftsman who made them with passion. This collaboration resulted in limited production for a niche market that highlighted the craftsmen's ability to execute a design and actively translate a design into a tangible object.

The dialogue between artisans and designers allows the former to open up to the world of change by adapting their products to the market's needs and for the latter to improve the quality of their designs and become more aware of materials and artistry.

Reflecting, however, on the evolution that the relationship between design and craftsmanship might undergo, it is evident how the current market demand for product *customization* appears impracticable without compromising the formal integrity of a design product. The leading solution adopted by Iacchetti in the products of Internoitaliano is modularity, which allows the product to be effectively adapted to the needs of the consumer while maintaining the recognisability of the design product, but envisages within the limits of customization. In this perspective, the designer's role evolves: he must not only define the shape of an object but also identify permissible solutions that allow the consumer to customize the product according to his needs. Likewise, the role of the craftsman is even more crucial as the absence of serial production makes his contribution essential.

DOPPIAFIRMA — COLOGNI FOUNDATION

Another project manifesting itself during Milan Design Week is DoppiaFirma, born in collaboration between the Cologni Foundation and Living, the interior and design magazine of Corriere della Sera. Now in its sixth edition, the project sees the collaboration between *innovative designers* and *excellent artisans* for the creation of

unique products that bear the double signature of both authors. The aim is to offer a new definition of *crafts* given by a creative and conscious transformation of the material as a result of an original approach and a skilful interpretative execution. It allows master craftspeople who interpret Made in Italy to explore new realities of expression, connecting them with designers on the international scene. The latter, on the other hand, have the opportunity to be inspired by new techniques and materials typical of Made in Italy craftsmanship.

Michelangelo Foundation, the international counterpart of the Cologni Foundation, implements many projects: the best known is the event organised on the island of San Giorgio in Venice, *Homo Faber*, inspired by Sennett's conception of the contemporary craftsman and showcasing a selection of craft works from around the world. In particular, however, the foundation aims to create programmes to help young enthusiasts enter the world of craftsmanship, demonstrating how this sector is attractive to young people and is more relevant today than ever. The idea is that "pairing talented young people who master innovative technologies with craft entrepreneurs results both in increased exports and turnover for companies and in reconciling different generations that have had little attention paid to their respective skills" (Micelli 2013: 106), which can bring craftsmanship back into the contemporary world.

Contemporary craft activities are part of a knowledge economy, where it no longer makes sense to keep secrets of making as it did in medieval guilds, but instead needs to be turned towards the future and innovation to evolve and survive, but dominate the current market. The Manifesto of the New Artisans of the 21st Century of Confartigianato states

> the craftsman is an entrepreneur who respects tradition but is strongly attracted to innovation. He loves experimenting and designing his tools and does not jealously guard his knowledge but shares it 'from hand to hand', creating bridges between generations. (Confartigianato 2015: 28)

The aim, therefore, is not to recover the craft trades as we knew them, à la Geppetto, but to preserve the characteristics of the craftsman: starting with the passion with which he does his work, the quality he demands, his desire to master the technique through exercise and practice, but above all his rootedness in a community to pursue socially recognised ideals.

As Micelli specifies, Sennett was the first to point out that "craftsmanship is characterised not only by its contribution to the economy of certain sectors — for example, that of high-quality products — but above all by its ability to stimulate features of each individual that allow communities to rediscover lasting bonds and a sense of common purpose" (Micelli 2011: 21).

The pandemic crisis has also had significant repercussions on the world of work; the phenomenon of 'great resignation' is a symptom of a rejection of standardised work, regulated by procedures or algorithms, and a need for the expression of one's personality, a margin of autonomy, a space for authentic sociability. All these factors present in artisanal work make it an all-round good form of work, which, as we shall see in the next chapter, today takes on hybrid and complex forms, mirroring the contemporary context.

2.3. Gen Z: a new generation of makers

2.3.1. Generation *

One of the most vital aspects of the research is the linguistic definition with which craftsmanship has always clashed. In addition to being very difficult to unambiguously define who the craftsman is today, what role he plays and what it entails to pursue craftwork, as we have seen in the previous chapters, it has also been due to different meanings that, over time, this word has held different, vast and often ambiguous meanings.

Even Diderot and d'Alembert, when writing the Encyclopédie in the mid-1700s, came up against this problem: the limit of human language in describing one's activities in words. Diderot's difficulty could not be more timely in describing the uncertainty and fluidity with which contemporary craftspeople are identified today. To mark a caesura with the craftsmanship of common opinion, represented by the archetype of Geppetto, the artisans involved in the research are defined as "makers" in Anderson's contemporary meaning that sees them as leaders and protagonists of the third industrial revolution.

The makers' difficulty identifying themselves in a single tagline was evident during the research. As Sennett points out, it is not a matter of stupidity but rather a human difficulty in putting into words a knowledge, a movement, a technique that is so inherent in us that it becomes natural. It becomes almost easier to show it than to explain it in words, which is what Diderot does to overcome the linguistic limitation: substituting

images for words and active involvement. We could say that Diderot identifies the firm heads of what storytelling is today.

On the other hand, the difficulty (and almost disinterest) in classifying oneself within a label seems entirely consistent when it comes to Generation Z. A word can sum up this generation: fluidity; or even better, a single character: the asterisk. Hence the boundaries between artisans and makers, between artists and designers, are increasingly thinning to the point of mixing and blurring, giving rise to hybrid makers: complex and unique profiles. Fluidity is not only found in the background but becomes transversal to the point of invading every aspect of life. Philosopher Luciano Floridi has suggested an interpretation that sees the very boundary between "networked communication (online) and real, material and analogue life (offline)" (Cristalli 2021) as something fluid and indefinite. He has called this state onlife: a hybrid experience that continuously flows between interactive devices and concrete experience.

2.3.2. Ethics in the first place

The sociological study aimed to identify values and behavioural drivers that can help understand the target audience, empathise with it and develop solutions that meet its needs.

After determining fluidity as a keyword summarising values and characteristics of Generation Z, aided by reports and scientific research, other core values have been individuated.

DIVERSITY

Generation Z is particularly sensitive to the issue of diversity, to recognising others as different and not necessarily definable. 75% of Gen Z say

their race, gender or sexuality cannot be easily categorised. (cfr. Depop 2021) They reject a definition, a label and see diversity as the expression and value that makes them unique from one another. However, they feel so different and *special* leads them to aspire to include the *other*, the *different*, with particular attention to all kinds of minorities.

INCLUSION AND TOLERANCE

It rejects all forms of discrimination and is ready to educate, especially the older generations, to review and question concepts and prejudices well stratified in society. It believes that dialogue and listening are fundamental to understanding the other and crucial for building a community. 66% say they would agree to join someone who thinks differently if there is a shared cause. (cfr. McKinsey 2018) Gen Z is often referred to as a 'communaholic' because, like Floridi's onlife dimension, it allows them to weave relationships in offline and digital life without distinction. They aspire to feel part of something, where what unites individuals is not necessarily the same cultural or social background but shared interests and causes.

SINGULARITY

However, the need to not want to define oneself within preconceptions and definitions does not disregard the need for personal expression; indeed, it amplifies it. Here, singularity becomes a fundamental value, to try to express and tell about oneself in a new and unique way that reflects one's uniqueness. This leads to expressing oneself through everything, including the purchases and products one searches for, preferring unique or customised pieces through which one can say something about oneself.

TRUTH

They seek truth and demand transparency and

honesty, especially from those who hold some form of power: social, economic, political… They are a highly informed generation who want to know the world and things and weigh their decisions and actions. Honesty and transparency are the basis of a conscious attitude concerning consumption and seeking to express their identity through objects and products. Singularity and the possibility of having a personalised and unique product is the biggest driver of choice when making a purchase. (cfr. *ibidem*)

SUSTAINABILITY

Gen Z is particularly sensitive to climate and environmental issues, which it perceives with urgency and priority. This implies adopting a more sustainable lifestyle: recycling more, reducing consumption of fast fashion, repairing their clothes and products, eating environmentally friendly food, adopting vegetarian and vegan diets, and minimising plastic consumption.

In general, the ethical and moral values they pursue are profound, so much so that for 75% of them, they are the main discriminating factor in any choice (cfr. WeTransfer 2021: 18) and lead over half of Gen Z research products before to buy them, meaning they are a highly informed audience that's unlikely to buy on impulse. Also, concerning the working world, 52% state that sharing their moral values in the work context is more crucial than any other incentive (cfr. *ivi*: 28), as we will see later.

2.3.3. The first digital–native generation

The instability of the current situation sees young people often overworked in a precarious situation, underpaid and often in a condition of isolation due to the pandemic. Added to this is the precariousness that characterises the creative industries, which are seen as a passion rather than a profession.

Fuelled by the gig economy, this scenario has inevitably changed the ideal of a secure and long-lasting job. The Great Resignation phenomenon recorded in 2020 that 45% of creatives are planning to change jobs in the next six months. (cfr. *ivi*: 40) Despite this, Generation Z is not losing the will to get involved and get busy, driven by their passions, so much so that Forbes' 30 under 30 lists recently recorded its most significant representation of Gen Z ever. In fact, as a study by Bank of America states, Generation Z is the generation of side-hustlers who juggle between odd jobs and side occupations, which often add up and overlap.

In this scenario, the figure of the craftsman and maker is also evolving, no longer local-based, anchored to territory and tradition, but reworking it to create something unique and recognisable. Highly hyper-connected, Generation Z masters platforms and online tools of all kinds, *jumping* from one to another through transversal paths and omnichannel experiences. Moreover, what makes a big difference is the almost complete indistinction between seller and buyer, as these two roles are often embodied in a single person, allowing them to empathise with the user and share the exact needs.

In this perspective, social media have undoubtedly changed the buying user journey, becoming a *one-stop-shop* for Gen Z: a place they can

discover and buy products without ever having to leave the app.

Furthermore, almost a third of online consumers use social media to research and find products to buy. As a generation that values influencers, they are more likely than average to discover new products from celebrity endorsements or vloggers.

For these reasons and in the name of the onlife dimension they dominate, it is crucial to design an omnichannel experience that utilises social channels in conjunction with — and complementary to — other commerce channels to provide a convenient and seamless consumer experience at each stage of the purchase journey.

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PART TWO

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Research and methods

3.

3.1. Outline of the research

3.1.1. Research framework

After the research, contemporary craftsmanship and its evolution through digital channels by emerging Generation Z makers defined the area of interest.

At this juncture, the following reflections emerged from the research conducted

❶ — Handicraft products can be a valid answer that promotes the local market and protects an ethical and sustainable production system.

❷ — Handicrafts are evolving into new forms.

❸ — Generation Z, no longer so subjugated by consumerist systems, is discovering new and heterogeneous ways of rethinking craftsmanship.

The difficulties encountered in this regard are due to the omnichannel nature that dominates the current environment, the complexity of the creative industry market, and the consequent difficulty for emerging young makers to enter this scenario competitively.

The identified opportunity is the primary driver of the response to the needs of the target, therefore in the implementation and simplification of digital tools in the digital sales process and the internal organisation of the craft activity, also confirmed by market data that see the social commerce phenomenon expanding.

3.1.2.
Research question

With this in mind, the project phase aims to answer the question:

How can optimal interaction, based on the application of the rules of ergonomics and usability, support this new generation of makers?

Declined as the following subquestions:

❶ — How to facilitate access to the social commerce market for these craft activities?
❷ — How to support Generation Z in monetising their passions in a context dominated by the gig economy?
❸ — How to intervene in a complex market, fragmented into different platforms and differentiated for each?

3.1.3.
Aim of the project

The project aims to provide the necessary tools to the new generation of contemporary craftspeople, defined as makers, by investigating their real needs and designing practical and ergonomic solutions that simplify a complex omnichannel framework.

3.1.4.
Working hypothesis

The idea is to apply the rules of ergonomics and usability to a digital system capable of facilitating the connection between the multiple platforms and tools identified as indispensable in

selling handicraft products online.

The project aims to create a virtual aggregator of contents and tools that allows ***potential buyers*** to move easily between the different promotion and sales channels. On the other hand, to structure a toolkit that allows ***makers*** to manage the various production and sales phases and monitor their earnings and the performance of shared content to maximise profit and minimise effort on the part of makers.

3.2. Methodology and methods

3.2.1. Research field

COMMUNICATION DESIGN

The approach to the problem analysed, and the resulting opportunities are relevant from the communication designer's point of view because it

❶ — addresses the issue of omnichannel as something that characterises not only makers but the hyper-digitalised society in which we live;

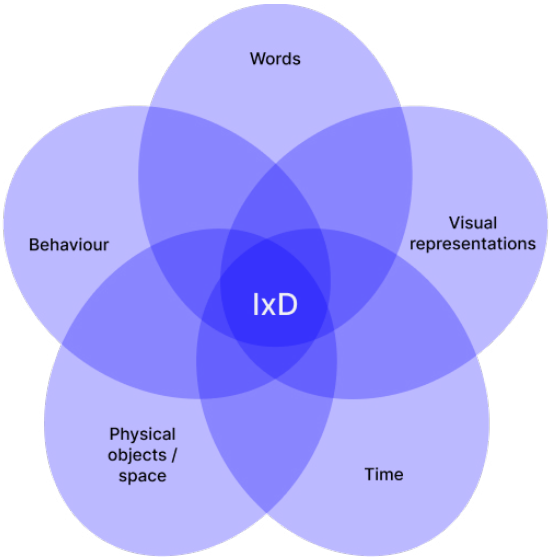
❷ — allows one to think and study solutions and strategies that respond to the problem and meet users' needs;

❸ — provides the tools to convey a message that promotes ethical and sustainable consumption in response to the current climate-environmental emergency.

INTERACTION DESIGN

The other area the thesis project embraces is interaction design, the discipline of designing

digital and interactive products and services. It involves designing "a dialogue between a person and a product, system, or service. This dialogue is physical and emotional and manifests in the interplay between form, function, and technology as experienced over time" (Kolko 2009).



↑ 3.2.1.1. Five dimensions of interaction design. Edited starting from *Interaction Design Foundation*

The aim is to focus on how users interact with products or services, relying on the ergonomic principles of usability to create the desired user experience. We could decline, helped by Gillian Crampton Smith, five dimensions to consider when designing an interaction design product [Fig. 3.2.1.1.]:

1D: **Words.** The first dimension refers to the nature of user interaction

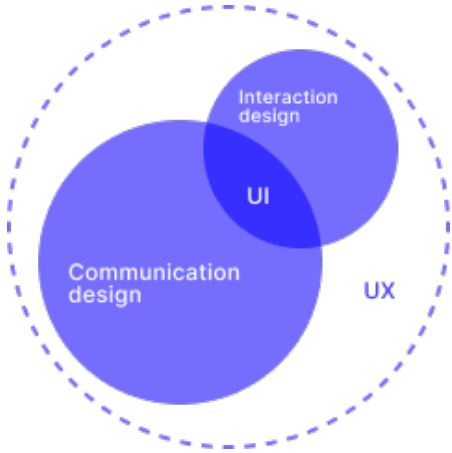
2D: **Visual representations.** The second dimension is the visual representations, including typography, diagrams, and icons that become the tools with which the user interacts

3D: **Physical objects and space.** The third dimension is the physical objects and space throu-

gh which the user exercises interaction control, as the keyboard, the mouse, the finger

4D: **Time.** The fourth dimension is the time within which the user interacts, which changes each time

5D: **Behaviour.** The last dimension is behaviour which refers to an action-reaction relationship.



↑ 3.2.1.2. Scheme of User Experience Design fields

The coexistence of these five dimensions makes it possible to design the right thing and design the thing right. We do not just design according to design thinking but focus mainly on design doing, placing the designed solution within a context, and testing its veracity and effectiveness (cfr. Crampton Smith 16:53).

Interaction design can be defined as an applied and contextual art since "it solves specific problems under a particular set of circumstances using the available materials" (Saffer, 2007: 4). In addition to the definition, the role of interaction design practitioners includes:

❶ — Focusing on users. The purpose of the design must meet the user's needs, enable him to perform the actions he desires and achieve the

objectives without limits.

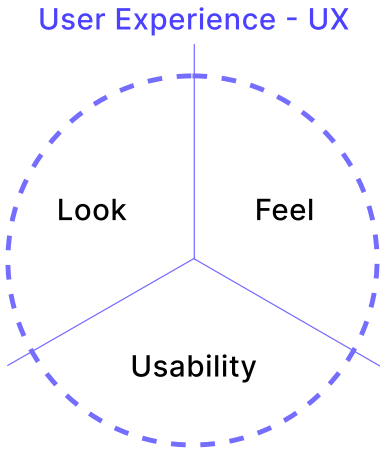
❷ — Finding alternatives. The solution must not involve choosing between already existing alternatives but must create one.

❸ — Using ideation and prototyping. In the process of designing the user experience is to devise solutions, build them and above all, test them. This last phase is the most important one, as it allows us to verify that what we have identified as the solution is indeed the solution.

USER EXPERIENCE DESIGN

The field of design with which this thesis project is approached falls under the discipline of user experience design, specifically in the union of communication design and interaction design, which sees as an artefact of a user interface design project, based on the study and application of the principles of ergonomics and usability.

3.2.2. Usability principles



↑ 3.2.2.1. User Experience components

The ergonomics of an interactive product or service is determined by usability, a quality attribute that determines how easy user interfaces are to use and fits into the more general design of the user experience [Fig. 3.2.2.1.]. What is analysed to determine the usability of a product or service? Usability involves several aspects of interaction design, which have to do with the interface or, more generally, with the user's experience with the product or service.

Indeed, the factors taken into consideration by usability will be explained better in the next paragraph.

Generally they are:

— navigation: the user's flow within the platform;

— familiarity: how quickly and easily he/she becomes familiar with the tool;

— consistency between elements;

— prevention and management of errors;

— feedback the user receives during the experience and which sends a positive or negative signal as to the effect the action taken had;

— visual clarity, which also makes it easier at first glance for the user to decode the meaning and functions of the various elements;

— flexibility and efficiency depend on the user's intent and the product's functionality.

In particular, the Interaction Design Foundation identifies five general components to be pursued in designing an artefact with good usability. These are learnability, efficiency, memorability, errors and satisfaction (*interaction-design.org*).

LEARNABILITY OR EASE OF LEARNING

It determines how easy it is for users to complete basic actions the first time they approach the product or service.

EFFICIENCY

It occurs once the user is familiar with the in-

terface and determines how quickly users perform the actions.

MEMORABILITY

It is established after a while in which the user abstains from using the interface and determines how easily they re-establish efficiency.

ERRORS ALLOWANCE

It is fundamental in defining the usability of an interface because they determine which errors users make, how serious they are and how easy they are to remedy.

SATISFACTION OR ENGAGEMENT

It regards an overall judgement of how much the user enjoys the product or service experience.

Analysing Nielsen's ten heuristics for User Interface Design (Nielsen 2020), other principles should also be considered, including:

— **Visibility of system status,** which represents constant information to the user about the current status they are in, through appropriate feedback within a reasonable time frame.

— **Match between the system and the real world,** which assumes that the design speaks in a language the user can understand through familiar expressions and words or recognisable icons and images.

— **User control and freedom** allow the user to exit or override a task during its fulfilment.

— **Consistency and standards** of platform or industry to consider to facilitate user understanding of the visual code.

— **Flexibility** involves providing the user with accelerators such as shortcuts and unique gestures to optimise specific actions.

— **Help and documentation** support the user in the optimal use of the service and accomplishing their tasks.

3.2.3. Research approach

Interaction design involves diverse methods and methodologies. Dan Saffer, one of the most respected experts in the field, considers it an applied art and identifies four major approaches to interaction design that can be used at the designer's discretion to create various products, from websites to non-digital services (Saffer 2007).

Approach	Overview	Users	Designer
User-Centered design	focuses on user needs and goals	guide the design	translates user needs and goals
Activity-Centered design	focuses on user tasks and activities that need to be accomplished	perform the activities	create tools for actions
Systems design	focuses on the components of a system	set the goals of the system	makes sure all the patrs of the system are in place
Genius design	relies on the skills and wisdom of designer	source of validation	is the source of inspiration

↑ 3.2.3.1. Four approaches to User-Centred Design

As shown in [Fig. 3.2.3.1.] they are:

— UCD (User-Centered Design)
— Activity-centred design

— Systems design
— Genius design

USER-CENTERED DESIGN (UCD)

It focuses on user needs and goals. Users guide the design, while the designer is called upon to translate user needs into design solutions.

ACTIVITY-CENTERED DESIGN

It focuses on the tasks and activities that are to be achieved. Users have the role of performing the activities, while the designer creates tools for the actions.

SYSTEMS DESIGN

It focuses on the components of a system. The users depend on the system's objectives, while the designer must ensure that the various parts of the system work.

GENIUS DESIGN

It relies on the skills and wisdom of the designer to create products. Users become the source of evaluation, while the designer is the source of inspiration.

3.2.4. Research process

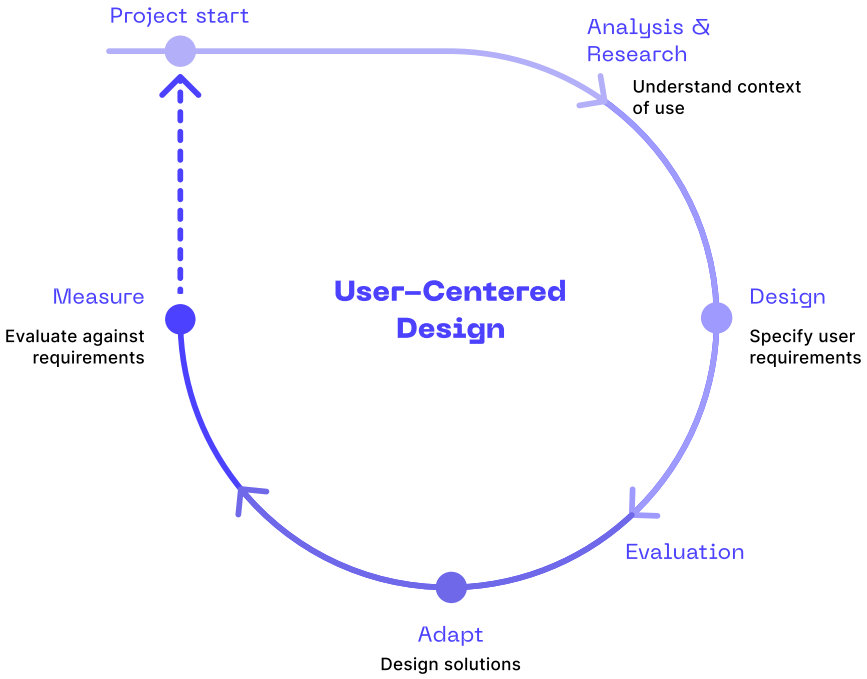
The user-centered approach is characterised by two key aspects:

— user involvement in the design process from the very beginning

— iterativity of the process, which includes questioning the identified solutions and constantly listening to users.

The process consisted of four major stages: the first two of research and investigation, the last two of design and implementation. As is cle-

ar from the diagram shown [Fig. 3.2.4.1.], this is not a linear path, but the very nature of the approach presupposes retracing one's steps during the various stages and questioning what has been developed up to that point.

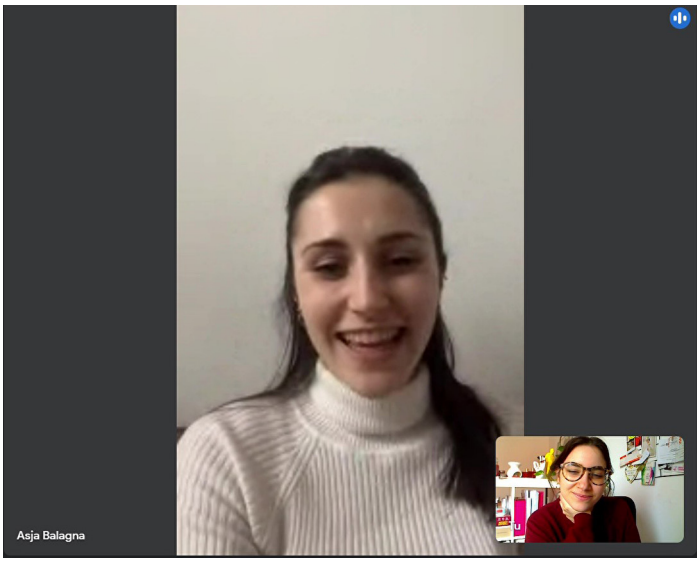


↑ 3.2.4.1. The four stages of UCD process. Edited from *Medium*

ANALYSIS

The first phase, called Analysis, aims at understanding the use context. Therefore, desk research has been conducted through papers, scientific articles, books and official documents to reconstruct the socio-cultural context in which contemporary craftsmanship developed, investigating its deepest roots and identifying prospects. During this phase, I also identify the target of interest: young makers with transversal skills and hybrid backgrounds at the forefront of the movement, giving vitality to what we can define as contemporary craftsmanship. The scouting phase starts

that allows me to reach heterogeneous scenarios of the same phenomenon, to identify common patterns and understand the underlying dynamics. I conducted a very first interview with Asja, owner of Filodivoce, an online hand embroidery business, who told me her story, explained her habits and gave me confidence in thinking that the theme I was addressing was something that was gaining ground in an international context but also vividly in the Italian one.



↑ 3.2.4..2. Screenshot from video-interview with Asja Balagna, founder of Filodivoce

DESIGN

The analysis follows the three basic steps to address the second phase: person, scenario and use case. (cfr. Le 2017) Respectively aim at constructing personas representing a particular group of people and guiding them in the prioritisation of the pre-planning work; then I drop them into a scenario by immersing myself in the typical sales process to understand needs and difficulties, and finally, I hypothesise the use of the artefact to achieve their goals.

I, therefore, structure a survey that would allow

me in an agile manner to specify the requirements of the target audience. Therefore, I identify the information I need to obtain a broader and more general picture of the phenomenon, with more precise enquiries about the most commonly used sales channels, the difficulties encountered and the current conception of craftsmanship by the protagonists of this movement. At the same time, I conduct a cross-screening phase between sales platforms and social media; I get in touch with about 200 makers to whom I submit the survey. I have maintained a dialogue with makers from the beginning of the project and continued until the last stage in a constant dialogue.

After identifying clusters, personas and their needs, market analysis has been conducted, highlighting the system's complexity, given the multiplicity of platforms and tools with different functionalities and purposes. In particular, I identify two types of fundamental tools for the target group: on the one hand, social media and, on the other hand, sales platforms, as well as a series of collateral tools that nourished the connection between the two ecosystems such as communication or payment tools. The main asset for social media was promotion and sales for platforms such as Vinted, Depop or Etsy.

EVALUATION

The first solution was to bring these two assets together under a single platform, which on the one hand, would be able to offer social media tools and formats to implement a communication and promotion strategy, and on the other hand, would include the functionalities of online sales platforms.

According to the UCD process, I submit the solution to some makers for validation. What emerged was that, apart from being a very complex and ambitious system, this solution required them to, first of all, take care of an additional platform, with all that this entailed, and secondly, to

fragment further the traffic they generated, further complicating an already very complex situation. Indeed, the main goal the makers identified was the need to stay active on social channels, not to lose the audience they had on the various platforms and not to disperse the traffic of new users they generated.

DESIGN

Therefore, a step back and re-evaluating the system, what became apparent was the need to simplify communication between platforms to facilitate the evaluation and purchasing process on the part of consumers and on the other hand to bring together similar information from different sources, such as enquiries or purchase requests, in one control panel.

After analysing the selling journeys of the personas in more detail, the fundamental tasks on which to structure the output were identified. The artefact aims to act as an optimiser of the connection between platforms and their information.

EVALUATION

At this juncture, we immersed ourselves in the different personas, hypothesising the functionalities needed in the different steps of the sales funnel and thus defining the fundamental features of the service through the study of competitors. Then I re-designed the information architecture, drawing wireframes until the consolidation of final layouts.

IMPLEMENTATION

The last phase was submitting an A/B test to a small group of makers among those contacted in the initial phase, which validated confident design choices and provided general feedback to identify future implementations.

Analysis and development

4.

4.1. Contemporary framework

The market analysis highlighted the relationship between the different stakeholders involved in promoting the sale of handicraft products online. Etsy is undoubtedly the pioneer in this sector; it is a marketplace that allows enthusiasts and hobbyists to create an account and put their products up for sale. Other online sales platforms have recently established themselves among Generation Z. In particular, tools such as Vinted or Depop devoted to selling mainly second-hand clothes and accessories have been particularly successful. The vocation for sustainability causes is one of the determining factors in using these platforms by young people. These platforms, however, follow politics that also allow the sale of handmade products. Therefore, thanks to a lower percentage of sales and a more similar target group than Etsy, many makers have started to use these services to create an online shop window for their small businesses. Indeed, the type of product one wants to sell is also decisive in the choice of platform: it is certainly more common to see small ceramic objects on Etsy than on Depop, where clothes, accessories and jewellery are popular.

Other stakeholders in this system are social media, which undoubtedly play a fundamental role in online promotion and communication. If you do not have a profile on social media today, you do not exist. One of the crucial aspects of selling artisanal products is to communicate that they are artisanal, to tell the story behind the product, to show how it is made to convey the time that goes into it, in short, communicating

its value through storytelling. Nevertheless, that is not all because what the makers are looking for is active involvement, one that is interested and passionate about the storytelling, to the point of deciding to support it - to buy a handmade product. To achieve this goal, according to the culture of making and creating proposed by Gauntlett (2013), it is necessary to replace words with images, and what better tool to do this than social media? While sales platforms provide a range of functionalities and services helpful to makers, they certainly do not replace product communication and promotion and do not allow for storytelling.

The complementarity of these two systems constitutes the problem since it requires dedicated and exclusive activity on the maker's part in content creation, product management, customer interaction and the actual production and fulfilment of orders. The problem, however, opens the door for the designer, who sees it as an opportunity.

The connection between platforms has been identified as crucial in the thesis. At this juncture, the actors in the market framework are analysed, starting with Linktree, the platform identified for the project.

4.1.1. Platform overview

Linktree was the first *link-in-bio* platform built to overcome social media's ability to put a single link in the bio. It functions as a reference aggregator to link different platforms, allowing users' online content to be more discoverable and easier to manage.

Started as a startup by brothers Alex and Anthony Zaccaria and Nick Humphreys in 2016, it is based in Melbourne, Australia and has offices in

Sydney and Los Angeles.

In 2019 they were thrilled to be part of CNBC's Upstart 100, a list of the brightest and most intriguing young startups that promise to become the great companies of tomorrow. In March 2020, Fast Company honoured them in its list of *Most Innovative Companies* of 2020, placing them fourth in the Social Media category. Previous fourth-place winners in the Social Media category include Glossier and Reddit. In 2021, it acquired Songlink, a platform offering a fully customisable, on-demand smart link solution for music, podcasts and more.

Today, Linktree is the top player in the market, with over 20 million users and more than one billion unique visitors per month.

✻ WHAT DOES LINK-IN-BIO MEANS?

A *link in bio* on social media refers to a call to action designed to drive traffic from the Instagram profile to other target pages or socials. Generally used in the caption of a post, this is because most social media currently do not allow to include a link in their posts. This limitation was handled by updating the link in the profile bio. Social media, such as Instagram, Facebook and TikTok, allow users to add a bio to present their profile in a few lines and a single link. What used to happen before the emergence of reference aggregators, such as Linktree, was the constant updating of the link to refer to different needs of the user: it could be the link to the profile of another social media or the purchase of one's book, or the crowdfunding page for a cause he or she espouses...

These reference landing page services, on the other hand, allow us to bring together under a single link all the references that we are interested in sharing in that social network or online platform. The result can be similar to a business

card, a list of useful links or a list of resources to consult, depending on the user's interest. Moreover, Linktree allows to build an online ecosystem that is not subordinate to social media rules, such as ephemerality: it allows information to remain in time.

4.1.2. Mission and values

Linktree was born from the co-founders' need to respond to a daily problem in Bolster, their music and entertainment digital business: updating their Instagram profile link to promote their artists and musicians.

The idea was developed overnight, and the initial intention was to keep it as an exclusive tool for their customers, but they soon realised that the problem was more common than they thought. Moreover, at that same time, Instagram had moved from offering a chronological feed to sorting the feed through an algorithm: this made the fruition of the content shared on the social deferred to their publication often by a few days, making it difficult for users to access that link-in-bio referred to in the post because by that time it had already changed.

So Linktree, born to satisfy a practical problem of a company, became a much more established enterprise but did not lose sight of its founding mission: to develop products and integrations that evolve with creators and make processes more manageable. The goal is to provide creators and users with the tools to monetise their passions, turning the actual gig economy into a passion economy.

For future developments, Linktree said it intends to invest in social commerce (Linktr.ee, 2021), making it even easier and quicker to purchase products via social media. The social com-

merce phenomenon is set to grow exponentially to USD 80 billion in the United States alone.

4.1.3. Insights

Linktree is among the top 300 most popular website destinations globally, with 1.2 billion unique visitors per month. The platform counts over 24 million global users. In 2021 alone, Linktree enabled over 1 million artists to generate 90 million visits to streaming providers: twice as many artists and three times as many clicks as the previous year.

The company has grown with its success: from a dozen employees to two hundred in a couple of years.

4.1.4. Audience

Linktree has an average of 10,000 new registrations per day and over 20 million users (Linktr.ee), including creators, brands such as Red Bull and HBO, artists such as Selena Gomez and Alicia Keys, and digital platforms such as TikTok and Shopify. The heterogeneity of the audience proves Linktree's adaptability to different industries and needs. Among the different industries the platform embraces, the one that monetises the most earns from selling its physical products (cfr. Linktr.ee 2022), confirming the company's predictions and intentions to invest in social commerce.

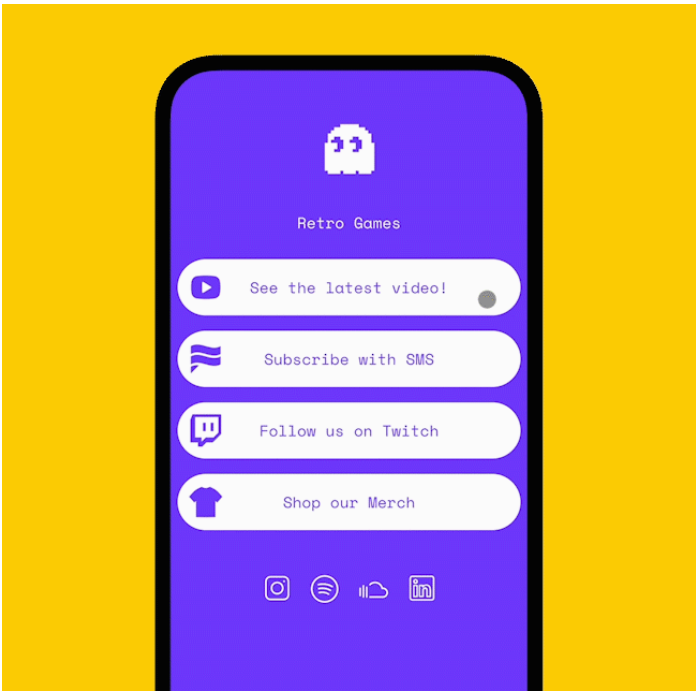
According to data reported by the company in the Creator Report, Linktree has identified around 200 million creators in the global market as "individuals who use their influence, creativity, or skills to aggregate and monetise their

audience" (*ibidem*). Of these 200 million, 140 are semi-pro, those with an audience of between 1k-10k followers, a range that generally includes niche creators such as makers and small businesses (cfr. *ibidem*). Investing in niche content creation is much more successful, relatively speaking, than those who target a wider audience. More and more creators realise the value of connecting with an engaged audience united by unique interests: this is the area that seems most promising and successful.

Niche creators are the ones who populate this platform the most, with 66% of Linktree users. As far as demographics are concerned, they see 18-24 year-olds and 24-35 year-olds as the largest age group, with almost 29% and 34%, respectively. (cfr SimilarWeb.com n.d.)

From the report, 7% of niche creators earn more than USD 100,000 per year versus 5% of non-niche creators, and 37% of niche creators have had a brand partnership - versus 26% of non-niche creators. (cfr. Lintree 2022)

4.1.5.
General features



↑ 4.1.5.1. Example of a reference page made with Linktree

Main target: creators, influencers, commerce enterprises, company
Date release: 2016
Head quarters: Sidney, Australia
Active users: + 23 billion
Special features: first link-inbio platform
Pricing: *freemium* (upgrade to unlock features)
Touchpoints: browser, mobile app

As the internet became fragmented, Linktree's functionality grew to serve those better using it and streamline the content-sharing process. Now Linktree has developed its functionalities as the integration with some commerce platforms or more detailed analytics to address not just celebrities or big brands but also business owners,

non-profits and charities, artists and content creators.

Linktree divides its features into three main sections depending on the objective of the creator:

❶ — Share your content

❷ — Make and collect money

❸ — Grow your following

The first section allows a header to separate the different references by giving them a title. It also includes integrations that allow users to enjoy content from other channels, such as:

— social media: *TikTok, Twitch, Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, YouTube, Clubhouse*

— owned contents: pdf documents, videos, NFT (Non-Fungible Token, digital asset that links ownership to unique physical or digital items)

— streaming music and podcasts

— communication tools for surveys and forms: *Typeform*

The second section aims to provide tools and integrations for selling products, services or collecting tips as:

— integrations with commerce services: *Shopify, Spring*

— online payment services: *PayPal, Square*

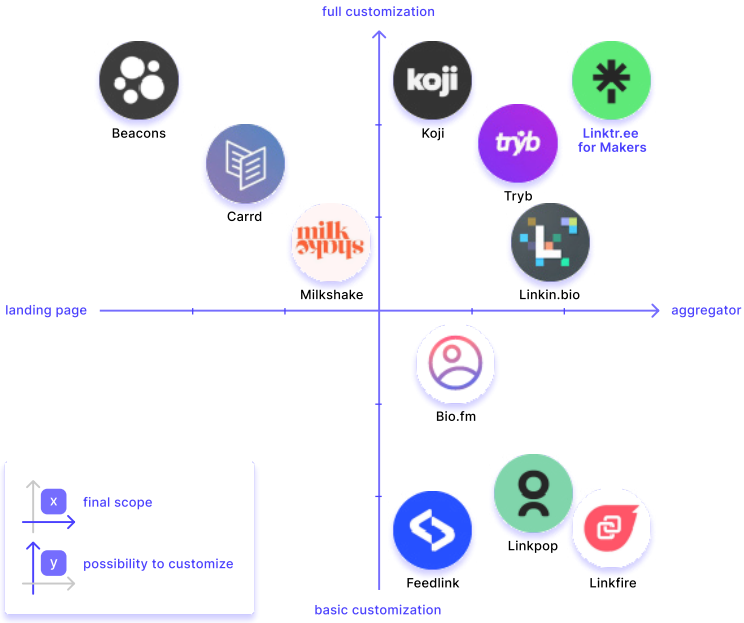
— tools and integrations for requesting payments or raising funds: *Requests, Tip Jar, GoFundMe*

The last section, on the other hand, aims to grow, manage and connect with its audience. Here we find integrations with online forums such as Reddit and the possibility of collecting contacts from users.

In addition to the platform's various integrations, there is the possibility of customising the page design and displaying analytics over time

according to general visits and the performance of individual links.

4.1.6. Competitors



↑ 4.1.6.1. Benchmark representing platform and competitors' positioning in market framework

Ten link-in-bio platforms were analyzed, considering some of the most popular ones with the highest number of uses and niche ones that cater to the needs of a narrower target group.

Through benchmarking, they were compared on two main axes [Fig 4.1.6.1]:

x — Final scope. What differentiates these platforms is often the intended purpose. In particular, some are configured as aggregators of references to digital destinations such as social media, generic URLs, and proprietary content;

others, instead, have as their mission the creation of a landing page, a website in which not only to collect references to other channels but to make the content or additional information directly accessible. The former point towards the ***aggregator*** pole; the latter refer to the ***landing page*** pole.

ꟻ — Possibility to customize. Since customization is considered one of the fundamental values for the target group because it allows them to communicate their identity and adapt the tool to their needs, two poles were defined, starting with ***basic customization*** and ending with ***full customization***. They are considered as discriminating elements, the possibility of modifying the style of texts, colours and buttons, the choices the platform made available and the possibility of intervening on the page's structure.

What emerges from the graph is that the platforms that propose themselves as website builders are indeed those that grant the user more freedom in customization. These were considered indirect competitors, as they meet a different need from the target group, which is not interested in having a website.

Regarding the two right-hand quadrants, we distinguish two groups, three in the lower quadrant considered secondary direct competitors and three in the upper quadrant considered primary direct competitors. All the competitors have been analyzed according to usability principles. (cfr. ¶ 3.4.2.)

4.2.
Target analysis and personas

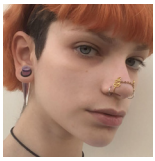
4.2.1.
Process and difficulties

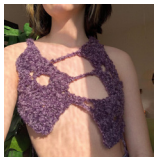
To define the target audience, a cluster of users was initially identified, and then the personas and, thus, the needs of the target audience were defined.

The characteristics circumscribing the target a priori identified the age group - belonging to Generation Z - and the activity - production and sale of handicrafts online. Subsequently, common patterns were identified from quantitative research through a desk research of the reports of major online craft selling platforms, to which direct comparison with makers significantly contributed. Subsequently, I conducted a digital survey that would allow me to empathize with the identified target audience and understand the most common needs and difficulties that contemporary makers struggle with daily.

The initial idea was to combine the survey with online interviews to empathize even more with the target audience and map makers' sales habits more accurately. When it came time to develop the interview questions, however, I realized that the data I would collect were very similar to those requested in the survey. Therefore, I decided to include several open-ended questions in the survey to allow people to express their thoughts and elaborate on otherwise limited responses.

↗ 4.2.1.1. Captures from Instragram posts of some makers reached for the research

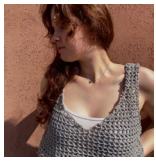


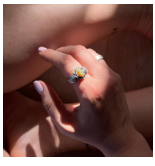
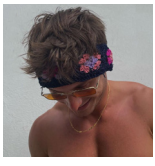


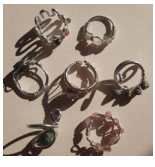
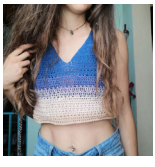
MEET
THE
MAKER

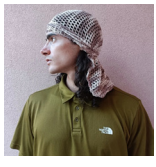
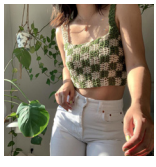
IT'S
JUST A
CRAFT UNTIL
A MAN SAYS
IT'S ART

Smoking



Ongoing dialogue with the makers manually contributed to the different stages of the project and allowed for the definition of six user personas, which will be presented in depth in the next section. (crf. ¶ 4.2.3.)

The significant difficulty was reaching and exposing the survey to the identified cluster of users. For this reason, I continued the scouting work to identify compatible individuals through sales platforms such as *Depop, Vinted* and *Etsy* and social channels such as *Instagram* and *TikTok* by personally contacting the maker. This allowed me to interact with many makers directly and to have a dialogue that was not just limited to a request for survey compilation but often resulted in an ongoing conversation over time and a significantly higher level of empathy.

The survey was then submitted to those who met the following requirements:

— aged between 16 and 25 years;

— who were producing and selling craft items

— who were using sales platforms, such as *Etsy, Vinted* or *Depop,* social media or even their own website for sales;

— who had a digital identity: an active social media profile promoting their business.

4.2.2. Data collection

The survey aimed to:

— define targets attributes to identify common patterns

— identify clusters

— investigate platforms and tools through pointed questions on the strengths and limitations of the leading platforms used to identify output characteristics

— verify the needs I had hypothesised during the preliminary research phase.

The survey [cfr. ¶ 9.3. Appendix A] consists of a total of 26 questions, 12 of which are open-ended, and consists of four sections:

❶ — About you;
❷ — About your activity;
❸ — About handicrafts;
❹ — About your digital identity.

The first section aims to define the demographics of the maker: name, age, location and field of study.

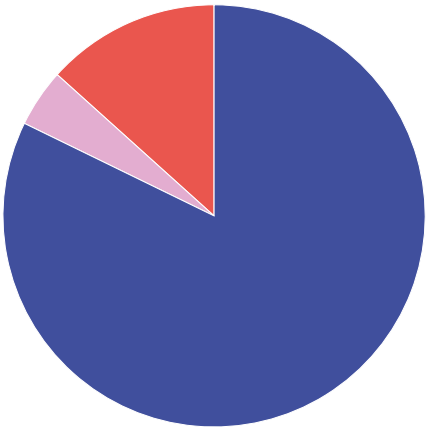
On the other hand, the second section shifts the focus to the small business, going on to investigate its tools and habits, starting from defining the sector it fits into and its evolution: when and how it was born, reasons why; to investigating its future perspective. This section asks the makers to select the most efficient platform regarding sales and the most significant limitations of the platforms that emerged from the preliminary desk research carried out as the most in vogue. In addition, I asked the makers to explain the promotional activities they put in place to make their small business known and those they considered most effective.

The third section aimed to outline the context and explore the sentiment of these makers for craftsmanship, starting with a question that I find particularly interesting: that of defining themselves and their business. The questions in this section aimed to empathise with the maker, trying to understand the significant difficulties they face in selling their products online and their perception of their buyers.

Finally, the last section aimed to identify and verify the platform's functionalities, starting from the strengths and limitations identified by the makers in using social platforms.

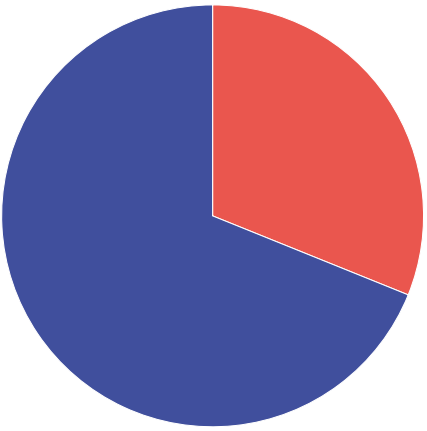
The following are some insights from the survey answers collected From the analyzed sample of 45 makers. The data, combinated with reports and studies analyzed during initial desk research, has been developed to define user personas.

Where are you based?



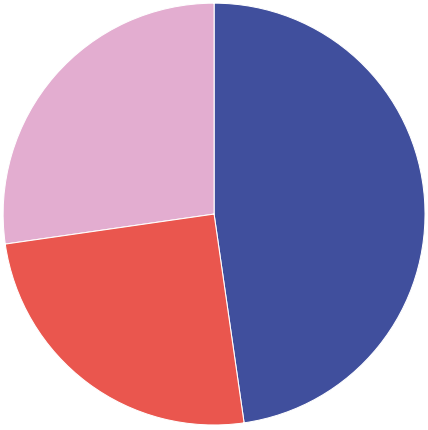
- Italy — 82%
- Extra EU — 13%
- EU — 4%

When you started your activity?



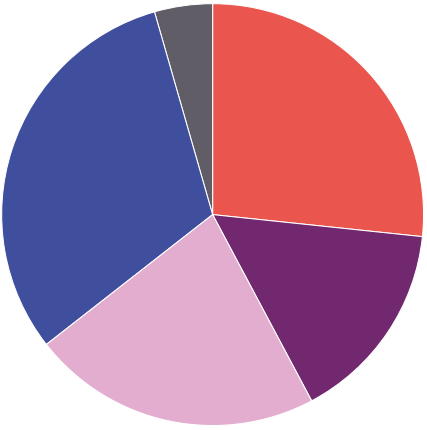
- After 2020 — 69%
- Before 2020 — 31%

In your future you see your activity as...



- Career — 48%
- Passion — 27%
- Side-hustle — 25%

How would define yourself?

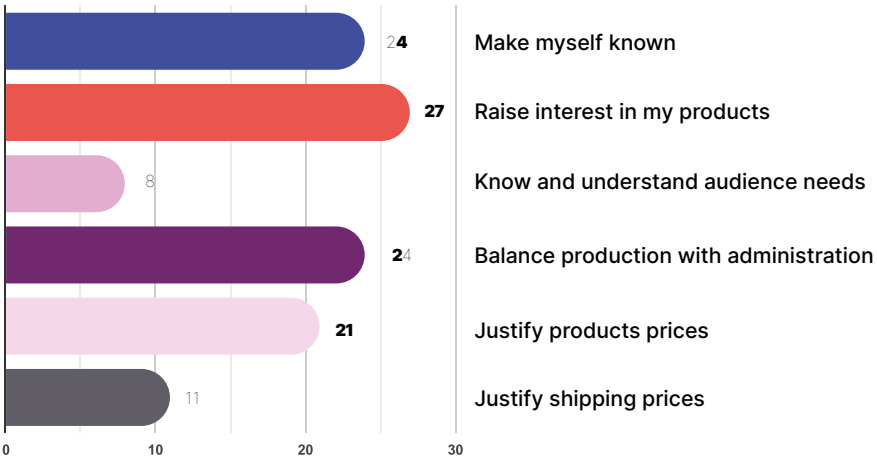


- Artist — 31%
- Artisan — 27%
- Maker — 22%
- Designer — 16%
- DIYer — 4%

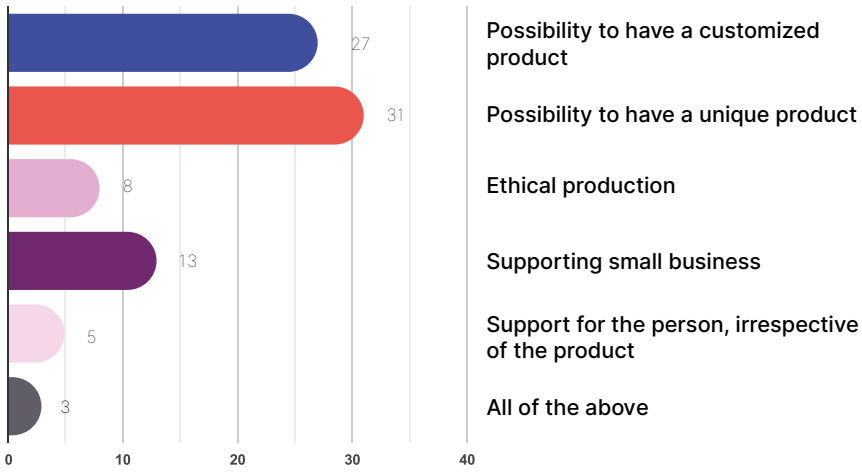
↑ 4.2.2.1. Pie charts from data collected with survey

↗ 4.2.2.2. Bar charts from data collected with survey

What are the difficulties you most often face in selling handmade products?



What do you think motivates your buyers most to buy your products?



4.2.3.
User personas

The structure and questions of the survey allowed me to obtain interesting qualitative data that led to the definition of six personas: Emily, Jake, Alex, Alice, Giulia and Kristall. Each of personas has been characterized by demographics information, personality through an empathy map, digital channels used, main tasks and selling flow among platforms and tools. In this regard, it should be considered that the number of platforms used was minimized by considering only the platforms most used by the makers; this was done to simplify the process of analysis and task identification and to diversify the personas more among themselves to obtain a more heterogeneous and in-depth picture that was able to identify the deeper needs of the target audience.

Emily
maker

career

General info

demographics female, 25 yo
status lives with her partner
location London, UK

I love to make new collections and tell a story with each collection. I dream to set a ceramic workshop in my apartment one day. It's an investment more than a hobby.

Background

education master degree
study field fine arts
activity ceramic homeware

Touchpoints & channels

Personality

kind
introverted
resolute

Tasks

- manage orders and clients
- guarantee timings and deadlines
- collect and show reviews

Motivation

Visibility & performance

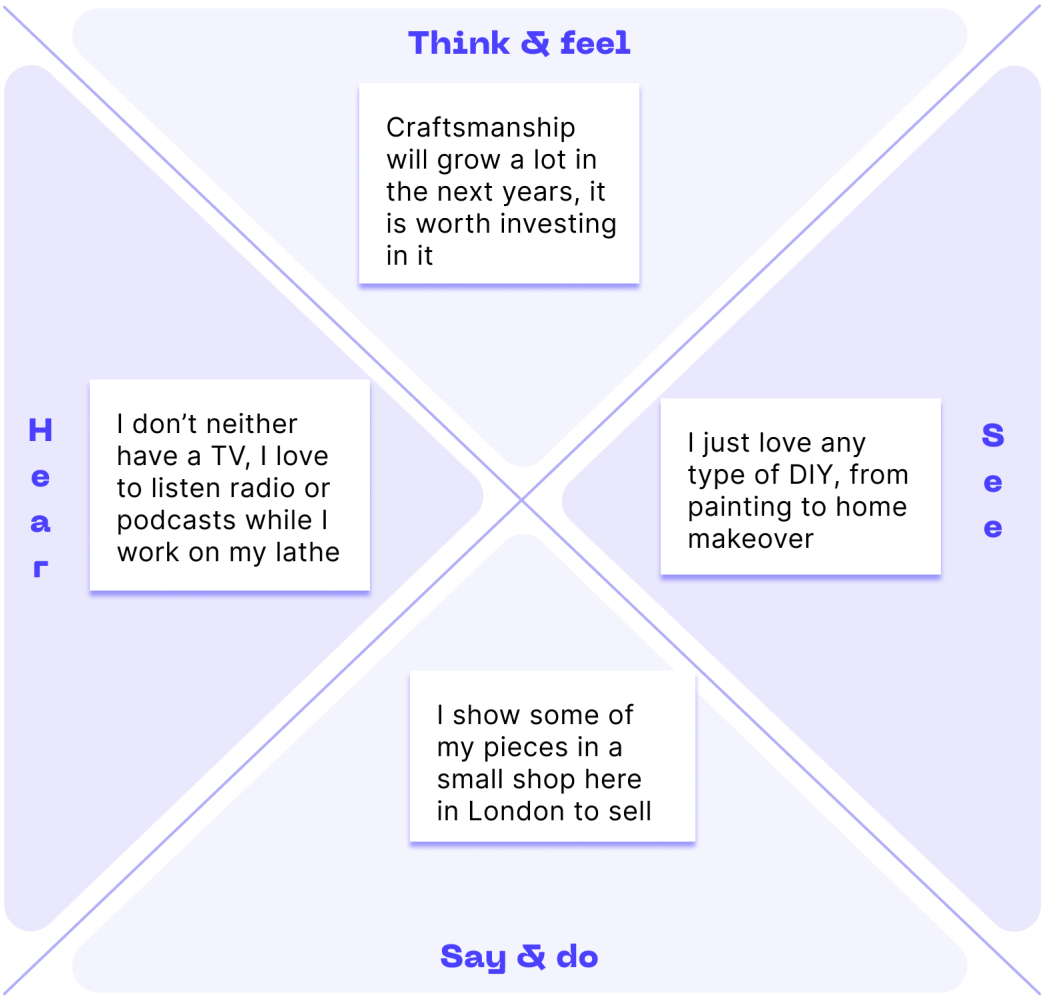
Internal organization & management

Logistics & shipping

Network & community

Selling flow

↑ 4.2.3.1. First user personas analysis
↗ 4.2.3.2. First personas empathy map



Pains

The growth path of my small business is still long... there're so many tools to consider!

Gains

I dream of having a recognizable brand resold perhaps in major physical stores

Jake
designer

career

General info

demographics male, 25 yo
status lives alone
location Bruxelles, Belgium

I like to think that my small business can inspire young people to pursue their passions. everything has already been invented, which is why I upcycling: the key to success is how you make up the elements you already have.

Background

education master degree
study field fashion design
activity upcycled clothes

Touchpoints & channels

Personality

humorous
stylish
methodical

Tasks

- manage orders
- get support in contents creation
- manage interaction with clients

Motivation

Visibility & performance

Internal organization & management

Logistics & shipping

Network & community

Selling flow

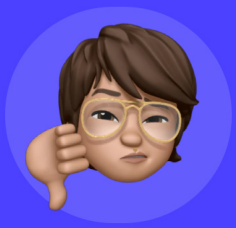
↑ 4.2.3.3. Second user personas analysis
↗ 4.2.3.4. Second personas empathy map

Pains

I do not fell to have the tools I need to give structure to my business...

Gains

I want to promote and create a new concept of fashion, embracing sustainability too



Alex
artist

self-expression

General info

demographics non-binary, 22 yo
status lives off-campus
location Bologna, Italy

I think that DIY and selling handmade products is a great anti-capitalistic way of earning some money.

Background

education bachelor degree
study field phylosophy
activity recycled/upcycled jewels

Touchpoints & channels

Personality

charming
self-centered
determined

Tasks

- manage request and interactions
- plan products launch
- monitor contents performance

Motivation

Visibility & performance

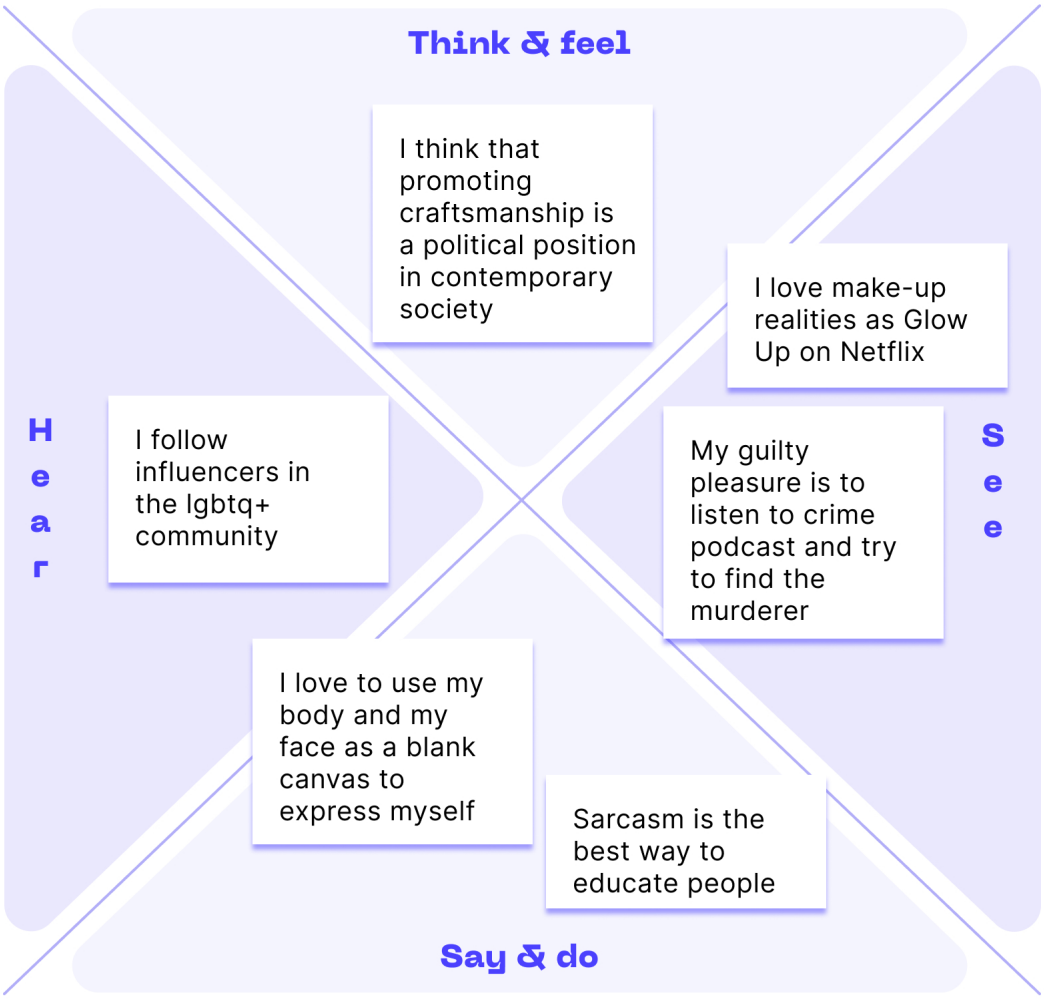
Internal organization & management

Logistics & shipping

Network & community

Selling flow

↑ 4.2.3.5. Third user personas analysis
↗ 4.2.3.6. Third personas empathy map



Pains

I think that people cannot judge my products without judging me

Gains

I'd love to have a community that share my own values

Alice
artist

self-expression

General info

demographics female, 16 yo
status lives with parents
location Treviso, Italy

Through illustration I create new worlds.
I like to have people tell me stories and fantasize about them.

Background

education high school
study field foreign languages
activity illustration and printing

Touchpoints & channels

Personality

cheerful
chatty
imaginative

Tasks

- get support in contents creation
- manage orders and clients
- organize production and shipping

Motivation

Visibility & performance

Internal organization & management

Logistics & shipping

Network & community

Selling flow

↑ 4.2.3.7. Fourth user personas analysis
↗ 4.2.3.8. Fourth personas empathy map

Pains

I don't want the success I have experienced with that this business conditions me too much in choices about the future

Gains

I would like to become independent as soon as possible

Giulia
designer

side-hustle

General info

demographics female, 19 yo
status lives with parents
location Milan, Italy

I started selling my second hand and vintage clothes as a way to earn a little bit of money and then incorporate my making/crafting skills to create some handmade pieces.

Background

education bachelor degree
study field design
activity crochet accessories

Touchpoints & channels

Personality

outgoing
imaginative
hyperactive

Tasks

- get support in contents creation and performance
- manage orders and clients
- collect reviews

Motivation

Visibility & performance

Internal organization & management

Logistics & shipping

Network & community

Selling flow

↑ 4.2.3.9. Fifth user personas analysis
↗ 4.2.3.10. Fifth personas empathy map

Pains

I have so many passions and interests, it seems reductive to have to choose

Gains

I am convinced that in my own small way I can make a difference

Kristall
maker

side-hustle

General info

demographics female, 15 yo
status lives with parents
location Milan, Italy

I haven't found my way yet, but I don't want to give up, and the passion my grandmother passed on to me I hope will give me the tools (and money) to figure out what I want to do.

Background

education professional institute
study field pastry
activity embroidery accessories

Touchpoints & channels

Personality

thoughtful
cooperative
kind

Tasks

- optimize performance
- manage current and future orders
- monitor order and customers history

Motivation

Visibility & performance

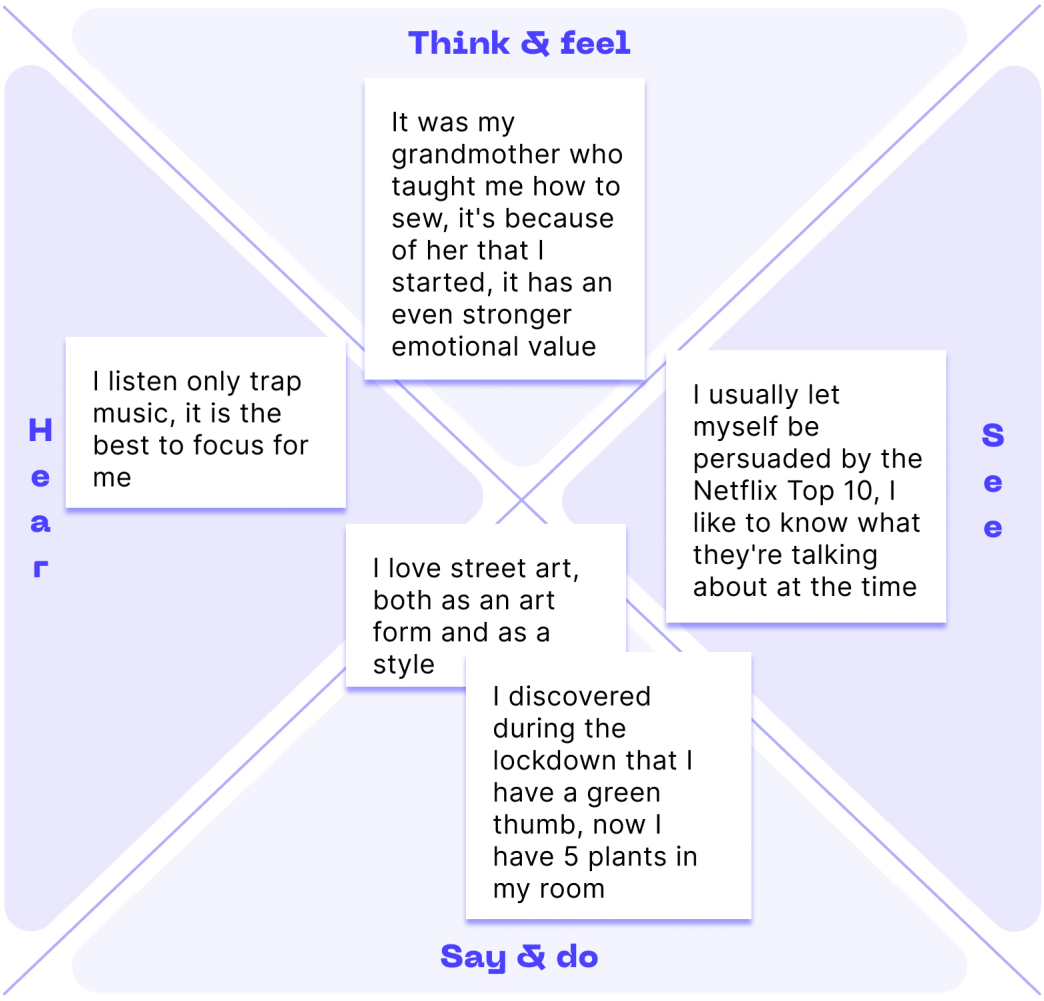
Internal organization & management

Logistics & shipping

Network & community

Selling flow

↑ 4.2.3.11. Sixth user personas analysis
↗ 4.2.3.12. Sixth personas empathy map



Pains

I don't know what direction of study to take that will excite me and at the same time keep me

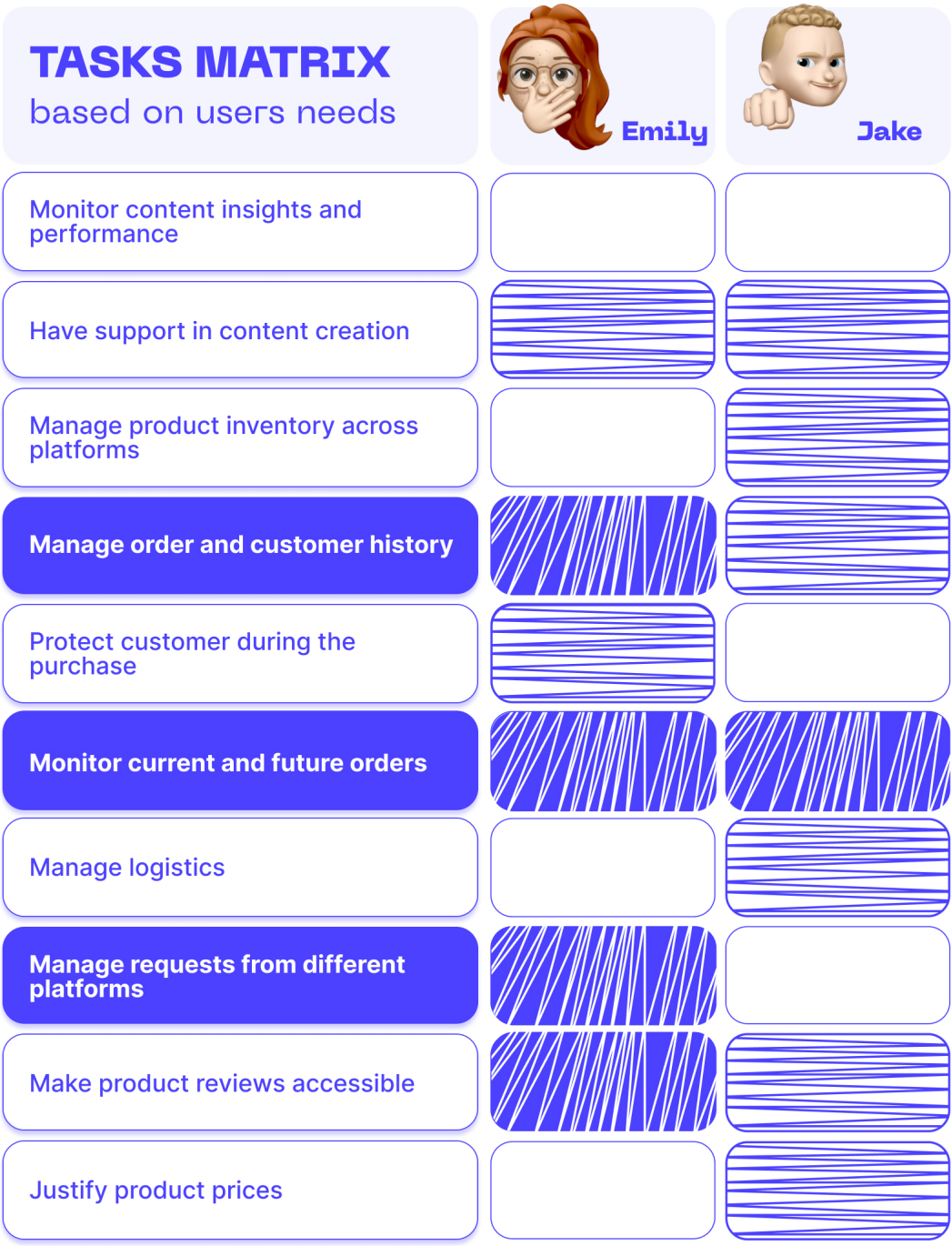
Gains

I want to use this passion to earn money so I can continue my studies

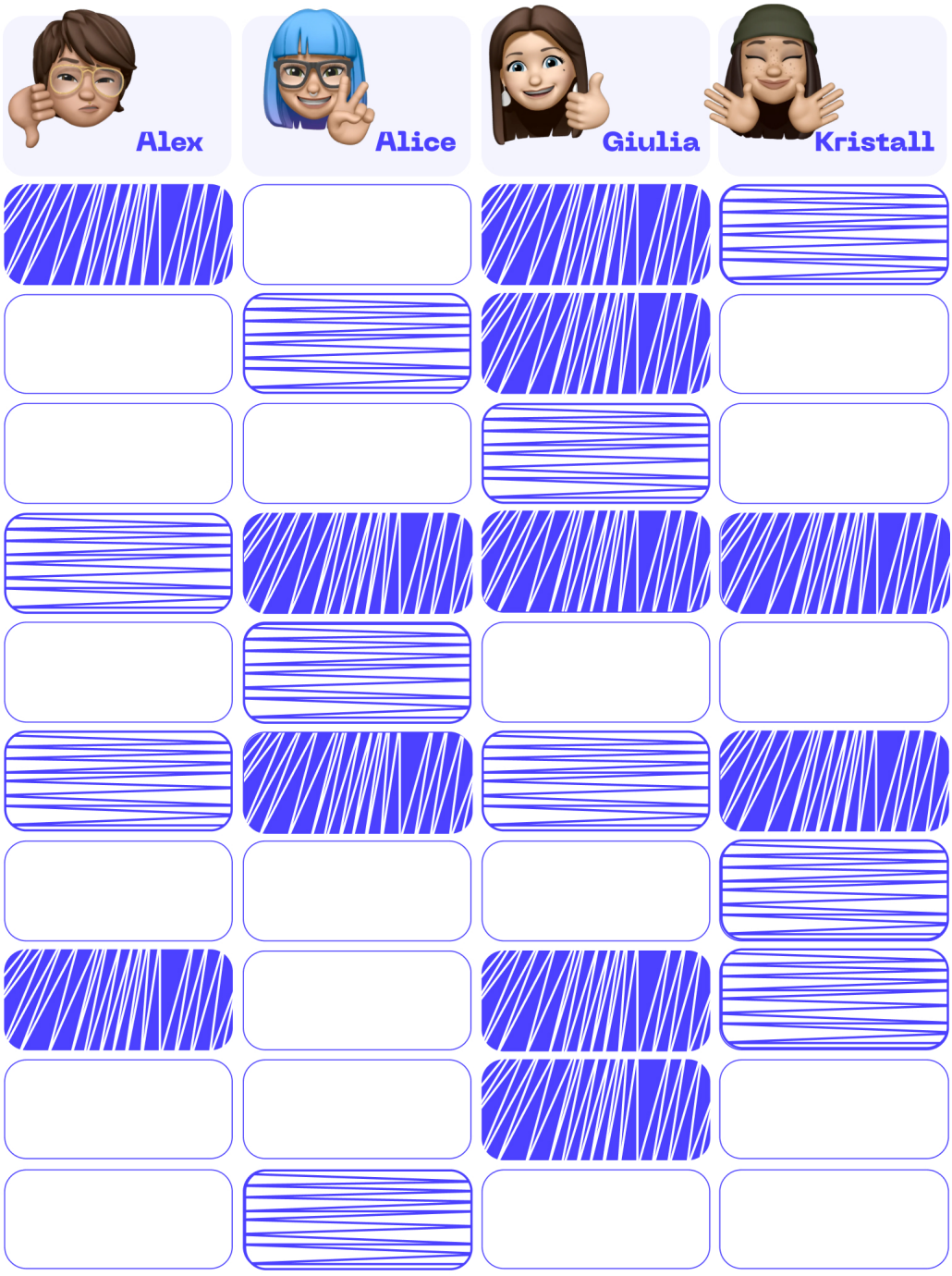
4.2.4. Personas analysis and tasks–matrix

From the personas charts and empathy maps, a list of tasks has been identified from which it is necessary to identify the key ones to be considered for the next phase of design. These are as follows:

— Monitor content insights and performance;
— Have support in content creation;
— Manage product inventory across platforms;
— Manage order and customer history;
— Protect customer during the purchase;
— Monitor current and future orders;
— Manage logistics;
— Manage requests from different platforms;
— Make product reviews accessible;
— Justify product prices.



↗ 4.2.4.1. Tasks matrix to identify main tasks among personas


Alex
Alice
Giulia
Kristall
crucial task
minor task

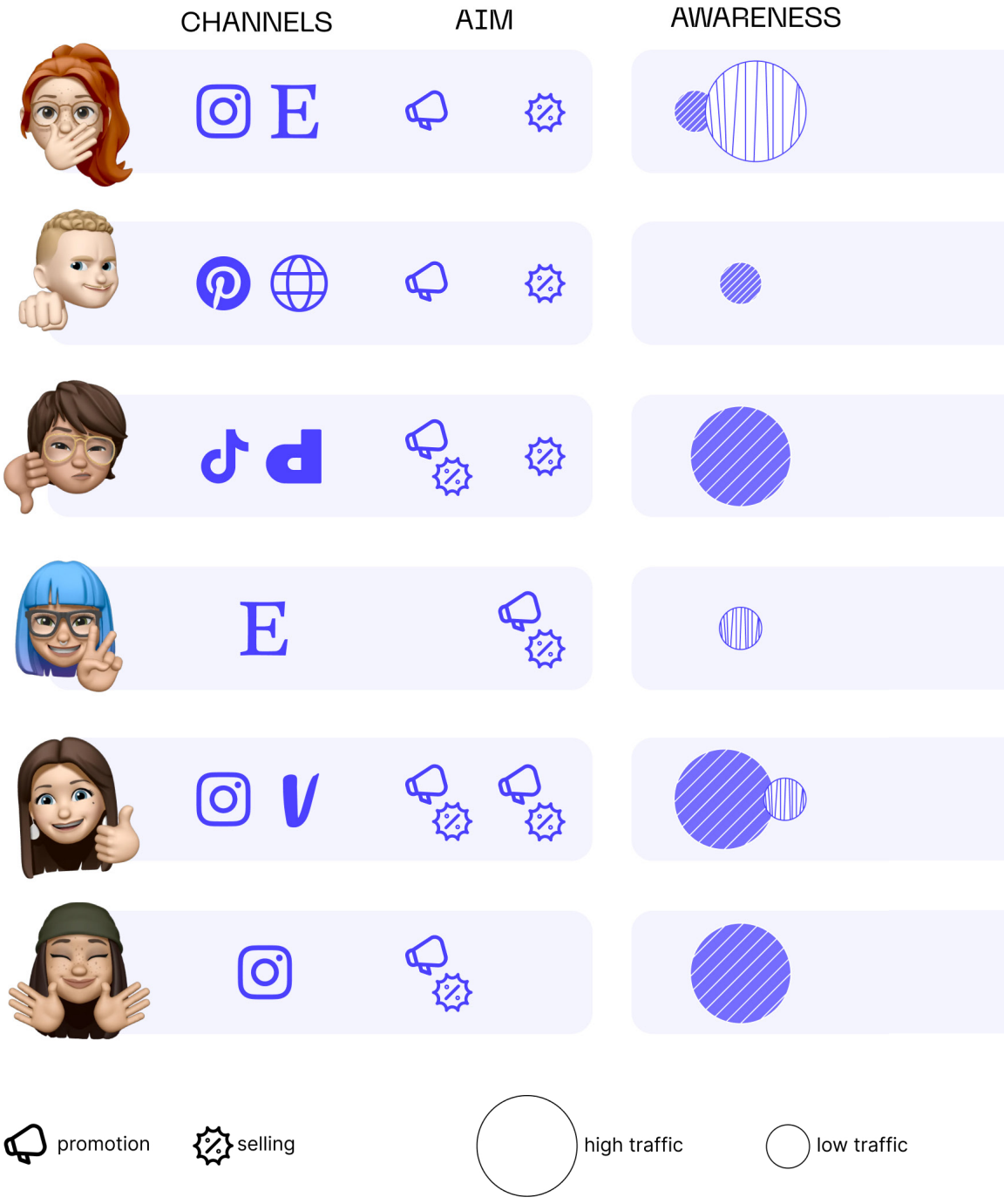
Through the tasks matrix, the main objectives of the platform were identified. Set as the primary goal to facilitate the connection between platforms, three key tasks for personas were identified:

❶ — Manage order and customer history;
❷ — Monitor current and future orders;
❸ — Manage requests from different platforms.

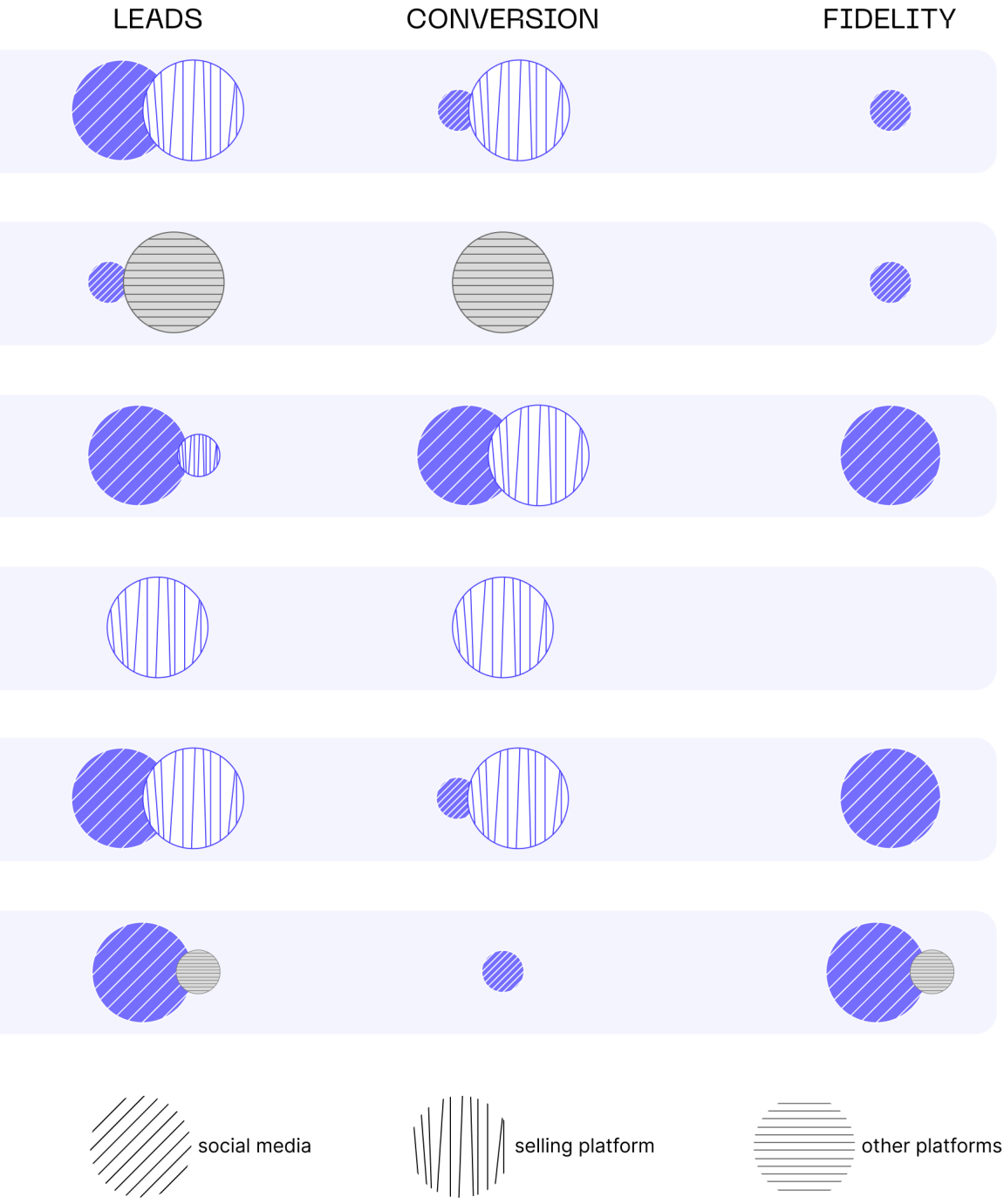
Next, for each of the six personas, the selling flow was defined in more depth during the different stages of the funnel to determine which moments required the maker to be more engaged and to establish a primary target audience.

MATRIX PLOT

to analyze selling flows



↗ 4.2.4.2. Matrix plot of selling journey of six personas


LEADS
CONVERSION
FIDELITY
social media
selling platform
other platforms

This matrix plot [Fig. 4.2.4.2.] highlighted the channels and platforms brought into play by the different personas during the sales funnel, differentiated into the four main stages: Awareness, Leads, Conversion and Fidelity.

It is evident that the first and last phases, those of Awareness and Fidelity, are dominated by social media. This is not surprising because it is precisely on these platforms that the storytelling necessary for the promotion of a product is built and where the most significant number of interactions with one's audience takes place and, therefore, where one has an interest in maintaining a communication that can engage the customer enough to build loyalty. The decision is made in the middle stages of sales, and the customer's purchase is actually made.

In the Leads phase, where the customer interacts and becomes interested in the product, we see a relatively even alternation of the two categories of platforms. This is the phase that generally requires the most effort from the maker because it is the time when it is necessary to divert the traffic generated by the promotion to the marketplace in order to conclude the sale. Since these are handcrafted and often customized products, the negotiation and agreement phase between the customer and the maker often occurs on social and sales platforms.

On the latter, generally, the actual conversion of the customer takes place. The represented diagram highlights three personas that consistently see the alternation of social media and selling platforms throughout the sales process, and for which the connection between platforms and tools is critical. Therefore, the primary target audience was identified as the three personas Emily, Alex, and Julia. On the other hand, the secondary target consists of Jake, Alice, and Kristall.

4.2.5. Target definition

At this point, the personas of the primary target audience were more thoroughly analyzed to go on to identify crucial moments in the sales path, effort on the part of the maker, and key actions across platforms that confirmed and validated the hypothesis advanced through the tasks matrix.

Emily manages her product collection mainly on Etsy and uses social media, particularly Instagram, to show her community behind the scenes of ceramics production. She offers a wide range of customizable products, so on Instagram, she also shows the commissioned works she has done. For this reason, many customers ask her to customize a product on Instagram. The main task she wants to achieve is to manage orders and customers and guarantee timings and deadlines efficiently. The most crucial phases are for Emily leads and conversion because she has to interact with different sources and send traffic from social media to the selling platform.

Giulia uses Instagram instead also to promote her small business, with paid advertisement. Her community is strong on social media, but it is difficult for her to convert interested people into potential buyers. Most requests come from Instagram, but it is inefficient as a selling platform. For this reason, she is also trying to build a strong page on Vinted.

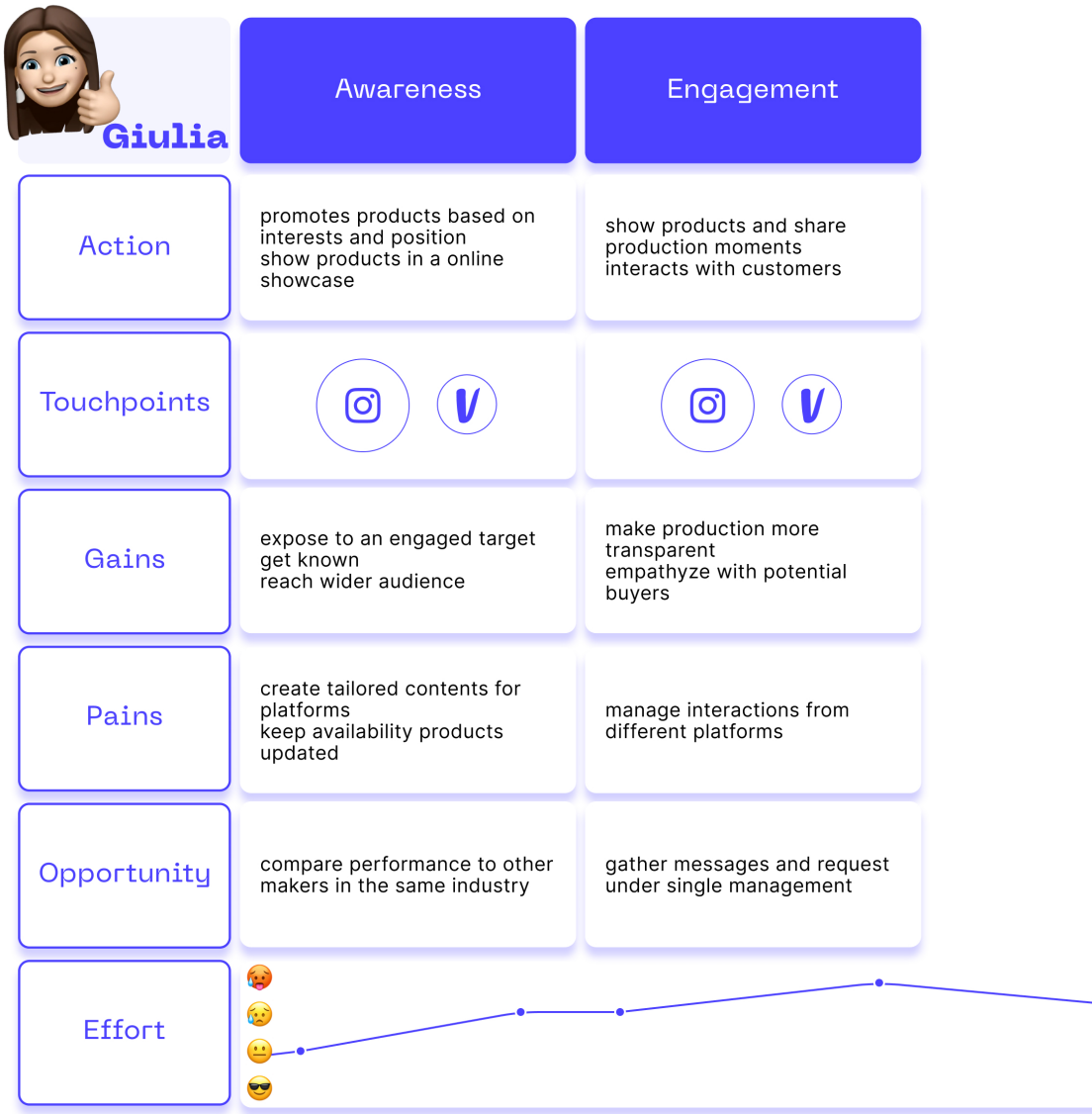
Alex reaches a broad audience on TikTok, talking about current events and promoting a sustainable lifestyle; in this way, they built a strong community that shares their values. Their products are very successful, but the studies do not allow them to be consistent in production. For this reason, the main task they want to achieve is to ease task management and schedule.

Emily

	Awareness	Engagement
Action	show products on her Etsy show on social media examples of custom products	interacts with who show interest
Touchpoints		
Gains	show products type she makes, gain visibility in search engine and give inspiration for customization	provide as much information as possible
Pains	manage contents on both platforms, produce tailored contents	do not miss any request, reply quickly
Opportunity	create a database to easily share contents on different platforms	gather updates from platforms and organize them by type
Effort		

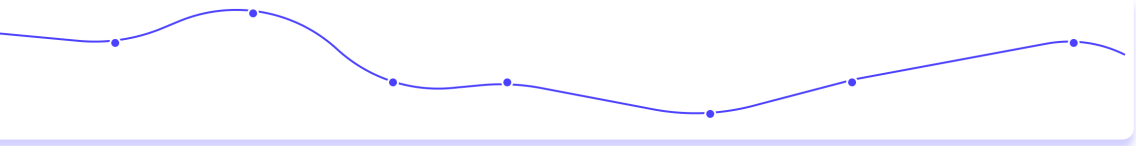
↗ 4.2.5.1. User journey representing selling journey of Emily

Leads	Conversion	Fidelity
negotiates price and availability based on customer requests	prefers to redirect costumers to selling platform to complete the purchase	ask her customers to review products and business in general
make unique, tailored and custom products	guarantee traced payments to safeguard the customers	convey confidence to new customers
manage bargaining, guarantee products availability and production timings	redirects who come from Instagram to Etsy	reviews are often private and dislocated
suggest a price range based on various criteria (related products, country, prices)	ease link between platforms	make reviews visibile to new customers



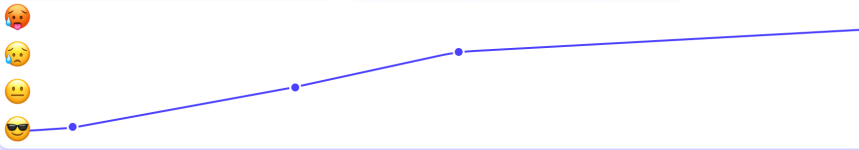
↗ 4.2.5.2. User journey representing selling journey of Giulia

Leads	Conversion	Fidelity
promotes set to save on shipping chat with clients for customization and prices	close purchase on selling platform accepts different payment methods	gather and show user generated contents
offer a tailored product meet target needs sell products	meet the needs of as many people as possible	gather community retain customers
guarantee availability plan production timings	manage orders confim and protect customers	gather UGC in different ways and formats
support in timings control according to different stages of production	monitor orders history and information for shipping	mark UGC with labels and gather them together



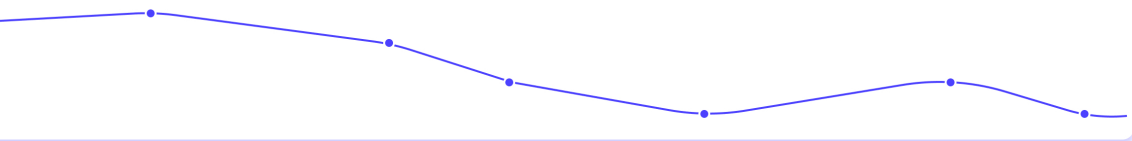
Alex

	Awareness	Engagement
Action	create divulgation contents show finished products	organize contents by theme
Touchpoints		
Gains	spread handmade products' value reach people who have shared interests and values	make available a wide range of contents, debate various topics
Pains	use the right hashtags and captions to reach the interested target	redirect users from social media to selling platform mantain consistency in communication
Opportunity	provide guidelines to optimize contents with trends elements	ease connection between platforms
Effort		



↗ 4.2.5.3. User journey representing selling journey of Alex

Leads	Conversion	Fidelity
interacts with engaged people show customized products as inspo	promotes one-of-a-kind pieces and seasonal collections	create contents from community's comments
build a community meet target needs	sell products, instil fomo offer always new products	engage, promote interaction
manage different type of interactions from both platforms	manage orders update products availability	
mark requests based on aim/ type	make user able to check product availability/timings	



4.3.
Usability analysis

4.3.1.
Usability criteria

Eight criteria were identified to analyze and compare the competitors' usability, based on the fundamentals of ergonomics, the primary needs of the target audience, highlighted in the previous chapter, and the nature of the platforms analyzed. These criteria include customizability, easiness to set, information hierarchy, visual appeal, error allowance, fluency, integrability and information clarity.

CUSTOMIZABILITY

It analyzes the freedom granted by the platform in customizing its page and the ease with which it has access to this functionality. The evaluation is based on the fields the user can act on, such as themes, colours and fonts, and the variety of choices available.

EASINESS TO SET

It analyzes the user's first approach to the platform when the immediate need is to connect and set the necessary information. What is evaluated here is the optimization of the process, as determined by the number of clicks, steps, and login steps required from the first access of the platform to the general setting of information.

INFORMATION HIERARCHY

It analyzes how complex the information architecture of the platform is. It is reflected in the organization of information within the primary

TARGET

CUSTOMIZABILITY

How much it is possible and easy to customize the page, considering appearance and functionalities.
Evaluation based on customizable fields and available choices.

EASINESS TO SET

How long it takes and the level of ease to go through the whole process of setting.
Evaluation based on clicks and login steps.

ERGONOMICS

INFORMATION HIERARCHY

How much complex is the information architecture, how infos is organized and arranged in relation to main target's tasks.
Evaluation based on general structure, keywords and icons use and position.

VISUAL APPEAL

How much is appealing general aestetics.
Evaluation based on colour combination, shapes, spacing and fonts.

ERROR ALLOWANCE

How much is ease for the user to undo or recover to a mistake.
Evaluation based on possibilities and easiness to go back, reload a page or recover to an action.

FLUENCY

How much is easy for the user to navigate through sections to achieve a task.
Evaluation based on number of needed steps and immediacy of flow through sections.

PLATFORMS

INTEGRABILITY

How much is free the user to integrate different contents and reference.
Evaluation based on amount and heterogeneity of available integrations.

INFORMATION CLARITY

How much are clear and efficient keywords and visual contents to users.
Evaluation based on shown infos and keywords and graphs' immediacy in fruition.

↑ 4.3.1.1. Criteria considered for usability analysis based respectively on target, ergonomics and platforms

interfaces, the location of elements, and the communication code adopted, such as keywords and icons.

VISUAL APPEAL

It analyzes how appealing the overall aesthetic of the platform is. To assess aesthetic appeal as objectively as possible, it evaluates how it impacts the platform's usability. Therefore, it is not a score on liking, which would be a personal judgment, but on the color scheme chosen and how shapes, spacing, and fonts affect the fruition of information positively or negatively.

ERROR ALLOWANCE

It looks at how easily a user can undo an action or remedy an error. Evaluation is based on the number of possibilities provided and the ease of returning or restoring a past situation. In addition, the immediacy of these "ways out" in the interfaces is also considered.

FLUENCY

Fluency evaluates the user's overall navigation experience within the platform, particularly in the path or alternatives available to go through the different sections to reach the desired tasks. The evaluation is based on the number of steps required to achieve a task. The immediacy of the route between the different sections is also considered.

INTEGRABILITY

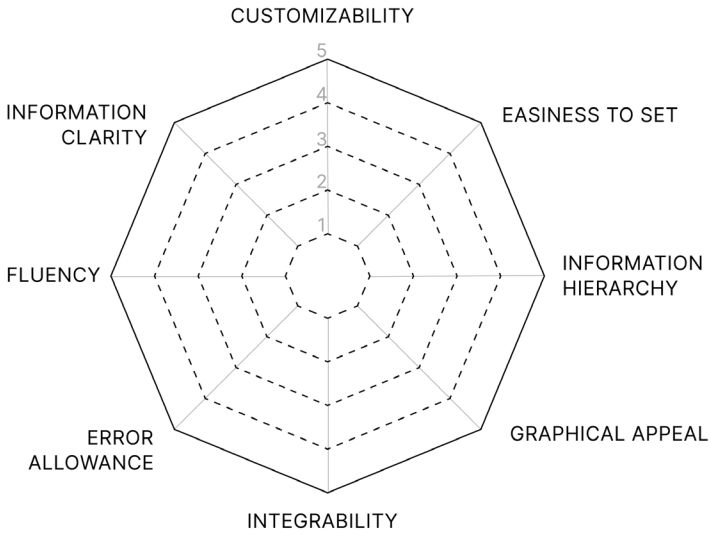
Integrability values the user's freedom to integrate content, formats and references of different natures into the page. It is not only about the applications with which the platform is integrated but the possibility of intervening in the structure of the page by adapting it, through the different integrations, to the user's specific needs. The evaluation is based on the number and heterogeneity of available integrations.

INFO CLARITY

Info clarity analyzes how clear and compelling keywords and visual content are to users. The evaluation is based on the choice and immediacy of the shown information and the associated keywords, plus clarity in graphics and analytics.

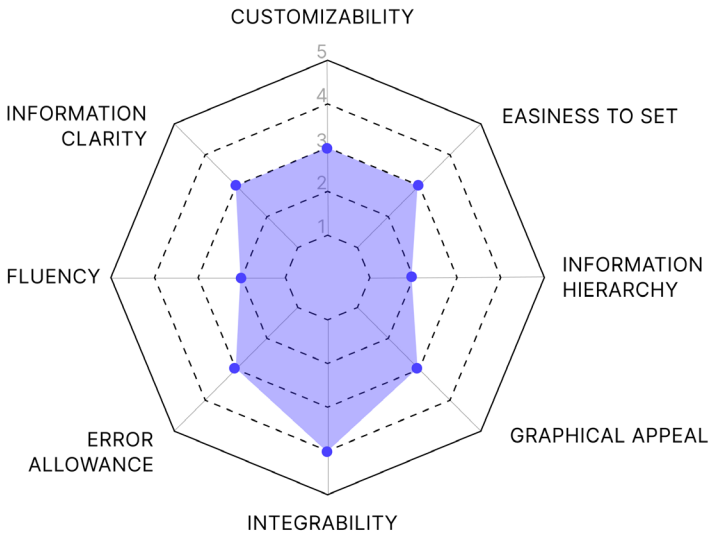
An experiential analysis has been conducted to score each of these criteria. On a scale of 1 to 5, these scores are displayed in a radar chart called usability map. [Fig. 4.3.1.1.] The scores correspond to the following ratings:

❶ — the platform performs poorly according to the criterion;
❷ — the platform meets the criterion poorly;
❸ — the platform meets the criterion minimally;
❹ — the platform performs well for the criterion in question;
❺ — the platform is excellent in the criterion considered.



↑ 4.3.1.2. Usability criteria displayed on radar chart

4.3.2. Usability testing: Linktree



↑ 4.3.2.1. Usability map of Linktree.

CUSTOMIZATION

Allows customization of page appearance, but with limited functionality and mostly reserved for the paid plan. Customization involves background color, button shape and color, and font.

EASINESS TO SET

The account creation procedure is quick and essential. Adding links is pretty straightforward. The Explore section facilitates understanding functionalities and presents the platform's integrations categorized by objectives and types.

INFORMATION HIERARCHY

The top navbar presents the five main sections, but the initial dashboard interface does not effectively give an overview of crucial information.

In addition, the sections' order does not reflect the priorities dictated by the platform type, such as the choice to put Settings before Analytics. In addition, the Settings keyword is vague and groups very different types of information and purposes within it.

VISUAL APPEAL

The aesthetic of the dashboard and creator page is minimal and modern; it works but is not particularly appealing.

INTEGRABILITY

Integrability is undoubtedly a strength of the platform. The Explore section, the only one also accompanied by icons, presents an overview of all possible integrations of the platform. In addition, the possibility to intervene on individual references, for example, by scheduling their appearance on the page, makes the platform functional and adaptable for different purposes. Despite this, access to the more advanced features requires activation of the paid plan.

ERROR ALLOWANCE

It is pretty easy to undo or remedy an error during tasks, although often, this possibility is expressed only by icons.

FLUENCY

The ever-present top navbar allows the user always to know which section they are in; however, the length of the sections makes the process of finding information long and not very smooth. There are not many tools to skip steps and ease navigation.

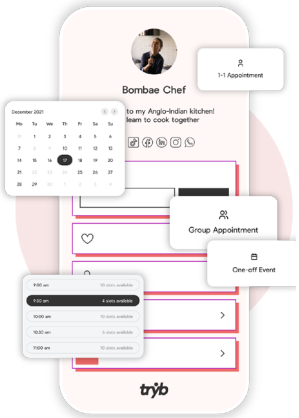
INFORMATION CLARITY

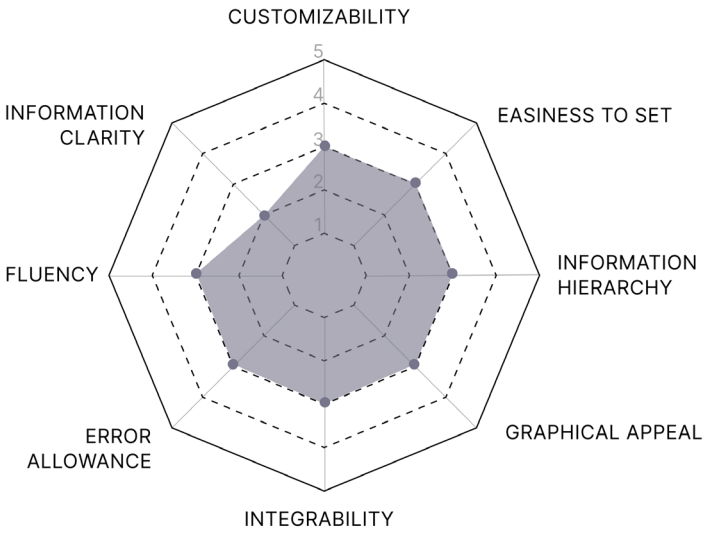
The choice of keywords is relatively straightforward, except for a few sections, as already mentioned. The icons in the sidebar are pretty anonymous but, at the same time, linked to se-

condary functions. The Analytics section is very comprehensive but again available only by subscription. Despite this, the essential information is shown straight away.

4.3.3. Usability testing: direct competitors

Tryb





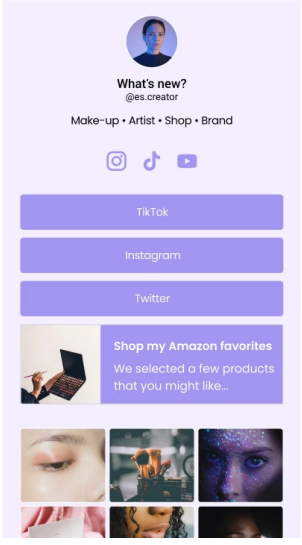
↑ 4.3.3.1. Example of a reference page made with Tryb

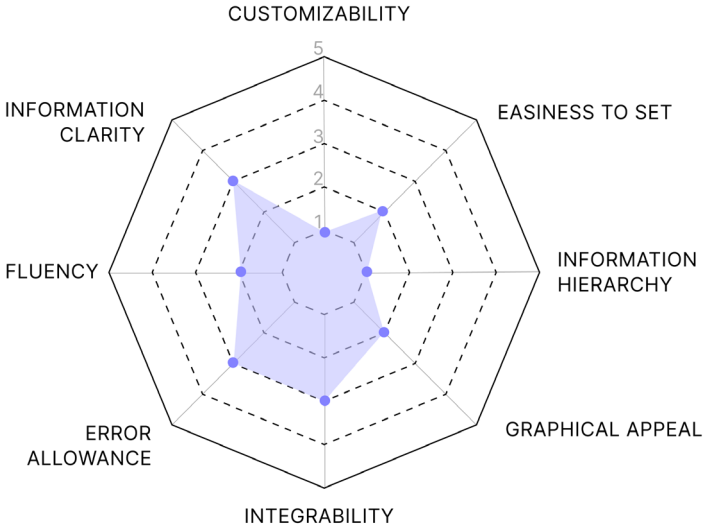
↗ 4.3.3.2. Usability map of Tryb

Main target: creators
Date release: 2019
Head quarters: United Kingdom
Active users: not available
Special features: subscription, email lists, content editor
Pricing: *freemium* (upgrade to unlock features)
Touchpoints: browser

Tryb presents itself as a complete toolkit for creators that gives them the possibility of creating a fully customizable page. It also allows for creating and managing extra content directly from the platform, such as articles, guides or courses. Finally, it offers a series of functionalities that allow you to sell tickets for an online event, collect contacts for a subscription or membership and sell digital products or request tips. Like all such platforms, it has an Analytics section that allows unique access to the page to be monitored. It is the most integrated platform among those analyzed, with attractive and modern graphics.

Feedlink





↑ 4.3.3.3. Example of a reference page made with Feedlink

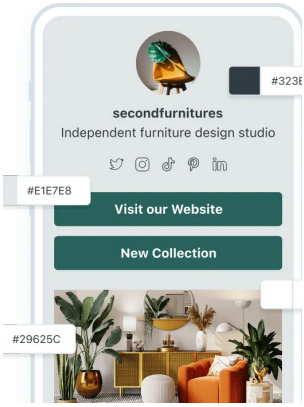
↗ 4.3.3.4. Usability map of Feedlink

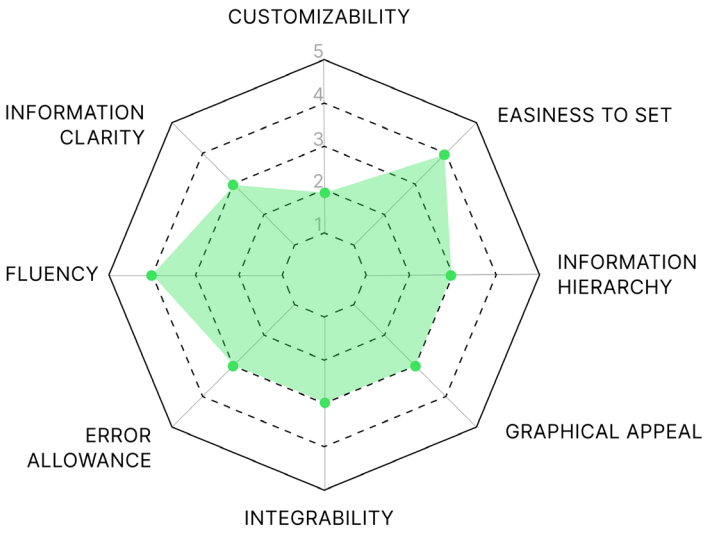
Main target: creators, gamers, small business owners, artists, coaches
Date release: 2020
Head quarters: Macedonia

Active users: 3.000
Special features: Instagram contents and feed, reviews
Pricing: paid, from $3/month to $29/month
Touchpoints: browser

Feedlink is one of the latest tools designed by EmbedSocial, the first UGC (User Generated Content) platform that allows you to embed native social media content, such as feeds or stories, into your website. Feedlink acts as a link on the bio page, allowing you to link to your social channels, embed your feed or show a blog post.

Linkin.bio





↑ 4.3.3.5. Example of a reference page made with Linkinbio

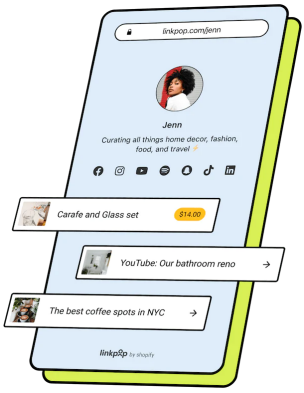
↗ 4.3.3.6. Usability map of Linkinbio

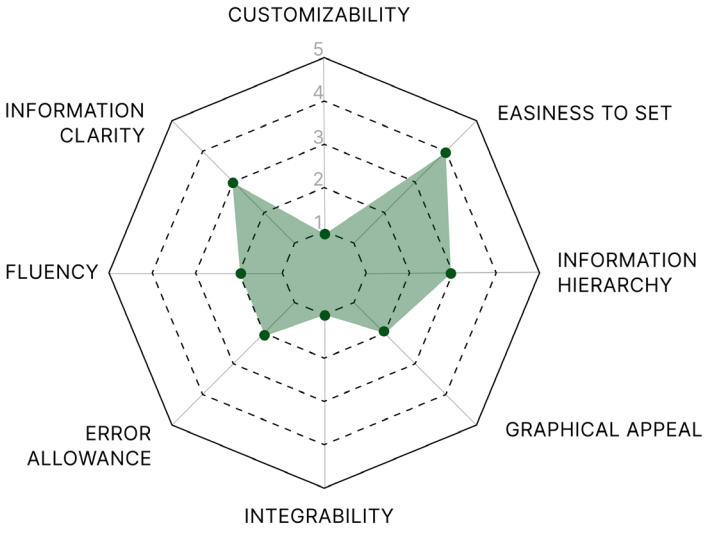
Main target: creators
Date release: 2021
Head quarters: Canada
Active users: 200.000

Special features: link to single product post
Pricing: paid, from $18/month to $80/month
Touchpoints: browser, mobile app (Later)

Linkin.bio is a product of Later, one of the most popular platforms among social media managers, used to schedule content on social platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and TikTok and manage the analytics and performance. Linkin.bio aims to be a mini web page within one's social profiles, making content clickable and shoppable. One of the most interesting features is the ability to link to a single Instagram product post. It only provides paid plans, requiring a Later subscription and a business Instagram profile to monitor analytics and performance.

Linkpop





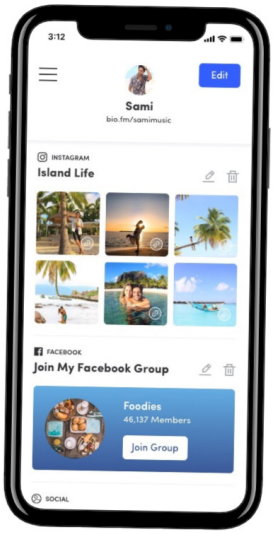
↑ 4.3.3.7. Example of a reference page made with Linkpop

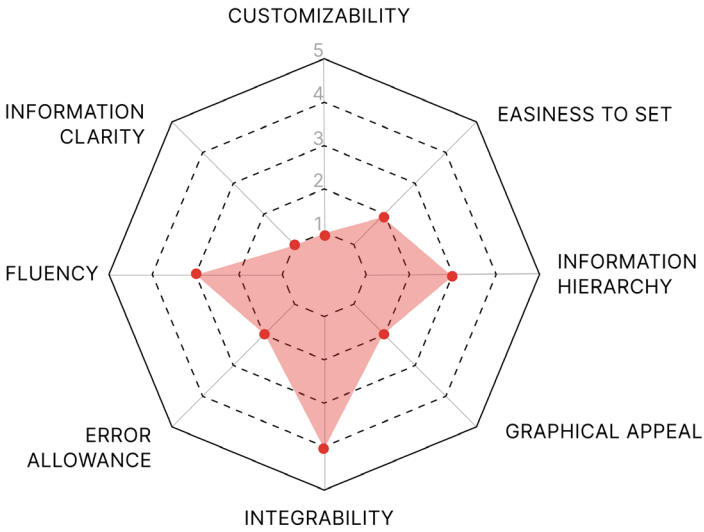
↗ 4.3.3.8. Usability map of Linkpop

Main target: creators, brands, influencers, business owners
Date release: 2022
Head quarters: Canada
Active users: not available
Special features: link to store or single products
Pricing: *freemium*, upgrade from $9/month
Touchpoints: browser, Shopify app

LinkPop is a product developed by Shopify to make it easier for business owners to connect their social channels, apps, marketplaces and content. Compared to the other competitors analyzed, this one is undoubtedly the most commerce-oriented, being native to one of the most popular sales platforms at the moment. What it promises is to transform its audience into customers. The customization options are present but are not very numerous compared to what one would imagine. The integrations undoubtedly become interesting, especially if you own a Shopify store.

Bio.fm





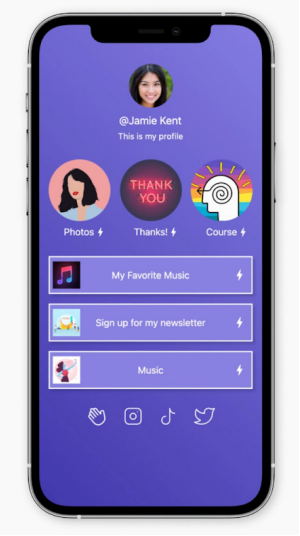
↑ 4.3.3.9. Example of a reference page made with Bio.fm

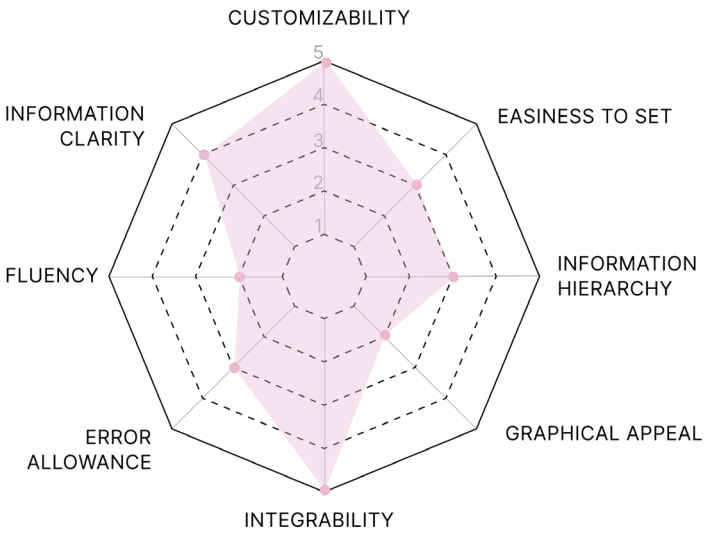
↗ 4.3.3.10. Usability map of Bio.fm

Main target: influencers and online entrepreuners, creators, brands, amateur
Date release: 2016
Head quarters: Malaysia
Active users: 6.000
Special features: link to single product post
Pricing: *freemium*, upgrade from $5/month
Touchpoints: browser

Bio.fm is one of the first link-in-bio platforms. It has relatively limited functionality, with integrations of the more mainstream channels such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube and Spotify. It does not allow much freedom in customization, and the free version is limited, so much so that it does not allow access to analytics.

Koji





↑ 4.3.3.11. Example of a reference page made with Koji

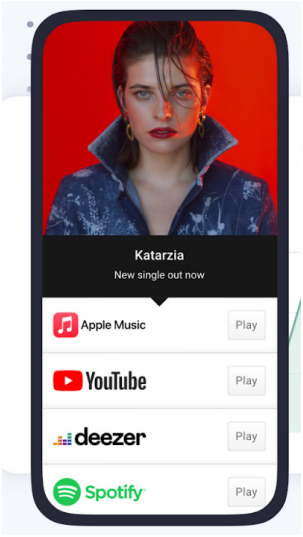
↗ 4.3.3.12. Usability map of Koji

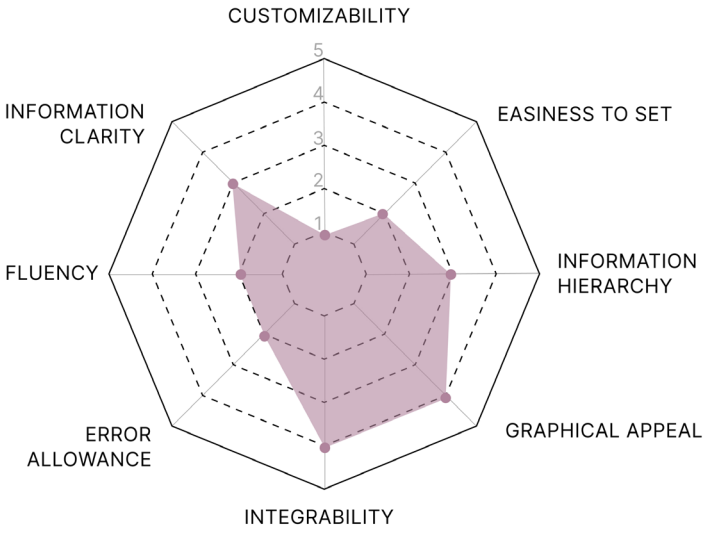
Main target: creators, influencers, NFT owners, musicians and artists, eCommerce
Date release: 2016
Head quarters: United States
Active users: 260.000
Special features: +200 mini app, integration with other link-in-bio
Pricing: free
Touchpoints: browser

Koji is the link-in-bio platform with the most integrations among those analyzed, as it relies on a database of more than 200 apps to customize one's page and monetize, many of which are native to the platform and therefore contribute to making one's page original, fulfilling several functionalities. Although the appearance gives the idea of a very technical system, it is pretty easy to navigate and allows a high level of customization.

4.3.4. Usability testing: indirect competitors

Linkfire





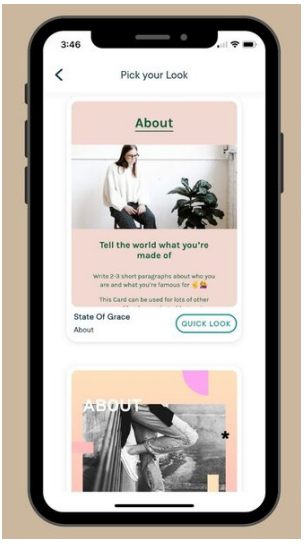
↑ 4.3.4.1. Example of a reference page made with Linkfire

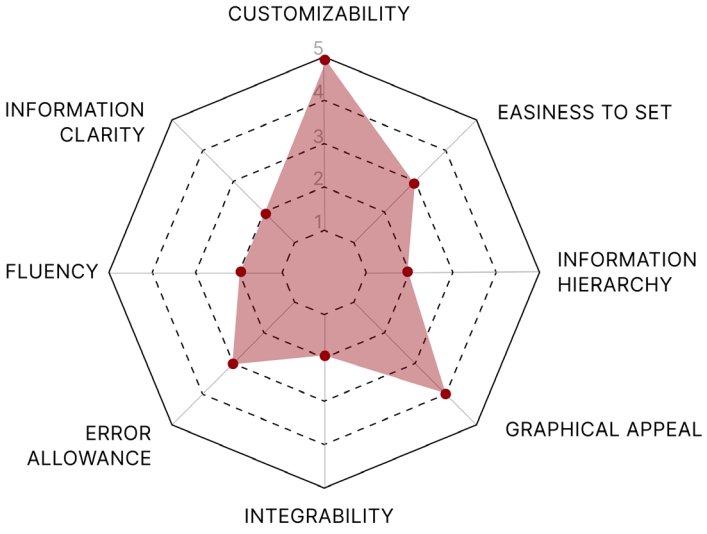
↗ 4.3.4.2. Usability map of Linkfire

Main target: artists and musiciants, music labels
Date release: 2016
Head quarters: Denmark
Active users: 50.000
Special features: integrations for music
Pricing: paid, from $9/month to $80/month
Touchpoints: browser

Linkfire is the most specific link-in-bio platform among those analyzed; its purpose is to target musicians and artists to facilitate sharing and access to music in different forms and through different tools. This is precisely interesting for the research because it addresses a narrow target audience's specific needs and requirements. In addition to presenting the standard features that we have found in all competitors so far, such as a bio or reference to a site, it is possible, thanks to integration with Spotify and Apple Music, to use it to promote the release of a song or album, share a playlist, or refer to concert ticket sales.

Milkshake





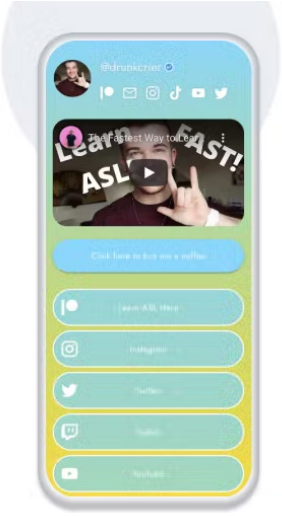
↑ 4.3.4.3. Example of a reference page made with Milkshake

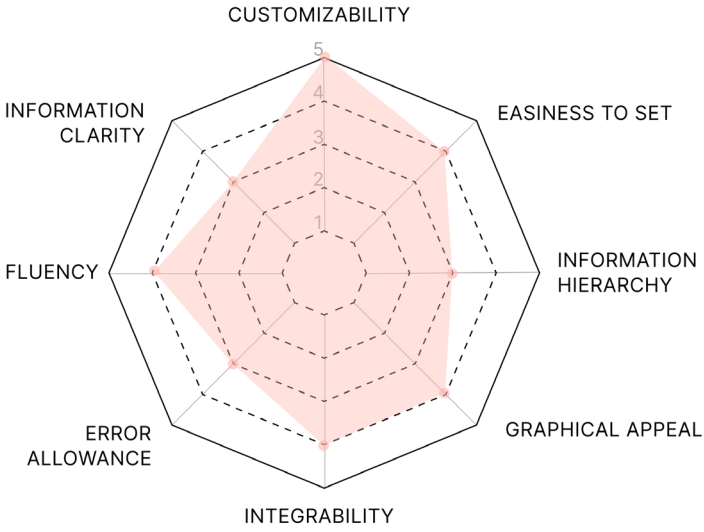
↗ 4.3.4.4. Usability map of Milkshake

Main target: creators
Date release: 2019
Head quarters: Australia
Active users: not available
Special features: cards as components to build the page
Pricing: free
Touchpoints: mobile app only

MilkShake offers itself as a free website builder directly from your smartphone. Through cards, it allows you to create dedicated sections of your page. The features are various, from the about section to top picks to links with different integrations. The graphics are minimal but eye-catching, although they do not stand out for clarity of information. Although it bills itself as a landing page builder, the functionality is quite limited, as are the customization options.

Beacons



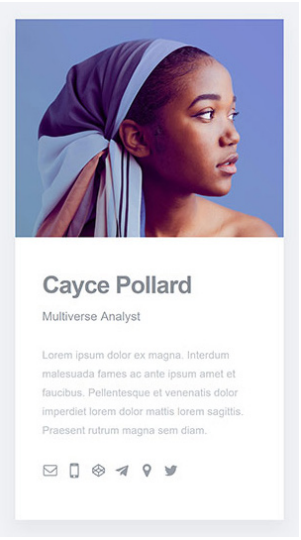


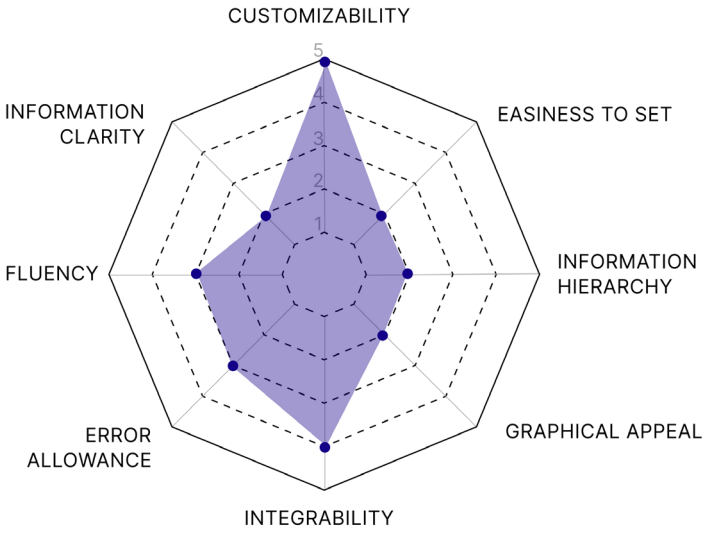
↑ 4.3.4.5. Example of a reference page made with Beacons

↗ 4.3.4.6. Usability map of Beacons

Beacons aims to be a free forever link in bio tool and mobile website builder. Through media kit and follower count features, it mainly targets creators and influencers. It also has several features that encourage payments in the form of community support or payments for one's work. Although the payoff communicates a different message, it offers a paid Entrepreneur plan unlocks advanced features. The level of customization is high, allowing feature themes to be created and saved in the library.

Carrd





↑ 4.3.4.7. Example of a reference page made with Carrd

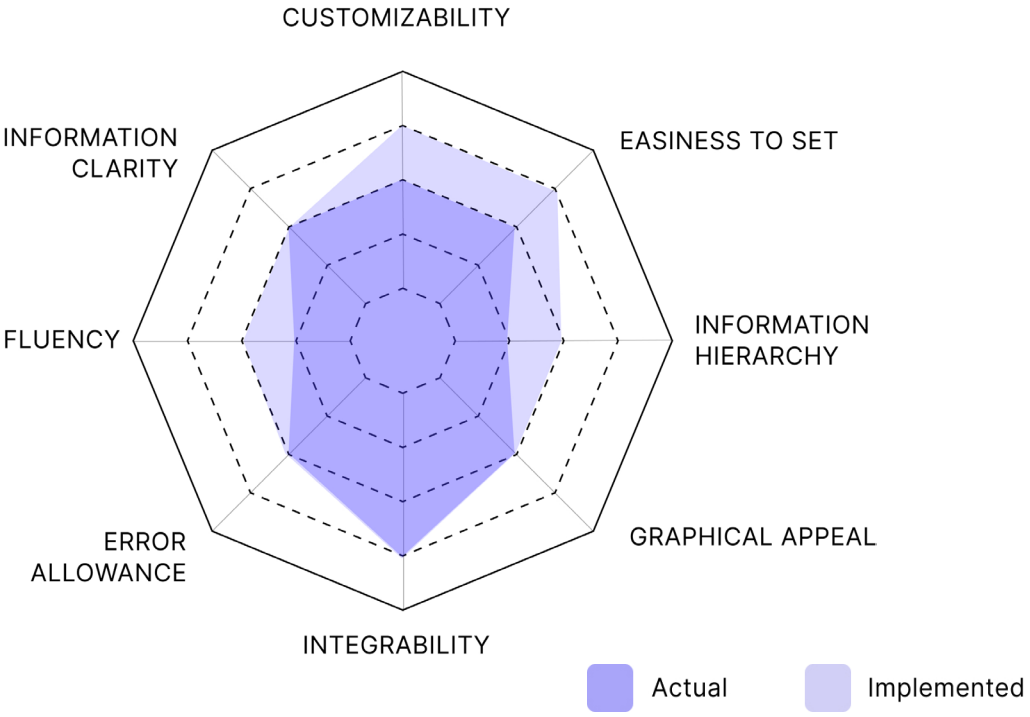
↗ 4.3.4.8. Usability map of Carrd

Main target: creators, business owner
Date release: 2016
Head quarters: United States
Active users: 8.000
Special features: developers advanced features
Pricing: *freemium*, upgrade from $19/month
Touchpoints: browser, mobile app

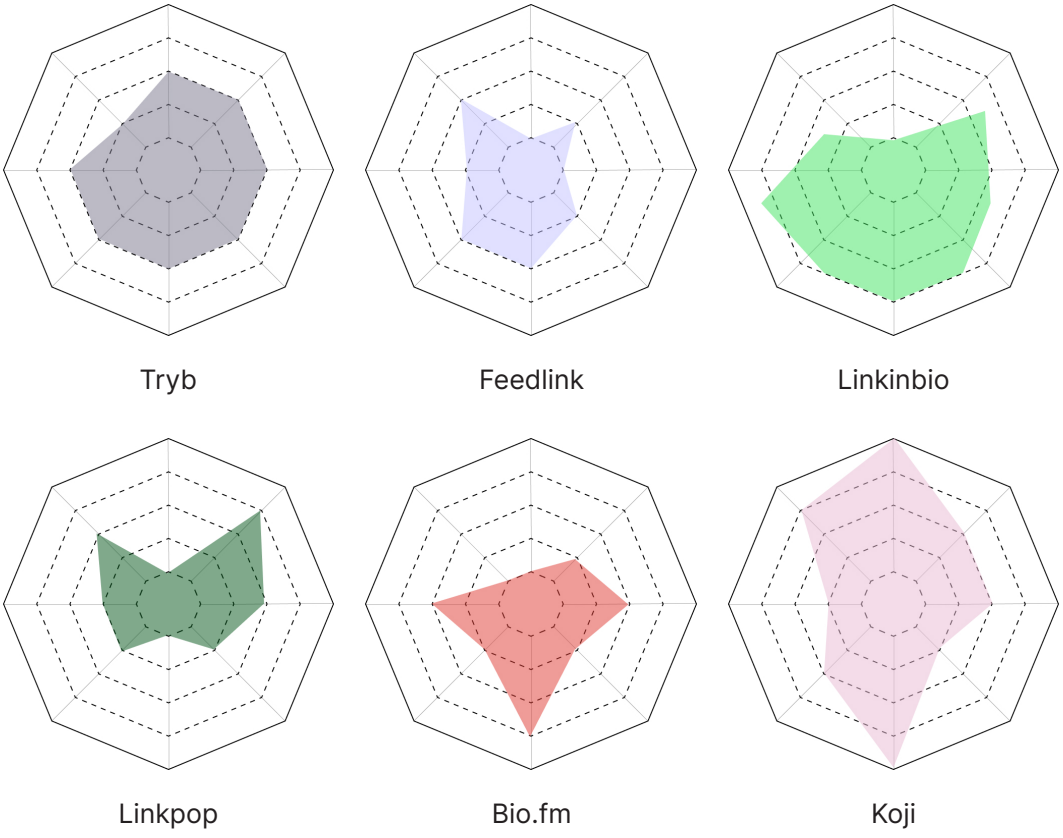
Carrd is a simple, free, fully responsive platform allowing you to create one-page sites for almost anything. Of all the competitors analyzed, it is the one most geared toward website building, on par with WordPress or Wix. It is possible to go and modify the various components to manage even the animation, starting from the choice of a theme. You can understand the platform's more technical imprint from the graphics already.

4.3.5. Usability framework

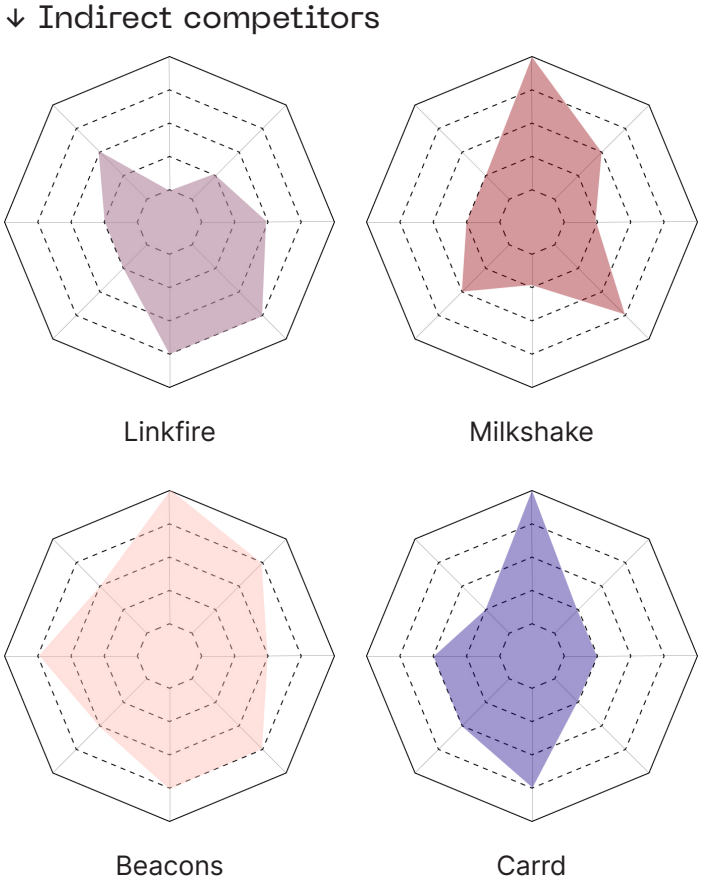
Comparing the platforms considered [Fig. 4.3.5.1.], it becomes apparent that the direct competitors have diverse drivers but generally appears strong in integrability, the primary driver dictated by the platform but lacking in information clarity. Although a few platforms stand out, customization is undoubtedly not a strength, while the easiness of set does not appear critical. On the other hand, indirect competitors undoubtedly appear more homogeneous, focusing everything on customization and integrability. This is understandable because of the positioning they assume, certainly promoting a significantly higher degree of user freedom than direct competitors. In this scenario, comparing the competitors' usability maps with that of the reference platform, Linktree, an implementation on customization and easiness to set - critical drivers for the target audience - seems essential. In addition, it also appears necessary to act on information hierarchy and fluency to be competitive with competitors and make the user experience clearer and more immediate. Thanks to the research conducted and starting from the identified objectives, the design phase begins, which will be developed in the next section.



↓ Direct competitors



↙ 4.3.5.1. Implemented Linktree usabilit map in comparison with direct and indirect competitors



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PART THREE

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Ergonomics application

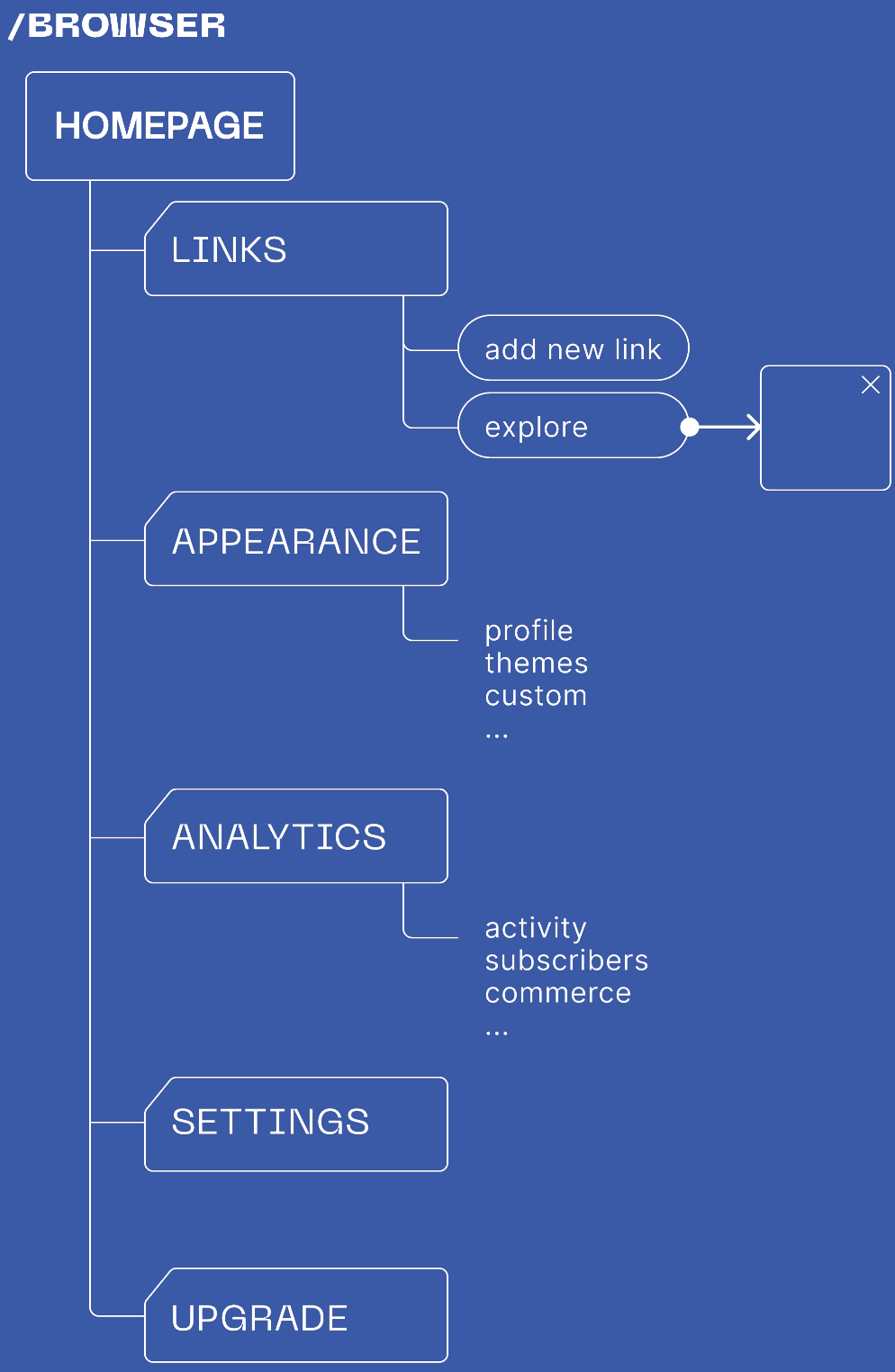
5.

5.1. Starting framework: Linktree

Having laid the groundwork from the research and analysis phase, the last phase of the process, the design phase, was developed.

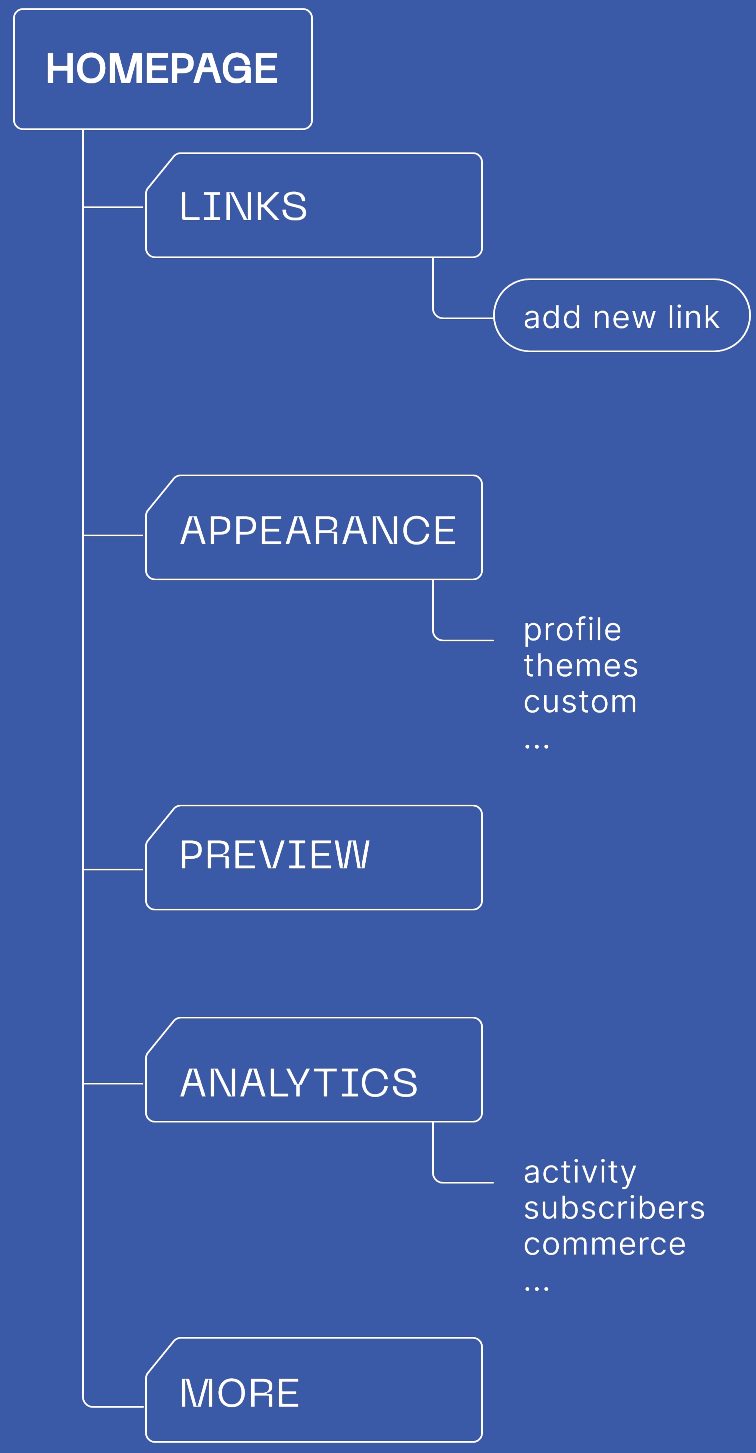
The first activity involved identifying the current information architecture of the Linktr.ee application and the respective browser platform.

For the redesign of the information architecture, reference was made to the tasks derived from the target analysis.



↗ 5.1.1. *Linktree* actual information architecture, rispectively on browser and mobile

/MOBILE APP


HOMEPAGE
LINKS
add new link
APPEARANCE
profile
themes
custom
...
PREVIEW
ANALYTICS
activity
subscribers
commerce
...
MORE

5.2. User flow construction

From the three core tasks for the target audience, subtasks were identified that would highlight the needs of the target audience more practically. These have been reported in detail below.

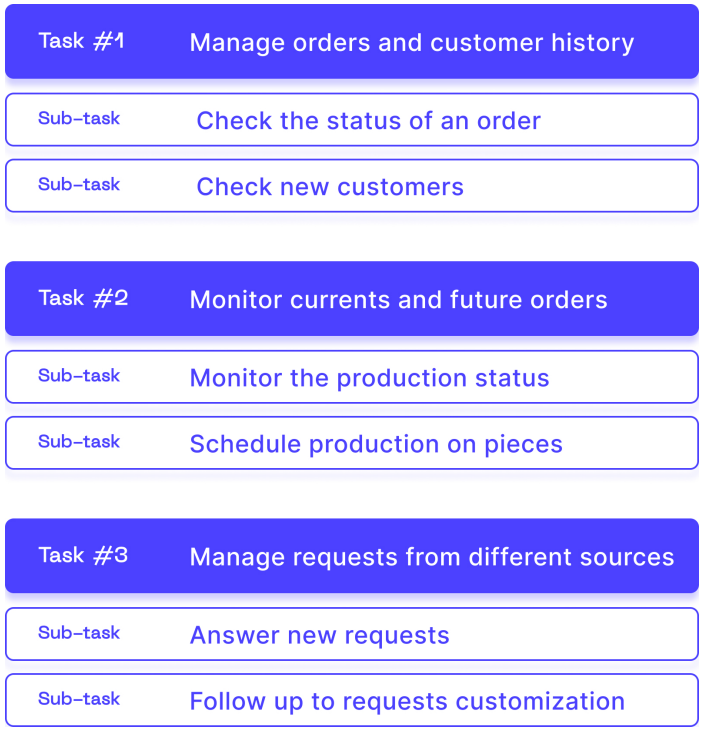
The first task concerns ***order and customer monitoring*** and has been divided into two subtasks: *checking order status* and *checking new customers*.

The second task concerns the business's internal organization, specifically the need for makers to ***monitor current and future orders*** to ensure they meet the agreed timelines. In this case, two scenarios are identified, and they involve the need to *monitor the production status of an order* by checking the daily tasks, perhaps supplementing them with other activities that are ancillary to craft production. On the other hand, the other scenario considers the ups and downs of the makers' production rhythms, which are often not constant but follow university or other rhythms. In this case, therefore, the need for *schedule production on pieces* was identified as a subtask, imagining that the service could also be supportive in the long-term management of the activity.

The last task identified aims to ***simplify the interaction with the maker community*** across the platforms and digital tools manned. In this case, the two scenarios considered involve the need to *answer new requests* so as not to lose any possible customers and the need to *follow up to request customization* during the contracting phase, which is often critical since we are dealing with unique and highly customizable products.

Such subtasks were critical in defining user flows. First, each subtask was unpacked into the individual actions necessary for the user to complete it. For each of these actions, a response

from the system that the user expected to receive and consequently the key screens were identified.



↑ 5.2.1. Tasks and subtasks scheme

5.3. Touchpoint understanding

At this point, the target touchpoint for service development was identified. In particular, the study of personas showed that most use smartphones rather than PCs. This phenomenon was also confirmed by the experience recounted by the makers co-involved in the research phase. Often those who were in the habit of using pc were people who work in the world of design or

communication and thus were accustomed to using pc mainly during study or work hours, while everyone is more familiar and accustomed to accessing mobile. Moreover, the very purpose of the project assumes agility and process optimization that is not achievable through a platform available from a browser. The tools makers use, such as social media and marketplaces, travel much more on mobile devices precisely because of their agile nature, so the idea of managing various features accessible from mobile through a browser-based platform would not have been compelling. Finally, the possibility of developing a dedicated app for the makers of the Linktr.ee service provides some freedom at the design level that allows it to respond to the needs of the target audience without debilitating the standard functionalities of the service that certainly appeal to a broader audience by responding to more generic functions.

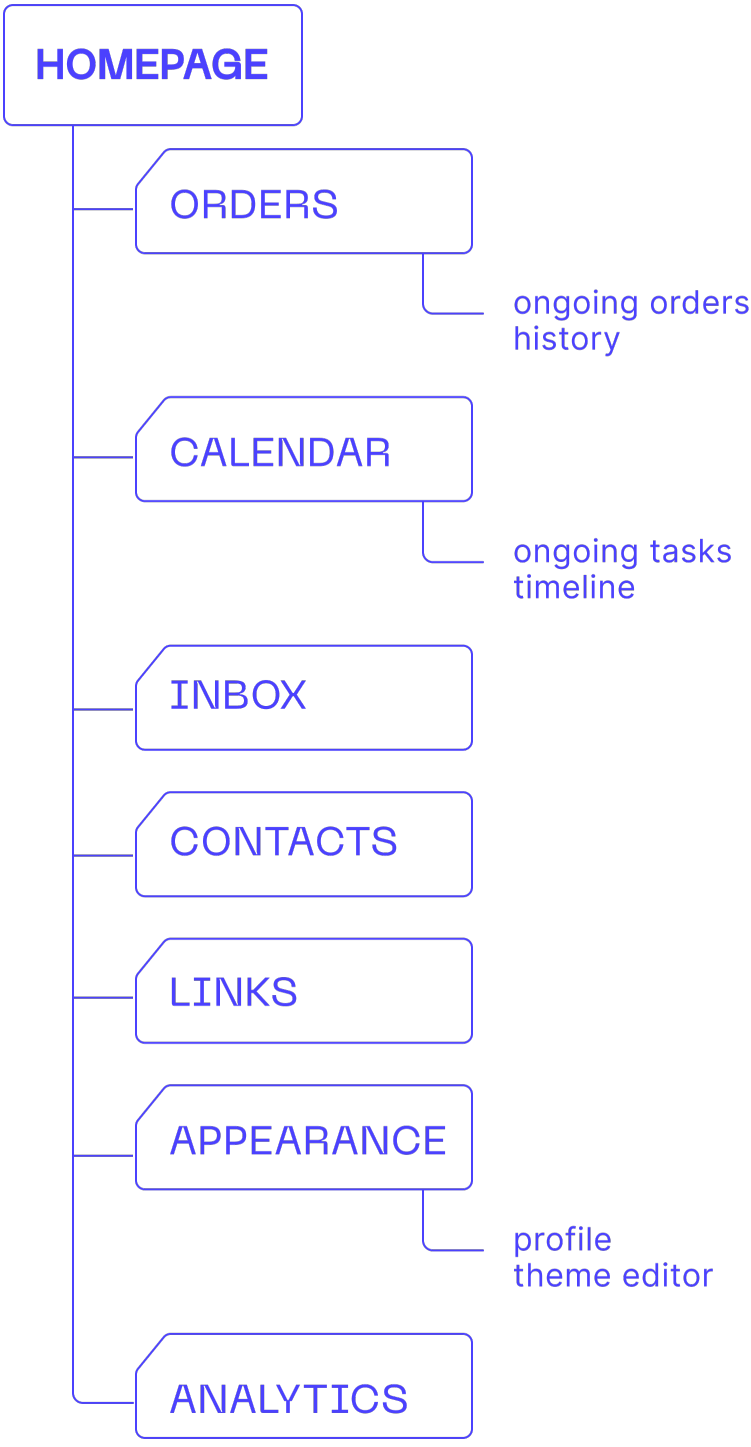
5.4.
User flow definition

Once all these elements were identified: the reason why for the project, primary needs and subtasks, target touchpoints, and general framework, one had the tools needed to develop the implemented information architecture [Fig. 5.4.1.] and define user flows [Fig. 5.4.2.]. These highlighted the possible user paths within the application and the primary application interfaces that would meet the target audience's needs.

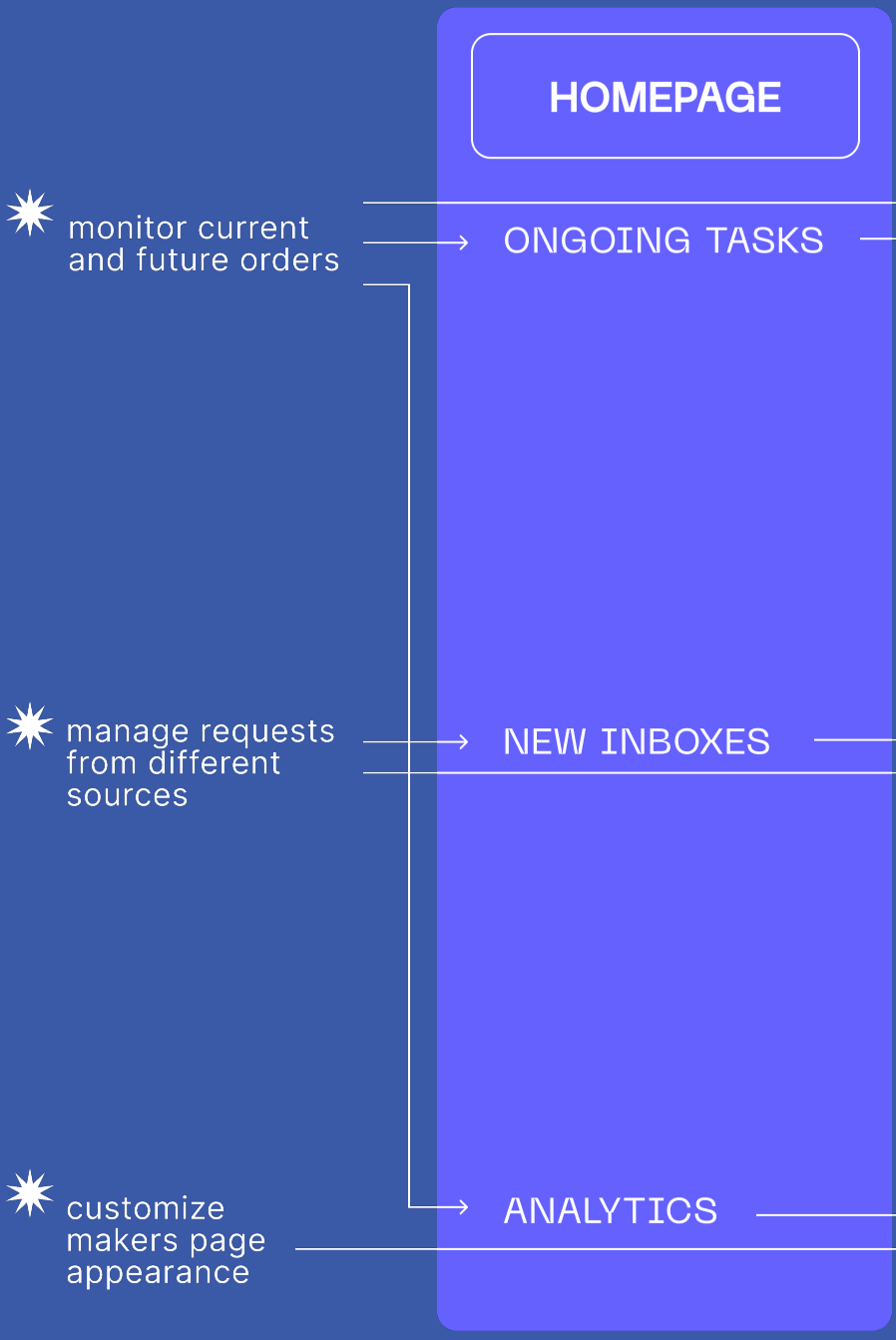
Based on the user flows, the information architecture of Linktr.ee for Makers was defined, as an app that allows optimizing the effort of makers in managing different digital tools while maximizing their results and sales.

↗ 5.4.1. *Linktree for Makers* information architecture

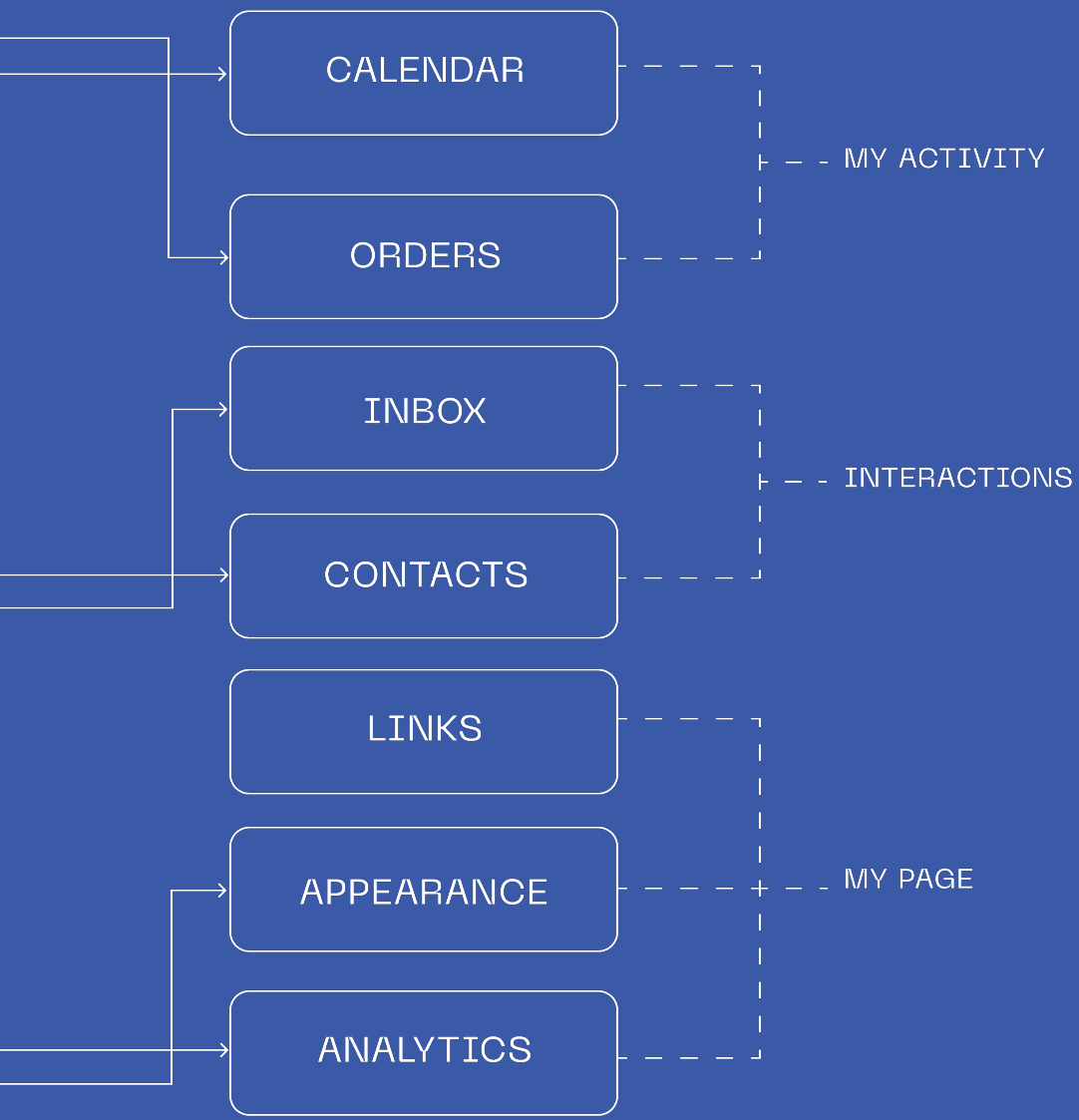
/LINKTR.EE FOR MAKERS



/LINKTR.EE FOR MAKERS

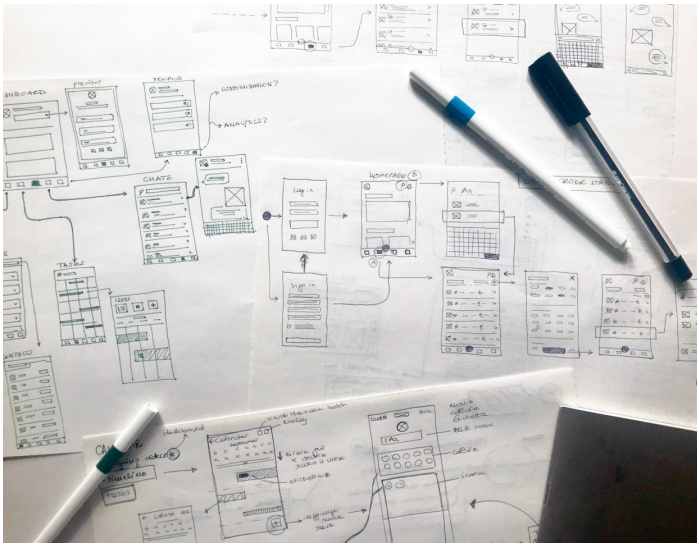


↗ 5.4.2. *Linktree for Makers* usage flow


CALENDAR
ORDERS
INBOX
CONTACTS
LINKS
APPEARANCE
ANALYTICS
MY ACTIVITY
INTERACTIONS
MY PAGE

5.5. Wireframes

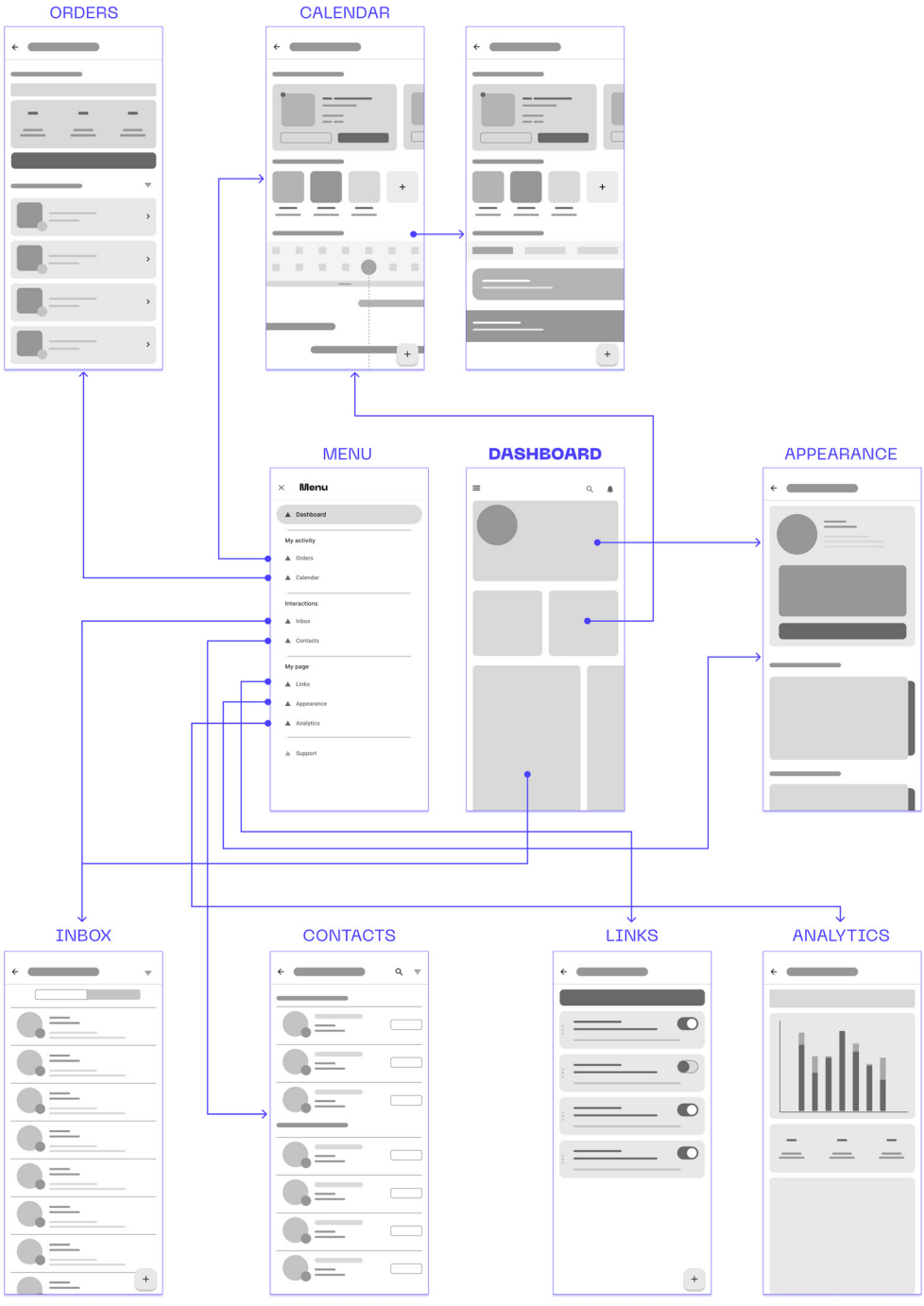
At this juncture, competitor research was drawn upon to identify more advanced insights and features that met needs and could increase the value of the project. Interfaces were first studied in the big picture, testing the division of sections, hierarchy of information, and definition of structure through hand sketches. This first phase allowed for questioning the consistency of the interfaces with the scope of the project and the actual connection between the different components.



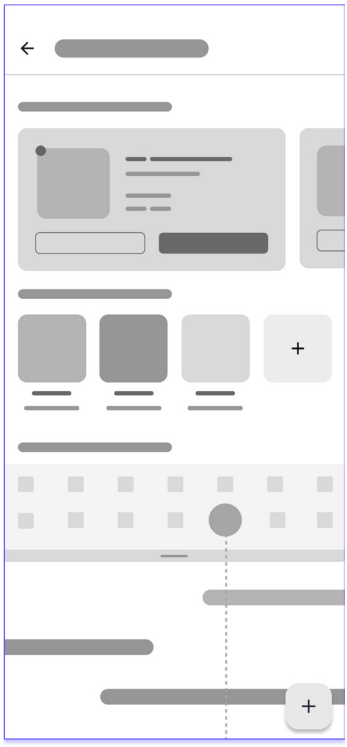
↑ 5.5.1. Photos of some sketches made during the study of user flows

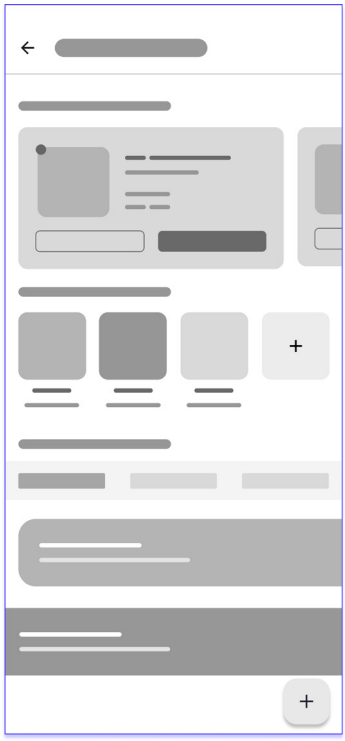
→ 5.5.2. Linktree for Makers flow chart

↓ 5.5.3. Wireframes of main sections

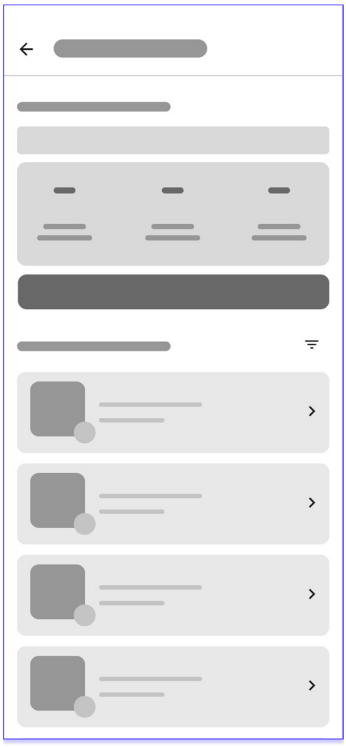

ORDERS
CALENDAR
MENU
DASHBOARD
APPEARANCE
INBOX
CONTACTS
LINKS
ANALYTICS
Menu
Dashboard
My activity
Orders
Calendar
Interactions
Inbox
Contacts
My page
Links
Appearance
Analytics
Support

CALENDAR





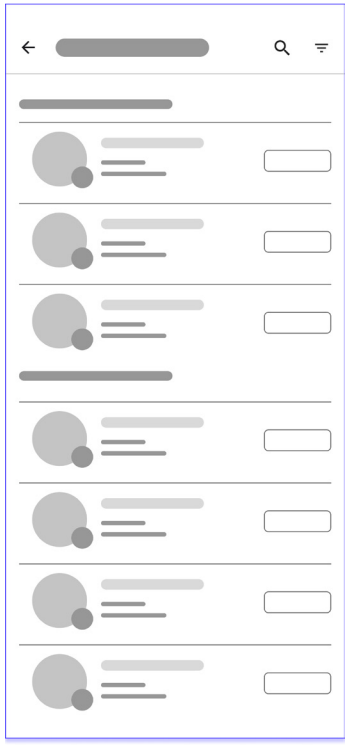
ORDERS



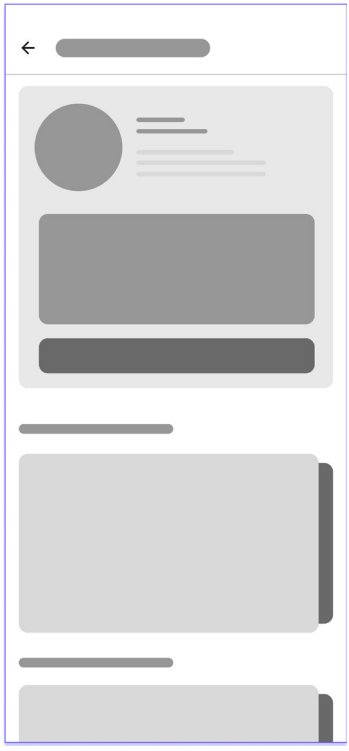
ANALYTICS

INBOX

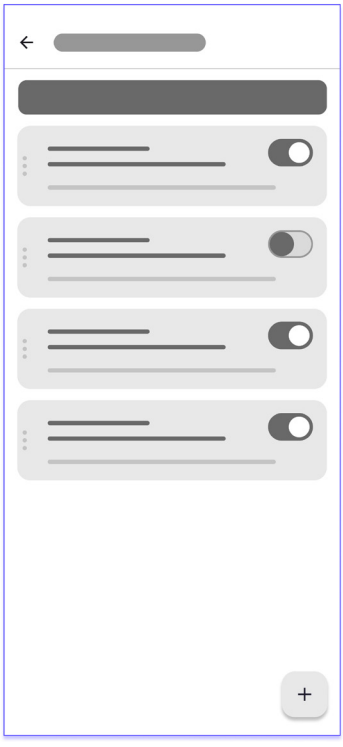
CONTACTS



APPEARANCE



LINKS



Linktr for Ma

.ee

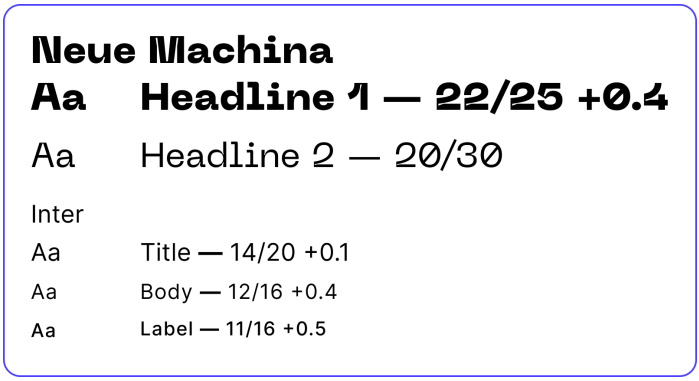
kers

6.

6.1.
Design system

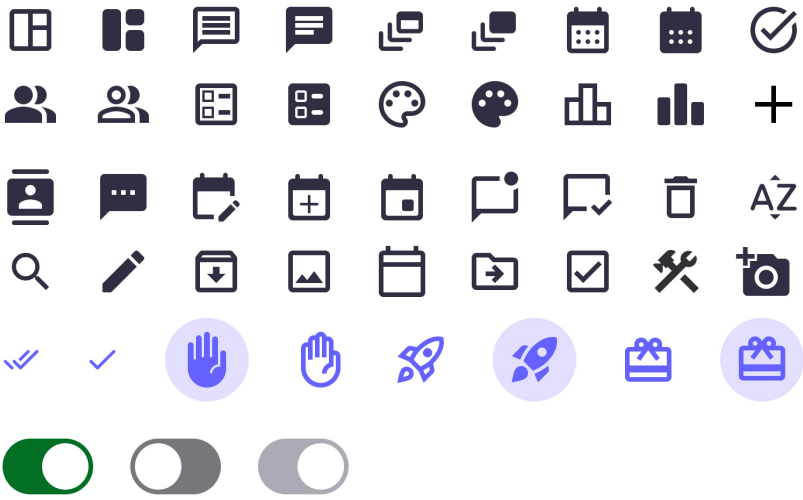
At this point, a design system was defined, through a theme color codes were identified for the different elements in three levels: primary, secondary and tertiary, in addition to error and neutral code. The color code was defined through a plugin that allows a theme to be created from a custom color that, with the right accommodations, ensures the accessibility of the content. In addition, contrasts were checked with the Adobe colors system that calculates the background and foreground colors ratio. If the ratio calculation is 3:1 or more, readability is guaranteed. In addition, the main text styles were defined according to the different types possible for the application.

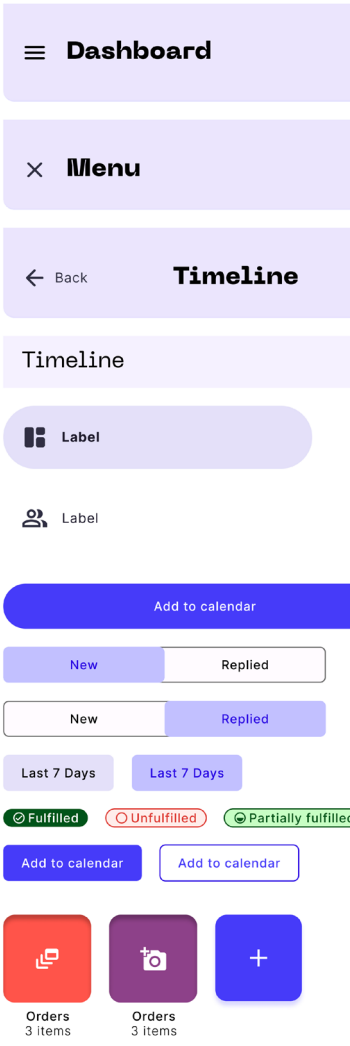
Having defined the general design system, atoms, such as icons, were first developed, moving on to molecules, such as buttons and chips, and finally to organisms, such as components and cards of the various interfaces.

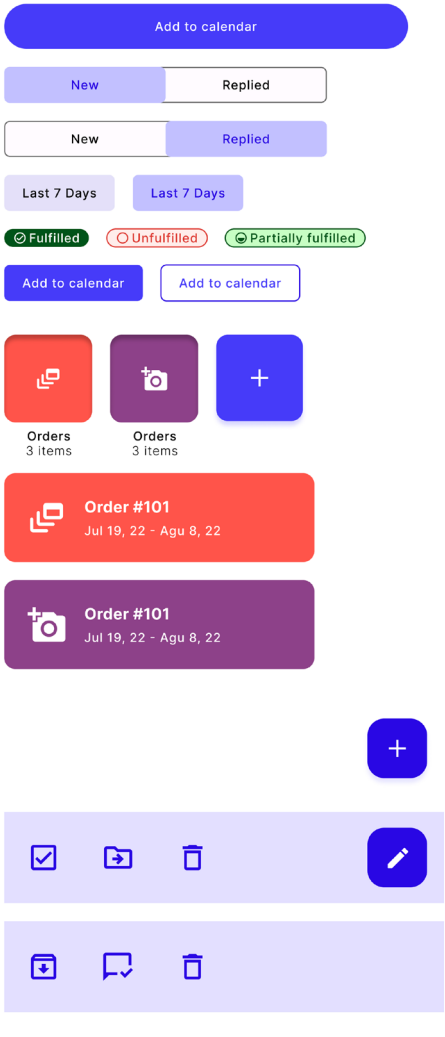


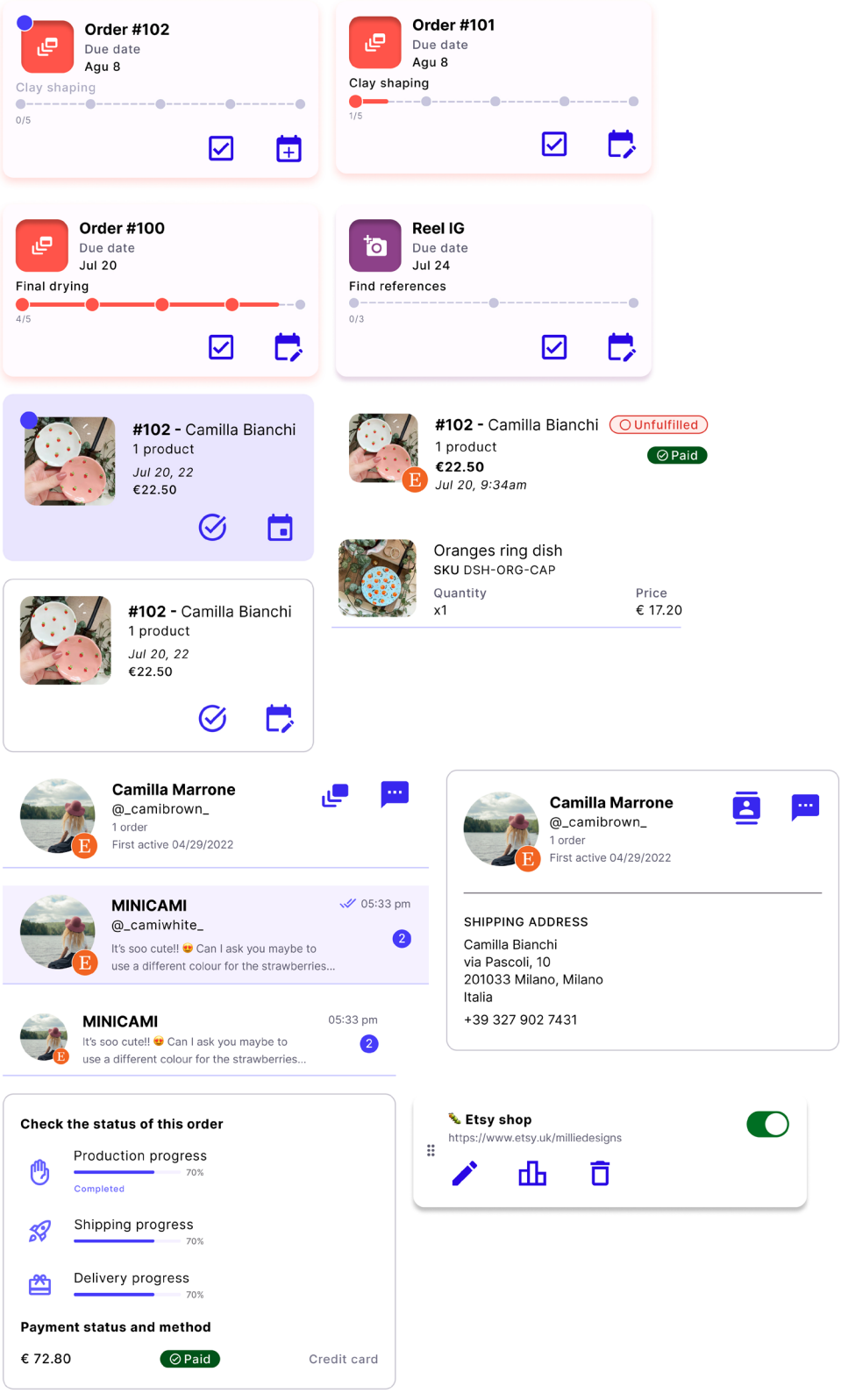
↑ 6.1.1. Typography for application
↗ 6.1.2. Color palette for design system

Primary
Secondary
Tertiary
Error
Neutral
#463BF9
#5D5C71
#7A5368
#BA1A1A
#5F5E62



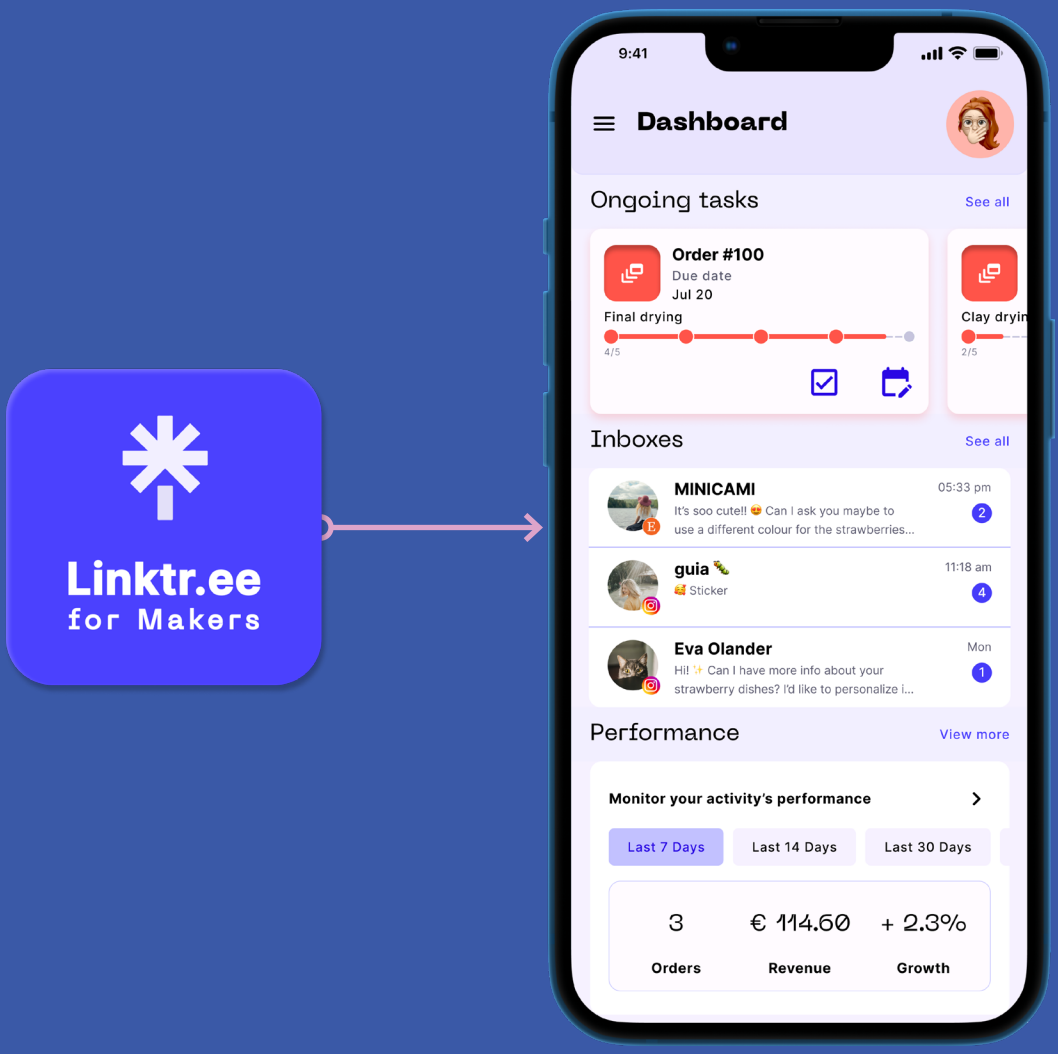

Dashboard
Menu
Back
Timeline
Timeline
Label
Label
Add to calendar
New
Replied
New
Replied
Last 7 Days
Last 7 Days
Fulfilled
Unfulfilled
Partially fulfilled
Add to calendar
Add to calendar
Orders
3 items
Orders
3 items


Add to calendar
New
Replied
New
Replied
Last 7 Days
Last 7 Days
Fulfilled
Unfulfilled
Partially fulfilled
Add to calendar
Add to calendar
Orders
3 items
Orders
3 items
Order #101
Jul 19, 22 - Agu 8, 22
Order #101
Jul 19, 22 - Agu 8, 22



↑ 6.1.3. Atoms, molecules and organisms

6.2.
Final layouts



/ Dashboard

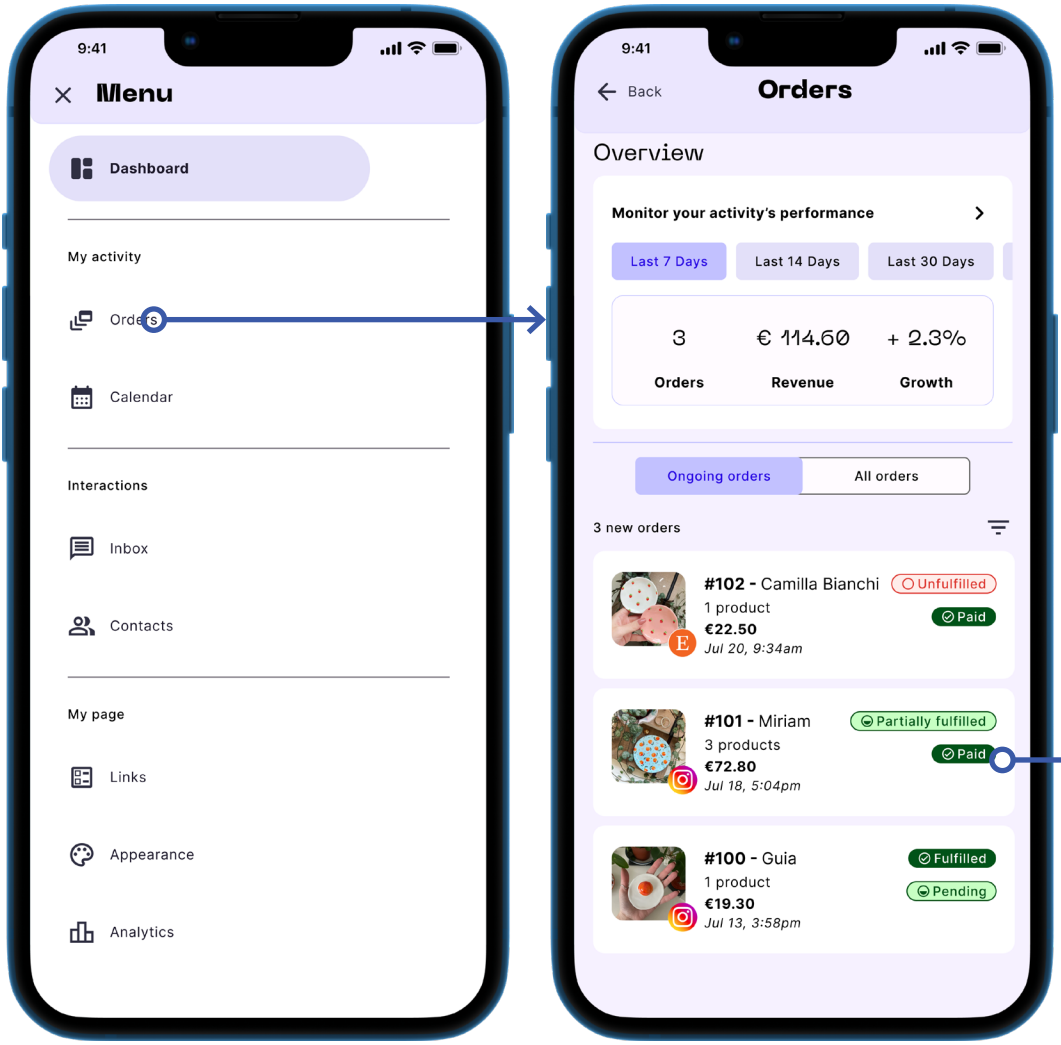
When the application is launched, the main screen is organized as a dashboard from which the maker can keep track of tasks to be done during the day, last unread conversations, and overall business performance.

In addition to quick access to these three key features, from here it is possible through the drawer menu to reach all the primary functions needed by the maker in one step.

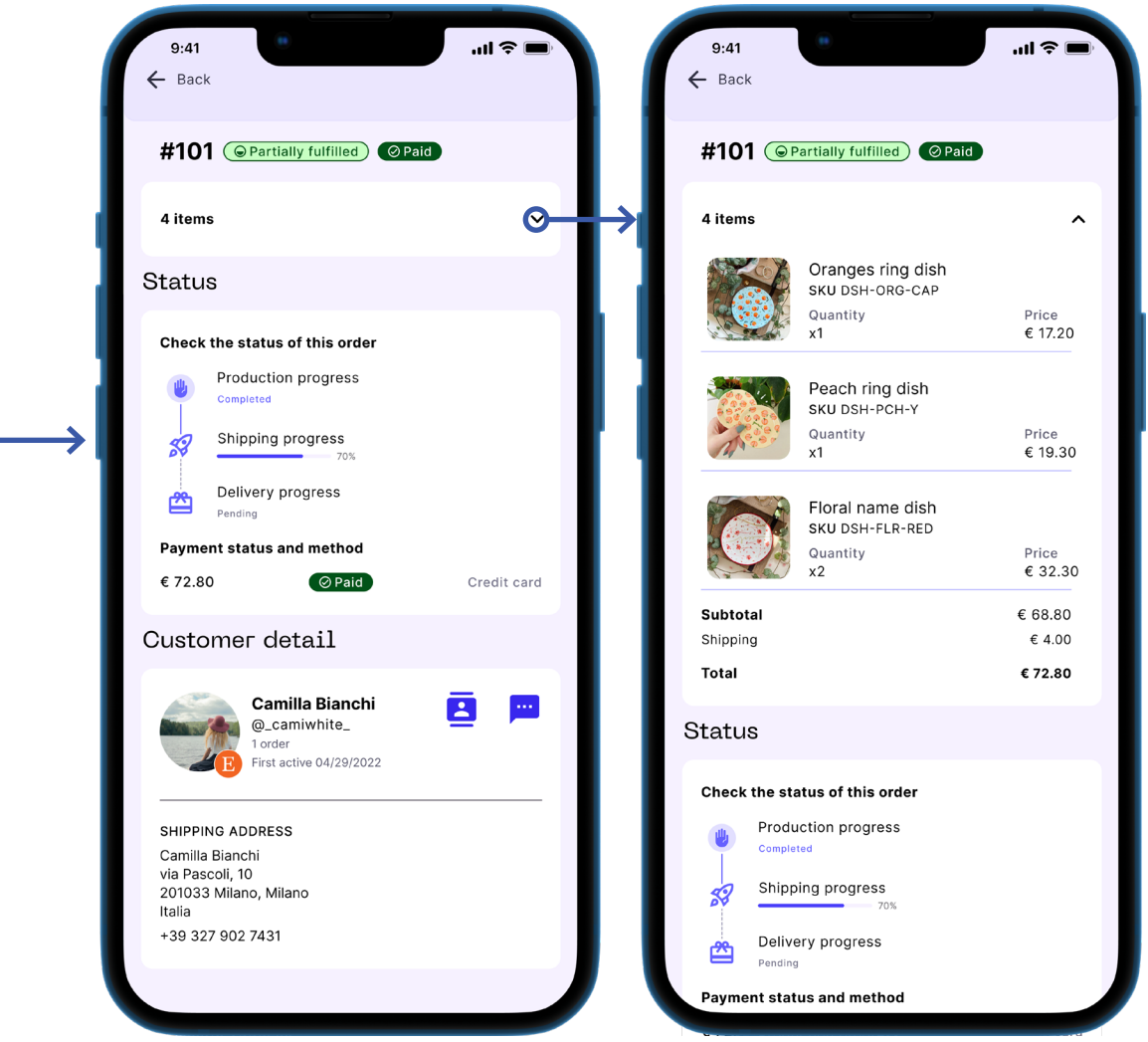
The different items are grouped by macro-sections: *My activity*, *Interactions* and *My page*. This helps to give a clear reading from the outset of the overall structure of the application and its functionality.

↑ 6.2.1. Final layouts: dashboard

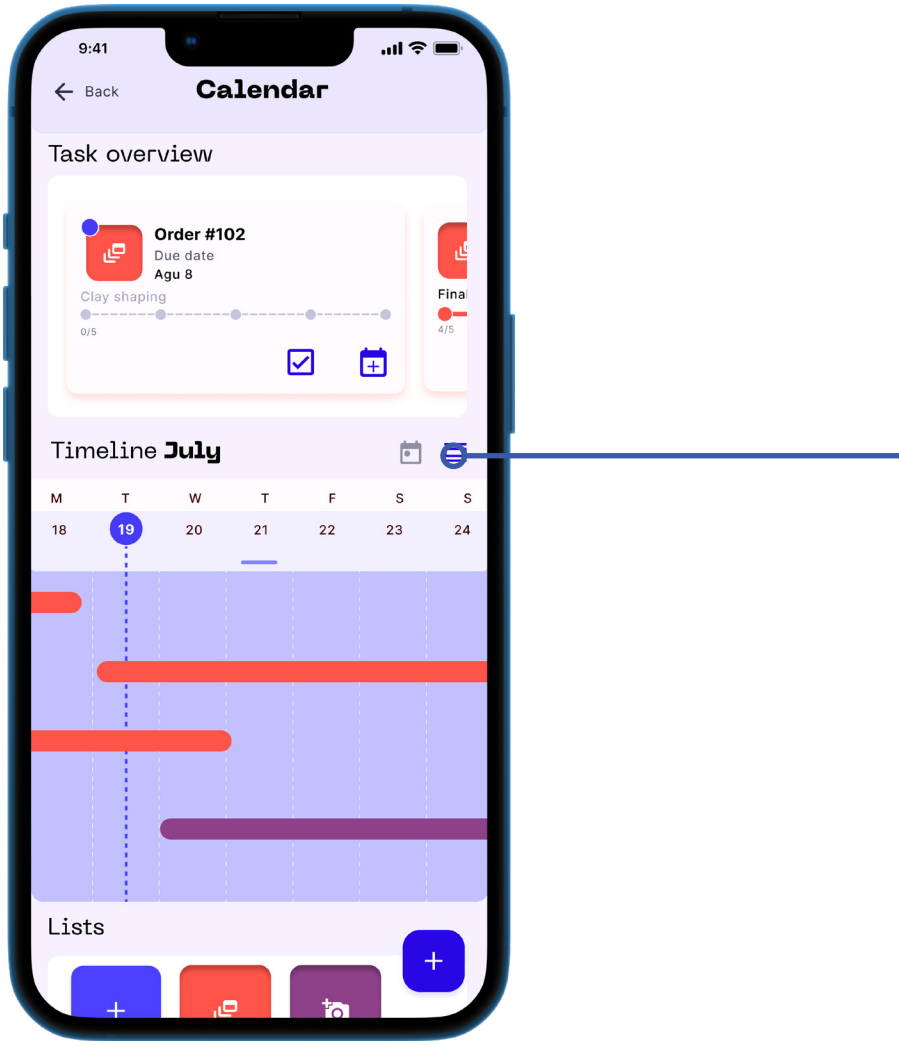
/ Orders



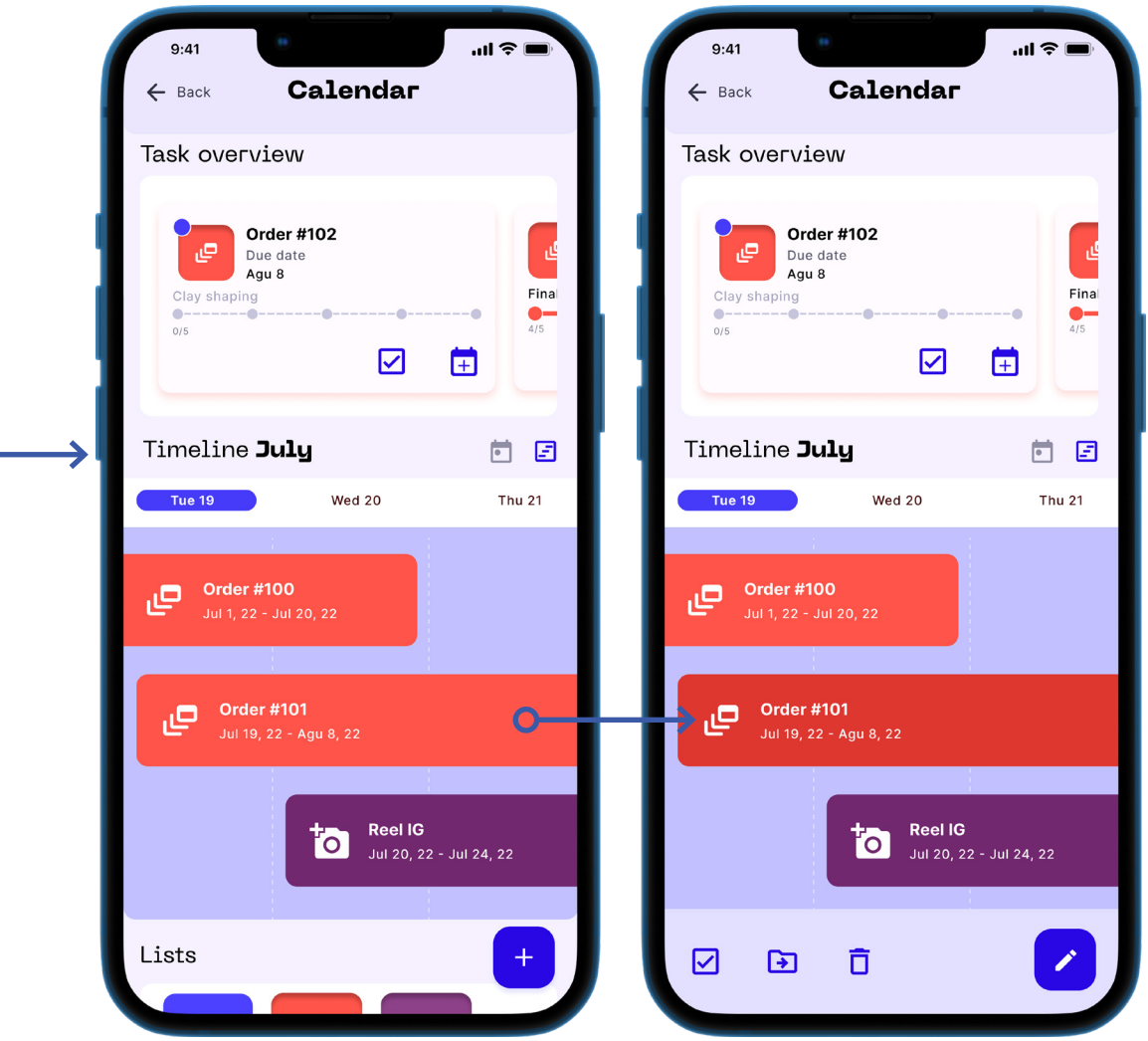
↑ 6.2.2. Final layouts: drawer menu and order history
↗ 6.2.3. Final layouts: order specifics


9:41
Back
#101
Partially fulfilled
Paid
4 items
Status
Check the status of this order
Production progress
Completed
Shipping progress
70%
Delivery progress
Pending
Payment status and method
€ 72.80
Paid
Credit card
Customer detail
Camilla Bianchi
@_camiwhite_
1 order
First active 04/29/2022
SHIPPING ADDRESS
Camilla Bianchi
via Pascoli, 10
201033 Milano, Milano
Italia
+39 327 902 7431
9:41
Back
#101
Partially fulfilled
Paid
4 items
Oranges ring dish
SKU DSH-ORG-CAP
Quantity
x1
Price
€ 17.20
Peach ring dish
SKU DSH-PCH-Y
Quantity
x1
Price
€ 19.30
Floral name dish
SKU DSH-FLR-RED
Quantity
x2
Price
€ 32.30
Subtotal
€ 68.80
Shipping
€ 4.00
Total
€ 72.80
Status
Check the status of this order
Production progress
Completed
Shipping progress
70%
Delivery progress
Pending
Payment status and method

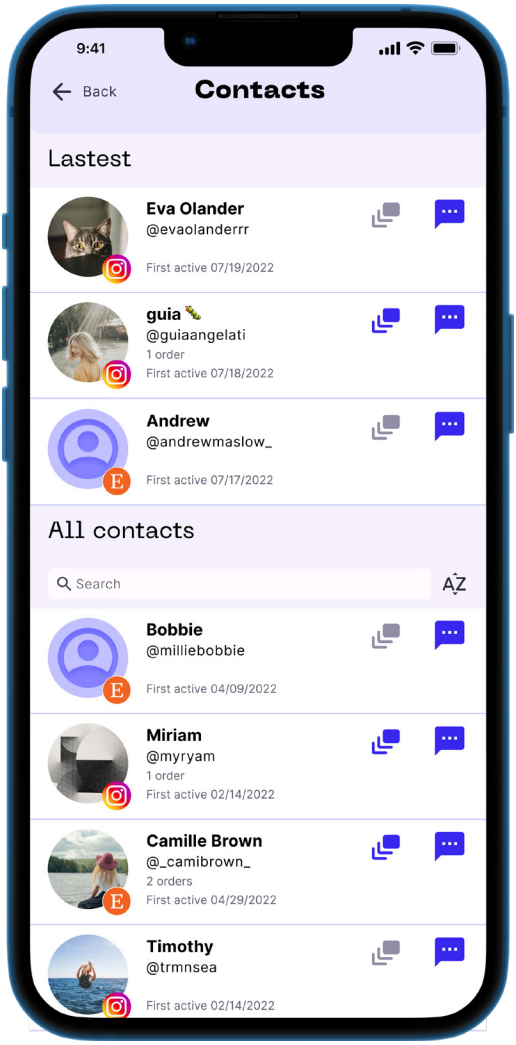
/ Calendar

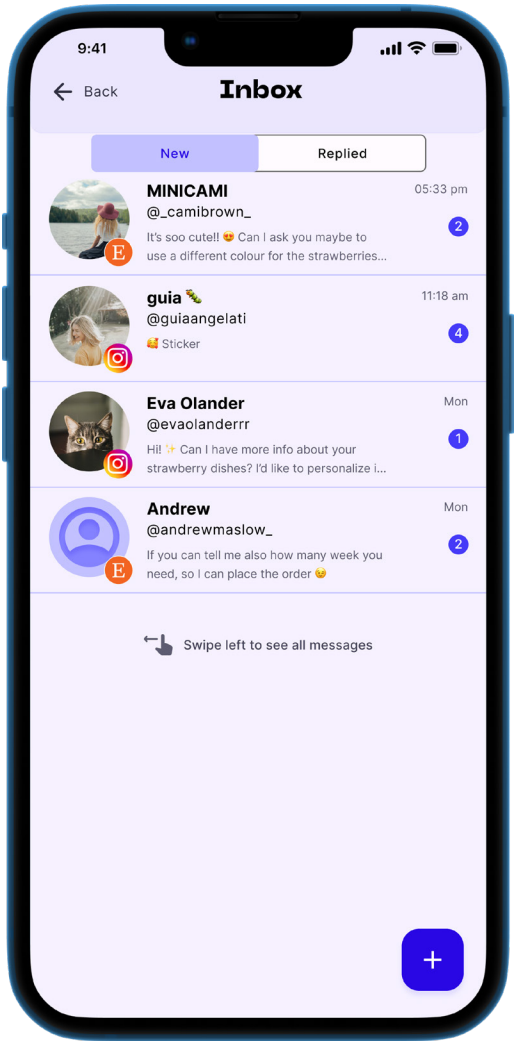


↑ 6.2.4. Final layouts: calendar timeline view
↗ 6.2.5. Final layouts: calendar 3-day view


9:41
Back
Calendar
Task overview
Order #102
Due date
Agu 8
Clay shaping
0/5
Timeline July
Tue 19
Wed 20
Thu 21
Order #100
Jul 1, 22 - Jul 20, 22
Order #101
Jul 19, 22 - Agu 8, 22
Reel IG
Jul 20, 22 - Jul 24, 22
Lists
9:41
Back
Calendar
Task overview
Order #102
Due date
Agu 8
Clay shaping
0/5
Timeline July
Tue 19
Wed 20
Thu 21
Order #100
Jul 1, 22 - Jul 20, 22
Order #101
Jul 19, 22 - Agu 8, 22
Reel IG
Jul 20, 22 - Jul 24, 22

/ Contacts and inbox

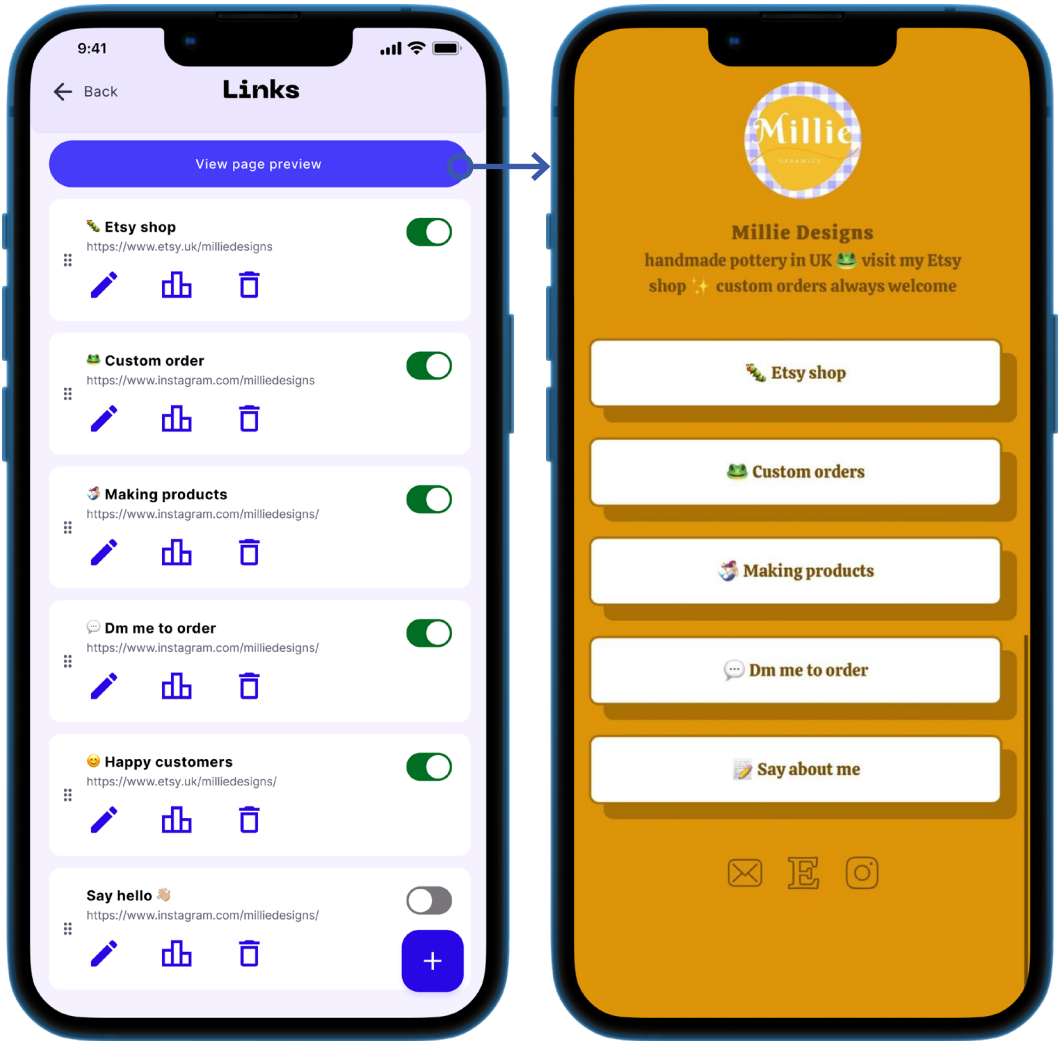




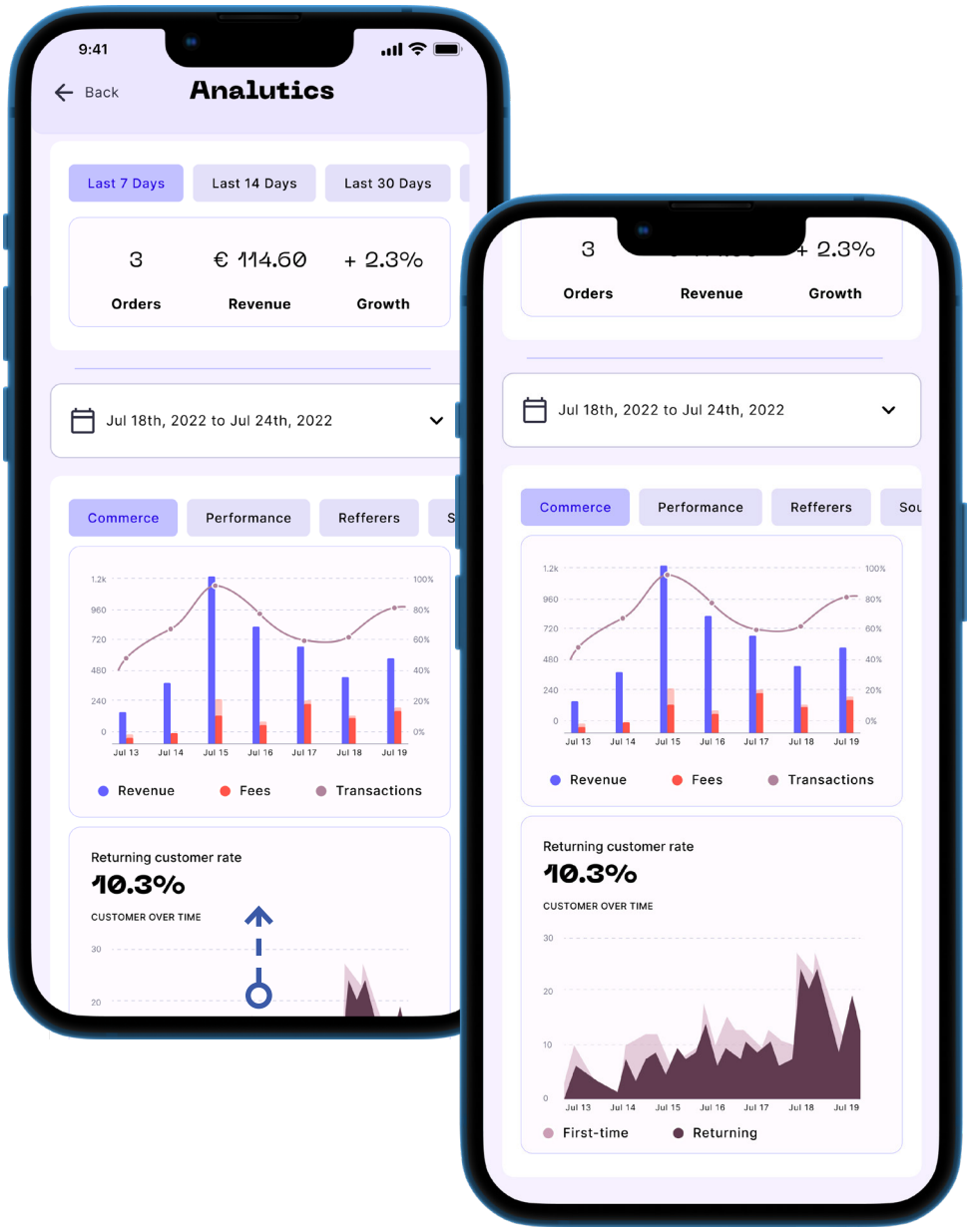
↑ 6.2.6. Final layouts: contacts and unread conversations
↗ 6.2.7. Final layouts: all conversations

9:41
Back
Inbox
New
Replied
Claire
@_clairette_
Yeah, I know! It's difficult sometimes
Mon
Matt
@matt92
2 photos
Mon
EasyPottery
@easypottery
Sat
Mars
@moodyfoody
I usually don't customize this piece, but it's a really special request so maybe I can tr...
Sat
NINA
@misticfalls
Perfect, I look forward to see the final result
Sat
Arianne
@ariannebatch
I will send you updates about the process so
07/15
Megan
@littlecraftslondon
Your last collection is suuper cute! Congrats Emily
07/14
Hazel
@captain_varrow
Thank you!!
9:41
Back
Inbox
New
Replied
Claire
@_clairette_
Yeah, I know! It's difficult sometimes
Mon
Matt
@matt92
2 photos
Mon
EasyPottery
@easypottery
Sat
Mars
@moodyfoody
I usually don't customize this piece, but it's a really special request so maybe I can tr...
Sat
NINA
@misticfalls
Perfect, I look forward to see the final result
Sat
Arianne
@ariannebatch
I will send you updates about the process so
07/15
Megan
@littlecraftslondon
Your last collection is suuper cute! Congrats Emily
07/14

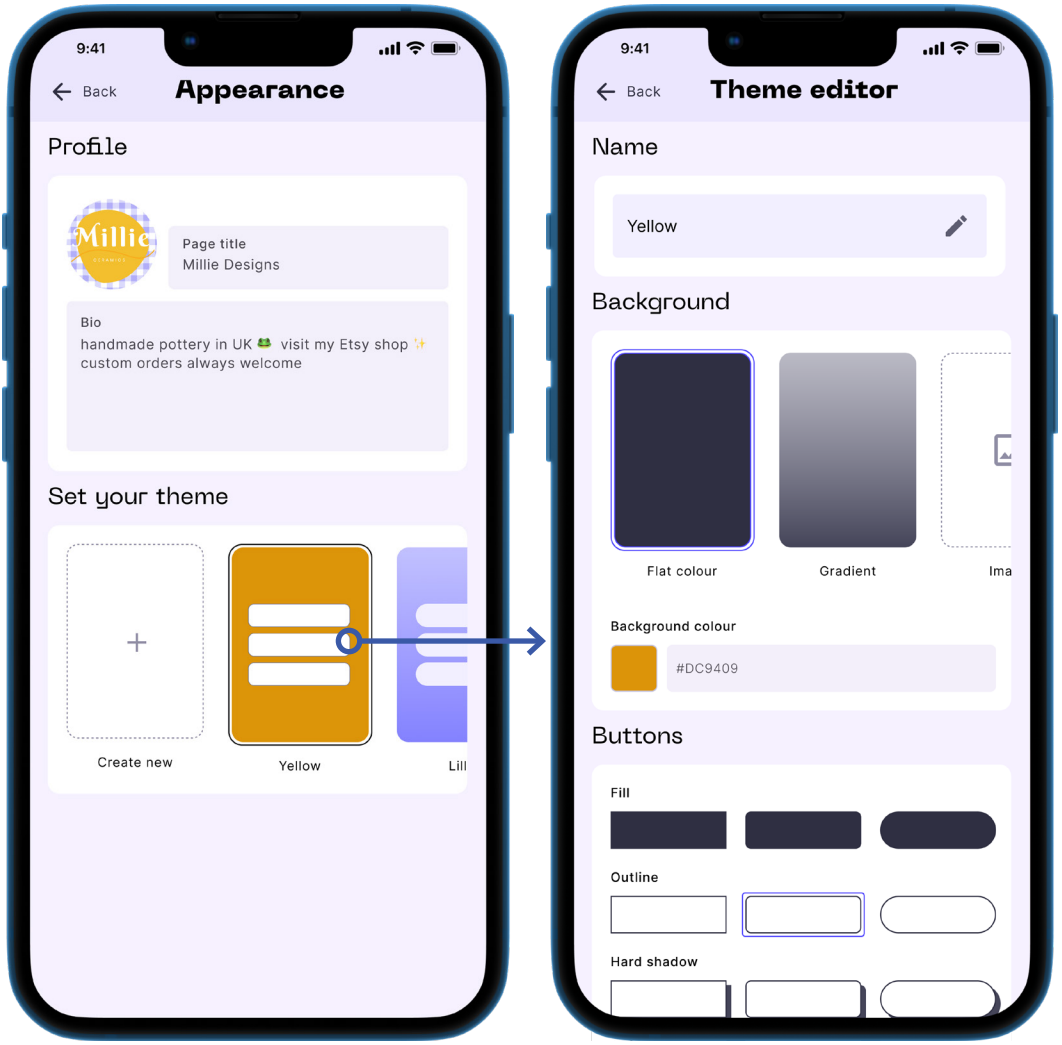
/ Page management



↑ 6.2.8. Final layouts: links manager and page preview
↗ 6.2.9. Final layouts: analytics


9:41
Back
Analytics
Last 7 Days
Last 14 Days
Last 30 Days
3
€ 114.60
+ 2.3%
Orders
Revenue
Growth
Jul 18th, 2022 to Jul 24th, 2022
Commerce
Performance
Refferers
Revenue
Fees
Transactions
Returning customer rate
10.3%
CUSTOMER OVER TIME
First-time
Returning

/ Customization



↑ 6.2.10. Final layouts: information about profile and possibility to customize appearance of page

Evaluation

7.

7.1.
Method of evaluation

Evaluation is crucial to validate the assumptions developed during the redesign phase. According to the user-centered approach, this phase is fundamental because it allows questioning the assumptions that, as we guide the project, validate the correspondence of the identified functionalities with respect to the considered target and test the usability of the application.

The evaluation tool used is A/B testing. This evaluation is based on administering two variants of the same item, the original A and variant B, to an audience. To make the evaluation phase effective, three objectives were identified to be achieved-which responded to the tasks identified in the research phase-then declined into subtasks that would guide the testers' interaction with the application.

The objectives were:

❶ — Monitor primary tasks
❷ — Optimize connection between orders and calendar
❸ — Manage references

To submit the project to the testers, they were first shared a Google file that briefly introduced them to the project to contextualize the interfaces they would later see. They were accessed directly from their smartphones so that their interaction would not be affected, and they could observe their behaviour without interference.

I share with testers not shared evaluation objectives but clear instructions that they would need to accomplish to complete the various tasks.

The sample of testers involved was 20, half of

whom were makers responding to the target and the other half differentiated by age, status and profession to have a heterogeneous picture.

Figma was used to have the interfaces tested to simulate a more realistic and natural interaction through prototyping the various sections.

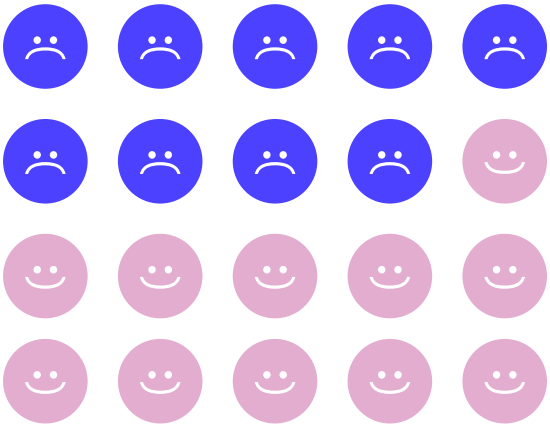
↑ 7.1.1. Snapshot during A/B testing

7.2. A/B testing

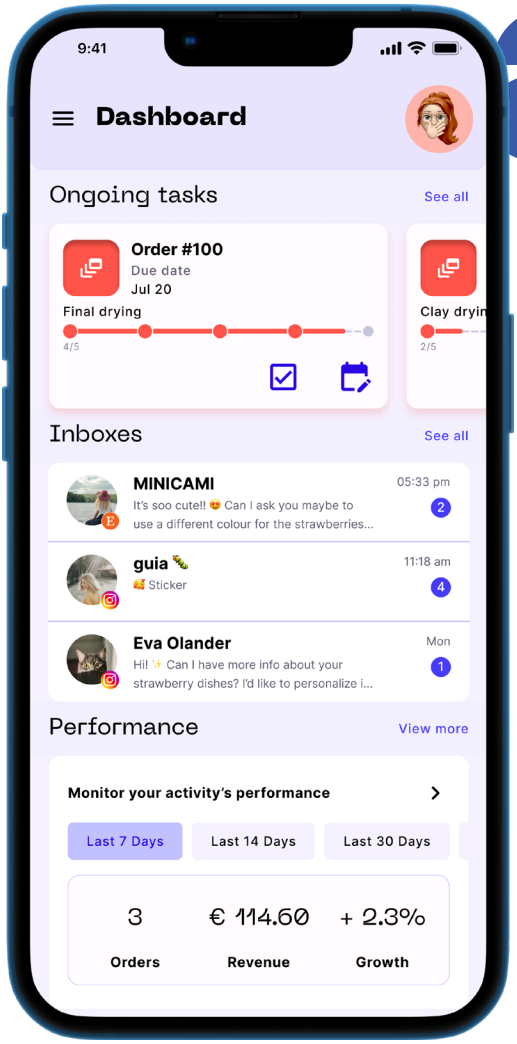
MONITOR PRIMARY TASKS

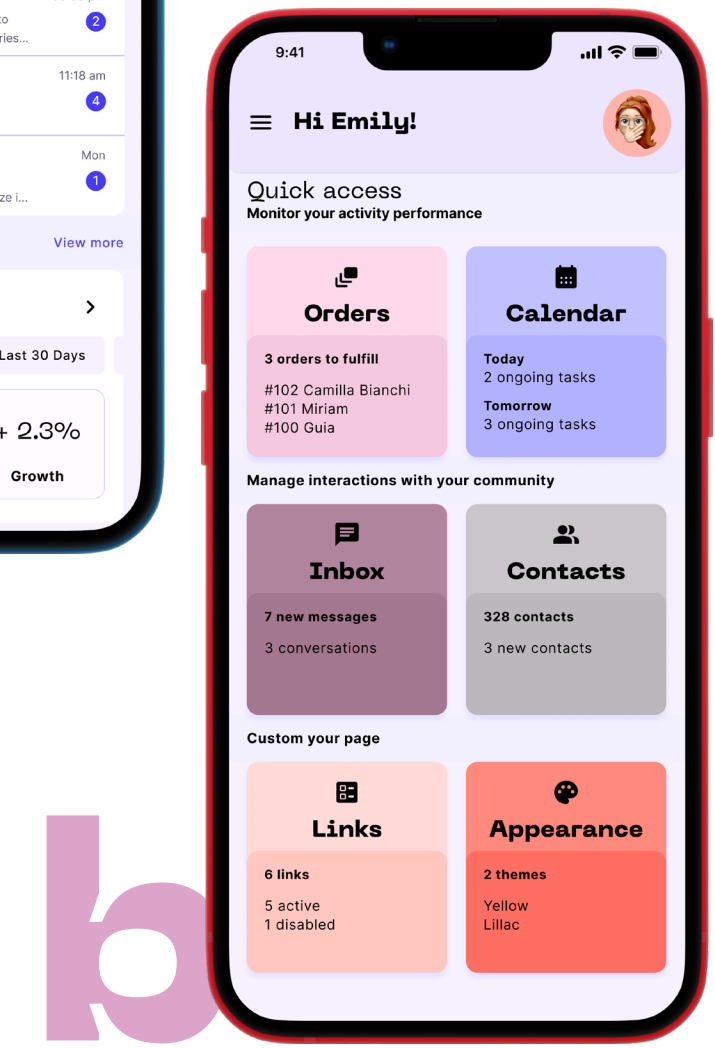
The first objective corresponds to the main login screen. In this case, the difficulty encountered was the choice of priority information for makers at platform login. Specifically, Option A provided a preview of the primary information of some sections, particularly Tasks, Inbox, and Analytics. Option B, on the other hand, provided minimal information on all sections, as if they were notifications to be explored.

In this case, there was no clear majority between the two options. The testers who opted for option B found the first version of the dashboard far too complex and somewhat scattered, while those who preferred it found the information immediately, and the fact that they could see a preview of the different sections gave them a way to anticipate the functionality of the app. Despite this, even those who preferred option A admitted to focusing on other elements at first glance, some more on the preview of conversations, others on the charts.



↑ 7.2.1. Votes from testers: 9 A / 11 B



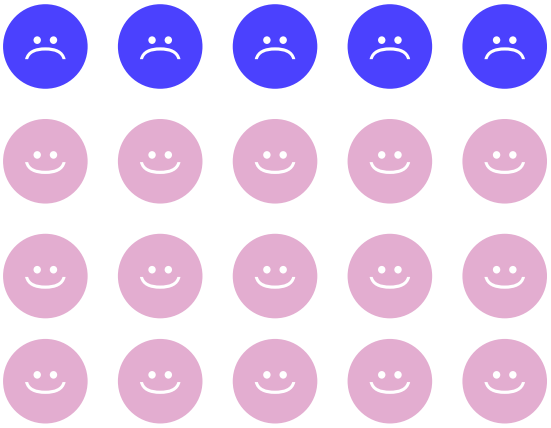


↖ 7.2.2. Dashboard layout option A

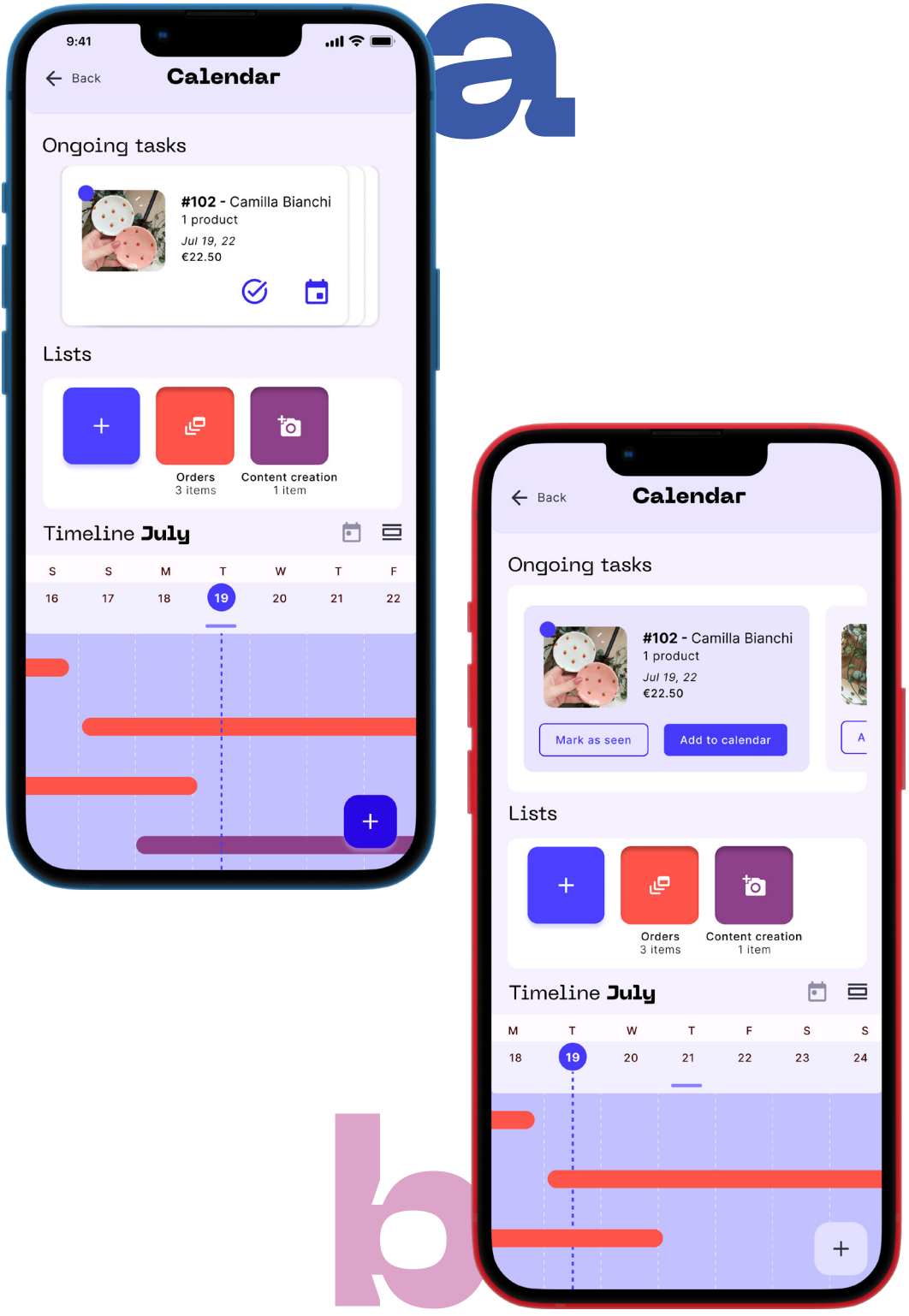
↗ 7.2.3. Dashboard layout variant B

OPTIMIZE CONNECTION BETWEEN ORDERS AND CALENDAR

The second objective required testers to interact with newly notified orders to mark them as read and add them to the calendar. The connection between these two dimensions was crucial in the design phase and complex because it combined functionality proper to a task manager with the order tracking information properly to marketplaces. In this case, however, there was a clear majority for option B, substituting icons for text buttons where the action was more immediate than the other option. The type of actions - mark as read, add to calendar - do not correspond to a universal visual code but leave room for interpretation, making the interface dysfunctional. Moreover, some testers said that the card layout makes it look like movable elements to be inserted into the calendar with a drag-and-drop motion. In option B, on the other hand, the call-to-actions are less eye-catching but more explicit. In both, the scroll to the calendar is appreciated as a confirmation of the action taken.



↑ 7.2.4. Votes from testers: 5 A / 15 B

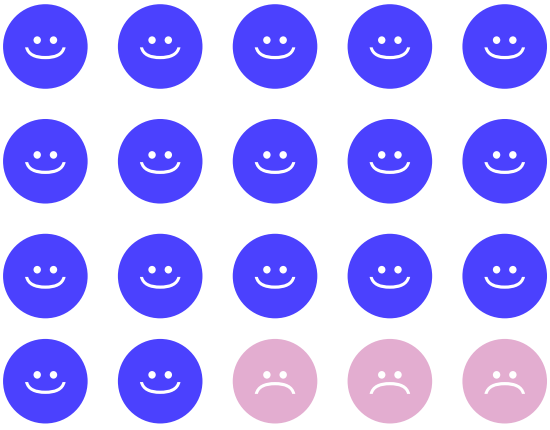


↖ 7.2.5. Calendar layout option A

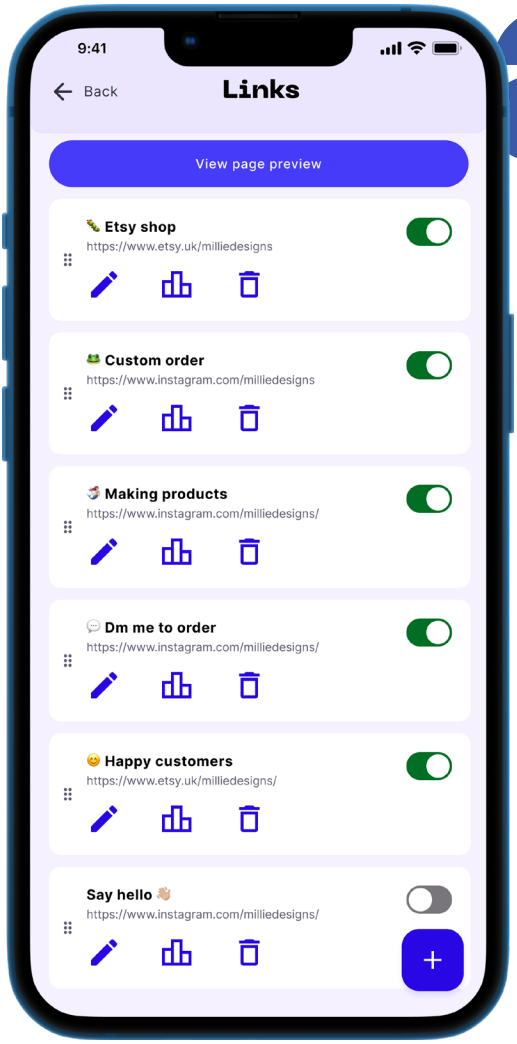
↗ 7.2.6. Calendar layout variant B

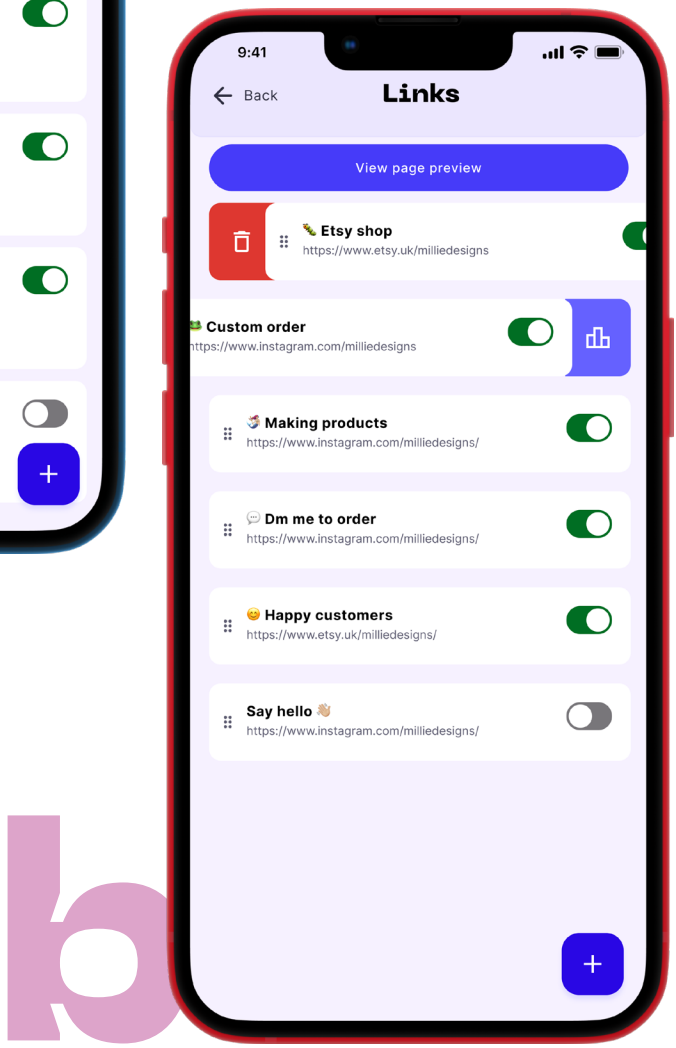
MANAGE REFERENCES

As a final goal, I wanted to test an interface secondary to the target but primary to Linktree's functionality, namely the management of one's page links. In this case, option A presented the possible actions for each reference on the card: Edit, Analytics, and Delete. Option B, on the other hand, provided a different interaction by proposing a gesture that is becoming increasingly popular: that of the sideswipe. In this case, the testers felt bewildered by the lack of icons and made several wrong attempts before understanding the action the interface required. However, all the testers who voted for option A said they would probably find the swipe gesture faster and more efficient after second access.as a confirmation of the action taken.



↑ 7.2.7. Votes from testers: 17 A / 3 B





↖ 7.2.8. Links layout option A

↗ 7.2.9. Links layout variant B

7.3. Thoughts and opportunities

The results of the A/B test confirmed and overturned my assumptions, but they also challenged some choices that I took for granted. In particular, concerning the dashboard, I identified as a possible resolution between the two interfaces the assumption of giving the user the possibility to customize the login screen through widgets, thus inserting the preview of those that are prioritized, almost as if it were the screen of one's smartphone. On the other hand, examining tasks 2 and 3, the difficulty of use can be traced back to the lack of information; in this case, an initial tour of the application that illustrates the different sections and functionalities could guide the user in the first access, optimizing the fruition through established gestures.

Conclusion and future developements

8.

8.1.
A passion-driven job

This thesis is the result of a research and project work born out of an interest in the topic of handicrafts. In February 2020, I began an internship at TA-DAAN, an Italian startup that promotes an idea of contemporary and international craftsmanship. The opportunity to look at the craftsmanship as a response to values I shared, such as creativity and sustainability, made me passionate about this art. What was even more surprising was to realize how thousands and thousands of young people shared this interest and passion.

Crafts in my imagination were outdated and dusty; instead, I was meeting more and more people who were proving me otherwise. Not only on social or online platforms, but people in my circle were starting to get into crocheting, jewelry making, sewing, and so on. I found it fascinating how in the world now determined by technology and immateriality, there was such a deep interest and investment in the matter, concrete objects. Imperfect objects, born from hobbies, often consolidated through youtube tutorials or handed down by some patient grandmother. Creations of little economic value but which affirmed an implicit will: that of remaining adherent to reality, of meeting in markets and at events, of giving value to what is shaped by hands.

This phenomenon, which involved me much more closely than I expected, is defined by Adam Davidson (2020) as passion economy. It is an economic model built around those who create with a purpose, people powerfully motivated to start a business, enterprise or even just a community, usually through digital platforms and tools, dri-

ven by a shared passion. The pillars of the passion economy can be identified in expertise, that is, in these creators' skills, experiences, and relationships.

Certainly, digitization has given these creators the tools to turn their passion into a job. Perhaps it will seem utopian to live in a world where working is determined not by an economic need but by a personal passion, yet the subversion of the former idea of a working career also seems to contribute to building this scenario.

As the historical research conducted revealed, the fear of sharing the skills and knowledge of artisans - jealously guarded in medieval guilds - undoubtedly contributed to its decline. Today, however, these practices are displayed and shared in the knowledge society and help build communities of people who share the same passions.

In this potpourri of tools and technological devilry, it is difficult for these micro businesses to emerge, despite possessing all the necessary tools to do so. Hence the idea of the project is to simplify this complex picture, to intervene from a designer's point of view in optimizing the connection between sales tools and social sharing platforms, supporting the makers and providing them with a toolkit. Therefore, by leveraging the popularity and functionality of a tool like Linktr.ee, it is possible to imagine setting up an ad hoc platform for these 200 million creators who populate digital channels. Linktr.ee for Makers can bring together sales and organizing functionality in a single control panel, allowing makers to maximize sales while minimizing effort on their part. Requiring no content production drives the traffic generated into conversions, allowing sales performance to be tracked.

8.2. Future developments

From the discussion with several makers during the final evaluation, I identified some collateral functionality to the sales and promotion activity which would be helpful to implement in the application. In the design phase it was decided to focus on specific needs by studying the target audience and personas. However, several design directions emerged that could be pursued.

In particular, building on specific features of the current project, an Education section could be developed to support the makers in content creation, strategy development, or data monitoring with articles, interviews, and workshops. With respect, in fact, to performance monitoring, a system could be developed that could provide data on the creative industry referred by the maker, providing some insights such as click rates or conversion rates of makers that fit into a related market so that they could also evaluate their performance in a broader picture. This would probably only be possible once a substantial number of users are reached to allow this data to be extrapolated and analyzed.

Regarding the sales process, it was decided to focus on the more complex stages of the funnel, namely those involving simultaneous and complementary use of different tools. However, one of the stages that might be useful to investigate is loyalty. Indeed, an insight that often emerged from conversations with the makers involved in the project is the difficulty in conveying trust to new customers, given the lack of proper tools for collecting and sharing reviews integrated with social media and marketplaces. Therefore, it would be attractive to explore how we can leverage Linktr.ee for Makers to collect customer experiences

and reviews to show them to potential buyers.

This juncture opens the door to what we can call the application's front end, which was not considered in this project. It was decided to focus on the control center of the tool, providing the necessary functionality to support makers without considering the consumers' point of view. Therefore, conducting research on social commerce trends, for example, or user behaviours for online shopping, it would be interesting to intervene on the Linktree landing page to guide the potential buyer through different digital tools during the funnel stages.

The research also showed that meeting occasions such as fairs and markets are still alive today, and renewed participation is rediscovered. Therefore, it would be interesting to connect the Linktree for Makers digital tool with these kinds of meeting events, perhaps suggesting events and activities in one's area and supporting in managing and organizing them.

Last but not least, it would certainly be appropriate and consistent with the project's approach to broadening the scope of the evaluation, testing the app on a much more comprehensive and internationally extended audience to track different usability features or solutions. In particular, one might consider testing two of the elements that currently look promising for future digital tools. These are voice commands and the study of gestures.

8.3. Conclusions

The Linktree for Makers thesis project aims to be the starting point for constituting digital tools that are supportive of new entrepreneurs and do not only cater to content creators or influencers but allow agile connections across the different channels that dominate the digital scenario today. The research results affirm how craftsmanship can be a viable response to the needs of the current market, meeting the interest and passion of the new generations for something that would otherwise be lost.

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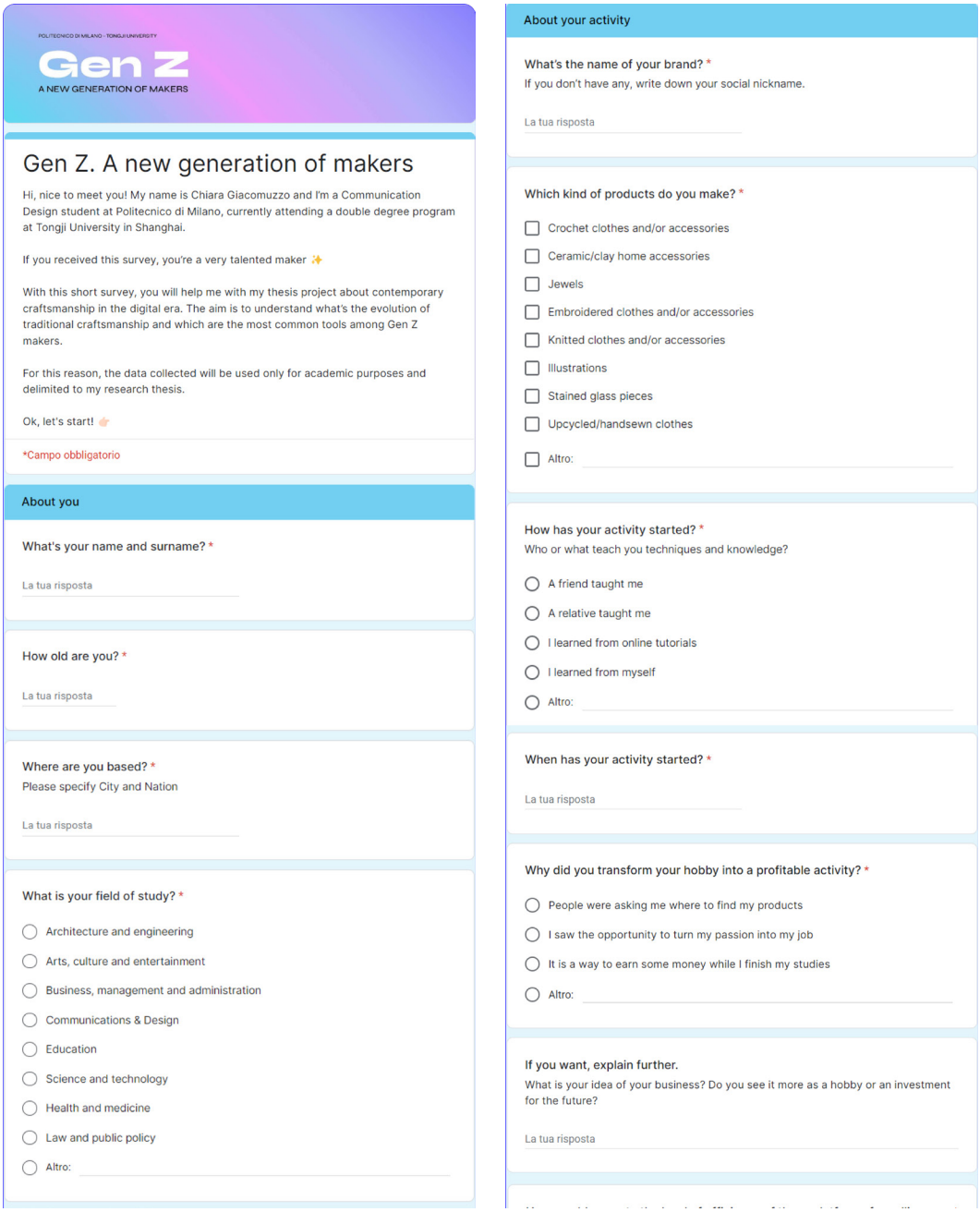
Appendix A



POLITECNICO DI MILANO - TONGJI UNIVERSITY

Gen Z

A NEW GENERATION OF MAKERS

Gen Z. A new generation of makers

Hi, nice to meet you! My name is Chiara Giacomuzzo and I'm a Communication Design student at Politecnico di Milano, currently attending a double degree program at Tongji University in Shanghai.

If you received this survey, you're a very talented maker ✨

With this short survey, you will help me with my thesis project about contemporary craftsmanship in the digital era. The aim is to understand what's the evolution of traditional craftsmanship and which are the most common tools among Gen Z makers.

For this reason, the data collected will be used only for academic purposes and delimited to my research thesis.

Ok, let's start! 👉🏻

*Campo obbligatorio

About you

What's your name and surname? *

La tua risposta

How old are you? *

La tua risposta

Where are you based? *

Please specify City and Nation

La tua risposta

What is your field of study? *

- ○ Architecture and engineering
- ○ Arts, culture and entertainment
- ○ Business, management and administration
- ○ Communications & Design
- ○ Education
- ○ Science and technology
- ○ Health and medicine
- ○ Law and public policy
- ○ Altro:

About your activity

What's the name of your brand? *

If you don't have any, write down your social nickname.

La tua risposta

Which kind of products do you make? *

- ☐ Crochet clothes and/or accessories
- ☐ Ceramic/clay home accessories
- ☐ Jewels
- ☐ Embroidered clothes and/or accessories
- ☐ Knitted clothes and/or accessories
- ☐ Illustrations
- ☐ Stained glass pieces
- ☐ Upcycled/handsewn clothes
- ☐ Altro:

How has your activity started? *

Who or what teach you techniques and knowledge?

- ○ A friend taught me
- ○ A relative taught me
- ○ I learned from online tutorials
- ○ I learned from myself
- ○ Altro:

When has your activity started? *

La tua risposta

Why did you transform your hobby into a profitable activity? *

- ○ People were asking me where to find my products
- ○ I saw the opportunity to turn my passion into my job
- ○ It is a way to earn some money while I finish my studies
- ○ Altro:

If you want, explain further.

What is your idea of your business? Do you see it more as a hobby or an investment for the future?

La tua risposta

Survey structure shared via Google Forms

How would you rate the level of efficiency of these platforms for selling handicraft products online? *

Please give a rate to each platform from 1 to 4 where 1=not functional at all / 2=poor / 3=efficient but with limitations / 4=ideal

	1	2	3	4	I don't use it
Etsy	○	○	○	○	○
Depop	○	○	○	○	○
Vinted	○	○	○	○	○
Own website	○	○	○	○	○
Instagram	○	○	○	○	○
Pinterest	○	○	○	○	○
TikTok	○	○	○	○	○
Facebook	○	○	○	○	○

What do you think are the main limitations of these platforms? *

Please choose from the limitations (rows) the ones you have found in the platforms (columns). If you think the platform has all of them please choose for that column "all of them", if you think it has none of them please choose "none of them".

	Etsy	Depop	Vinted	Own website	Instagram	Facebook	TikTok	N… th…
Low visibility	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Little traffic	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
No possibility of customization	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
No possibility of creating/sharing extra content	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Not considered reliable	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I can't keep track of my orders	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
People are interested but do not buy	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

What activities do you put in place to promote your creations and make yourself known? *

☐ I regularly post content on social channels

What activities do you put in place to promote your creations and make yourself known? *

☐ I regularly post content on social channels
☐ I have subscribed to several platforms that promote businesses similar to mine
☐ I collaborate with influencers who raise awareness of my brand
☐ I actively participate in trade fairs or attended events
☐ I resell my pieces in shops in my area
☐ Word of mouth
☐ Altro: _____

Which of the promotion activities you selected above is the most effective for you? Why? How do you explain this? *

La tua risposta

About handicrafts

How would you define yourself?

○ Craftsmen
○ Artisan
○ Designer
○ Maker
○ Artist
○ Do-it-yourselfer
○ Altro: _____

Do you think investing in handmade products has a value in today's society? Why? *

La tua risposta

What are the difficulties you most often face in selling handmade products? *

☐ Make myself known
☐ Raise interest in my products
☐ Know and understand audience needs
☐ Balance production with administration and communication
☐ Justify products prices
☐ Justify shipping prices
☐ Altro: _____

What do you think motivates your buyers most to buy your products? *

What do you think motivates your buyers most to buy your products? *

- [ ] Possibility to have a customized product
- [ ] Possibility to have a unique product
- [ ] Ethical production
- [ ] Supporting small business
- [ ] Support and 'affection' of the person, irrespective of the product
- [ ] Altro:

Do you think that communicating the values and the making process is important and effective in selling your products? Why? *

La tua risposta

Do you use social media to promote or talk about your activity? *

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

About your digital identity

How would you rate the level of efficiency of these social media for talking about your activity? *

Please give a rate to each social media from 1 to 4 where 1=not functional at all / 2=poor / 3=efficient but with limitations / 4=ideal

	1	2	3	4	I don't use it
Instagram	○	○	○	○	○
Pinterest	○	○	○	○	○
TikTok	○	○	○	○	○
Facebook	○	○	○	○	○
YouTube	○	○	○	○	○
Snapchat	○	○	○	○	○

What do you think are the main pros of these social media? *

Please choose from the limitations (rows) the ones you have found in the social media you use (columns). If you think the platform has all of them please choose for that column "all of them", if you think it has none of them please choose "none of them".

	Instagram	Pinterest	TikTok	Facebook	YouTube	Snapchat	None of them
High interaction	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Different							

What do you think are the main pros of these social media? *

Please choose from the limitations (rows) the ones you have found in the social media you use (columns). If you think the platform has all of them please choose for that column "all of them", if you think it has none of them please choose "none of them".

	Instagram	Pinterest	TikTok	Facebook	YouTube	Snapchat	None of them
High interaction	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Different formats (photos, long/short videos...)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ease of use	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Transparency	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Trust	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gathers a wider pool than sales tools	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Performance insights	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
No fee	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Popularity	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Match with my target	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

What do you think are the main limitations of these social? *

Please choose from the limitations (rows) the ones you have found in the social media you use (columns). If you think the platform has all of them please choose for that column "all of them", if you think it has none of them please choose "none of them".

	Instagram	Pinterest	TikTok	Facebook	YouTube	Snapchat	Non of ther
Lots of competition	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Difficulty in emerging	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Algorithm mechanism	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Does not transmit trust	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Lack of protection for the customer/maker	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Appendix A Survey structure shared via Google Forms

What do you think are the main limitations of these social? *

Please choose from the limitations (rows) the ones you have found in the social media you use (columns). If you think the platform has all of them please choose for that column "all of them", if you think it has none of them please choose "none of them".

	Instagram	Pinterest	TikTok	Facebook	YouTube	Snapchat	Nor of the
Lots of competition	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Difficulty in emerging	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Algorithm mechanism	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Does not transmit trust	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Lack of protection for the customer/maker	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Lack of sales functionalities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Lack of agreements for logistics/shipping	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Can you think of anything else?

Would you like to add something to the socials mentioned or suggest socials I haven't considered?

La tua risposta

You're done! 🙌

To thank you for your availability I leave you this playlist of cute cats and puppies to make your day better 💛 Enjoy! 😻
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BkD2nN5275c

If you know any makers I should definitely find out about, please write me the name or nickname and I will contact them! Thanks for your help *

La tua risposta