

**Socio-technical gaps and social capital formation in
Online Collaborative Consumption communities**

by

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Declaration

I, Ali Gheitasy, affirm that this thesis submitted at the University of West London is my own work, except expressed or referenced accordingly.

Abstract

Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) are transforming social activities and interactions which are naturally varied and dynamic. In this process, 'gaps' develop between the technologies and emerging social requirements. Given that the main challenge for Computer Supported Cooperative Work (CSCW) is to identify and ameliorate these socio-technical gaps, it is essential to understand how individuals work and collaborate in groups, societies, and communities.

The main question addressed in this study regards the identification of these gaps in the social activities of Online Collaborative Consumption (OCC). The intention is to improve user experience and design requirements to support OCC at the socio-technical design level. OCC facilitates sharing, swapping, trading, or renting products, services, and resources, via the computer-mediated interactions. *Etsy*, an online marketplace and community for handmade and craft goods, is the focus of this study as a community in which OCC takes place.

The evaluation of online communities by using an ethnographic approach is an equally important question which this study investigates. Due to a lack of standard methods, a new combined methodological approach is proposed in this research (Predictive ethnography) and it was used in evaluation of collaborative communities to investigate the socio-technical gaps. In this approach, online ethnography complemented predictive evaluation with the aid of heuristics including sociability, usability, and user experience (UX) items. These heuristics were drawn from previous literature as the success factors for the online communities. The textual interactions from discussions of the forum and teams on *Etsy* that were related to these heuristics were collected and coded. Over 1000 posts from 178 threads were collected. Their frequencies were

measured to demonstrate their importance, and further ethnography helped the researcher in qualitative analysis and meaning making of the textual interactions.

The subsidiary question this research aims to answer is how social capital is developed in the OCC communities. Social capital is utilised as a tool to enhance the understanding of the socio-technical requirements of OCC communities and to improve the process of social capital generation. The same above-mentioned methodological approach (Predictive ethnography) was applied with the heuristics replaced by social capital measures. Over 9500 posts collected from 97 threads from the textual discussions of different *Etsy* teams. This study investigates the social capital formation in different types of teams such as topic-based ones that are created based on the common interest topics, and location-based ones that are created based on the shared locations of the members. In the topic-based teams, a significant amount of knowledge sharing and intellectual capital was observed. In location-based teams, most interactions were within social interactions and relational capital.

The new method proposed in this research has shown its effectiveness in gaining insight from the natural discussions of the members. In total, 33 socio-technical gaps were identified and presented with possible recommendations. The most significant gaps concerned: Trust creation features; relevant rules of behaviour; clear displayed policies; and social presence tools.

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

CSCW	Computer Supported Cooperative Work
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry
FAQ	Frequently Asked Question
HCI	Human-Computer Interaction
ICTs	Information and Communication Technologies
ISO	International Standardization Organisation
OCC	Online Collaborative Consumption
SEO	Search Engine Optimization
STS	Socio-Technical System
UX	User eXperience

1. Introduction

1.1. Rationale and purpose of the research

Technology advancement takes place within the social process, and not as an autonomous occurrence. Technology and society emerge as two facets of the socio-technical concept during the development of facts, artifacts, and social groups. Social groups contribute to the social construction of technology and to the creation of democratic technological culture by discussing their problems and concerns. Therefore, it is crucial to study these social groups through their interactions.

Online social interactions are enhancing, evolving and affecting many aspects of our lives. This evolution might be one of the most exciting experiences of our era, where people share content, experiences, ideas, expertise and contribute to collective power of societies. The constant changes in these social activities and interactions lead to gaps between the users' requirements and the existing technological capabilities. These gaps arise, where the social requirements are not being met by technologies supporting social interactions and needs. Given that the main challenge for designers of technologies that support the collaborative works is to identify and ameliorate these socio-technical gaps, it is essential to understand how individuals work and cooperate in groups, societies, and communities. This study attempts to investigate these gaps in the social activities of Online Collaborative Consumption (OCC), which facilitates sharing, swapping, trading, or renting products, services, and resources, via the computer-mediated interactions. These sharing practices within the online communities can create values and help in social capital formation. Learning about the social capital formation can be a useful instrument to reveal the different collaboration patterns within users' social interactions. Revealing these collaboration

patterns can be valuable to improve the user experience and the quality of design requirements from a socio-technical perspective.

1.2. Overview of OCC, CSCW, social capital, and socio-technical gaps

1.2.1. Collaborative consumption & CSCW

Collaborative consumption combines and shapes groups to find something or someone to create many to many interactions (Botsman and Rogers 2011). Before the online age, it has always played an active role in social life as the people were used to sharing (lend and rent) their lands and other goods. Within last two decades, the field of Computer Supported Cooperative Work (CSCW) that coordinates the activities of collaborating individuals with the aid of computer systems emerged (Baecker 1995). CSCW started to enhance the existing collaborative consumption practices and create new ones by providing efficient instant sharing and communication platforms. Earlier OCC mainly involved sharing files, photos, videos, and knowledge, while nowadays it engages other areas of our everyday life. CSCW connects individuals with common interests, and enhances trust between them in different ways such as with the aid of online reputation systems. OCC assists people to get access to products and services while saving time, money and spaces as well as generating income. Engaging in collaborative consumption enables individuals to become micro-entrepreneurs (The Economist 2010).

OCC activities are computer mediated interactions between people that facilitate sharing, swapping, trading, or renting products, services and resources. It provides the development of community oriented and open business models, which rely on social forms of intellectual property, decreases the inequality and protects the environment. The consequences of consumerism and resources scarcity became

increasing causes of price and allocation, and as a result, severely impact the viability of the current globalised model of free trade. This OCC grounded economic model combines global intellectual collaboration with local production and may leads to more sustainable societies. It could balance the wealth and resources not just by the ability to utilise distributed equipment, finance, and energy, but also by stabilising the global material usage. It reveals the value hidden in our resources and skills we have developed. It allows us to make a right use of the resources and skills, trade them and earn money from them. OCC is a foundation of the new economy that challenges the old economy corporate ideology that must own the assets to make goods and provide services. Instead, it inspires the distribution of ownership. This new economy could succeed a sustainable consumption whose key indicators are: localisation, ecological footprints reduction, community building, collective action and creating new socio-economic organisations (Seyfang 2007).

OCC transforms consumption habits by using fewer materials in more efficient ways through enabling access to products and services over ownership. Automobiles, home, and tool sharing, for example, provide access to materials for people who do not own them. OCC reveals the value hidden in our resources and in skills we have developed. It allows us to share and trade resources and skills, and in some cases, to make money from them. It provides significant environmental benefits by increasing efficiency and decreasing the waste of resources by encouraging reselling and reusing old or unwanted materials rather than throwing them away. OCC inspires open collaborative projects such as open software and Wikipedias by distributing tasks between individuals to solve a problem that serves the need of individuals and, at the same time, provides a sense of belonging to the community. OCC is part of a new

economy based on community-oriented activities with the aid of internet technology that combine global intellectual collaboration with local production.

OCC enables the individuals to set up and join local and global communities to exchange knowledge, skills, resources and help. It also facilitates creating events and collective action gatherings. The collaboration and interaction in the heart of collaborative consumption enable individuals to be active citizens in society, which increases their social capital.

1.2.2. Social capital

Putnam (1995) defined social capital as trust, network structures, and norms that promote cooperation among actors within a society for their mutual benefits. Social capital is a valuable concept in understanding the practices and outcomes of social systems (Castiglione et al. 2008). It also can be very useful in policy making due to its mostly positive implication recognized in society, and in its character in the creation of social and individual goods (Castiglione et al. 2008). For these reasons and because of social capital's relevance to OCC, we intend to learn and reveal social capital formation within online communities. This could also be helpful in revealing the social needs of individuals that contribute to understanding the socio-technical gaps within OCC.

Different business models used by companies utilise resources to work, create value and to accomplish economic activities, and/or to foster local connections and communities. Many companies try to create a sense of community by making use of different social features such as collective rating and writing reviews that could create values for the users (e.g. Airbnb and Ebay). This study focuses on *Etsy* as the data gathering platform, which is in the redistribution market category. *Etsy* is an

established online marketplace that connects buyers and independent craftspeople for buying and selling handmade and vintage craft items. Its' diverse community features enables members to communicate and trust each other to share their problems, concerns, solutions and to generate social capital. The study of social capital formation reveals diverse collaboration patterns that are valuable in defining the social and technical requirements of the users in bridging the gaps.

1.2.3. The socio-technical approach towards the bridging of gaps

System engineers tend to detect human, social and organisational issues as problems of the human interacting with the technology. Accordingly, often they overlook the relationship between the interaction of individuals and the social organisation of work, and how the latter can impact the former (Baxter and Sommerville 2011). Socio-technical approach is a philosophy associated to action research to outline the humanistic values related to technology and change (Mumford 2006). This approach aims to understand the interaction between humans, machines and the environmental elements of the work system. In the socio-technical approach, the two dimensions of people and technology need to work mutually to create improved outputs; therefore finding and keeping the balance between these dimensions is crucial.

This study applies a socio-technical approach that provides a valuable framework for the understanding of how technology is embraced and used by people in the organisations. The meaning of technological artifact is not residing in the technology itself, rather in how the technologies are shaped and practiced in the diversity of social interactions (Bijker 1995). The socio-technical approach has a major democratic feature by giving the people a voice that is valuable in Human-Computer Interaction (HCI). The description of human needs should come from the people associated and

affected by technology and work organisation. In the socio-technical approach the employees who use the new systems, are involved in determining the required quality of working-life improvements (Mumford 2006). The socio-technical design has a strong emphasis on participatory methods, where the users are engaged in the design process (Greenbaum and Kyng 1991). According to Pasmore (1985), the socio-technical approach provides more flexibility and the ability to handle new challenges based on skill redundancy and creates more skills than normal work required. In this approach, individuals must be seen as complementary to technology, not secondary to it. Increasing knowledge is a significant objective of this approach, which could raise the chances for individuals and groups to learn more (Mumford 2006). This approach as a framework aids us to investigate how social characteristics affect users' consumption and sharing practices through collaborative communities along with the consideration of technical factors.

This research is an interdisciplinary study that draws inspiration from HCI, social science, technology and design. In this study, the intention is to investigate the individuals' behaviours and needs with regards to their cultural background, by observing the online communities where the individuals are provided with opportunities to consume collaboratively. This research aims to identify socio-technical gaps in OCC and to support the design of OCC platforms better through the identification of these gaps. This study also aims to understand the formation of social capital in OCC to reveal collaboration patterns and social requirements that also contribute to the gaps. Its objective is to provide a framework to better evaluate the online collaborative communities. The results of this study can benefit an enhanced economy by discovering new socio-technical aspects and provide a framework to support OCC design features and functionalities better.

In recent years, there has been a shift in the attitudes of people towards consumption due to the collective concerns over environmental, social, and development impacts. These increasing concerns and the desire for social embeddedness by localness and shared consumption (Belk 2010; Botsman and Rogers 2011) have made the OCC an attractive alternative for the consumers. OCC is rapidly growing in different categories such as product service systems, redistribution markets, and collaborative lifestyles. This phenomenon is emerging in various domains such as transportation (Lyft and Uber), products and goods (*Etsy* and *Ebay*), space (*Airbnb* and *Sharedesk*), money (*Zopa* and *Kickstarter*), services (*Taskrabbit* and *Odesk*), food (*Eatmeal* and *Meal sharing*), education (*Coursera* and *Udemy*), and many more. Despite the societal impact, this phenomena could have also a significant impact on the e-commerce patterns and online sales, which make it significant to examine and study the users' behaviours in the context of OCC.

Despite the growing practical importance of this phenomena, there is a lack of empirical research on the issues and challenges of these platforms. Most research in this area have emphasized on the outlining of this concept as well as distinguishing the different categories of collaborative consumption (Botsman and Rogers 2011; John 2013; Belk 2014; Schor and Fitzmaurice 2014; Ertz et al. 2016). Some recent studies have been undertaken to investigate the people's motivational factors to participate in collaborative consumption (Hamari et al. 2015; Ikkala and Lampinen 2015; Tussyadiah 2015). While these studies focused on some aspects of OCC, this research investigates the challenges and issues of OCC in an extensive and qualitative approach by observing the users' behaviours in the real environment of an OCC community. The results from this study including the socio-technical gaps and recommendations could contribute to the design and policy making of OCC platforms.

Due to the lack of a standard methodological approach for evaluating the online collaborative communities, this study proposes a novel ethnographical approach to evaluate a community of OCC. This approach could be valuable in the studying of similar platforms. This research also investigates the formation of social capital in *Etsy* community. Studying the social capital formation in different types of teams such as topic-based and location-based teams reflect diverse collaboration patterns. These different patterns of collaboration are valuable in outlining the social and technical requirements of the users of these online collaborative communities, towards bridging the gaps.

1.3. Structure of the thesis

This PhD thesis consists of seven chapters. In chapter 1 the introduction provides the rationale and purpose for this PhD research. Chapter 2 discusses the literature review for different domains of this research such as socio-technical gaps, online collaborative consumption (OCC), online communities, and social capital. At the end of this chapter, the gaps in OCC research will be discussed. Chapter 3 starts by presenting the research questions followed by the socio-technical framework as an outcome of the literature review. Afterwards, it covers methodology for this research by reviewing the related work in ethnography and predictive evaluation, then introduces the predictive ethnography as a new approach conducted by this study, followed by the discussion of heuristics as success factor and the social capital measures. At the end of this chapter the implementation of predictive ethnography will be presented followed by introducing the data gathering platform, challenges of online ethnography, ethics of the study, and the data analysis and procedures applied. In chapter 4 the results of the pilot study will be presented. It starts by reporting the social

capital formation followed by socio-technical gaps results and discussions. This chapter concludes by representing the preliminary contributions from the pilot studies and the lesson learned from this pilot study. Chapter 5 discusses the results of social capital data collection. It starts by defining how the study was carried out and the different types of teams in data collection. Then the quantitative analysis results for various teams will be presented followed by the qualitative analysis results from the online ethnography will be discussed for different teams. These qualitative findings summarised at the end of each team in a bullet point format. At the end of this chapter a summary of results will be presented. In chapter 6 the results of data collection for socio-technical gaps will be presented. It starts by introducing of how the study conducted, then reveals the quantitative analysis results followed by the discussions of the qualitative findings from the online ethnography. This chapter concludes with a summary of findings and lists of discovered gaps and possible recommendations. Chapter 7 is the final chapter of this PhD research that covers the discussions and conclusion. This chapter starts by discussing the findings from the social capital formation in *Etsy* online teams followed by the socio-technical requirements of social capital formation in different teams. Then, the discussion of socio-technical gaps in *Etsy* community will be presented. In conclusion, answering the research questions will be reviewed followed by the theoretical and practical contribution of this research. Finally, the limitations of this PhD research and the possible future research implications will be presented.

2. Literature review

In this chapter, a review of the related literature will be covered. This project aims to investigate the socio-technical gaps in OCC. Therefore, it is necessary to review in details the current literature in both areas. First, the socio-technical concept, approach, and gaps will be discussed as the conceptual framework for this study. Then, a discussion and background of OCC as a platform and context for this study will be covered. This study also aims to investigate the formation of social capital in OCC. Hence, a history of social capital along with its categories and relevance with OCC will be reviewed. Finally, to explore the gaps in OCC research, an overview of the existing research in this area will be outlined.

2.1. Socio-technical gaps

The term socio-technical was originally introduced by Emery and Trist (1960) to emphasise the relationship between human, social and technical factors in an organisation. It sprouts from the Tavistock Institute in the early 1950s to improve the quality of working situations in human terms with technical changes. It is closely connected to action research to define the humanistic set of values related to technology and change (Mumford 2006). The objective of this approach is to understand the interaction between humans, machines and the environmental elements of the work system. This approach is more alike to philosophy than the types of design methodology associated with systems engineering (Mumford 2006). It provides guidance for systems designers rather than comprehensive procedures to follow (Baxter and Sommerville 2011).

Organisations have a tendency to emphasis solely on technological factors in knowledge management systems; therefore, ignoring the users' behaviour occurring

in the social factor of the system might cause a severe failure in the systems (Davenport and Prusak 2000). Systems could fail due to lack of support for the real work in organisations, despite having their technical requirements in place (Baxter and Sommerville 2011). The problem arises when systems apply techno-centric approaches that do not address the people in business processes and relationships within the organisation (Norman 1993; Goguen 1999) appropriately.

In addition, often software engineers tend to detect human, social and organisational issues as problems of HCI, that is the human interacting with the technology. As a result, they disregard the relationship between the interaction of individual and the social organisation of work, and above all how the latter can impact the former (Baxter and Sommerville 2011).

In the socio-technical system (STS), subsystems including people and technology affect each other in producing output and businesses operations (Pasmore et al. 1982). Technology subsystem emphasises on the processes and tasks to produce desired output; while the social system focuses on the relationship between people and their characteristics, attitudes, skills, values, etc. (Bostrom and Heinen 1977). In the socio-technical approach, the two subsystems need to work jointly to create improved outputs; therefore finding and keeping the balance between these subsystems is crucial. Mumford believes that both the social and technical subsystems should be given equal weight, whenever possible (Mumford 2006).

Although the term socio-technical is generally used to define many different complex systems, five key features determine a socio-technical system are (Badham et al. 2000):

- The system has interdependent parts.

- The system adapts to and pursues goals in external environments.
- The system has an internal environment embracing separate but interdependent technical and social subsystems.
- There are choices in the system, i.e., system goals achievable by more than one way.
- The system performances depend on jointly optimising the technical and social aspects of the system.

Despite all the advantages of this approach, there are also some criticisms and concerns in socio-technical systems that need to be addressed here. Baxter and Sommerville (2011) highlight a number of issues such as The “Different levels of abstraction” in which people could define the system boundaries in different areas. It is important to ensure there is an agreement on the social, technical elements, their interdependent and interaction in the system that need to be jointly optimised. Furthermore, they also outline another problem as the lack of specific criteria for assessing the success of social elements in the evaluation of the socio-technical systems (Baxter and Sommerville 2011). Moreover, the possibility of disintegrating the system into separate social and technical subsystems could give the different weight of analysis for each part, and often the focus is on the technical parts of the system (Eason 2001).

Socio-technical approaches often appear in other areas that might not be explicitly referred to as such (Avgerou et al. 2004). The sectors such as participatory design methods, CSCW, and ethnographic approaches have socio-technical principles (Baxter and Sommerville 2011). The CSCW field initiated relatively to improve group support applications (Grudin 1994). Its emergence as a field was due to the

significance of the group and organisational contexts in human-computer interaction (Horn et al. 2004). Ackerman (2000) has distinguished the problems of CSCW as:

- Generalizability from small groups to a general population (social sciences)
- Predictability of affordances (HCI)
- Applicability of new technological possibilities (computer science)

Practical socio-technical systems require more flexibility to support social life in more effective and efficient ways. In socio-technical systems, it is crucial to balance both social and technological factors and to know their affordance to support other elements. One outcome of CSCW is that it is easier and better to supplement technical mechanisms with social elements to control, regulate, or encourage behaviour (Sproull and Kiesler 1991). Within the decade, as the technical researchers understood better the social requirements, all the CSCW systems became more sophisticated (Ackerman 2000). The difference between social requirements and technical capabilities lead to gaps, which are the main challenge for socio-technical systems. Ackerman has defined These socio-technical gaps as, “The divide between what we know we must support socially and what we can support technically” (Ackerman 2000).

To explore these gaps, it is essential to understand how individuals work and exist in groups, societies, communities, and other forms of cooperative life. Online communities that are empowered by technologies to support interpersonal communications could be regarded as socio-technical systems that entail of both technical and social components (Kling and Courtright 2003; Trist and Murray 1993). OCC utilising these communities to inspire the collective actions could be appropriate platforms to study these gaps. In a socio-technical approach, the system should be seen as a set of actions towards a united whole and not as a set of individuals and

separated works (Pasmore 1985). This increases the collective work group that is a significant principal of the OCC that serves the need of individuals and at the same time provide a sense of belonging to the community. The following section aims at defining OCC.

2.2. Online Collaborative Consumption (OCC)

The context of this study is OCC, which enables individuals to interact with each other and to exchange information, knowledge, experience, materials, support, etc.. Collaborative consumption is a way of banking on the community that creates a new culture to encourage individuals to be active participants instead of being a passive member. Every individual brings benefits for the others by collaboration even if this is not the intention. It exposes the potential value in our skills and resources and enable us to utilise them, trade them and make money from them. OCC promotes a new culture of access over ownership powered by technology and decentralised networks.

There are various definitions of the term “collaborative consumption”. It was first used by Felson and Speath (1978). They defined it as “events in which one or more persons consume economic goods or services in the process of engaging in joint activities with one or more others” [p. 614]. This incredibly broad definition that includes diverse activities such as drinking with friends, speaking on the telephone and even watching a football game in a group, recently became narrower. In a more focused definition, Botsman and Rogers (2011) describe collaborative consumption as “activities that combine and shape groups to find something or someone to create many-to-many interactions including product service systems, redistribution markets, and collaborative lifestyles” [p. xvi]. Collaborative consumption and sharing economy often overlap and have very similar definitions. Sharing economy is an economic model that

enables people to share their underutilised assets such as space, skill, and other resources for monetary or non-monetary benefits (Botsman 2013). For example, ride-sharing platforms such as Lyft. John (2013) considers collaborative consumption a subset of the sharing economy. Belk (2014), however, considers collaborative consumption as a domain between sharing and marketplace exchange, which has elements of both. He pointed to activities that facilitate individuals in the acquisition and distribution of resources for a “fee” or other “compensation” (Belk 2014). This definition includes bartering, trading, and swapping, but excludes non-monetary sharing activities such as CouchSurfing. Although both collaborative consumption and sharing economy have so much in common, it needs to be noted that collaborative consumption often involves the transfer of ownership; that does not occur in sharing economy.

Collaborative consumption and sharing activities have always played an active role in our lives as people have traditionally shared, bartered, swapped, lent and rented their resources. Other examples include car boot sales, second-hand stores, borrowing, and lending between neighbours, and local market communities. Within last two decades Internet technologies and Web 2.0 in particular, started to enhance collaborative consumption practices and created new ones by providing efficient instant sharing and communication platforms. Web 2.0 allows users to contribute content in many online venues, and to connect with others (Carroll and Romano 2011), and enables them to create and join online communities, in which mutualism and reciprocity are the main factors.

2.2.1. Categories

The different categories of OCC include: “product service systems, redistribution markets and collaborative lifestyles” (Botsman and Rogers 2011).

- **Product service systems:** People pay for the benefit of a product, and it's usage without owning the product, e.g., car sharing.
- **Redistribution markets:** Using the networks and communities as a marketplace enable individuals to distribute their goods, e.g., eBay and Gumtree.
- **Collaborative lifestyles:** People with common interests are linked together to share and exchange assets such as time, space, skills and knowledge, e.g., The cube London.

2.2.2. Main principles

Four most important principles of collaborative consumption are defined by Botsman and Rogers (2011) as:

- **Critical mass:** to reach the tipping point in a system to become self-sustained. (By increasing the choices and being a social proof to pass the psychological barrier of new behaviour.)
- **Idling capacity:** to achieve not only physical products but also less tangible capitals like time, skills, and space.
- **Belief in the commons:** to gain balance between self-interest and interest of the group and believing that resources belong to all.
- **Trust between strangers:** to trust people who we don't know to different levels.

2.2.3. Environmental and sustainability benefits

OCC could enable us to live in the settings of mutualism and reciprocity that have been disturbed by the hyper-consumerism of our modern life. This modern consumerism criticized by Botsman and Rogers (2011) for encouraging us to own and hoard the stuff that does not make us happy, creating enormous volumes of waste, and ruining the world's limited resources. They bring an example from the story of the Wal-Mart stampede of 2008. In this store as the crowd of people who care about possessing stuff than their humane relationships with others, rushed to get hold of cheap stuff to buy, which caused a store employee to lose his life. Collaborative consumption could provide substantial environmental benefits by increasing efficiency and reducing the waste of resources by encouraging reselling and reusing old or unwanted materials rather than throwing them away. It amends our consumption habits regarding not only what to consume but also how to consume. Open collaborative projects such as free software and Wikipedia as a part of collaborative consumption inspire the collective actions, which serve the need of individuals and at the same time provide a sense of belonging to a community. It enhances the "Crowdsourcing", which is defined by Howe (2008) as the distribution of tasks between a group of networked individuals or community to solve a problem with collective intelligence and action.

OCC has the potential to provide a new sustainable collaborative economy whose key indicators are: "localisation, reducing ecological footprints, community building, collective action and creating new socio-economic institutions" (Seyfang 2007). OCC is a rapidly growing phenomenon in varied domains such as: transportation (Lyft and Uber), products and goods (*Etsy* and *Ebay*), space (*Airbnb* and *Sharedesk*), money (*Zopa* and *Kickstarter*), services (*TaskRabbit* and *Odesk*), food (*Eatmeal* and *Meal*

sharing), education (Coursera and Udemy), and many more. These companies use different models to utilise resources to work, create value and to accomplish economic activities, and/or to foster local connections and communities. While many of these firms creating more fair, sustainable, and socially cohesive activities, in some cases, as they become established, they could behave similarly to conventional capitalist companies. For example, Zipcar started by focusing on carbon footprint reduction. Nonetheless, some of its later activities such as, a partnership with Ford Motor Company to offer sport utility vehicles and putting cars on college campuses, where cars were not common before, could increase the vehicle usage. On the other hand, many other firms withstand their sustainability goals, particularly where their products or services are low-impact like *Etsy* (Schor and Fitzmaurice 2014).

2.2.4. Economic benefits

OCC is in demand in difficult economic situations where people struggle to get careers, and cannot afford unnecessary spending and companies downsizing and decreasing their wages. Additionally, it is more efficient and boosts productivity, lowers barriers to entrepreneurship, and helps markets to work even if the cash is limited. It can contribute to reducing inequality by promoting growth in places where people have little money but have skills and time to offer. Capitalism is not stable in essence since it is changing so fast and is entirely focused on the money, while disregarding the social and political factors (Soros 1998). Although corporations emphasizes on their short-term goals and growing their profits, social goals such as providing employment to individuals become secondary for them. According to Soros (1998), the inconsistency between the global financial markets and the national scope of governments will lead to a failure and collapse of the capitalist system in the end.

Two alternative solutions have been proposed by the British Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) for the future organisation of industry (DTI 1999). First, the 'wired world' that is the network of entrepreneurs enabled by the internet to work on joint projects. In this model, individuals become 'knowledge workers', develop sets of skills and knowledge, and sell them to other persons or companies. The permanent job will be replaced by temporary contracts and individuals will have to become skilled at selling their skills. People will be looking for customers instead of seeking for the jobs. Therefore, secure communications and the development of human relationships based on trust will be crucial in this model. However, the Job stability will be the shortcoming of this model. Second, the alternative is the 'built to last' companies. These companies objective is to succeed through the knowledge gathering. The development of knowledge has very high value, and they are very keen to keep the personnel who own this knowledge. Therefore, they are expected to provide better job stability. Mumford (2006) believes that new global economy could consist of both the 'wired world' and 'built to last' companies. Entrepreneurs could use 'Wired world' to run their companies motivated with their innovative ideas. Companies will use 'Built to last' model to fulfil their customer needs, to provide job stability for their employees and to dominate the market. Nevertheless, the possibility and success of combining the 'wired world' and 'built to last' models is subject to having the mutually beneficial relationships (Mumford 2006). OCC includes the major principles of both 'wired world' and 'built to last', moreover, its' collective actions and mutually beneficial collaboration could bring them together.

2.2.5. Core values

A new collaborative economy that is deep-rooted in social and cultural transformations will be driven by two core values of OCC. Firstly, the rise of communities' dynamics as

an essential factor in doing business. These online communities empower productive human relationships and increase social capital through communication networks and in particular the Internet. They can create their own practices and societies through the bottom-up model, or existing societies could organise them. There is no more a matter of independent and separated corporations marketing to private consumers; it is now a matter of networked economy consisted of productive communities. Secondly, the effect of the collective production of value and intellectual property with the support of online technologies. This alternative way of value creation and sharing practices open new perspectives in consumption, production and innovation models.

2.3. Online communities

Online communities are virtual spaces that support by internet technologies to mediate interpersonal communications and interactions. They can be considered as socio-technical systems that consist of both technical and social components (Kling and Courtright 2003; Trist and Murray 1993). The Internet technology facilitates members with asynchronous interaction and storage facilities, and round a clock access to different geographical reach. These online communities increase productivity by creating and storing knowledge by members that contribute to solving problems, creating new products and innovation. This is apparent in the widespread use of the wikis and other virtual teams where the members add contents and share knowledge and other resources to complete various projects. These communities also create a sense of belonging, safety and attachment to the group (Blanchard and Markus 2004). These feelings build lasting relationships with other members and a source of social and emotional support.

OCC facilitated by online communities create knowledge, which is considered as a valuable intangible asset that generates key competitive advantages for many organisations (Grant 1996). These organisations, which are driven by the knowledge economy, utilise online communities to meet their business requirements and objectives (Chiu et al. 2006).

Different types of online communities meet diverse needs at any given time. Hagel and Armstrong (1997) distinguish the online communities as interest, relationship, fantasy, or transaction. Other researchers such as Lazar and Preece (1998), define the characteristics of a community as its goals, the topic of interest, type of activity and interaction, size, the level of support, the degree of anonymity, type of conventions, language, and procedures. In regards to the relation to real communities, online communities might need regular, periodic, or no face-to-face interactions (Iriberry and Leroy 2009). Another study by Hummel and Lechner (2002) differentiated online communities in five categories as games, interest or knowledge, business-to-business (knowledge and transactions), business-to-consumer (interest, commerce, and transactions), and consumers-to-consumers (interest, trade, and transaction).

Many sociologists have studied online communities and compared them to physical ones and discovered the existence of several community-related concepts such as social aggregations and ties, identity, and collective action (Iriberry and Leroy 2009). The impacts of the use of online communities and Internet on individuals and society, such as social involvement and social isolation have also been studied. Wellman (2005) For instance, found that online communication can enhance social engagement, improve the face-to-face communication in local communities, and to help accumulation of social capital. Furthermore, other studies on the impact of online communities on society demonstrated the accumulation of the social capital within

these communities by facilitating durable social relationships, trust, and reciprocity to achieve collective goals (Blanchard and Horan 1998; Chaboudy and Jameson 2001; Hampton 2003; Iriberry 2005).

OCC encourages the social interaction and collaboration via online communities that are valuable to the economic activities. Granovetter (1992) argues that economic activities are located in ongoing networks of individual relationships, and economic objectives are typically complemented by non-economic goals which are embedded in the social context (Granovetter 1992). Also, Young (1998) perceives the social relations structures significant for economic actions. Furthermore, in collaborations and co-operations contracts are expected to be more socially than legally binding (Jones et al. 1997). Therefore, the structure of the informal social system could have a significant impact on economic activities. The collaboration and interaction with other people in the heart of OCC enable individuals to be active citizens of the society, generate trust and increases social capital. Next section discusses further the relevance of OCC and social capital.

2.4. Social capital

The earliest use of term 'social capital' close to its current meaning has been traced back to 1916, Lyda J. Hanifan, who was an educator in a rural school in West Virginia (Putnam 2000). He does not refer to it as a real state or a personal property but rather to "goodwill, fellowship and mutual sympathy" within a social unit (Hanifan 1920). Although it has appeared briefly in the literature following Hanifan's work in 1916, the concept has not been used systematic until the 1980s (Castiglione et al. 2008). Within last twenty or thirty years, it has been increasingly used in many disciplines related to social sciences. Social capital has multiple definitions, for example, The World Bank

(1985) defined it as “the norms and social relations embedded in social structures that enable people to coordinate action to achieve desired goals”. Furthermore, Putnam (1995) defined it as trust, network structures, and norms that promote cooperation among actors within a society for their mutual benefits. Additionally, Putnam (2000) suggests that formal membership, civic participation, social trust (generalised trust), and altruism (volunteerism) are indicators of social capital. According to Bourdieu (1997, p.51), social capital is “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition”. Bourdieu considers social capital as a resource created from networked connections. Coleman (1990, p.302) however described social capital as “a variety of entities with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structure, and they facilitate certain actions of actors within the structure”.

Therefore, it can be concluded that social capital consists of a number of core features such as ***trust, associational activities and civic norms***.

Dakhli and de Clercq (2004) have categorised ***Trust*** into two types, namely generalised and institutional. Generalised trust is associated with the extent to which individuals trust each other. Institutional trust is related to how much individuals trust organisations and institutions. Since generalised trust deals with the interpersonal aspect of trust, it can be supposed to decrease insecurity and assist interaction and collaboration (Sako 1992; Beugelsdijk and van Schaik 2005). On the other hand, institutional trust deals with the deterrent part of trust (Dakhli and de Clercq 2004) that creates a sanction system, which makes the breach of agreement among actors costly. This enables the actors to cooperate and expect interchange (Rousseau et al. 1998; Dakhli and de Clercq 2004).

Associational activity or membership (collaboration and participation) deals with the likelihood of individuals to voluntarily join different kinds of organisations (Knack and Keeper 1997; Dakhli and de Clercq 2004). Associational activities enhance the prospect of entrepreneurship (Doh and Zolnik 2011).

Civic norms are the general likelihood of individuals to collaborate and consider the public interest against self-interest (Knack and Keeper 1997; Dakhli and de Clercq 2004). Civic norms have positive effect on entrepreneurship (Doh and Zolnik 2011). In this regard, the study by Doh and Zolnik (2011) suggests that governmental policies could promote the social capital by increasing the cultural openness and diversity to encourage people to participate in various social networks. In addition, governmental institutions could increase the civic norms by fighting with the corruptions and raising the trust.

2.4.1. Resources and benefits of social capital

To study the formation of the social capital, it seems inevitable to consider the different resources and benefits generated from that. These resources and benefits are discussed below.

Access to information

Networks broaden the sources of information and improve information quality, relevance, and appropriateness (Adler and Kwon 2002). Dense networks can significantly enhance sharing of knowledge between actors (Dyer and Nobeoka 2000).

Material resources

Access to resources can also be gained through solidarity, reciprocity and resource sharing. The networks which embedded in social recourses provide benefits such as access to material resources (Seibert et al. 2001).

Emotional and social support

Emotional and social support is provided by means of solidarity and reciprocity. Close networks could provide more interpersonal benefits such as mutual support and some resource sharing (Coleman 1988).

2.4.2. Bonding & bridging social capital

Different types of networks or groups lead to a distinction between various kinds of social capital, which have bring different advantages for individuals. Below, there will be a discussion of the two types of social capital together with their advantages.

Putnam (2000) has introduced two types of bonding and bridging social capital. Bonding social capital includes homogenous groups of individuals (e.g. sharing similar circumstances, situations or life experiences), while bridging social capital consists of heterogeneous groups of individuals (with different circumstances, situations or life experiences). Later Beugelsdijk and Smulders (2003) differentiate bridging and bonding social capital from a network approach. They argue that bonding social capital generally comes from dense and close networks that consist of similar kinds of actors, while bridging social capital mostly comes from sparse and open networks that consist of different kinds of actors. Bonding social capital accumulates trust, creates shared funds, increases the exchange of favour, mutual support, mobilises solidarity, and helps to share limited resources which are only available for network members. However, it limits the information flow and resource exchange among actors inside and outside the network due to its' closed networks nature (Portes 1998). Conversely,

bridging social capital provides more informational benefits (Burt 1992, 2000, 2001a, 2001b). This is due to more open and sparse network that provides actors with less redundant connections in order to easily gain non-redundant information and have new opportunities.

In regards to interpersonal relationships, there are different types of relationships in social networks. Granovetter (1973), divides these relationships into strong and weak relationships in accordance with the frequency of interactions, and the amount of trust and intimacy. Most strong relationships derive from bonding networks, and most weak relationships come from bridging networks. Nonetheless, we cannot associate a strong relationship with a bonding network, and a weak relationship to a bridging network (Burt 1992). Therefore, Social capital from both bonding and bridging networks could have both strong and weak relationships; even though the strong relationship networks are expected to provide more bonding social capital whereas the weak relationship network to provide more bridging social capital.

2.4.3. Collective social capital

The distinction between whether social capital should be perceived and measured as an individual, collective, or both, has raised concerns in literature (van Deth 2003). Pierre Bourdieu, for example, outlines the social capital as the actual or potential resources that are linked to *possession* of a durable relationship of mutual acquaintance and recognition (Bourdieu 1986). In this view, the actor possesses and invests individually towards reciprocal profits, beyond his/her social relationships. On the other hand, Robert Putnam (1995, 2000), associates social capital more to the *collective* distribution by binding of norms and the bridging of distributed collectivities. Accordingly, it decreases transactions costs and benefits every actor individually,

including those who did not invest in it. In this view, “community” has been considered as “conceptual cousin” of social capital. Therefore, it could be “private good” and a “public good” at the same time (Putnam 2000).

Moreover, Coleman views the social capital as “not a single entity, but a variety of different entities having two characteristics in common. They all consist of some aspect of social structure, and they facilitate certain actions of individuals who are within the structure” (Coleman 1990).

2.4.4. Non-tie social capital

Social capital can also be generated in circumstances where no individual ties exist, such as online communities, where individuals help each other without knowing one another. They can also create individual tie after the social exchange and keep in touch afterward. People come to these communities not only to search for information, knowledge and solving problem; they also use these environments to look for support and friendship (Zhang and Hiltz 2003). Online communities enable individuals to engage in social action to achieve collective goals, facilitate social capital within social relationships, trust, and reciprocity (Blanchard and Horan 1998; Chaboudy and Jameson 2001; Hampton 2003; Iriberry 2005). A study by Jiang and Carrol (2009) suggest that online communities are not only source of origin for social capital, but they could also lead to new tie generation. They claim, most social capital studies use the SNA (social network analysis) to define and visualize community or social network. It emphasizes on individual gains by using an egocentric perspective and ignores the collective side of the social capital. In addition to SNA, other validated measurement scale such as Williams’s survey (2006) also measures individual bridging and bonding and overlook the collective side of the social capital. Moreover, they claim that since

shared identity and ties could have different emphases (e.g., shared identity at collective level vs. ties at the individual level), the social capital that they generate might be at the expense of each other.

2.5. OCC & social capital

Social capital facilitates exchanges, collaboration, and debates across disciplines in ways that are often unusual (Castiglione et al. 2008), and enables collective actions (Ahn and Ostrom 2008). It has been positively associated with knowledge sharing and contribution (Chiu et al. 2006; Wasko and Faraj 2005), leveraging tacit knowledge (Collins and Hitt 2006), knowledge creation (Cross et al. 2001), and intellectual capital (Nahapiet and Ghoshal 1998). These are all central components of collaborative consumption. Furthermore, trust as the main construct of social capital is also vital in collaborative consumption in easing decision making (Uzzi 1997) and reducing the cost and risk of collaboration. The shared codes and norms in social capital facilitate and motivate collaboration and knowledge sharing (Huysman and Wulf 2006), which are baseline in collaborative consumption. Furthermore, a higher level of social capital and its constructs within the communities has been positively associated with the collective actions related to environmental management, resilience, and sustainability of the communities (Walker and Salt 2006), which are the goals of the collaborative consumption. Moreover, since social capital supports individuals to access the useful information and knowledge (Landry et al. 2002), it plays a significant role in a knowledge-driven economy (Knack and Keeper 1997; Fountain 1999).

Given that many articles theorise that OCC could generate social capital, some studies also investigated the social capital formation in OCC and sharing economy. For instance, Parigi and State (2014) study on Couchsurfing, revealed that this platform

leads to new friendships. However, they also found the decline in creating the close relationships since its launch in 2003 since the users became disappointed by the casual and short-lived relationships. Similarly, another research on time banking has revealed the limitations of the sharing economy to generate social capital (Dubois et al. 2014), since the individuals often participate in the one-time event, and they do not continue. However, despite the limitation of the OCC in generating social capital, it can be concluded that social capital is an absolute consequence of OCC.

2.6. Towards pointing to the gaps in OCC research

This review of the literature has established the background and a basis for the significance and objectives of this study. It started by defining the socio-technical concept, gaps, and the benefits and issues with socio-technical systems. Then the different definitions of OCC discussed along with its similarity and distinction with the sharing economy. The different categories and main principles of OCC also outlined, followed by its environmental and economic benefits. Furthermore, online communities identified as one of the core values of OCC and the source for the formation of social capital. The literature on social capital provided a historical background and definitions as well as its resources, benefits, and different types. Finally, the relation of OCC and social capital revealed from the discussions of existing research.

Despite the growing interests and practical importance of OCC, to date, the empirical studies verifying the issues and challenges of these platforms are extremely limited. Most of the research in this area has tended to focus on outlining of the collaborative consumption and sharing economy, as well as distinguishing their different categories (Botsman and Rogers 2011; John 2013; Belk 2014; Schor and Fitzmaurice 2014; Ertz

et al. 2016). Some recent research has been carried out mainly to study the people's motivational factors in participating in different categories of OCC. For example, a study by Hamari et al. (2015) examine the motivational factors by conceptualizing and testing four factors of attitude and behavioural intention towards OCC as sustainability, enjoyment, reputation, and economic benefits. The results from this study suggest that the factors of enjoyment and economic benefits significantly affect behavioural intention, whereas sustainability and enjoyment have an impact on attitude towards OCC (Hamari et al. 2015). Another study by Ikkala and Lampinen (2015) on Airbnb examines the motivations of individuals towards monetizing and social interaction related to network hospitality. The results of this study pointed out that participants are motivated to monetize network hospitality for both financial and social reasons (Ikkala and Lampinen 2015).

A few studies also concentrate on the drivers and deterrent factors of the OCC. Owyang (2013) in a market report on collaborative economy indicated three drivers of OCC as societal, economic, and technology. This report suggests several challenges associated with OCC as disruption of existing regulation, lack of trust between users, lack of reputation, and uncertainty of the stability of the business models (Owyang 2013). In another recent study, Tussyadiah (2015) examines the motivational factors that drive and hinder the OCC in the travel and tourism marketplace. This study found the lack of trust, lack of efficacy with regards to technology, and lack of economic benefits as the deterrent factors of OCC in accommodation rental services. This study also indicated the societal aspects of sustainability and community, as well as economic benefits as the motivational factors that drive the OCC in accommodation rental services (Tussyadiah 2015).

Overall, these studies highlight some characteristics of OCC in an abstract way. The mediation of ICT to this context brings forward new complexities and the need for investigating and appreciating these complexities. The purpose of this study is to investigate these complexities, challenges, and issues of OCC. This study aims to investigate these complexities and issues by utilising a socio-technical approach. It intends to make use of an extensive and explorative way of observing the users' behaviours in their real environment of an OCC community. This study also aims to investigate the formation of social capital at collective and more specifically in "non-tie" level, where there are no individual ties exist between members of the online community. Besides, it expects to test the Jiang and Carrol (2009) theory to learn whether and how ties and individual networks can be generated by non-tie social capital within online collaborative communities. This study does not seek to measure the amount of social capital exhaustively but to utilise it as a tool to study the patterns of interactions within different communities of OCC. The objective of this study is to contribute to the socio-technical design in supporting the OCC in an improved way of community formation.

The next chapter will then present the research questions, socio-technical framework for this study developed from this literature review, and methodological approaches.

3. Methodology

In this chapter, a new methodology is proposed to evaluate OCC community. First, the research questions and socio-technical framework as a guideline for this study will be presented. Then, a review and background of existing and potential methods will be discussed, followed by presenting the “Predictive ethnography” as a new combined method. Later, heuristics that are a major part of this approach will be defined. Then, social capital measures will be presented. Afterwards, the implementation of the predictive ethnography will be discussed followed by the overview of the data gathering platform. Then, the challenges of online ethnography followed by the ethics of study will be argued. Finally, the data analysis and procedure will be defined.

Considering the nature of this study, which is based on the human behaviour, social activities and socio-technical design of OCC, a mixed method approach has been considered as an appropriate methodology. To investigate the socio-technical gaps in supporting OCC, the researcher must learn the motivations, perceptions, behaviours, benefits, difficulties and collaboration patterns of online community users'. It is also essential to evaluate the technologies supporting OCC and their design. Since it is not possible to conduct an extensive study of OCC communities due to time and resource constraint and the fact that we want a refined qualitative understanding of how these communities interact and how they could be better supported through design. A case study focused on an existing OCC community is pursued. Therefore, it is necessary to understand how to evaluate online collaborative communities.

3.1. Research questions

Reviewing the related literature it can be concluded that, although there are a number of studies investigating the main issues related to social capital and CSCW, there is a lack of research in their convergence area and more specifically in the field of OCC.

The main problems of CSCW rely on generalisability of groups, predictability of affordances and applicability of technologies. OCC, which inspires the collective actions and generates social capital, is the right platform for studying these problems (socio-technical gaps) to learn the details of interaction within communities to inform its design. Most social capital related studies focus on individual bridging and bonding and they have failed to address the collective (non-tie) side of it, therefore there is a need for further research in this area.

The main research question is:

- What are the socio-technical gaps in technologies supporting OCC?

The subsidiary questions are:

- How is social capital formed in OCC?
- How the design of OCC platforms might be refined, by identifying the socio-technical gaps?
- How socio-technical gaps and social capital formation in online communities might be investigated using an ethnographic approach?

To seek the answers to the questions mentioned above, this study investigates how social aspects and technical factors affect users' consumption and sharing practices through collaborative communities. The answers to these questions can contribute to

an enhanced economy by revealing new and improved socio-technical aspects and support OCC design features and functionalities.

3.2. Socio-technical framework as an outcome of literature review

As a result of reviewing the literature, the lack of empirical studies in OCC is noted, due to the recent emergence of this research topic. To answer the research questions for this study, the OCC context could be examined from a socio-technical perspective since the online communities of OCC can be considered as socio-technical systems. This inspired the development of a socio-technical framework as a conceptual guideline to better define the methodological process for this study. As highlighted in the literature review, the issues with socio-technical systems include: The “Different levels of abstraction” in which the system boundaries could be defined in different areas (Baxter and Sommerville 2011). Furthermore, the possibility of disintegrating the system into separate social and technical subsystems could give the different weight of analysis for each part, and often the focus is on the technical parts of the system (Eason 2001). Therefore, it is important to ensure there is an agreement on the social and technical elements, their interdependents, and interactions in the system that need to be jointly optimised. Having a socio-technical framework provides the perspective that can be used to situate the collaborative communities of OCC in a larger setting. It can be used as an analytical purpose to help in diagnosis of breakdowns of the the system elements. It can also be utilised as a medium to bring together all the features of social and technical elements that helps in optimising the big picture of the system and keeping the balance between them.

This framework consists of two principal components as technical content shown in blue, and social context shown in red (Figure 1.). The socio-technical gaps in the

middle emerge between the needs of social component and affordance of the technical component. In the technical part, “Artefact” that is *Etsy* community in this study, supports “Users” who are the *Etsy* community members, placed in the social part. The users are situated in the social context of OCC. The context of OCC in social part, provides insights in defining the requirements in the technical part, that are the necessary content for the Artefact.

The lack of specific criteria for assessing the success of social elements in the evaluation of the socio-technical systems has also been considered as another issue (Baxter and Sommerville 2011). To evaluate the socio-technical system and search for the gaps, three significant elements considered in this framework, including usability, sociability, and user experience (shown in grey in Figure1). These three elements surround all the social and technical components. User experience element associates with the users in social component. Usability is related to technical component. Sociability element is associated to both social and technical components. Although in this framework only three elements are defined for the assessing the socio-technical system which, are broad, but they reflect a starting point for assessing the complexities of these systems.

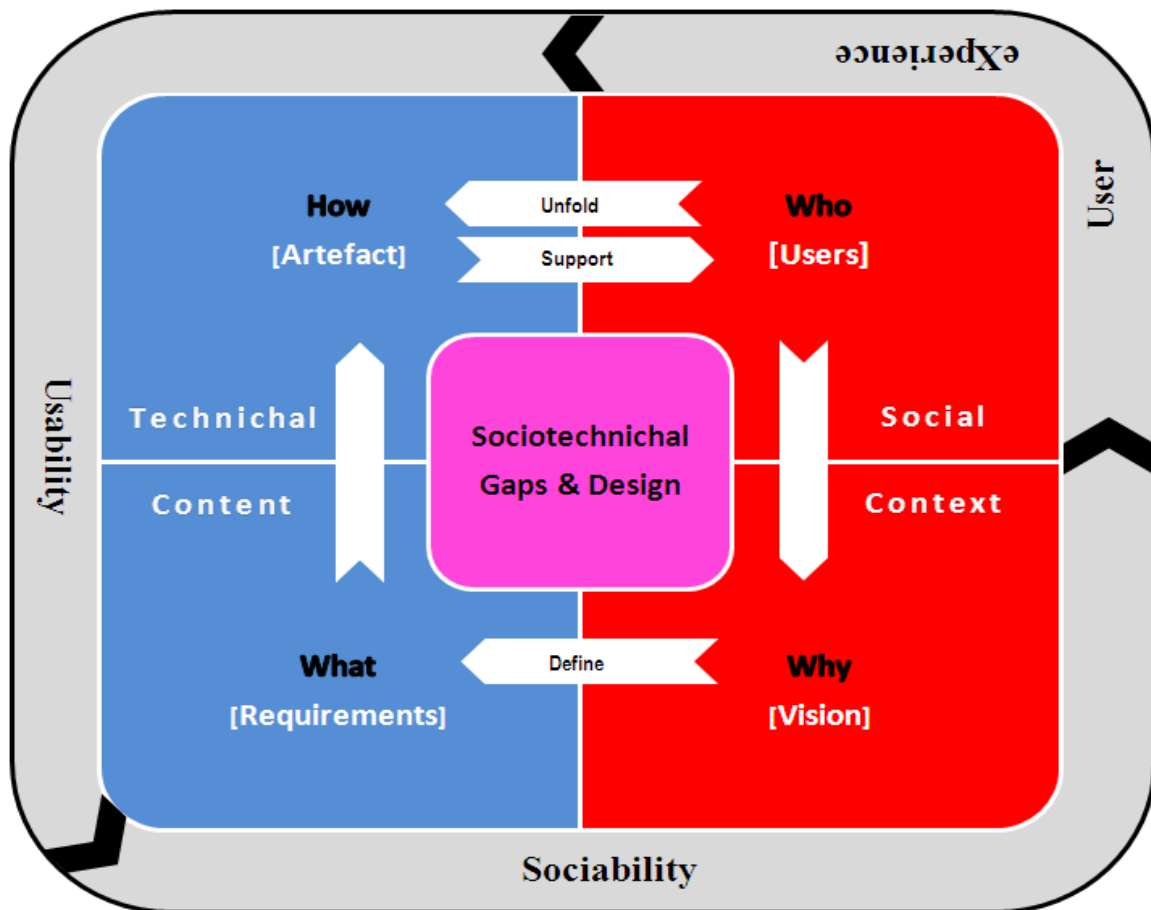


Figure 1. Socio-technical framework

Usability and Sociability are two corresponding perceived features to support users' participation in an online community (Maloney-Krichmar and Preece 2005; Preece 2001). User experience corresponds to the perceived individual characteristics of the users.

This framework provided a big picture for this research by enclosing the social and technical aspects involved in the context of this study. Having all these elements and contextual factors in one frame, contributed to the holistic perspective that was required in the methodological strategy of the study that is discussed in the next section.

3.3. Methodological foundation

Online communities are more than just ordinary websites; they allow users not only to consume information but also to provide and contribute to the content within a wide range of topics. They evolve in accordance with how individuals communicate, with the aid of technology within their social interactions. Design principles of online communities are guided by their purpose, policies, selection of technology, designing usability, and supporting sociability (Preece et al. 2004). Sociability refers to providing “a state of being sociable” within online communities, where users find it satisfying to interact with each other to achieve their goals (Phang et al. 2009).

Standard usability evaluation methods evaluate users' performance in specified tasks in a controlled context, which is not convenient for evaluating the online communities. As Preece et al. (2004) argue, they are useful but inadequate for evaluating online communities since they do not address sociability. Besides in many online communities, sociability overshadows usability. A study of Facebook users by Hart et al. (2008) revealed that usability testing does not elicit all the significant aspects of social web use, such as self-expression or social pleasure. They also found that users are less concerned about the bad usability of the system when there are enjoyable aspects that compensate the usability inadequacies. In addition, they suggest a more holistic approach to evaluation to support the new design guidelines for modern day social websites. Likewise, Malinen and Ojala (2011) claim that usability heuristics concentrate on a task-oriented approach and exclude social and “hedonistic” characteristics. Regarding collaborative systems evaluation, Araujo et al. (2002) identify four crucial elements; including group context, usability, collaboration, and cultural impact. These elements, as part of the evaluation process, distinguish the group and work context, usability strengths, and weaknesses, collaboration

capabilities, and investigate the impact of the system over time. Furthermore, Antunes et al. (2012) suggest an “eclectic approach” to the evaluation of collaborative systems in order to cover several factors, including the individual and group characteristics within social and organisational contexts and also to assess positive and adverse effects of technology.

Therefore, we can conclude that a holistic approach is needed to focus on sociability components to determine purpose, protocols, and codes of behavior in addition to usability and user experience to evaluate the ease of use and user satisfaction. A combined methodological framework is proposed in this paper to evaluate OCC, *Etsy* in this case: ethnography is combined with predictive evaluation through heuristics, which include sociability, usability, and user experience (UX) items drawn from previous research reported in the literature.

3.3.1. Ethnography

Ethnography and qualitative research methods are recommended by Preece et al. (2004) as suitable approaches for studying social interaction and sociability. Ethnography provides a naturalistic interpretation and understanding of human behavior within cultures and communities by providing descriptions of social structures, behaviors, symbols, and language (Patton 2002). This method helps to analyse and understand the community’s interaction within their “textual social discourse” (Abdelnour-Nocera 2002). It studies not only the text but also the “form of interaction”, “meaning making” and “cultural production” within the text (Boellstorff et al. 2012). This approach helps to understand the culture of the online community from an insider’s point of view. It also enables the researcher to study the users within their context, which is crucial in the socio-technical nature of this study. The holistic nature

of this approach, based on contextualised findings, allows the researcher to develop a better understanding of how sociability issues develop and are uttered within online communities.

Considering system design and use, this method could be valuable for HCI research. It supports the developers in understanding the social setting of the systems and helps to study the functionalities of technical systems in social activities of their users, rather than the features the designers envision (Hughes et al. 1993). Besides, it requires the researcher to engage, navigate and interact with the systems, which is vital for the evaluation of interactive systems' usability.

However, it should be taken into consideration that using ethnography for an in-depth understanding of a community, its norms and interactions necessitates a long-term commitment. Additionally, the significance of ethnography in design is a matter of argument. While ethnography provides valuable insight regarding the evaluation of system design, it is less effective when it comes to design solutions and recommendations (Crabtree et al. 2009). Moreover, regarding ethnography within HCI, Hughes et al. (1994) raises the concern for communication of the results between the ethnographer and designers. They consider it as an unsystematic method for developers since the results presenting in a "discursive" form and design options are not clearly stated.

Consequently, complementing ethnography with other methods could increase its strength and reliability, particularly in HCI and qualitative research methods. One of the methods, which could complement ethnography, can be the predictive evaluation.

3.3.2. Predictive evaluation

Predictive evaluation makes use of heuristics to predict the usability problems (Nielsen 1994). These heuristics are useful guidelines in eliciting the usability issues. However, they are not always accurate in testing the interactive interfaces, such as online communities. Furthermore, like other methods, they need to be customised specifically for evaluating sociability (Preece 2001).

A number of studies incorporated social aspects into the heuristic evaluation. Preece et al. (2004), is perhaps the most prominent, which presents a comprehensive list of usability and sociability heuristics for evaluating online health communities. Gallant et al. (2007), made use of five heuristics to investigate social ties and social interaction of Facebook and MySpace users. Moreover, Iriberry and Leroy (2009) also proposed success factors, which are necessary to be considered in online communities, based on communities' genre and system life cycles. Furthermore, Malinen and Ojala (2012) utilised eight heuristics for evaluating sociability of an online exercise community. These heuristics generally have been used in expert evaluation, user interviews, surveys, and in some cases such as Preece et al. (2004) surveys created from heuristics added to the ethnography study.

Predictive evaluation has been criticized regarding the validity of the gathered data since the evaluators are substitute users and it does not involve real users in the process (Kanter and Rosenbaum 1997). Using the heuristics from the perspectives of actual users of community through surveys and user interviews could be a good basis for evaluating the success of the online community. Nonetheless, it has been shown that users are often not very consistent and accurate in self-reporting (Kim 2000). Also,

real users might have difficulties in understanding the terminologies and concepts related to usability and sociability.

This study intends to propose a new way of using these heuristics, accompanying them with online ethnography: “predictive ethnography”. These heuristics will be utilised as the baseline to enable ethnography to predict the success of the online community.

3.4. Predictive ethnography

This study proposes a new approach defined as “predictive ethnography”. In this approach, ethnography and predictive evaluation complement each other and improve each other’s effectiveness and efficiency. The heuristics could enhance the ethnography by improving its structure both in the data gathering and analysis. The ethnographers need an open mind, “not an empty head” to study the domain (Fetterman 2010). The researchers need to spend less time carrying out the data gathering process, as they know what to look for. In addition, the heuristics can help in translating the ethnographic insights into design recommendations and requirements. These heuristics can act as a form of structure to provide better results and less subjective conclusion. In this study on OCC, the heuristics served as guidelines to investigate the lack of success factors in the online community, as well as predicting the issues related to the success of the community.

Preliminary ethnography was carried out in parallel to the selection of the heuristics. It helped to understand the culture, norms and behaviours of *Etsy* community members, and also assisted the selection of the relevant heuristics (success factors). The heuristics were drawn from previous literature, considering the nature of *Etsy* community, based on the three core element including sociability, usability, and user

experience (UX). The heuristics were also helpful in the process of data analysis in ethnography, which involved tagging and coding of the data. This approach could support the HCI purpose in building a bridge and dialogue between the users' domain and system designers. It could also help the language and cultural barriers between HCI researchers and system designers in interpreting the users' needs into design features.

3.4.1. Heuristics as success factors

The heuristics set out in this research are considered as success factors for the online community of the OCC. They are meant to be used as a tool for evaluating the OCC platform. Usability and sociability are two features that are significant for the success of a virtual community (Lu et al. 2011). Both usability and sociability are multidimensional in online communities, in that members' views determined by dimensions such as ease of use of the technical system, and social interactivity of the community space (Lazar and Preece 2002).

3.4.1.1. Sociability

The term sociability in this research focuses on the supporting of social interaction of the users in technology and is clearly related to the concept of usability. Sociability of online community concern with "a state of being sociable", where members find it pleasant to interact with each other in achieving community's shared purposes and mutual support through the community (Phang et al. 2009; Preece 2001). In another study according to Preece et al. (2003), sociability "is concerned with developing software, policies, and practices to support social interaction online". De Souza and Preece (2004) have constructed a framework, the online communities framework

(OCF), to analyse and understand online communities, based on the three essential elements relating to sociability as people, purpose, and policies.

'Purpose' focuses on the significance of a well-defined and clear purpose of the community. 'People' are a major factor in online communities, and play an important role in the sociability of an online community. People can have different roles such as moderators, mediators, general participants and lurkers. Another feature related to people is the community size, which can be either too small or too big, reaching critical mass is significant that is different from community to community. 'Policies' emphasis on the ruling the behaviour of the online community members. Based on these elements Preece (2000) presents sociability guidelines for designing online communities.

3.4.1.2. Usability

The concept of usability became significant since the computer applications and interfaces began to be used by the end users and they were no longer considered as products only for designers and engineers (Shackel and Richardson 1991). The most cited definition of usability defined by the International Standardization Organisation (ISO) in the official ISO 9241-11 standard as: "the extent to which a product can be used by specified users to achieve specified goals with effectiveness, efficiency and satisfaction in a specified context of use".

This definition focuses on specified users, defined goals and a specified context of use. This demonstrates that usability is relative to which users are using which product, what they use it for, and in which context they use it. This definition also concentrates on effectiveness, efficiency and satisfaction as the main criteria for a usable product. Effectiveness refers to the accuracy and completeness with which the

user can accomplish his/her goals. Efficiency focus on the resources used regarding the accuracy and completeness of goals achieved. Satisfaction is the users' comfort, the acceptability of the work and positive attitude towards the utilisation of the product.

However the ISO definition cover all characteristics well, but it still seems quite a broad description. Nielsen (1993) in a more specified lists outlines five aspects of usability as: (1) learnability (how easy is the system to learn), (2) efficiency (how quickly users can achieve their tasks), (3) memorability (how easy is the system to remember), (4) errors (prevention and recovery from errors), and (5) satisfaction (how much users like the system) (Nielsen 1993).

3.4.1.3. User experience

Researchers and practitioners considered the existing usability as too focused on effectiveness and efficiency and felt the need for more weight on the quality of the experience. User experience (UX) focused more on hedonic qualities of the use and deals with aesthetics and self-actualization of the users (Bargas-Avila and Hornbæk 2011). The International Standardization Organisation (ISO) define UX as: "a person's perceptions and responses that result from the use or anticipated use of a product, system or service" (ISO 9241-210, 2010). Three types of qualities concerning UX defined by Hassenzahl and Tractinsky (2006) as (1) qualities that go beyond instrumental use, and focus e.g. on aesthetics of a product, (2) emotional and affective aspects, referring to how users anticipate on, react to or reflect on their use of a product, and (3) experiential qualities that concern the use of a product in a complex combination of previous and future experiences, that can change over time and are unique for each user (Hassenzahl and Tractinsky 2006). (Figure 2.)

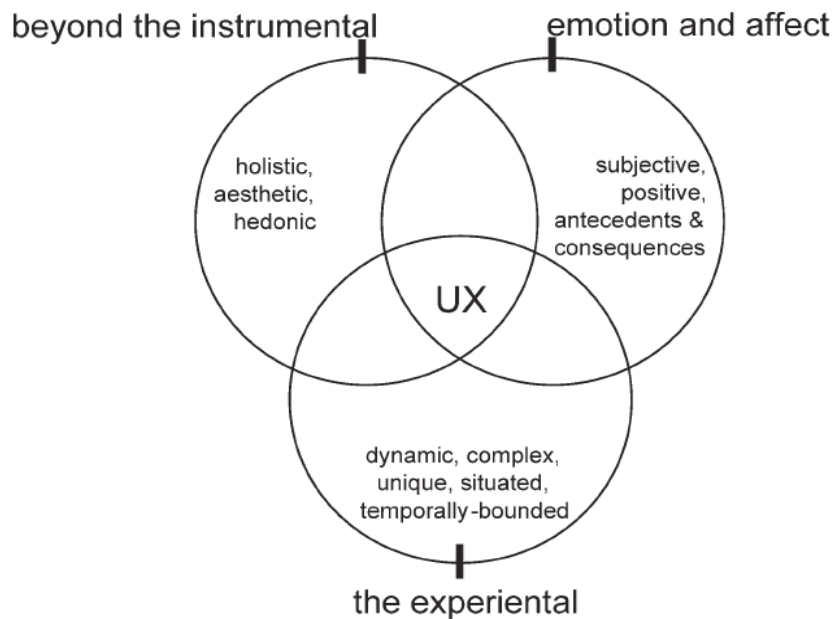


Figure 2. A unified view of user experience (Hassenzahl and Tractinsky 2006)

3.4.2. Heuristics selection

The socio-technical framework developed from reviewing the literature provided a conceptual guideline and the starting point in selection of the heuristics. It verified three core element including sociability, usability, and user experience (UX) that discussed above. As discussed in the literature review, the issue in evaluation of the socio-technical systems, is the lack of detailed criteria for assessing the success of social elements (Baxter and Sommerville 2011). Furthermore, due to the recent emergence of OCC, there is a lack of empirical studies in this research topic. Therefore, further review of literature has been carried out in the methodological approaches of the online communities. This literature review was focused on the empirical research on the design principles and success factors of online communities.

The success of collaborative communities depends on a number of interdependent factors in various domains within group characteristics, social and organisational context and technology support for social interaction. These factors could vary

according to the type of communities, which fulfil different needs in a particular way. According to Hagel and Armstrong (1997), an online community can be of *interest*, *relationship*, *fantasy*, or *transaction*. Furthermore, Hummel and Lechner (2002) identified five types of communities including *games*, *interest or knowledge*, *business-to-business* (knowledge and transactions), *business-to-consumer* (interest, commerce, and transactions) and *consumers-to-consumers* (interest, trade, and transaction).

Etsy community can be considered as *consumers-to-consumers* since people with similar interest are engaged in trade and transaction in addition to the knowledge exchange. However, as discussed earlier in this chapter, most research suggest an eclectic approach in the evaluation of the collaborative systems such as online communities. Therefore, this study intended to improve the reliability of heuristics by using more explicit and extensive guidelines and not by restricting the scope of the heuristics to only one category of the communities. To improve the explicitness of the success factors and in order to make them more inclusive, a set of constructs was established as a new level below the initial three elements of usability, sociability, and user experience. They emerged from the reviewing of the literature as the major challenges to OCC platforms and online communities. These extensive constructs are interdependent and often overlap between the usability, sociability, and user experience. They ensure that the key challenges and issues of these communities are included in a upper level prior to the selection of the heuristics. The construcs developed in set of ten categories, which embrace the final heuristics as the success factors of the OCC communities.

In the selection of heuristic items, the researcher revised the past literature on online communities to discover what has been suggested as the success factors for these

communities. The selection stage was carried out in parallel to the preliminary ethnography on *Etsy* community to ensure the heuristics are well suited to the nature of this community. These heuristics along with their corresponding constructs come as follow. (Table 1.)

Constructs	Items	Sources
Social relationship	S1: Network creation (e.g. individuals with similar interest)	Iriberry & Leroy (2009) Väänänen-Vainio-Mattila et al. (2010)
	S2: Face to face communication (e.g. offline meetings & events)	Wellman (2005); Blanchard & Markus (2004)
	S3: Dynamic interaction (e.g. verbal, gestural & emoticons)	Preece et al. (2004)
	S4: Social & emotional support	Ridings & Gefen (2004)
Reciprocity	S5: Information exchange	Millen et al. (2002)
	S6: New product & innovation	Millen et al. (2002)
	S7: Achieving a collective goal (knowledge creation/ problem solving)	Hampton (2003)
Trust (Privacy & Identity)	S8: Different level of anonymity (limit of privacy)	Leimeister et al. (2005)
	S9: Persistent identity	Kollock (1996)
	S10: Members profiles and pictures (creativity in self-presentation & identity construction)	Hummel & Lechner (2002); Zhang & Hiltz (2003)
	S11: Transparency (e.g. exposing identity of content providers)	Leimeister et al. (2005)
	S12: Clear establishing of self-goals for the community	Leimeister et al. (2005)
	S13: Trust creation features (e.g. reputation model)	Sabater, J. and Sierra 2001
Content creation / member contribution	S14: Social recognition & self-expression	Tedjamulia et al. (2005); Malinen (2009); Hart et al. (2008)
	S15: Fast & informal interaction (commenting & rating contents)	Malinen (2009)
	S16: Rewards & recognition for contribution	Andrews et al. (2001); Tedjamulia et al. (2005)
	S17: Feedback to motivate (public & private)	Tedjamulia et al. (2005)
	S18: Volunteerism	Iriberry & Leroy (2009)

	S19: Self-satisfaction	Wang & Fesenmaier (2004)
Purpose, policies & procedures	S20: Relevant rules of behaviour & clear displayed policies	Preece et al. (2004)
	S21: Different members' roles (e.g. contributor and reader)	Preece (2000)
	S22: Suitability & functionality of content	Väänänen-Vainio-Mattila et al. (2010)
Information design & presentation	SU23: Advanced & filter search for content	Preece (2001)
	SU24: Easy information obtaining	Phang et al. (2009)
	SU25: Discussion board organisation	Preece et al. (2004)
Technology Support	SU26: Subgroup formation (facilitate interaction & discussion in different subtopics)	Maloney-Krichmar & Preece (2005); Iriberry & Leroy (2009)
	SU27: Awareness tools (e.g. calendaring tool for meeting)	Preliminary Ethnography
	SU28: Social presence tools(e.g. status info, camera connection, IM, graphical presentation of activity & avatar)	Malinen (2009)
	SU29: Other tools (chat, mailing list, UseNet news, etc.)	Preece-Maloney & Krichmar (2003)
Navigation	U30: Consistent & easy navigation	Nielsen (1994); Preece et al. (2004)
	U31: Intuitive layout	
	U32: Visibility of site (what is going on in the site...)	
User control	U33: Feeling in charge of system	Nielsen (1994); Preece et al. (2004)
	U34: Error prevention & correction	
Reliability	U35: Access to system always to be available	Palmer (2002)
	U36: Easy to remember search sequence	Hornbæk (2006); Preece (2000)

Table 1. Heuristics (S: Sociability/ U: Usability/ Green coloured: User experience)

3.4.3. Heuristics within constructs

The selected heuristics are distinguished with S and U, which are representing sociability and usability. Some items also overlap between both sociability and usability that are shown with SU. As suggested by previous research, some items within both sociability and usability, could comprise the hedonic qualities of UX, which

are shown with green colour (Table.1). The above mentioned heuristic items are situated and discussed within the ten constructs that come as follows.

3.4.3.1. Social relationship

The aim of online communities is the creation and maintenance of social relationships or friendships. They provide the opportunity to extend the global reach that is to build online relationships with individuals of similar interests, who have never met (Iriberry and Leroy 2009). Online communities develop lasting relationships between members and provide attachment to the community. They are also a source of social and emotional support for the members (Blanchard 2004). Relationships formed in online communities, sometimes are extended into off-line and face-to-face meetings. Public reports of such meetings might become part of the social life of the community (Blanchard and Markus 2004).

3.4.3.2. Reciprocity

Improved communication within the online community increases new projects, businesses, and product innovations. These particularly assist the firms to save time (Millen et al. 2002). Communications through online communities are useful in decreasing the barriers to collective action (Hampton 2003).

3.4.3.3. Trust (privacy & identity)

Members' profiles and its representation enable the social identity formation and are significant in community design. They enable the members to define their personal information others can see on their profile, and they can work as a database for the "Contact Search" (Leimeister et al. 2005). In sum, social identity helps community members to know whom they are interacting with and develop a sense of security; therefore, it is closely associated to trust (Kim 2000). Transparency (e.g. exposing the

identity of content providers) and clear establishing of self-goals for the community can help even uncertain members to engage better in the community (Leimeister et al. 2005). Thus, persistent members' identity, recording and displaying the history of the community, and a coherent sense of space have been considered essential for fostering online community (Kollock 1998). Reputation model is the evaluation of previous interactions in the community, which enhances the process of developing trust and reputation, and is considered as significant as the outcome in online communities (Sabater and Sierra 2001). However, each member of the community should be able to decide on the type and the amount of personal data to be exposed to other members. Flexible levels of anonymity mechanism can help to promote lasting relationships and encourage trust, hence is considered indispensable in community design (Leimeister et al. 2005).

3.4.3.4. Content creation & member contribution

The opportunity to represent oneself to other members is one of the key features in online communities. It allows members to express themselves and have recognition in a social situation (Hart et al. 2008). Online communities should provide essential and dynamic interactions to have active members' contribution (Gallant et al. 2007). Content creation and participation in the community should be easy for members and participation should not need any special skills or expertise. Therefore, fast and informal interaction such as commenting and rating the content are significant in the success of online communities (Malinen 2009). Reward and recognition for active contributors might encourage members in creating better quality content. This mechanism could be more effective in hobbyist members, who are more motivated to contribute and show their skills and expertise to other members (Malinen and Ojala 2012). On the other hand, feedback and social recognition facilitate self-organisation

in large sites and encourage collective actions in communities, and have been considered important in the success of online communities (Tedjamulia et al. 2005). Providing 24/7 member support for communities, volunteerism has been considered vital in particular for game communities (Iriberry and Leroy 2009).

3.4.3.5. Purpose, policies & procedures

Purpose, as one of the most essential issues in online communities (Kim 2000; Preece 2000) determines the content of the community, which has also been considered as a major concern in the design of the community (Powazek 2002).

On the other hand, social policies as a form of sociability define relevant rules of behavior. They provide frameworks for social interaction that are considerably significant within the online community (Preece et al. 2004).

Moreover, supporting the different community members' roles such as contributors and lurkers are essential to attracting many diverse members. Lurking, (observing what others are posting) is often a way to know the community, its rules, and to engage in it as a newcomer; therefore it is important to be supported (Malinen and Ojala 2012).

3.4.3.6. Information design & presentation

Community users should be enabled to search the content in personalised, filtered and advanced way. This feature plays an important role in the success of online communities (Preece 2001).

“Ease of use” in finding information or the speed with which users can navigate through the online community is a Usability component and is crucial to be considered in online community design (Iriberry and Leroy 2009).

Discussion board organisation plays a major role in online community success. They could be organised by topic or string depending on the need of the discussions (Preece et al. 2004).

3.4.3.7. Technology support

Subgroup formation and management reduce information overload and provide a better understanding of discussions for members of the community. This is particularly important in the success of communities of interest and support (Iriberry and Leroy 2009).

Awareness tools could support community members to arrange events and face to face meetings, by allowing them to choose and confirm the place, date, and time. Significance and the lack of this feature have been noticed within our initial observation in *Etsy* community (Ethnography).

In online communities where the members are invisible, and anonymity is a barrier to developing trust (Boyd and Heer 2006), social presence tools could facilitate the development of a sense of presence. These tools could help developing this sense, in different ways such as status information, camera connection, IM, graphical representations and avatar (Millen and Patterson 2002).

Other tools should also be considered in online communities to make it more effective and efficient. For example, members could be updated regularly about recent activities and relevant information with a news feed or notification alerts to a mailbox, the same way as Facebook alerts and invites the users to visit the community whenever something new has occurred (Malinen and Ojala 2012).

3.4.3.8. Navigation

One of the significant Usability concerns within online context is navigation, which could have substantial impact on the success of online communities. Systems must provide easy and consistent navigation within the online community. The layout of the pages should be intuitive, and the users should be able to understand how to find their way without any previous experience or training. The visibility of the site could also help the users in navigation. The system should always keep the users informed about what is going on on the site by providing suitable feedback (Nielsen 1994; Preece et al. 2004).

3.4.3.9. User control

Online systems should support the users by providing a sense of being in charge of the system and responding to users' interactions. They should also prevent the problems in the first place, and if they happened, the users should be able to correct and fix the problem (Nielsen 1994; Preece et al. 2004).

3.4.3.10. Reliability

The success of an online community also depends on its reliability. For a community to be considered reliable, it needs to be accessible to users all the time (Preece 2000). It should also assist the users with an easy to remember search sequence and help the users to search the site efficiently (Preece et al. 2004).

Having discussed the heuristics to answer the first question of this study the socio-technical gaps, the next section will discuss the social capital measures towards answering the second question of the study non-tie social capital formation.

3.4.4. Social capital measures

Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) considered three dimensions for social capital including, structural, relational and cognitive. The structural dimension of social capital is demonstrated as social interaction ties, the relational dimension is demonstrated as trust, norm of reciprocity and identification, and the cognitive dimension is illustrated as shared vision and language.

To answer the second research question; the formation of social capital in OCC communities, social capital measures need to be well defined to complement the ethnography. These measures emphasis on the collective or non-tie social capital due to the focus of the study on the online collaborative communities, where no individual ties exist. Kransy et al. (2013) outline four challenges of measuring social capital as follows: “(1) clarity of the construct, (2) level of analysis, (3) multidimensionality, and (4) contextual factors such as age and culture.”

Given the current literature discussed in details earlier, it can be concluded that social relationships (relational capital), reciprocity (intellectual capital) and trust are three main constructs, which facilitate social capital within online communities. Although this study differentiate these constructs and dimensions systematically, it has been acknowledged that they could be highly interrelated. For example, trust and reciprocity are closely interrelated and the act of reciprocity leads to increase in trust level (Vaezi et al. 2011). Moreover, this study attempts to specify important aspects of social capital rather than reviewing such aspects exhaustively.

These measures including the constructs, their dimensions, and collaboration types come as follow. (Table 2.)

Construct	SC dimension	Collaboration type
Social relationship (Relational capital)/ Trust	Visibility	Self-presentation, Promotion (Listing new items, New treasuries)
	Relational interaction	Social & emotional support, Welcome
	Network creation	Following <i>Etsy</i> , Twitter, Facebook, Etc.
	Face to face meeting	Creating meeting events
Reciprocity (Intellectual capital)/ Trust	Intellectual interaction	Feedback, Comment, Gratitude, Question, Internal (Tag ideas), external (Blogs)
	Collective goals	Problem solving
Trust	Authority	Volunteering, Awareness

Table 2. Social capital measures

3.4.4. Social relationship (Relational capital) dimensions

The aim of online communities is the creation and maintenance of social relationships or friendships. Relational characteristic of social capital relates to resources that produced and leveraged through relationships (Nahapiet and Ghoshal 1998).

Visibility: Social visibility enables individual to be perceived by others and to know more people; therefore, it could increase weak ties that are significant in social capital formation (Granovetter 1973).

Relational interaction: Online communities develop lasting relationships between members and provide attachment to the community. They are also a source of social and emotional support for the members (Blanchard 2004).

Network creation: They provide the opportunity to extend the global reach that is to build online relationships with individuals of similar interests, who have never met (Iriberry and Leroy 2009).

Face to face meeting: Relationships formed in online communities, sometimes are extended into off-line and face to face meetings. Public reports of such meetings might become part of the social life of the community (Blanchard and Markus 2004).

3.4.4.2. Reciprocity (Intellectual capital) dimensions

As discussed earlier in the literature, social capital is positively associated with information exchange and knowledge sharing. Knowledge has been identified as a valuable asset by economists (Marshall 1965). Considering the nature of this study, online communities, we assume most reciprocity to take place in the intellectual level. Intellectual capital has been defined by Nahapiet and Ghoshal as “the knowledge and knowing capability of a social collectivity, such as an organisation, intellectual community, or professional practice” (Nahapiet and Ghoshal 1998).

Intellectual interaction: Improved communication within the online community increases new projects, businesses, and product innovations. These particularly assist the firms to save time (Millen et al. 2002). In online environments, these communications mostly performed in textual format within question, feedback, comment and gratitude (thankfulness).

Collective goals: Communications through online communities are useful in decreasing the barriers to collective action (Hampton 2003).

3.4.4.3. Trust dimensions

Authority: Authority closely associated with reputation and development of bridging social capital (Recuero 2007). Since individuals focus on having an audience and getting the reputation it could increase the trust.

Volunteering: trust positively related to volunteering (Castiglione et al. 2008), which “strongly predicted by civic engagement” (Putnam 2000).

3.5. Towards implementation of the predictive ethnography

As discussed earlier in this chapter there is a lack of standard methods evaluating the online communities. Many studies recommended a holistic approach to investigate sociability as well as usability of the online communities. Ethnography, which provides a holistic view by studying the interactions of the users in their natural setting, and emphasis on the larger context of activities (Blomberg and Karasti 2013) recommended for studying the social interaction and sociability.

Socio-technical infrastructures are hidden by their nature (Star 2002), and they require longer periods of time to be studied and understood how they emerge and evolve (Karasti et al. 2010). Ethnography gains insight from the shared information space and the big data that is available online. It helps to reveal the hidden aspects of the socio-technical by gaining insight not only from the explicit part of observation but the implicit indications and the collective users' experiences observed.

Ethnography develops insight from the member's perspectives and experiences by going beyond what members say they experience (Dourish 2006), by observing how they act and react in different circumstances. Ethnography is used in HCI research in response to the need of moving from laboratory studies to broader understandings of the social organisation of technology use (Dourish 2006). Its significance is also pointed out in understanding the social context and the users' routines (Räsänen and Nyce 2008). Hence, it is valuable for HCI research in studying the uses and functionalities of a technological system in the work contexts.

However, often ethnography has been used in HCI instrumentally only for data collection. It could be problematic particularly in design when it comes to bridging between the domain and the system designers (Räsänen and Nyce 2008). These

include concerns with communicating the results gained by ethnographers and the difficulties in their written reports and getting abstract lessons for design values (Viller and Sommerville 2000). And often the outcome of an ethnographic study might be the recommendation of what should not be developed rather than what should be (Dourish 2006).

The goal of this study is not to dismiss the role of ethnography but to enhance it and use it in a more effective way and contribute to the ongoing discussion about the ways to make the most of this method. This research intends to take advantage of an improved ethnographical approach to understand the gaps better in order to narrow or bridge them. Ethnographic fieldwork is an approach of discovery and learning process where research is guided by experience gathered within the field (Velghe 2011). As in this research the investigation process initiated by the preliminary ethnography that complemented the selection of the heuristics and social capital measures. The observation of the members and following the individuals' online behaviours, which take place in this study, are considered as the most important principals of online ethnography in understanding of the practices and meaning-making of the interactions (Boellstorff et al, 2012; Varis 2014). Ethnography is an ongoing process with ordinary life that offers knowledge that others already have (Hymes 1996) . This research utilises this process to learn the meanings, norms, and the patterns of a way of life. The ethnography taking place in this study in multi sites

In a new approach “predictive ethnography”, the ethnography is complemented by heuristics that are considered as the success factor in designing the online communities. These heuristics act as a structural framework for the ethnographer both in data collection and analysis. The heuristics as guidelines help the ethnographer in data collection in highlighting and understanding the significant areas to investigate.

They also could be useful in providing the outcomes and communicating them in a more abstract and efficient way since the designers are familiar with these heuristics. Furthermore, this methodological framework could provide less subjective results and the researcher would need to spend less time carrying out the process, as he knows what to look for.

3.6. Data gathering platform

Etsy community as an instance of OCC platforms, is the focus of this study. *Etsy* is a large, established online marketplace and community that connects buyers and independent craftspeople for buying and selling handmade and vintage craft items, as well as arts and crafts supplies. It is an appropriate platform for this study since it provides diverse collaborative tools and features. Its communities are active within different countries, which provide access to the shared information space of the members' communications. As an OCC platform, it pursues the sustainability goals by focusing on the low impact product on the environment such as handmade and vintage items. It operates as a self-regulating and self-sustaining online community. The *Etsy* Corporation's mission statement characterises *Etsy* as a "community that actively supports one another in the shared goal of offering alternatives to mass-produced objects" (Etsy 2014). It enables individuals to communicate with and trust each other so they can do business. Individuals come to *Etsy* to find unique things from real people, and they want to know the story behind what they are buying and whom they are buying from. *Etsy's* community features include teams, forums, offline events, and online workshops. *Etsy* is a diverse and growing community with 30 million members in 200 countries (Etsy 2013), provides an appropriate OCC platform for this study. In this study, data is gathered from forums and teams, which are active communities

where members share information about running a business, learning new skills, obtaining advice from other members, and discussing their problems.

3.7. Challenges of the online ethnography

Given that the context of this study is online communities of *Etsy*, the challenges of ethnography in these online environments need to be addressed.

In offline observation, verbal communication combined with the facial expressions, the tone of voice, body language, and the impression is given by the appearance, and setting help the researchers to gain a better insight and analyse members. But in online ethnography, the researchers are not physically co-present with their research subjects and the context and setting altered. Therefore, they need a different set of skills such as analysis of textual and visual data instead of the interpersonal skills to access and interpret the social insights (Garcia et al. 2009). Due to the changes, the observation approach must be adjusted to the new online setting. These adjustments include the organisation, recording, understanding and analysing of text-based interactions.

In online communities, the medium of communication is based on text-based and online interaction this has both the advantages and disadvantages for the ethnographers. For example, the asynchronous nature of communication, changes the sequencing of messages, which intervene between a post and the message responding to that, might create problems in interpretation of the messages. (Garcia and Jacobs 1999; Markham 2004). On the contrary, this enables the ethnographers with a rich and comprehensive collective interactions and content, beyond the obvious traces that users leave through their online interactions (Rotman et al. 2012).

3.8. Ethics of study

In online environments, the discussion of public and private are blurring, which raise ethical issues around access to data and the protection of privacy and confidentiality (Garcia et al. 2009). Therefore, the researchers should know how to consider the principles of human subject protection to the online environment which varies from the face-to-face research contexts. In this regard, Sveningsson (2004) remarks that online researchers should be ethically aware by being “reflexive” and “flexible” in the situation they face.

Being open and clear about the purpose of the research and using online informant considered as a necessity for online ethnography. Hine (2008) argues that online research required openness about the research and the choice for the potential informants to be excluded. Researchers in online ethnography required to consider the expectations of potential informants, even in the online public environments (Ess and AoIR Ethics Working Committee 2002). Informed consent required the researchers to be clear regarding their research purposes, any potential risks to the participants, and declaring the choice of voluntary participation (Hine 2008).

Lurking as part of online ethnography also creates ethical concerns, and there are a variety of views on this matter. Some researchers believe in the lurking, in the beginning, to familiarise themselves with the setting before collecting data. For example, in a study of Israeli chat rooms, Shoham (2004) lurked first before announcing himself as a researcher in the community (Shoham 2004). However, some participants feel they have been spied on and they would prefer to engage actively with them from beginning (LeBesco 2004). However, despite the advantages of announcing the presence of the researchers in these online environments

(Sveningsson 2004), sometimes it might cost the anonymity, and also to interrupt the natural behaviour of the participants (Soukup 1999).

The rise of different platforms and online communities that enable sharing of information lead to the complexity in addressing the subject of privacy in Internet research. Individuals increasingly share more personal information in online platforms that provide a rich source and content for research, which are readily available online. Most of the information shared in these platforms is publicly viewable, therefore it does not fit to the standard regulatory definition of “private information.” Consequently, many researchers might not treat these data as requiring any particular privacy considerations (Buchanan and Zimmer 2012). Nonetheless, these online communities and platforms often used for big data research purposes characterise a complex environment of socio-technical interactions. In these environments individuals often do not understand fully how their interactions might be monitored, collected, and shared with third parties (Buchanan and Zimmer 2012). Furthermore, the privacy policies are regularly changing and not fully understood by the users, where the technical capabilities and designs are imperfect in restricting the information flows and protecting one’s privacy. Expectations about privacy and what is revealed, hidden and shared, are vary significantly amongst the users of different platforms, as well as between users of the same platforms (Morey et al. 2011). This becomes more alarming where the sensitive content is being shared and people may be at serious risk, and it is the responsibility of ethnographers to ensure that revealing contents do not put the peoples’ life in danger (Varis 2014). Some compromises and consideration might need to be made, such as sacrificing some ethnographic details, but this could not prevent ethnographers from doing research in these complex environments.

Given that the muddy range of ethical issues surrounding these online environments and knowing that the discussion of private or public is vague and changing, the researchers need to respect and protect the privacy of the community. To consider the online community as private space could improve the respect for the community and the ownership of their words (Markham and Buchanan 2012). In regards to the protection of the identity of the participants, the online ethnographers need to pay particular attention to the participants' nicknames as online identities (Bechar-Israeli 1999). Despite the fact that these nicknames are chosen as pseudonyms by the participants, they need to be protected by the ethnographers since the participants are known by these names in their communities (Sveningsson 2004). To respond to these changing social environment of these online communities, researcher should become part of these collaborative communities, by building one's own profiles, making some friendships, expose one's own choices, preferences and views, and make ethical decisions about what information and findings to be revealed (Beer and Burrows 2007).

Being aware of these ethical issues, enabled this study to consider and apply them in the procedure that is discussed in following part.

3.9. Data analysis and procedure

A preliminary ethnography was carried out parallel to the selection of the heuristics. The ethnography supported the researcher to interact with the system that is vital for evaluation. In addition, it contributed to the selection of the relevant heuristics. Once the heuristics were developed, before the data collection starts the ethical issues have been considered. To consider the openness about the purpose of this research, an announcement sent to the community and acknowledged the purpose of the study.

The researcher also contacted the person in charge in *Etsy* and acquired the consent for the data collection. The data collection started by taking two approaches:

The first approach aimed to observe the formation of collective or non-tie social capital in OCC communities. This approach concentrated on *Etsy* teams, (community features that enable people to create and join groups based on their commonalities) based on “location-based” and “topic-based” categories. Collaborations inside these teams observed within certain time length (e.g. one month) to find patterns for social capital formation. All textual interactions systematically coded and labelled to the social capital measure dimensions (visibility, relational interaction, network creation, face to face meeting, intellectual interaction, collective goals, and authority). (Table 2.)

For the second approach, the researcher coded and gathered textual interactions from *Etsy* forum and teams posts, related to each heuristic item including sociability and usability. (Table1.) The ethnographer also looked for new possible items and the community support for heuristics. This approach aimed to answer the main research question that is to identify the socio-technical gaps and to support the design of OCC platforms better.

The analysis for this research consisted of quantitative and qualitative analysis. In quantitative analysis, the collected and coded data will be measured to find the frequencies of the heuristic items, and social capital measures. The frequency of items and measures in certain time length demonstrated their level of importance, by means of, how much they have been discussed in the community. The result of coding is a coded text representing a structure for the raw data in the text, which could support the handling of text segments according to the occurrence or co-occurrence of the codes. The analysis of frequencies of occurrences and co-occurrences of codes considered a useful step but not the last word in data analysis (Gläser and Laudel

2013). These frequencies and word co-occurrence are significant in discovering the big themes that are hidden within the details and nuances of the texts (Ryan and Bernard 2003). Identifying these themes could be very useful step in analysing the culture of communities.

In quantitative analysis, the frequencies of occurrence of each dimension of social capital demonstrated the formation of the different type of social capital (relational and intellectual). The assessment of the dimensions within different teams (location and topic-based) revealed their social capital formation patterns. This helped to learn which social capital dimensions and types (relational and intellectual) are more likely to be generated within which team. These comparisons were based on the hypothesis that location-based teams generate more relational capital (e.g. people within these teams have more chance to meet up face to face in local teams) while the topic-based teams are expected to generate more intellectual capital (since the interaction is more informational and on a particular topic). The quantitative analysis of the collected and coded heuristics revealed the frequencies of different items. The percentage of occurrences of various heuristics revealed their significance in the creation of the gaps.

In qualitative analysis, the descriptions from online ethnography of the members' discussions provided a construction of an understanding of the members' behaviours, motives, and the collective norms. According to Rotman et al. (2012), online ethnographies have strength in producing comprehensive descriptions of interactions and content, beyond the visible traces left by the users within their online communication. It facilitates the emergence of "thick descriptions" and meanings from explicit and implicit behaviours from individual and collective discussions. This thick description comes from a naturalistic interpretation and understanding of cultures, humans' behaviours and interactions within communities (Geertz 1973). And it

provides an improved learning of the motivations, meanings, and attitudes that are implicit and often differing from explicit behaviours (Rotman et al. 2012).

The qualitative analysis of social capital study provided the descriptions within the range of different dimensions. The norms derived from the ethnography also added to these dimensions to outline different teams shared behaviours and to better reflect the multidimensionality and contextual factors of the teams. The qualitative descriptions analysed the formation patterns and helped to understand the different teams' requirements better, and to support the different social capital types. They also contributed to revealing the socio-capital gaps of different type of teams including location-based and topic-based.

The qualitative analysis uncovered the issues that could lead to the socio-technical gaps in the range of heuristics. This analysis complemented the missing features from the quantitative analysis that are why members are doing what they are doing, and how the gaps generated. It also exposed how the lack of enough support for heuristics could lead to socio-technical gaps. Furthermore, it provided a descriptive understanding of the social requirements and how the technology can afford to support these requirements towards narrowing the gaps.

Within the qualitative analysis, the data was anonymised to consider the ethics of the study. All the information regarding the names, nicknames, shops' name, address and any other individual information have been deleted to respect and protect the privacy and identity of the members.

In this chapter, the research questions, the socio-technical framework as a guideline for this study, a review of existing and potential methods, the "Predictive ethnography" as a new method, the heuristics, social capital measures, data gathering platform,

challenges of online ethnography, ethics of the study, and data analysis and procedure have been discussed. In the next chapter, the above-mentioned methodology put in practice and the pilot studies, preliminary data collection results, and the introductory socio-technical gaps will be presented.

4. Pilot study

This pilot study planned to test the practicality of the new proposed methodology for this research that is to answer the third question of this study (How socio-technical gaps and social capital formation in online communities might be investigated using an ethnographic approach?). It intended to help in estimation of the data collection period. The functionality of the used software (Nvivo) also tested for the main data collection. Furthermore, it aimed at providing insight into the data analysis of the research. This pilot study was designed in two stages trying to learn how to answer the questions for this research. The first stage concentrates on the second question of this research, the social capital formation in OCC. In the second stage, socio-technical gaps were studied to help on how to answer the main question of this study (What are the socio-technical gaps in technologies supporting OCC?).

4.1. Pilot study report (Social capital formation)

A pilot study was carried out within one week in March 2014. This pilot was preliminary, as the main data gathering developed in the main phase of the empirical work.

Two *Etsy* teams, “Florida Etsy Street Team”, as location-based (Figure 3.), and “Etsy Relevancy & SEO”, as topic-based, have been selected. It was anticipated that this categorisation would facilitate the comparison of the different collaboration types (Table 2.) and requirements of different type of teams.

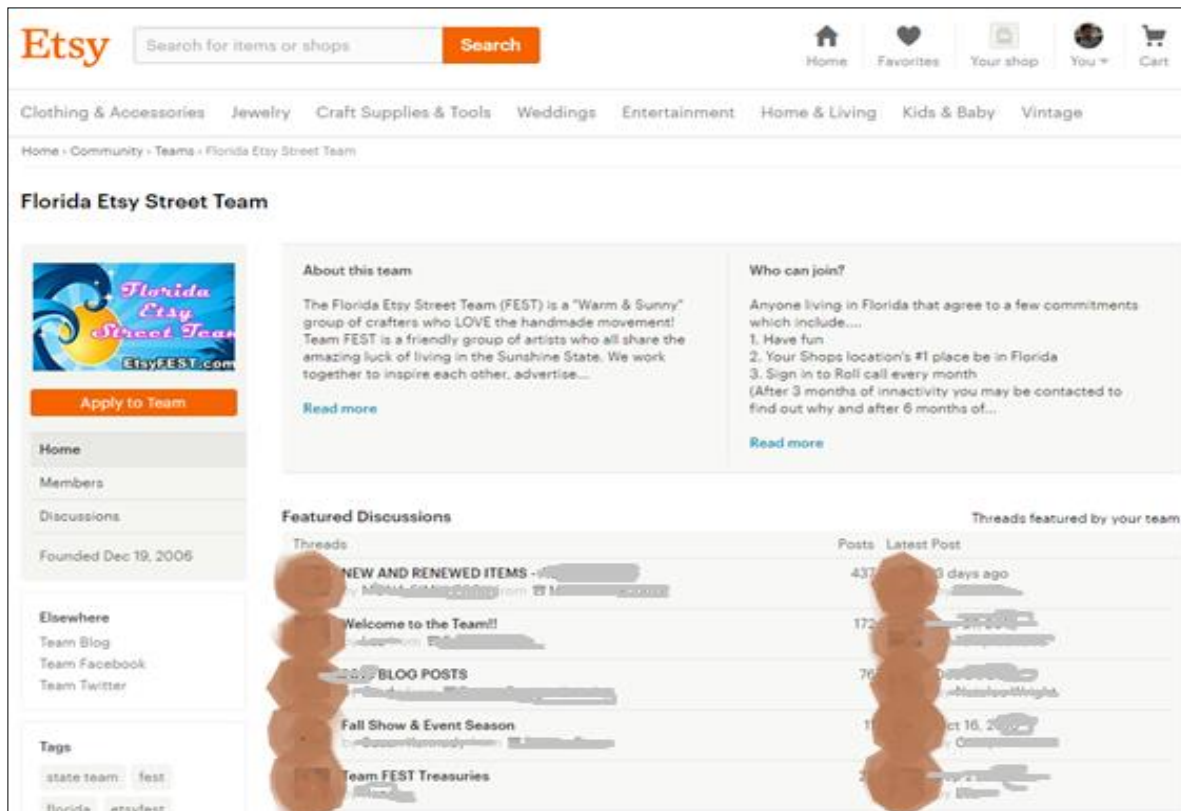


Figure 3. A screenshot of an Etsy team’s discussions

Teams were selected according to their activeness and practicality for the community members. Both teams should have had enough critical mass and active interactions to sustain and demonstrate their patterns of use. Continuous day-to-day interactions within at least previous two or three weeks was necessary for the selection process. The topic based team was selected due to its topic subject and its practicality for the maintenance of the members’ shop. Utilising the “Predictive ethnography”, all the interactions in the form of textual conversations of these two teams within one week were systematically collected and coded using Nvivo software. Coding was based on different collaboration types indicating to the dimensions and constructs of social capital. [The relational capital construct shown in red, the intellectual capital construct shown in blue, and the trust construct shown in green]. (Table 2.)

Construct	SC dimension	Collaboration type
Social relationship (Relational capital)/ Trust	<i>Visibility</i>	Self-presentation, Promotion (Listing new items, New treasuries)
	<i>Relational interaction</i>	Social & emotional support, Welcome
	<i>Network creation</i>	Following <i>Etsy</i> , Twitter, Facebook, Etc.
	<i>Face to face meeting</i>	Creating meeting events
Reciprocity (Intellectual capital)/ Trust	<i>Intellectual interaction</i>	Feedback, Comment, Gratitude, Question, Internal (Tag ideas), external (Blogs)
	<i>Collective goals</i>	Problem solving
Trust	<i>Authority</i>	Volunteering, Awareness

Table 3. Social capital measures

The purpose of codes is to show what is talked about in a segment of the text and the texts containing the raw data are indexed. Codes support the revealing of the text segments that can be used to group them within a thematic characteristics of the data they contain (Gläser and Laudel 2013). The coding-based approaches to qualitative data analysis vary in their underlying methodologies concerning the extent to which pre-existing theory is used in the coding process. In the study of social capital all the codes depend on the pre-existing theory as the social capital measures and all the textual data within a period of time collected and coded to these measures.

The coding procedure started by creating nodes that represent the social capital dimensions. Then for each node, according to its collaboration types, a number of sub-nodes have been created. Once all the nodes and sub-nodes have been created, the actual data gathering started. Each “Post” that is an individual comment in a “Thread”, has been coded into a collaboration type (sub-node). The segments of the text within the posts that indicate the occurrence of specific information are assigned to the relevant codes and keywords. Some posts occasionally represent more than one collaboration type; therefore, they have been coded more than once. (Figure 4.) The results come as follow. In total, 21 threads consist of 135 posts have been gathered and coded in social capital pilot study.

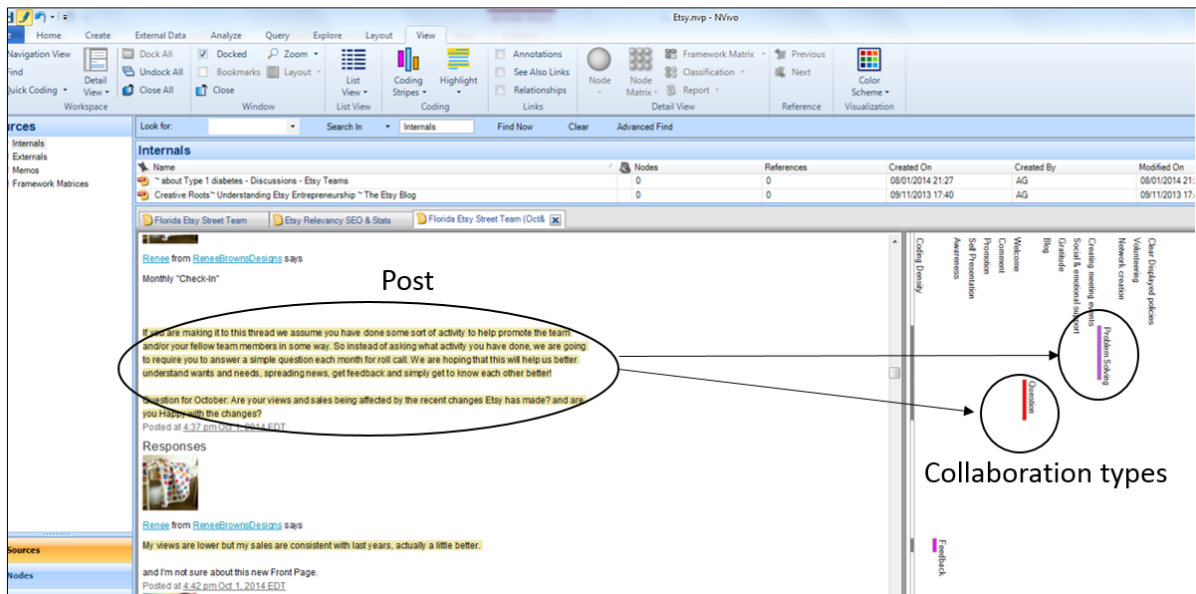


Figure 4. A sample of post, coded to collaboration types in Nvivo

In the location-based team, Florida Etsy Street, 11 collaboration types were observed reflecting four dimensions (Visibility, Relational interaction, Intellectual interaction and Authority). These point to the formation of all three constructs of social capital including relational capital (63.5%), intellectual capital (31.8%) and Trust (4.7%). The highest amounts of interaction in this team concerned: Promotion (56.1%), which refers to “Visibility” dimension. “Visibility” enables the individuals to be perceived by others and to know more people, therefore generates “Relational capital”. Comment (15.9%) and Tag ideas (9.3%), indicating the “Intellectual interaction” dimension that is associated with “Intellectual capital”. (Figure 5.)

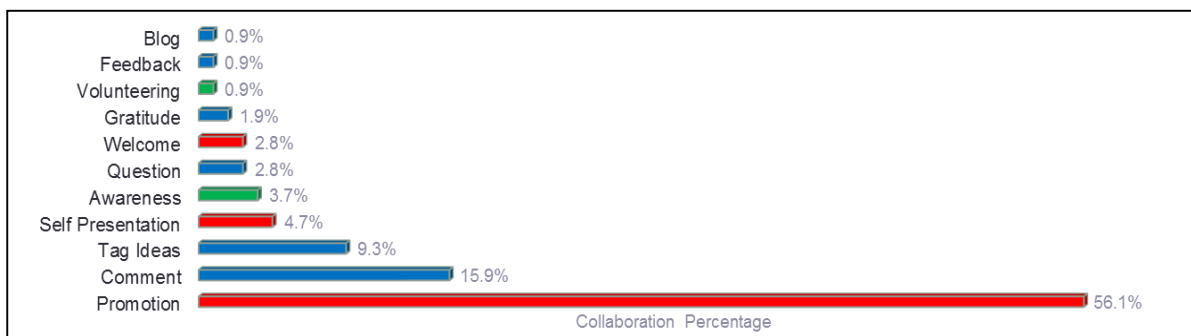


Figure 5. Location-based team (Florida Etsy Street Team)

In the topic-based team (Etsy Relevancy & SEO), the interaction was in the region of 7 collaboration types indicating to 4 dimensions (Intellectual interaction, Relational interaction, Collective goals, and Authority). These refer to the formation of all three constructs of social capital including; intellectual capital (94.8%), relational capital (2.6%), and Trust (2.6%). The highest amounts of interactions in this team point to Question (28.9%), Gratitude (26.3%), Feedback (23.7%) and Comment (10.5%), all related to “Intellectual interaction” dimension that is associated with “Intellectual capital”. (Figure 6.)

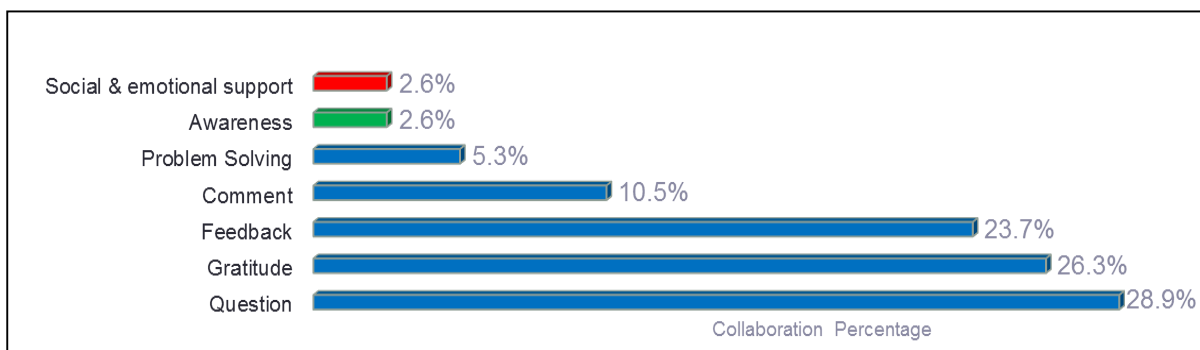


Figure 6. Topic-based team (Etsy Relevancy & SEO)

The frequency of different collaboration types in these teams indicates a generation of the various dimensions of non-tie social capital. They demonstrate that in the topic based team, most interactions were focusing on different types of the “Intellectual interaction” dimension reflecting a strong intellectual capital (94.8%), whereas in location-based team the collaboration types are more varied and belong to mostly relational capital (63.5%), sometimes combined with intellectual capital constructs. This supports our hypothesis that location-based teams generate more relational capital, while the topic-based teams are expected to create more intellectual capital.

This pilot study suggests that some collaboration types could reflect more than one dimension. For example “Gratitude”, collaboration type in “Intellectual interaction”

dimension, could also be an indirect reflection of “Problem solving”, since members whose problems are solved show gratitude. However, this study considered the real evidence for “Problem solving”, where the community members explicitly stated that their problems have been solved, rather than considering only gratitude as its indication.

As discussed above, evidence for five dimensions of non-tie social capital has been observed within these two teams (shown in colour in Table 3.). Only two dimensions including “Face to face meeting” and “Network creation” have not been observed during this study (shown in grey in Table 3.). However, evidence such as the potential for exchanging of materials could indirectly imply to “Face to face meeting”, but no direct evidence has been observed in this pilot study. Therefore, the theory by Jiang and Carrol (2009) that claims, online communities are not the only source of origin for social capital but they could also lead to new tie generation, could not be seen in this pilot study yet.

Construct	SC dimension	Collaboration type
Social relationship (Relational capital)/ Trust	<i>Visibility</i>	Self-presentation, Promotion (Listing new items, New treasuries)
	<i>Relational interaction</i>	Social & emotional support, Welcome
	<i>Network creation</i>	Following <i>Etsy</i> , Twitter, Facebook, Etc.
	<i>Face to face meeting</i>	Creating meeting events
Reciprocity (Intellectual capital)/ Trust	<i>Intellectual interaction</i>	Feedback, Comment, Gratitude, Question, Internal (Tag ideas), external (Blogs)
	<i>Collective goals</i>	Problem solving
Trust	<i>Authority</i>	Volunteering, Awareness

Table 4. Social capital dimensions and collaboration type observed in the Pilot Study

4.2. Pilot study report (Socio-technical gaps)

This pilot study carried out to test the validity and practicality of the Predictive ethnography. It aimed to answer the first research question that is to identify the socio-

technical gaps and to support the design of OCC platforms. It also intended at providing insights into the data analysis of the research. It was carried out within one week in March 2014.

In the coding procedure of socio-technical gaps study, majority of the codes depend on the pre-existing theory as the heuristics, however a few new codes created based on the new identified heuristics. It started by creating nodes using Nvivo software. Each node represents one item from previously created heuristics (Table 1.). Once all the 36 nodes have been set up, the data gathering started. After creating a "Document" in Nvivo, the textual interactions (posts) from *Etsy* forum have been collected (copied and pasted) and saved in the document, as well as "Word" format document for backup purpose. The collection of posts was based on their relevance to the heuristics. In this stage having a print out of the heuristic items on hand was very helpful in selection of the posts. The ethnographer also was looking for new possible items and the community support for heuristics. Afterwards, each "post" has been coded to a heuristic (node). Some posts occasionally represent more than one heuristic; therefore, they have been coded more than once.

The results demonstrated 20 items out of 36 have been observed and coded. Two new items (U37 and U38) have been identified and added to the heuristics. Additionally, two items (S14 and SU24) have been observed within the social capital formation in teams, added to the results. These results confirmed the significance of these 21 heuristics for evaluating and designing of the *Etsy* community. (Table 4.)

Constructs	Heuristics
Social relationship	S4: Social & emotional support
Reciprocity	S5: Information exchange
	S7: Achieving collective goal (knowledge creation, problem solving)
Trust (Privacy & Identity)	S8: Different level of anonymity (limit of privacy)
	S13: Trust creation features (e.g. reputation model)
Content creation contribution	S14: Social recognition & self-expression
	S18: Volunteerism
Purpose, policies & procedures	S20: Relevant rules of behaviour & Clear displayed policies
Information design & presentation	SU23: Advanced & filter search for content
	SU24: Easy information obtaining
	SU25: Discussion board organisation/ Convo organisation (NEW)
Technology Support	SU26: Subgroup formation (facilitate collaboration in subtopics)
	SU28: Social presence tools (social media)
	SU29: Other tools (forum, chat, mailing list, UseNet news, etc.)
Navigation	U31: Intuitive layout
	U32: Visibility of site (what is going on on the site)
	U34: Error prevention & correction
User Control	U33: Feeling in charge of system
	U34: Error prevention & correction
Reliability	U37: Update users with changes (NEW)
	U38: Easy customer feedback (NEW)

Table 5. (S = Sociability / U = Usability)

In total, 35 threads consist of 400 posts have been gathered and coded in this pilot study. The quantity of heuristic items within this pilot study is demonstrating their level of importance since the members of the community discuss and raise issues that are more important for them. These results show that sociability has been discussed more compared to usability issues. This finding is in line with Hart et al. (2008) study on

Facebook, in which they found that users are less concerned about the bad usability of the system when there are enjoyable aspects that compensate the usability inadequacies. These detected heuristics with the help of further observation contribute towards revealing the socio-technical gaps. (Figure 7.)

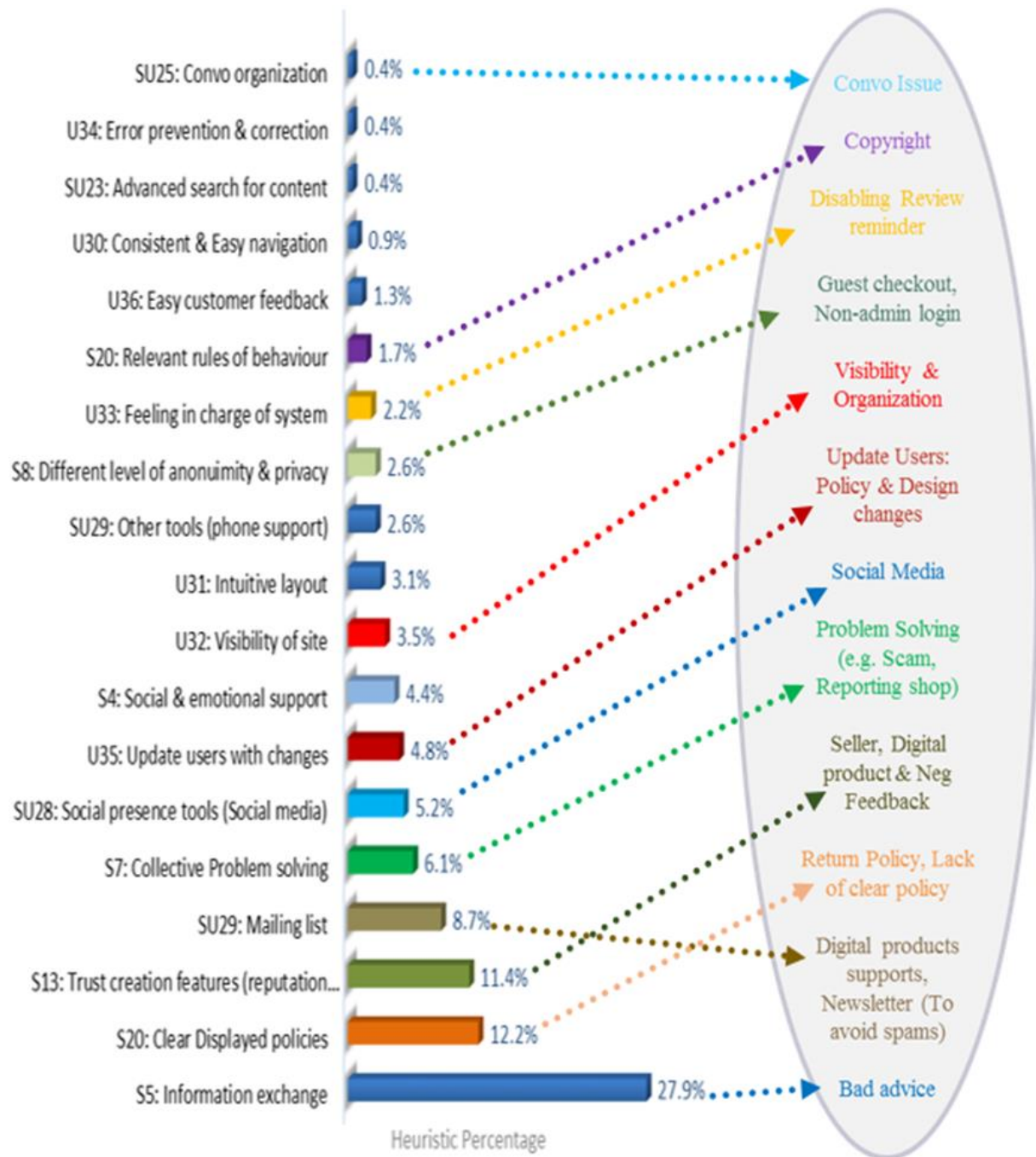


Figure 7. Heuristics percentage towards gaps

4.2.1. Introductory socio-technical gaps

This pilot study and data gathering presented the significance of 21 heuristics as the success factor for *Etsy* community. An additional observation on these detected heuristics helped to reveal whether the community has enough support for these heuristics or not. This observation concentrated on how the lack of enough support for these heuristics create issues, new requirements, and possible socio-technical gaps. These gaps have been considered introductory since there was a need for further data gathering and observation to better understand the community and the needs of its members. Therefore, they need to be better analysed and refined. The gaps have been recognized as they were more than individual issues, there were collective discussions around them, and there were differentiations between the social requirements and technical capabilities of the platform. The identified introductory gaps come as follow.

4.2.1.1. Reciprocity

Bad advice: this issue relates to Information exchange that is the most observed heuristics within this community. As discussed earlier in social capital formation chapter, they are wrong advice coming from the lack of expertise of members and they could be very costly. One solution for this problem could be the rating of expertise of the individuals in specific fields and to reveal who knows what. Another possible solution could be the rating of comments to show their usefulness.

Scam: this a common concern particularly in virtual environments. Our observation revealed that due to the active and collaborative nature of this community, as soon as someone raise a concern about a suspicious case they collectively solved the problem

and detected that. However, there is a lack of a particular space and systematic awareness for these issues.

4.2.1.2. Technology support

Spam: this is one of the most common problems in the virtual environments. In *Etsy* community, the shop owners want to promote their products by sending an email to their potential customers. However, many people don't like to receive these emails, and they could cause frustration. A solution for this problem could be a Newsletter and ask the customers to sign in to receive updates.

Digital products support: digital products (e.g. photos, postcards, etc.) becoming more and more popular. They required different supports compare to other products. In this community, for example, were causing problems such as printing layout and delivery. When customers were receiving these products online, they had problems in printing as well as receiving them. There is a need for a standard format for these products as well as online delivery confirmation.

Social media: are very useful tools that help individuals to have a better online social presence. But it has been revealed that due to a large number of them (e.g. Instagram, Facebook, Pinterest, etc.) they became very time-consuming and unmanageable. Often individuals have to get a third-party program to manage them. The collective discussion observed suggested to: *“master 1 or 2 (which are the best for you), keep it simple, not use same content in all, don't obsess, use 3rd party program”*.

4.2.1.3. Purpose, policies & procedures

Return policy (Lack of clear policy): Our observation revealed that *Etsy* community users are often facing problems due to lack of return policy when people buy products. For example, one member was asking: “I wish *Etsy* make a compulsory tick box”, other

members suggested to comply with “Distance selling regulatory” law in the UK since they were based in the UK. However since these online communities going beyond the geographical borders and the local laws and regulatory between countries might differ; therefore, there is a need for a standard policy for these communities.

Copyright: considering the nature of this community that is related to art and handcraft, individuals inspired and got new ideas from others design and products. This issue even causes more concern in virtual environments where the boundary of copying and inspiration is not clear. The observation revealed that there is mixed opinion among members regarding this issue. Therefore, there is a need for relevant rules of behaviour regarding how to define the copyright policies in these communities.

4.2.1.4. Trust

Feedback (Seller, digital product & negative): feedbacks (on products, shops, individuals, etc.) are very significant in using virtual environments and increasing trust. *Etsy* community enables the customers to write feedback for the sellers, but the sellers cannot write feedback for the customers. Our observation revealed that many of the community members want to have this feature in place. Giving feedback for the digital products also create some concerns. The product review in this community designed for the ordinary (non-digital) products that take some time for delivery. The feedback form sends to buyers after a period of time, but the digital products shipments are instant and required different way of providing feedback. Another issue revealed was the negative feedback from the buyers. Often the sellers want to be able to remove these negative feedbacks somehow. However, there is a mixed opinion among members regarding this issue.

Non-admin login: sometimes members have difficulties to manage and do all the admin work of their shops, and they need to hire someone to do them. They don't want to give access to all of their account. Therefore, there is a need to provide a partial access to their accounts, which is missing in this community.

Guest checkout: this option enables the people who are not a member of the community to buy items without registering and becoming a member. Our observation revealed that this feature is lacking in the *Etsy* community and several members want to have this feature.

4.2.1.5. Reliability

Update users with new policy & design changes: as observed in this community, when changes happen they create panic and frustration between members. In many occasions, the members were not sure when the policy changes start and how they work. The design changes without earlier notice also created panic as members thought there is something wrong with their pages. Therefore, it is vital to have the policies as transparent as possible and help the members in better understanding them. It is also important to update the members about these changes.

4.2.1.6. Navigation/ Information design & presentation

Visibility & convo issue: the visibility help members to understand what is going on on the page and what features are available to facilitate them. This usability issue has been observed in several instances in the community. This issue also could create navigation problems. The most significance visibility problem observed was related to the "Convo system" that is the messaging system in this community. In "Convo" inbox all the messages are not shown until the invisible "All" option clicked. This issue cost many members losing their messages and buyers and contact as a result.

4.2.1.7. User control

Disabling review reminder: if buyers do not want to write a review on a purchase the review reminder appears every time they go to their page until about 45 days after the purchase date, and there is no option to disable it. Our observation revealed that despite causing the frustration in buyers, there is mixed opinion among members whether to have a disabling option or not.

Having discussed the pilot studies, partial data gathering, and introductory socio-capital gaps, next chapter summarises the results and presents the preliminary contribution of this study.

4.3. Preliminary contributions from pilot studies

The results from pilot studies and initial data gathering suggested that the new proposed methodology, predictive ethnography is practical and effective in evaluating the online community such as *Etsy*. The heuristics and social capital measures developed by the aid of the initial ethnography revealed the community's success factors, needs, and different teams' social requirements. They also gave a better structure to ethnography and helped to translate the ethnographic insight into design recommendations and requirements. Without this structure, the researcher needed more time in data collection and coding of the data. Also, the coding and categorisation would not be very systematic and consistent. This methodology was useful in revealing a number of introductory socio-technical gaps that need further analysis and refinement, to answer the main question of this study.

The social capital formation results showed the occurrence of different collaboration types in various teams indicating the generation of different dimensions of non-tie social capital in each team. In topic-based teams, a significant amount of knowledge

sharing and various types of the “Intellectual capital” dimensions have been observed. The low quality of content often causes issues such as “Bad advice”, which could be costly in this team. The problems in this team concern with revealing “who knows what”, the quality of content, the expertise of contributors and organisational of the existing knowledge in the team. In the location-based team, most interactions were towards the “Relational capital” generation. The members of this team use a very diverse type of interactions. They proved to be very creative in helping each other and contributing to their community.

Shop locally, a value of OCC has been observed in the location-based team. These results also support the theory by Jiang and Carrol (2009) that online communities are not only a source of origin for social capital but they could also lead to new tie generation. These findings strongly support our hypothesis that location-based teams generate more relational capital, while the topic-based teams are expected to produce more intellectual capital. Learning this distinction with the aid of relevant social capital dimensions and collaboration types could be valuable in defining better the users’ social needs to verify the system’s technical requirements. These results also contributed to the revealing of the socio-technical gaps.

Moreover, the socio-technical gaps pilot study managed to evaluate the community effectively and verified 21 heuristics. It also identified a number of new heuristics by observation and identification of some issues that were beyond the existing heuristics. These new heuristics together with the previously identified ones could be useful in evaluating the online communities similar to *Etsy*. These results reveal that the sociability heuristics have more significance in this community since they have been discussed more compared to the usability items. This study also succeeded to reveal

13 introductory gaps. Further data gathering, observation, analysis, and refinement are required to expose, the final socio-technical gaps in OCC, and the enhancement of design of OCC platforms.

4.4. Lessons learned from pilot study

Following this pilot study, some lessons were learned, and adjustments were made for the main data gathering. For the purpose of the pilot study the textual interactions were collected and coded. Further analysis was postponed for later stages in order to have more data to aid the researcher in the qualitative meaning making of the textual interactions. However, it has been noticed that observing and recording initial indications of patterns of collaboration, during coding, could be useful for later analysis. Furthermore, the unit of analysis for this study is the number of posts. However, since the researcher does not have control over the size of the communities and the number of exchanged posts in two distinct teams are different, to compare their patterns of collaboration, the researcher needed to consider the percentage based on the number of coded items (SC dimensions & collaboration types). In representing the gathered data using Nvivo, the percentage of coded data option has been used. This option presents data based on the amount of the collected text (the volume of the text), whereas, the researcher was looking for the percentage depending on the number of the coded items. Therefore, the coded data was imported into Microsoft Excel, and the percentage was created based on the number of the coded items and the problem fixed. These experiences have been taken into consideration for the main data gathering and analysis as presented in the next sections. To improve the reliability of the results, a sample of the coding (approximately 10% of posts, for each team in social capital; and for the socio-technical gaps) were checked by a third party researcher to confirm the consistency of the coded data. The method and the

procedure of coding were explained to the third party researcher. Then, she carried out the coding procedure independently. Consequently, the results from the third party researcher was compared with the result of the pilot study with the presence of the third party researcher. The results from the social capital was consistent and the results were matching with each other. However, in the socio-technical gaps one problem was revealed. As it was shown in the Figure 6. The highest frequency of the coding was in the “Information exchange” area. But the result from third party researcher was not indicating that. After careful consideration it was revealed that there was a confusion in the domain of this code. Despite the fact that “Information exchange” could also occur in the area of some other heuristics, but this study is interested in revealing the issues/problems occurring in this domain. Revealing this confusion was helpful and considered in the main study of the socio-technical gaps. Considering the lesson learned from the pilot study, next chapter represents and discusses the results from the social capital data collection.

5. Social capital data collection and results

This chapter is structured as follow. First, the data collection approach outlined. Then, the results of the quantitative analysis reveal the occurrences and percentages of social capital dimensions and collaboration types. In this part, the location-based and topic-based will be compared followed by the extension of location-based and topic-based types. Afterwards, the qualitative findings from the online ethnography reveal the interpretation, meaning, and reporting of the individual and collective discussions along with the norms of different teams. Finally, the summary of the findings will be discussed with the aid of presentation of the social capital formation of the various teams in construct levels (intellectual capital, relational capital, and trust).

Social capital considered valuable in understanding the practices and outcomes of social systems and policy making due to its mostly positive implication recognised in society (Castiglione et al. 2008). The main features of social capital including intellectual capital, relational capital, trust, and collective actions and norms are the central components of OCC. For these reasons and the positive association of social capital to OCC (Dubois et al. 2014; Parigi and State 2014), this chapter reports on a study that investigates and reveals social capital formation within online communities of OCC. The study of social capital could also be helpful in clarifying the social needs of individuals that are indispensable to the understanding of the socio-technical gaps within OCC.

5.1. Data collection approach

After the pilot study on the proposed methodology of this research, predictive ethnography, the data gathering for social capital formation has been carried out with consideration of lessons learned from the pilot study such as observing and recording

the initial indications for patterns of collaboration, during coding. In the first phase of the study, all the textual interactions of the selected teams within an extended period of time collected and coded to the predefined social capital dimensions and collaboration types. In the second part of the study, online ethnography was applied to generate the qualitative results from different types of teams. The qualitative results create meaning making from the textual interactions and help in the understanding of the collective discussions and diverse collaboration patterns.

The types of teams are significant and different types of them expected to have varied kind of collaborations that could generate diverse types of social capital. Revealing these differences are essential in understanding the social and technical requirements of their members. Very often the *Etsy* members are looking for good teams to join. Within their discussions members reveal what kind of teams they like and look for, what they don't like about the existing teams and also they introduce new teams to each other. It has been revealed that teams could be categorised mainly into two types, such as topic-based and location-based. Topic-based teams have "*a lot of info*" since they are more focused on the issues and how to resolve them, and they have less discussions. Several members are looking for active and engaging topic-based teams to join. These teams expected to generate more intellectual capital, and difficulties in communications of technical terms are more anticipated in these type of teams.

Location-based are local or regional teams, which are usually very active. Their members often create events, meets and build great online communities. In the data collection process, first, the pilot study continued within location-based and topic-based teams in parallel, to compare their differences. Then, the data collection in location-based teams extended to investigate the social capital formation in different

cultures and geographical settings. Data gathered from three different location levels, such as city, country, and continent. These location-based teams are expected to mostly generate relational capital. However, due to their diverse geographical settings they are anticipated to have differences especially in social capital dimensions such as Face-to-face meeting and Network creation. Learning these differences enables the researcher to compare their social capital formation and the requirements of communities of the various geographical sizes.

Finally, the social capital formation in topic-based teams also extended in less technical topic-based teams. This could help the researcher to compare and learn the differences in social capital formation in high-technical and less-technical topic-based teams. In less-technical teams, it is expected to have more of relational capital compare to the high-technical teams. It would be interesting to know when the relational capital increases what impact it could create and what differences could happen in their technical communications. (Figure 8.)

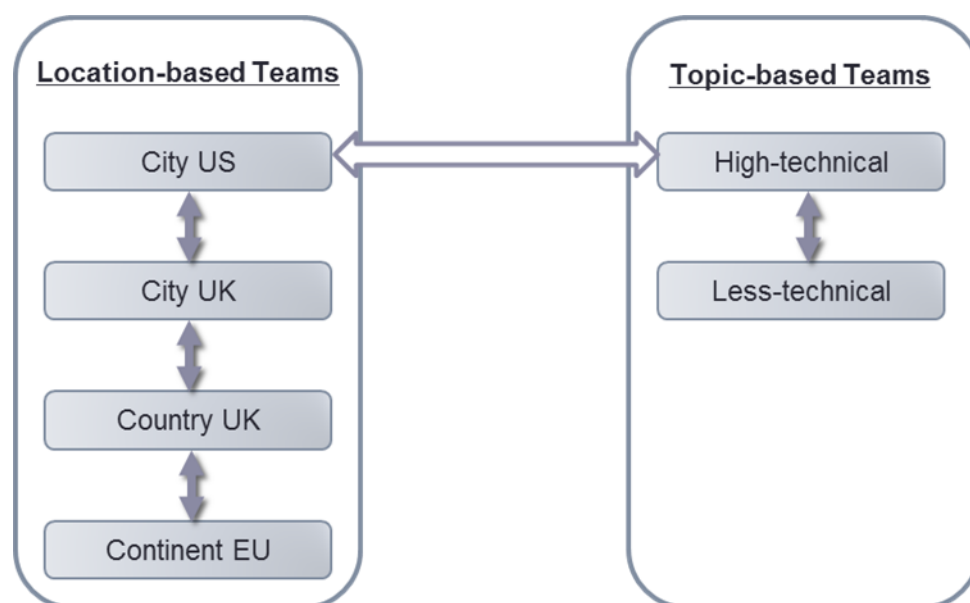


Figure 8. Different types of Teams in data collection

5.2. Quantitative analysis results (Social capital)

In this phase, all the textual interaction of the selected teams collected and coded within certain period of time (one month). The coding followed the same procedure as the pilot study; using Nvivo application based on social capital dimensions (nodes) and collaboration types (sub-nodes). A sample of the coding (approximately 10% of posts for each team) checked by a third party researcher to confirm the consistency of the coded data. The frequencies of different dimensions and collaboration types reveal the types of social capital formation within the teams. These quantitative results come as follow.

5.2.1. Social capital formation in location-based vs. topic-based teams

The data gathered within the extended period of one month in July 2014 from two *Etsy* teams, including “Florida Etsy Street Team” as location-based and “Etsy Relevancy & SEO” as a topic-based team. In total, 51 threads consist of 710 posts (all textual interaction of two teams) have been gathered. Topic-based communications included 33 threads (272 posts), and 18 threads (438 posts) from location-based have been collected.

In location-based team (Florida Etsy Street), most discussions were towards the generation of the “Relational capital” (shown in red in Figure 9.). 14 collaboration types have been observed reflecting six dimensions (Visibility, Relational interaction, Network creation, Face to face meeting, Intellectual interaction, and Authority). These point to the formation of all three constructs of social capital including; relational capital (92.2%), intellectual capital (7.4%) and Trust (0.4%). The highest amounts of interaction in this team were concerning: Promotion (73%) and Self-presentation (17.4%) both referring to “Visibility” dimension generating “Relational capital”. The

other interactions were very diverse and reflected 12 collaborations types. (Figure 8.)

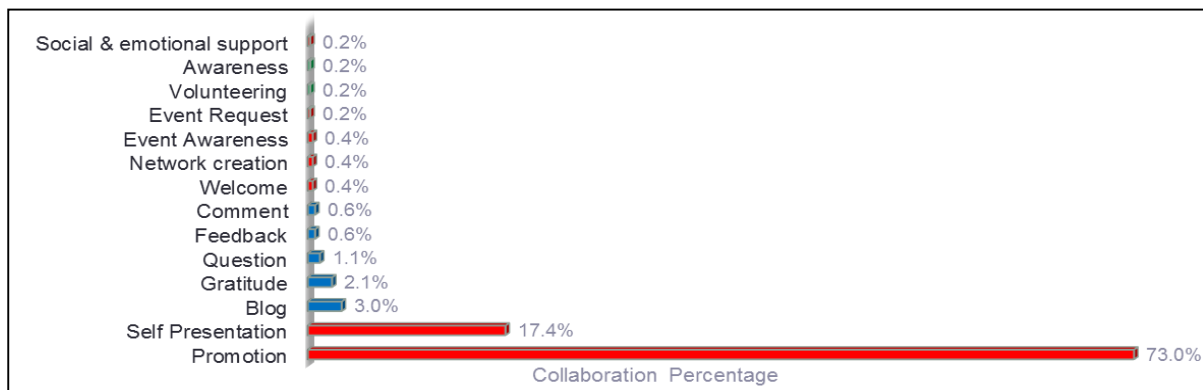


Figure 9. Location-based team (Florida Etsy Street Team)

In topic-based team (Etsy Relevancy & SEO), unlike the location-based team, most discussions were towards the generation of the “Intellectual capital” (shown in blue in Figure 8.). The collaborations were in the area of 8 types representing the four dimensions (Intellectual interaction, Relational interaction, Collective goals, and Authority). These refer to the formation of all three constructs of social capital including; intellectual capital (98.7%), relational capital (0.3%), and Trust (1.0%). The highest amounts of interactions in this team point to Feedback (36.3%), Gratitude (23.6%), Question (22.9%), and Comment (15.1%), all associated with “Intellectual interaction” dimension that is a part of “Intellectual capital”. (Figure 10.)

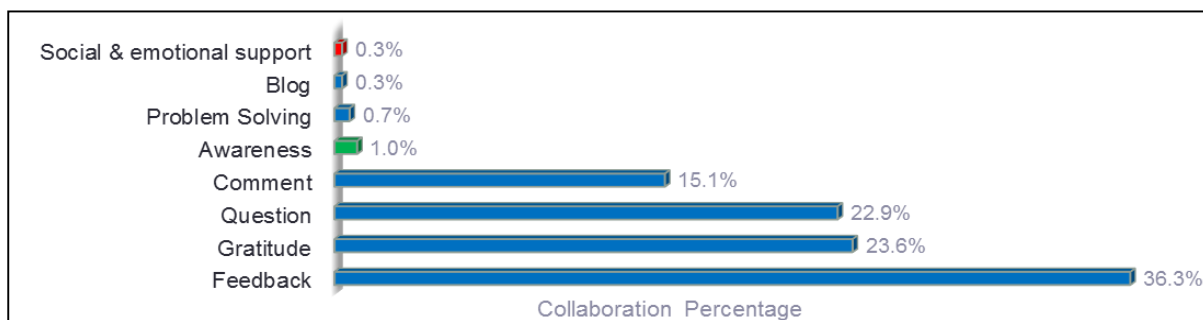


Figure 10. Topic-based team (Etsy Relevancy & SEO)

These results reflect the same pattern as the earlier pilot study. In topic-based team; most interactions were focusing on different types of the “Intellectual interaction”

dimension (98%). Only one more collaboration type has been observed in our new data gathering. In the location-based team, the interactions reflected strongly the formation of “Relational capital”, which increased from 63.5% in the pilot study to 92.2%. Collaboration types were more varied (14 types), three new types have been observed in this new data gathering. These findings strongly support our hypothesis that location-based teams generate more relational capital while the topic-based teams are expected to produce more intellectual capital.

Within this data gathering period, all seven dimensions of social capital have been observed in these two teams. The two new dimensions found in the location-based team, including “Face to face meeting” and “Network creation” dimensions, can support the theory by Jiang and Carrol (2009), which suggest that online communities are not only the source of origin for social capital but they could also lead to new individual tie generation. Some new collaboration types such as “Event awareness” and “Event request” have been identified, which could be valuable in defining better the users’ social needs to verify the system’s technical requirements. (Table 5.)

Construct	SC dimension	Collaboration type
Social relationship (Relational capital) / Trust	Visibility	Self-presentation, Promotion (Listing new items, New treasuries)
	Relational interaction	Social & emotional support, Welcome
	Network creation	Following <i>Etsy</i> , Twitter, Facebook, Etc.
	Face to face meeting	Creating meeting events, Event awareness, Event Request
Reciprocity (Intellectual capital) / Trust	Intellectual interaction	Feedback, Comment, Gratitude, Question, Internal (Tag ideas), external (Blogs)
	Collective goals	Problem solving
Trust	Authority	Volunteering, Awareness

Table 6. Social capital dimensions and collaboration type observed

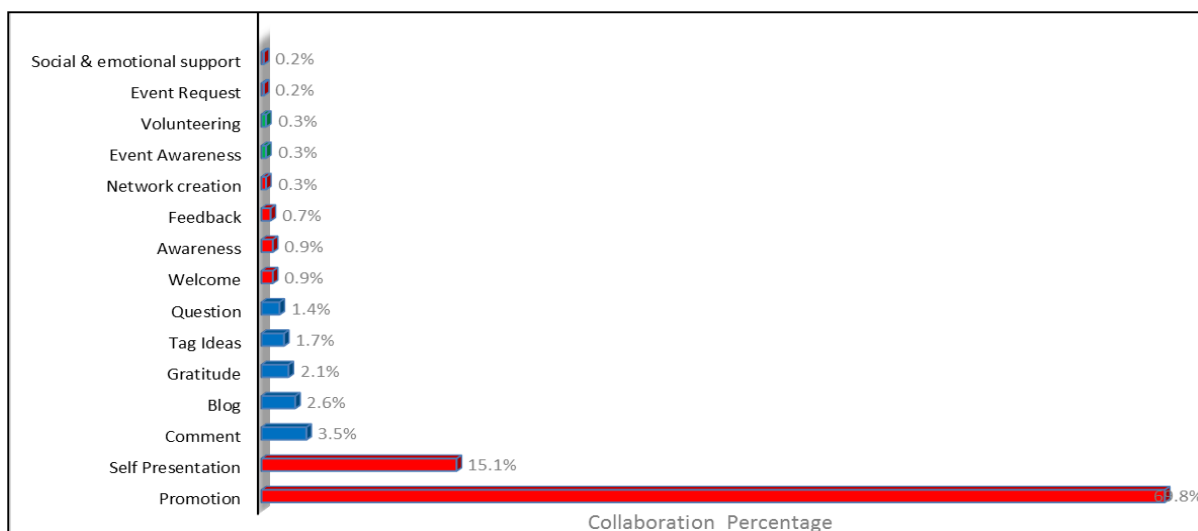


Figure 11. Aggregate results of the social capital formation (Location-based & Topic-based teams)

5.2.2. Social capital Formation in different location-based teams

The data collection procedure that carried out for the “Florida Etsy team” (US city), continued in parallel with a team of a city in the UK. More data also gathered from country based (UK) and continent based (Europe) teams that could help us better to understand the social capital formation in different geographical scale online communities. The continuation of this data gathering could reveal new possible interaction patterns and supplement our findings of social and technical requirements for communities of the various geographical sizes.

5.2.2.1. US city vs. UK city

The data collection for social capital formation within different cities in the US and the UK has been carried out within the extended period of one month in November 2014. The data gathered from two *Etsy* teams, including “Florida Etsy Street Team” as US city team and “Etsy Manchester Team” as a UK city team. In total, 37 threads consist of 1132 posts (all textual interaction of two teams) have been gathered. US city communications included 22 threads (909 posts), and 15 threads (223 posts) from the UK city team have been gathered.

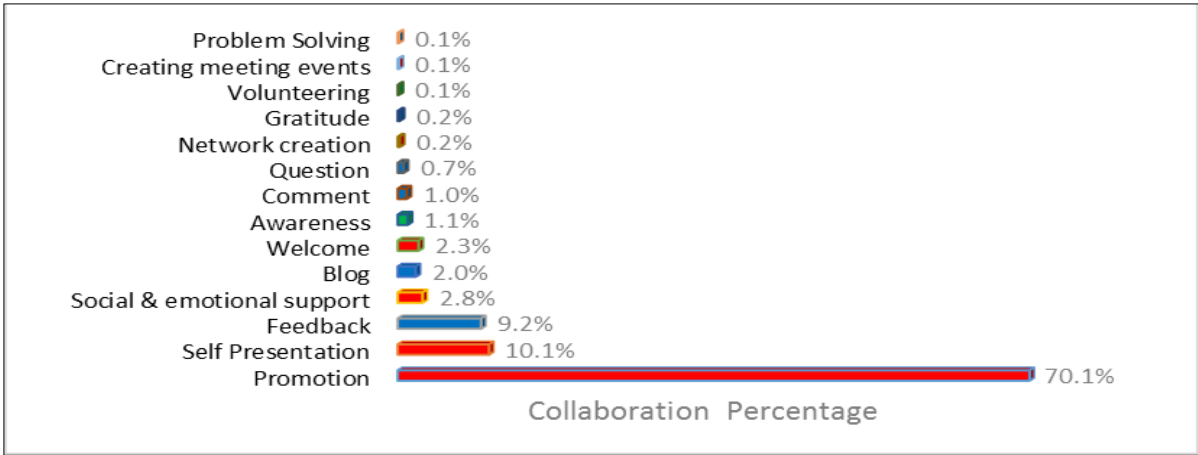


Figure 12. US City team (Florida Etsy Street Team)

In US city team (Florida Etsy Street), most discussions were towards the generation of the “Relational capital”. The collaborations were in the area of 14 types reflecting six dimensions (Visibility, Relational interaction, Network creation, Face to face meeting, Intellectual interaction, and Authority). These point to the formation of all three constructs of social capital including; relational capital (85.8%), intellectual capital (13.1%) and Trust (1.1%). The highest amounts of interaction in this team were concerning: Promotion (70.1%) and Self-presentation (10.1%) both referring to “Visibility” dimension generating “Relational capital”. The other interactions were very diverse and reflected 12 collaborations types. (Figure 12.)

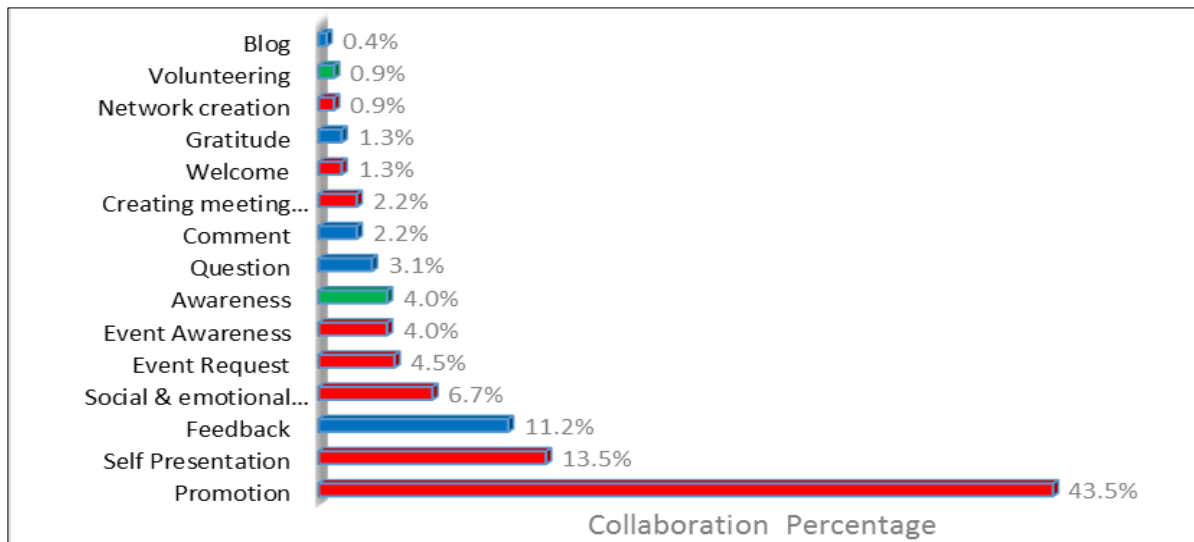


Figure 13. UK City team (Etsy Manchester Team)

In UK city team (Etsy Manchester Team), again the most discussions were towards the generation of the “Relational capital”. The significant difference between these two teams was concerned with “Face to face meeting” dimension, including Creating meeting events, Event awareness and Event request. In US team, only a tiny amount of interaction (0.1%) pointed to only one collaboration type (creating meeting events), whereas, in UK team all the three collaboration types of “Face to face meeting” dimension, have been observed, and the amount of interaction was much further (10.7%). In this team, the collaborations were in the area of 15 types reflecting six dimensions (Visibility, Relational interaction, Network creation, Face to face meeting, Intellectual interaction, and Authority). These point to the formation of all three constructs of social capital. Although the highest volume of interactions in both teams concerned the “Visibility” dimension (promotion and self-presentation), the US team had a considerably higher amount (80%) compare to UK team (57%). Authority dimension was another varying dimension within these two teams. In UK team, both Volunteering and Awareness collaboration types observed in a higher degree (4.9%), nonetheless in US team only a small amount (1.2%) has been observed. (Figure 13.)

5.2.2.2. Country, UK

The data gathering for social capital formation within the country (UK) has been carried out within the period of one month in November 2014. The data gathered from “Etsy UK” as a country team. In total, 50 threads including 2458 posts, have been collected.



Figure 14. UK Country team (Etsy UK)

In country UK team (Etsy UK), most discussions were towards the generation of the “Relational capital”. In comparison to the city teams, the interactions were less diverse, and most interactions were focused on promotional activities. In total nine collaboration types have been observed reflecting four dimensions (Visibility, Network creation, Intellectual interaction, and Authority). The highest volume of collaboration concerned the promotion in “Visibility” dimension (99 %). (Figure 14.)

5.2.2.3. Continent, Europe

The data gathering for social capital formation within the Europe continent team has been carried out within the period of one month in November 2014. The data gathered from “European Street Team” as the continent team. In total, 79 threads consisted of 4617 posts from this team have been collected.

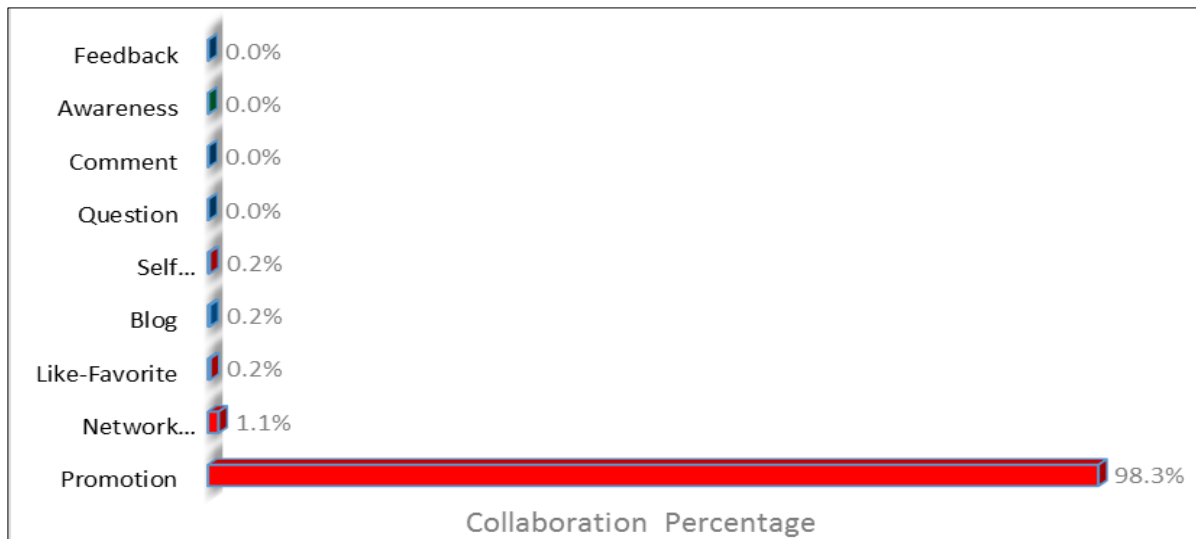


Figure 15. Europe Continent team (Etsy European Team)

The conversations observed within the continent team (Etsy European Team) were very similar to the UK country team, and most discussions were towards the generation of the “Relational capital”. However, despite the fact that most interactions were focused on promotional activities, the enormous amount of data gathered from these two teams are very useful within the qualitative analysis. In total nine collaboration types have been observed reflecting five dimensions (Visibility, Relational interaction, Network creation, Intellectual interaction, and Authority). The highest volume of collaboration concerned the promotion in “Visibility” dimension (98%). If the “Visibility” dimension is extracted from data, the main difference between this team and the UK country is the significant amount of “Network creation” dimension in the Europe continent team that is very minor in the UK country team. Network creation activities including following *Etsy* account, Twitter, Facebook, etc. that could create weak ties between individuals, which are expected to generate bridging social capital. Bridging social capital consists of the heterogeneous group of people. Thus, the heterogeneous population of the Europe continent team members consisted of so many diverse countries, and this tended to generate more the bridging social capital

providing more informational benefits. This information tends to be less redundant and has more new opportunities due to the sparse and open network of this team (Figure 15.)

5.2.3. Social capital formation in different topic-based teams

Data gathered from “Etsy Relevancy & SEO” team that is a high technical topic-based, compared to “Etsy Success” team that is a less technical and dedicated to sharing general business advice between entrepreneurs to support each other to succeed in their small businesses.

The data gathering has been carried out within a period of one month. In total, 163 threads consist of 1372 posts (all textual interaction of two teams) have been gathered. High technical team “Etsy Relevancy & SEO” communications included 33 threads (272 posts), and 130 threads (1100 posts) from less technical team “Etsy Success” have been gathered.

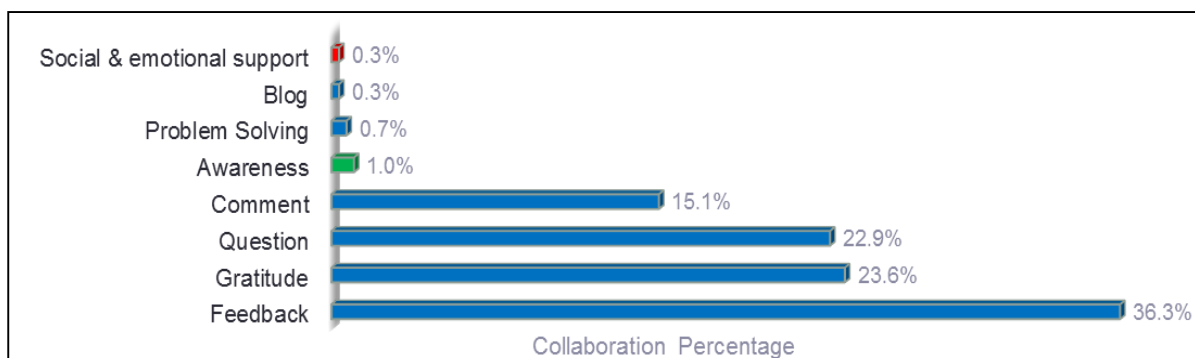


Figure 16. High-tech topic-based team (Etsy Relevancy & SEO)

In High-tech topic-based team (Etsy Relevancy & SEO), most discussions were towards the generation of the “Intellectual capital”. The collaborations were in the area of 8 types representing the four dimensions (Intellectual interaction, Relational interaction, Collective goals, and Authority). These refer to the formation of all three constructs of social capital including; intellectual capital (98.7%), relational capital

(0.3%), and Trust (1.0%). The highest amounts of interactions in this team point to Feedback (36.3%), Gratitude (23.6%), Question (22.9%), and Comment (15.1%), all associated with “Intellectual interaction” dimension that is a part of “Intellectual capital”. (Figure 16.)

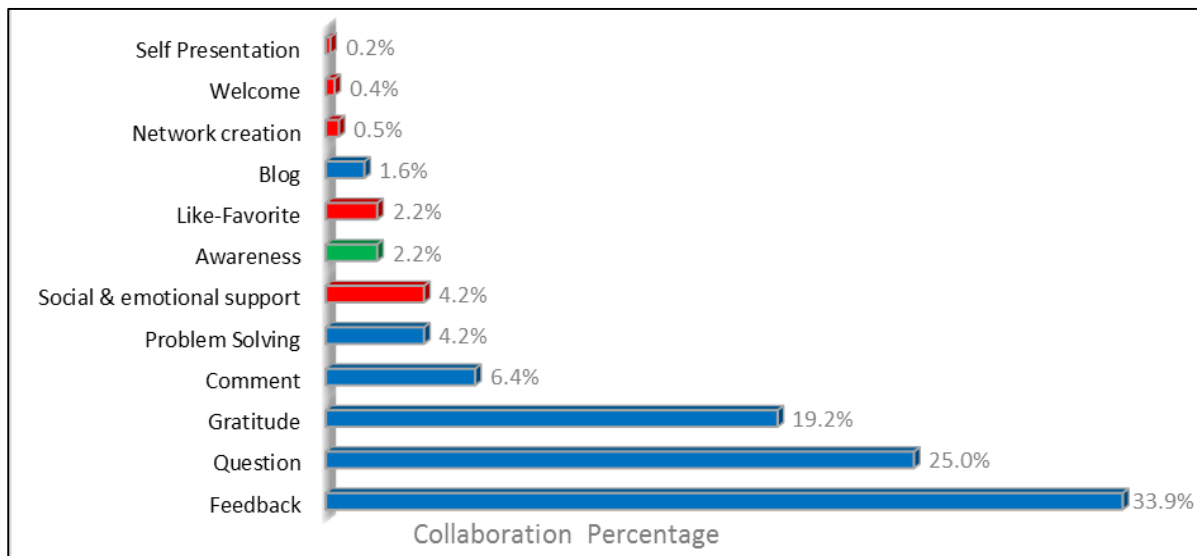


Figure 17. Low-tech topic-based team (Etsy Success)

In Low-tech topic-based team (Etsy Success), again the most discussions were towards the generation of the “Intellectual capital”. However the interactions were more diverse, and higher volume of the “Relational capital” was generated compared to the high technical team. The collaboration was in the area of 12 types representing the six dimensions (Intellectual interaction, Relational interaction, Visibility, Network creation, Collective goals, and Authority). These refer to the formation of all three constructs of social capital including; intellectual capital (90.3%), relational capital (7.5%), and Trust (2.2%). The highest amounts of interactions in this team point to Feedback (33.9%), Question (25%), Gratitude (19.2%), and Comment (6.4%), all associated with “Intellectual interaction” dimension that is a part of “Intellectual capital”. (Figure 17.)

Having presented the quantitative findings, the next chapter discusses the results of the qualitative analysis. These qualitative results reveal the interpretation, meaning, and reporting of the individual and collective discussions along with the norms of different teams that are missing from the quantifying of textual data.

5.3. Qualitative analysis results (Social capital)

The qualitative analysis enabled by online ethnography provides the descriptions and a construction of an understanding of the members' behaviours, motives, and the norms. These descriptions presented within the range of different social capital dimensions as *Visibility, Relational interaction, Network creation, Face to face meeting, Intellectual interaction, Collective goals, and authority*. Norms derived from the ethnography also added to these dimensions to outline different teams shared behaviours and to better reflect the multidimensionality and contextual factors of the teams. These findings which come as follow first discuss the location-based teams then provides the results for the topic-based teams.

5.3.1. Location-based teams

In this point, the qualitative results are presented in different geographic locations as city, country and continent. First, the findings from the US city presented then the UK city will be discussed. Afterward, the UK country team and finally, the EU continent team results will be revealed.

5.3.1.1. US city team (Florida Etsy Street)

In this team, the highest volume of social capital generated in "Visibility" dimension, which is mostly promotional activities that take place within game formats. The team leaders and captains pose strong social intelligence, which enables them to act in a new way to create mutual obligation and motivate other members to contribute to

collective actions. They set up some rules and sanctions to keep the team active and healthy.

The shared location of the members creates norms to help each other in their collective problems. It also facilitates shop local concept that is an instance of OCC.

The small amount of intellectual capital generated in this team, as the members add to the collective knowledge of the community, by sharing their information and experiences in a monthly questions format.

Visibility

Within this team, most promotions happen as games such as “treasuries”. These games demand mutual obligation from members to create common value for the community that brings benefits for the individuals. They also motivate members to contribute to the community and be active.

“Treasuries are a wonderful way to bring attention to your shop, as well as other shops on our team. We ALL need the attention so SPREAD THE LOVE!! The top 3 shops that create the most treasuries will be in the winner's circle for the following month.”, “If you are making it to this thread we assume you have done some sort of activity to help promote the team and/or your fellow team members in some way.”

Within their promotional games, they set some guidelines and rules such as do and do not, which the members must consider and obey. These guidelines often provide theoretical and practical knowledge that are valuable to the community members.

*“*2014 color trends (I've noted in parentheses - coordinating shades - for a helpful guideline) RADIANT ORCHID *Color of the Year, PLACID BLUE (light blue, pale blue, sky blue), VIOLET TULIP (purple, dark lavender), HEMLOCK (green, mint hues), PALOMA (silvery heather grey), SAND (neutral, tan), FREESIA (bright yellow, daffodil yellow), CAYENNE (dark blush, orange-pink), CELOSIA ORANGE (light terra cotta(?)), DAZZLING BLUE ”*

The games bring creativity for members that are beneficial for this community of artisan.

“THANK YOU to all of the team members for an unbelievable month of beautiful treasuries. You've been extremely generous, showcasing my bracelets in so many creative ways.”

They are also useful in revealing the members requirements and get feedback from other members.

“So instead of asking what activity you have done, we are going to require you to answer a simple question each month for roll call. We are hoping that this will help us better understand wants and needs, spreading news, get feedback and simply get to know each other better!”

Self-presentation: Often members present themselves with a small profile about themselves. These profiles are helpful for others as they know about members' abilities, skills, works, hobbies etc., which increase trust and smooth collaboration.

“Just wanted to introduce myself. My name is ..., and I am a visual artist, working in all media, including video, installation, and print making, along with the standards of sculpture, painting, photography, and more. I look forward to future discussions!”

Relational interactions

Social & emotional support: Within this team, some members are very open and willing to share the emotional state of their lives. Within this sharing, they also reflect about their shops as well as greeting and communicating with others.

“Hello everyone, I am still here...alot has been going on this month, a birth, wedding and a funeral so late check in for me. I have had alot of traffic coming through which is GREAT! just need to add more items to my shop.. Happy Halloween! :)”

The members also support each other emotionally by wishing luck, welcoming, thanking etc.

“Welcome ..., going to check out your shop now! Glad to hear from you Rose and Best of Wishes to you!! ”, “..., welcome as new captain and best

of luck. ..., thanks for your hard work and best wishes with all your endeavors”, “Welcome to the table ...! and ..., you have my best wishes lady :)”, “Welcome ...! I just visited your shop, favored it and favored all your items on the first page as a thank you. ..., you did a great job. Thank you too. Good luck!”

Social intelligence: Within this team, our observation discovered that most team leaders and captains pose strong social intelligence. Their social intelligence enables them to greet the new members and mediate between members to communicate.

“Greetings ...! Please check your convo for a special Welcome message :)", “... and ... are our 2 newest members and they are on our team treasury. When you have a moment, make sure to visit their shops. :)”

The social intelligence of these members become more apparent when they are using their skills and capabilities and acting in a new way to create mutual obligation and motivate other members to contribute to collective actions. For example:

“If you are making it to this thread we assume you have done some sort of activity to help promote the team and/or your fellow team members in some way.”

This shows the members are active and contributing to their team.

“So instead of asking what activity you have done, we are going to require you to answer a simple question each month for roll call. We are hoping that this will help us better understand wants and needs, spreading news, get feedback and simply get to know each other better!...Question for November: this is not Etsy shop / store related but I thought it would be fun to tease our taste buds for the upcoming feast...Sitting at a dining table filled with your favorite Thanksgiving foods, surrounded by family and friends, what is the first food / serving you put on your plate?”

They set up rules and sanctions such as, “Who can join” to keep members active and prompt them to contribute to the community. All the members need to “Sign in to Roll call” every month. After three months of inactivity they will be contacted to find out why and after six months of inactivity, they will be taken off of the team. It also has been specified inappropriate comments will be removed.

“Please do not use the discussion threads, team convo's or blog comments for spam and please no personal attacks, rudeness, solicitation for financial donations, or political discussions. Those types of comments will simply be removed - Sorry, but we just want to keep it fun!”

Face to face meeting

Creating meeting events: The number of events observed in this community was very few. For example:

“Hope this is okay to post. The Tampa Bay Etsy Crew would love for any FEST Team members in our area to come and be part of our Small Business Saturday event. We are accepting vendor applications through this Friday, the 9th. The event page (with application link) is here ... Even if you're not interested in vending, it's going to be a fun event to connect with the local Etsy community. Many TBEC members are also FEST teammates. =) ”

Intellectual interactions

It has been revealed that members of this team share their information and experiences in a monthly question format, which add to the collective knowledge of the community. For example, in one question they ask about their views and sales being affected by the recent changes *Etsy* has made and whether they are happy with the changes. Members of this community are very transparent and trust the community to share their sales information and personal experiences. They also share their strategies and practical knowledge to improve their sales that could be valuable to other members.

“Nothing seems too different for me. I hadn't added any new items since I was gone for a few months, so that may have had an effect on my September sales being lower then last year. I don't about the front page either since I never view it.”, “My shop views had been terrible lately, but I think a lot of that had to do with me not having the time to really work on it. Now that I'm back in ... and not commuting 15 hours a week I have been working on improving my photos and have started running ads again, so hopefully I see an improvement.”, “I seem to be getting a lot of views this past week, which I think may have to do with all of the treasuries our team is including me in. But I'm not sure about that. As far as sales go I have sold one item in 3 weeks. That's not very good considering the

amount of views I'm getting. I have a friend that also has a shop doing basically the same thing I am and she is selling like crazy! She keeps telling me it's because she has been open since 2007 but I'm not so sure if that's why."

Blogs: Within this team, some members are using blogs for promoting themselves, to be creative and even to make friends.

"I recently started a jewelry blog on tumblr and would love to know if anyone else has a crafting blog. I want to use mine to promote myself but also to share what other people are doing (not just jewelry, all kinds of crafts) and just kind of stay involved in the creative community. We could link to each other, help each other out and maybe even make some friends. Anyone interested? To be clear, mine is very early stages- only two posts- but it's a start! Thank you all."

Collective goals

Shared location: Shared location of the members creates a norm to help each other in their common problem. For example, a member makes awareness about the post office seven days delivery for the holiday's periods and other relevant news that affect their businesses.

"The Postal Service is extending delivery services to seven days a week to make sure people receive their holiday packages on time. Starting November 17 through Christmas Day, deliveries will be made every single day. "During the holidays, no carrier makes more deliveries to more places than the Postal Service, and this year, we're raising the bar with enhanced tracking and Sunday delivery," said Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe in a press release. Last year, USPS delivery rivals UPS and FedEx drew criticism for failing to deliver packages on time during the holidays. To make sure mail and packages arrive by Christmas, the Postal Service provided the following deadlines: Dec. 2 - First-Class Mail International/Priority Mail International Dec. 10 - Priority Mail Express International, Dec. 15 - Standard Post, Dec. 17 - Global Express Guaranteed, Dec. 20 - First-Class Mail/Priority Mail (domestic), Dec. 23 - Priority Mail Express (domestic)"

Shop local: The observation revealed that often the members of this team help each other to get the products they may specifically be looking for and don't see it on a team members shop and would prefer to shop locally. Sometimes members have custom

orders or have someone special they are trying to buy for; therefore, members let others know, and they will be contacted with the products' details and they see if they like it. For example.

“I am looking for pearlized abalone shards for my seashell designs. Either a cream or blue color. Thanks!”, “...I can supply you with pearlized abalone, both shards and full shells. Message me and I will be happy to tell you what I have available. :) ... (... ..)”, “I will ship free within Florida for any of you Team Etsy Buddies! =)”, “I am also looking for anything camels. Charms, pendants, findings. I just love camels...:)”

Authority

Volunteering: In many instances members of this team, volunteer to contribute to their team. For example, one of the member volunteers and accept responsibility for the leadership of the community. The old leader introduces the new one, wish her luck and thanks to all members. It is interesting to see that it was “fun” and she had a great time. Later the members also thank her and wish luck for the new leader.

“Hello all! I know it has been quite some time since my last check in. I have simply needed to step back and give priority to other parts of my life. With such great members on this team I had no problem stepping away and taking a break and know that the team would be fine without me and thank you! for that! I am, although, at a point where my hiatus is going to be much longer than I thought and know its better that I step down and let someone else take the reigns and hopefully have as much fun as I did being captain of such a great team! one of our own members, ... of ... has volunteered to take over the team and I do hope you all welcome give her a Florida-warm welcome!! ”

Helpfulness norms

The norm of helpfulness in this team does not limit to answering to a specific question asking for help. Often when the members realise the other's problem provide solution voluntarily. For example, a member reflects on her problem of not having sales but does not ask for help.

“Nope - As hard as I try with teams, social media, marketing, I get very few views and haven't had a sale since June. :(”. The other member offers a solution by sharing his/her practical knowledge. “... You have really cute stuff, but your tags/SEO isn't helping you at all. It's no wonder you haven't had a sale in so long! You've got to learn SEO pronto. I suggest starting at the Relevancy & SEO team. Also, you could read my SEO secret here... SEO/tags is the KEY. No way around it.”

The observation also revealed that the individuals with helpfulness norm have skills and capabilities to act in new ways. They voluntarily help other members and add to the collective knowledge of the community.

“As some of you may have noticed Etsy has launched a new tool (talked about in this thread: New Tool on Etsy: TEAM PAGES) Visit ours here... So myself and a few other curators have set up categories and started trying to feature/list items, sort of like a treasury - however, it occurred to me (since so many of us are bad at tagging our images) that member's could share a listing on this thread and I could then add it to a list! Saves me time and a larger variety of shops will get listed. So please post a link to an item you would like listed, as well as the category you want it in and I will do my best to include it.”

US City team (Florida Etsy Street)

- Highest volume of social capital generated in promotional activities in game formats that demand mutual obligation and motivate contribution to the community
- Games bring creativity and often required to set up certain rules and guidelines that provide valuable theoretical and practical knowledge to the community
- Shared location facilitates norm of helpfulness that creates skills and capabilities to act in new ways in collective community problems
- Shared location enables shop local concept that is an instance of OCC
- Intellectual capital generated by sharing information and experiences in a monthly questions formats
- Most members are very transparent and trust the community to share their sales information and personal experiences
- Self-presentations with a profile is helpful in knowing about members' abilities, skills, works, hobbies, etc., which increase trust and smooth collaboration
- Social intelligence enables mediating amongst members, act in a new way to create mutual obligation, and motivate members to contribute to collective actions

- | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Very few face to face meeting event taking place in this team• Some members are open to sharing the emotional state of their lives and provide social and emotional support to other members |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Table 7. Summary of qualitative findings (US City team)

5.3.1.2. UK city (Manchester team)

This team belongs to the smallest location-based setting in this study. It has the most diverse collaboration types (15 types). The members are very open and transparent in exposing themselves. The highest amount of “face to face meeting” dimension (10.7 %), within all the teams, occurred in this team. Another significant outcome within this team was the highest amount of “Authority” dimension (4.9%) that reflects the “Trust”, a major construct of social capital. The Local pick up concepts has also been observed in this team that facilitates them to take advantage of being local. It is dedicated for face-to-face, Manchester Centre-based handover of products.

The intellectual capital generated in this team, as the members often share their expertise voluntarily. Often these exchange of expertise happens in a diary format that benefits others and motivates them. Shared location and language also facilitates a common understanding and play a significant role in solving the common problems and add to the collective knowledge of the team.

Visibility

Self-presentation: Within this observation, it has been revealed that the members of this team are very transparent about their locations, skills, characteristics and weaknesses when they introduce themselves. This can soothe collaboration and demonstrate their trust to the community as well as how they can help and contribute to their community.

“Biggest problem for me is managing to get good photographs. Well they say practice makes perfect, let’s hope so.”, “I am wife, mama, graphic designer, yogi, reiki master, and lover of books. Nice to “meet” you!”, “The main skills I use are knitting, sewing, decoupage, candle making and jewelry making. I like to upcycle and reuse old things in my projects as much as I can.”, “Whereabouts in Bolton are you from? I am in Little Lever”, “I live in Macclesfield, so thanks for letting me join! I’m back and forth to Mcr quite a bit for work (I’m a freelance designer) so hopefully I’ll be able to make some of the meet-ups.”

Relational interactions

Social intelligence: It has been revealed that social intelligence plays a major role in managing this team and keeping it active. For example:

“Creating events to celebrate having 500 members” and Christmas events “in the run up to Christmas the timing couldn’t be better.” They keep improving the events and updating the members who attend or even the members who do not attend the events. “Over the next few weeks we’re going to be asking a series of questions about what you think should happen. Please tell us exactly what you think so we can make this event a true reflection of all of us”, “For people who couldn’t make it I will put the little guide I wrote online so you can have a look and see if you find it useful.”.

The social intelligence of the members also has been observed in setting the rules for the games within their team. These games are set up to be purposeful and practical for the individual members such as critiquing their shops.

“The rules are simple. Check out the shop above you and choose an item. Post a link to it and then say one thing you think they’ve done well and one thing they can work on! Remember, make it specific, achievable and nice. We’re all friends here. So ... Useful: The tags are too short, try putting “leather satchel” as one tag as opposed to two. Not useful: The tags are rubbish...Critiques from other people can be invaluable so remember, you need to put a critique to post! ;) Have fun.”

Face to face meeting

Creating meeting events: In this team, evidence has been observed for creating several face to face events. These events have been set up to chat about their issues

and try and think of practical ways to help each other. The events created on different topics, for example:

“How to promote your business using Twitter and she should know as she's a social media consultant in her day job” or “Christmas is coming’ ... we're going to be looking at practical things you can do to survive the Christmas season!”. In these events, they also get the chance to display their work and talents in a one day pop up window display for example. The members are open to non-team members or even non etsians. “Non etsians are also more than welcome to the after party...”

They usually use the social media to create, promote and make awareness about the events.

“...if you'd like to come I'd love it if you joined the facebook event to give me an idea of numbers :)”.

They gather feedback from members after each event and keep improving their next events.

“Hello All. After talking to a load of you the feedback we had was that you wanted more regular meet ups. We are going to have two meet ups a month at different times, the hope being that you will be able to make one of them.”, “We will be running voting polls over on our facebook group page.”, “We also have a Facebook group which tends to be more active than this forum. Come and join the fun. Look for “Etsy Manchester Members Group”.

The observations revealed that these events generate a lot of ideas and inspirations that motivate the members and make them more creative.

“I feel like we all got loads of ideas”, “I think we all went away feeling quite inspired to get our shops ready for Christmas.”, “I've got so many ideas now. Thank you...! Fun evening.”

Within these events, team members also meet several new people (team members) and keep in touch afterward.

“It was nice to see so many new faces.”, “It'll be great to see you again ...”, “Would be lovely to see some of you there”, “I'll pop over and see you all on the day, and it will be great to meet the community...”, “I hope I get to meet some of you at the Fred Aldous popup in a few weeks' time.”, “I'll

be coming over to Fred Aldous on Saturday to say hi, so hope to meet some of you then!", "I met some of you for the first time at the EtsyMcr + FredAldous Pop Up event the other week, which was a brilliant experience! ", "We'll all be looking forward to meeting you too. We have regular meetups and social events that invariably involve alcohol (I'm not saying we're alcoholics but I'm not denying it either). :-)"

Event awareness: The observation revealed that within this team some members raise awareness and inform others about the local events.

"Horwich community centre are planning a Christmas fair on 6th December and are asking around to see if anyone would be interested in a stall. They're asking for a £10 donation which will go to their charities in return for a stall space. As they're just planning at the moment they've not got much more info than this but if anyone wants a space or has any questions let me know."

They also help other members who have difficulties in booking and they even refer them to the event organisers.

"Hi... Where about in Horwich are you? I'm near the ...! They're fully booked on stalls except there is one last seller that's not paid their fee yet so she may be able to squeeze you in. Email ... and let her know I (...) sent you. She just needs details of what you sell and how to contact you etc. She said they're maybe doing another in Easter so she would like to keep your contact details for then if you don't mind."

Local pick up: The members of this team often create and use the coupon code such as "LOCALPICKUP" that enables them to take advantage of being relatively local. The LOCALPICKUP coupon is dedicated for face-to-face, Manchester centre based handovers of crafts and supplies.

Intellectual interactions

In this team, members often share their expertise voluntarily as a diary format. This motivates other members and also let them benefit from their personal experiences. For example, one member publishes her weekly activities as a diary on how she is getting ready her stock and shop for Christmas, which are useful for other members.

“Thanks for these ..., it's really helpful!! Must start getting myself organised for Xmas now and with your weekly updates and the weekly emails from etsy I think this is the motivation that will push me.”

Collective goals

Shared language among the members plays a significant role in shared understanding and solving their common problems. An *Etsy* member has an issue in understanding different features in *Etsy* and asking for help.

“...one aspect has me very confused which is the whole follow and favourite thing. When I navigate to my profile and click on 'following', I have a list of people I'm following who I don't remember adding”. His confusion turns to frustration as he cannot find the answer on google. “...everything I find on google seem to make my head spin and it doesn't help”. An explanation from a team member who has the shared language and understand the problem helps him to solve the problem quickly and make things clear. “...that's a brilliant explanation. Makes far more sense than what I found on other forum posts. I've just been trying out all the different follow / favourite buttons and it all makes sense now!”

The shared location also facilitates collective knowledge creation for this community. For example, a member asks for a local *“printing service that can provide good quality and reasonably priced products”*. Then a team member suggests a local print shop that is “speedy” and “cheap” and provides the shop address. Other member approves this shop and also suggest another one, providing address and also offers a practical printing advice:

“If you have a whole bunch of designs, it may be better for you to work out how many you want of each design and source a printer that can produce your cards digitally. This gives you some flexibility as you can have as many or as few as you want and you won't have the set up charges associated with traditional printing.”

He also provides a useful link for an explanatory starting point. Another member suggests another local shop near a library. She recommends it based on their helpfulness:

“I knew nothing about printing and he very patiently went through the ins and outs of cmyk and rgb colour systems and everything I needed to know to get my stuff in the right format to get the best colours for my work.”

This points to the shared location that facilitates a shared understanding of collective goals and adds to the collective knowledge of the community.

Authority

Volunteering: In this team some members are ready to volunteer to put individual efforts to donate their time, money and product items to contribute and run the events.

“Last week we shared how you could donate time and resources through the Pre Popup Party. This week we’re sharing how you can get your shop noticed and how you can donate to ensure the event goes ahead”, “We have had lots of people asking if they can donate an item”, “we’re using Eventbrite as a convenient way to donate money.”

Norm of helpfulness: The norm of helpfulness can build trust and go beyond the helping subject and could pay back the contributor by attracting potential customers. Occasionally the members who receive help in the community show an interest in buying items from the helper.

“P.S. Just popped over to your shop and spotted a brilliant picture of the vaults at Fountains Abbey. I have a thing about geometry so I really appreciate it! Going to have to save my pocket money up as I’m rather broke at the moment though.” In another example a member is looking for a decent place to do printing, other member goes beyond only answering the question and posting the question on her Facebook page: “I have also put this question on the private facebook page so fingers crossed you might get some more artists who know some secret places...”

UK City (Manchester Team)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The highest amount of face to face meeting events happens, within all the teams that generate a lot of ideas, inspirations, and creativeness; members also meet several new people and keep in touch afterward • Several face to face events created and made awareness via social media • The amount of volunteering reflecting the “Trust” was the highest within all teams • Many members are ready to volunteer and to donate their time, money and product items to contribute to the community, and run the events • Most members are very transparent about their locations, skills, characteristics and weaknesses, which demonstrate trust to the community that smooth collaboration • Shared language among members plays a significant role in mutual understanding and solving their collective problems • Shared location facilitates collective knowledge creation for the community • Shared location eases Local-Pickup enabling them to take advantage of being relatively local • Social intelligence plays a major role in managing the community and keeping it active • Norm of helpfulness can build trust and go beyond the helping subject and could pay back the contributor by attracting potential customers

Table 8. Summary of qualitative findings (UK City team)

5.3.1.3. Country, UK team (Etsy UK)

In this team, their collaboration types are less diverse (9 types). The highest volume of social capital generated in “Visibility” dimension, which is mostly promotional games. Within these games, they were very creative in presenting their products in new ways and mixing the promotion with other activities such as Networking. Very often the members of this team use social media for network creation.

The intellectual capital generated in this team often facilitated by shared location of the members. It enables them to exchange information about national policies and international guidelines that add to the collective knowledge of the team.

Visibility

Promotional games: Members of this team in their promotion games, present their items based on different categories that are lacking in the *Etsy* website. For example, they create their listing based on the colours, seasonal, a certain range of price and discounted items. They also mix their listing promotion with other activities such as favourite, like, pin, tweet of other items.

“Post the link to an item in your shop which has a colour in common with the item in the post above you (feel free to pick out a minor or background colour to make a connection).”

In this team, my observation revealed the significance of social intelligence in creating the games.

*“Post any item from your shop that has something in common with the item posted directly above you - connect by colour, theme, shape, material, type of item, or whatever other link you can find...!”, “Let's play a game! This is a fun way to share our literary items & see what other team members have to offer. :)” A is for Archive (of fairy tale news): The next poster adds an item from their shop beginning with the letter B (then the next post will be C, etc)”, “*Go to the shop that posted before you *add an item to your favorites from their shop. *Post the link of that item to here. The next person to post will then do the same with your shop and post one of your listings that is their favorite.”*

Network creation

The members of this team often are using the social media and follow each other on many occasions.

“Who uses pinterest, I need some great stuff to repin! Here's me... Post a link to your boards in here for others to follow!”, “If you post here please favorite, like, pin, tweet some of the other items posted above you:)) Thank you”, “to keep spreading the word let us know if you have a facebook page, its another way to lead people here, they even have an Etsy button thingy, mine is”.

Intellectual interactions

When the members ask for tips and advice, they add to the collective knowledge of the team that other members can benefit. It has been revealed that knowing of how the others deal with their concerns make them more confident on how to handle the problems. For example, on one occasion a member asks for advice on whether to print or not the digital products.

“I was wondering if anyone else sold greetings and Christmas cards. I currently offer them as a digital card that you can purchase and print yourself but was thinking that I should maybe be printing them myself and selling in packs in the run up to Christmas. Can anyone recommend a good way to do this, sites to print from etc. Is this how other people go about selling their greetings cards? I'm a bit worried spending too much money getting a load printed for them not to sell!” Other member shares her experience and preferences, as well as recommending a good site for printing. *“I would get some printed, if I were you. Try ... - they're very reasonably priced. The PDF card design I saw in your shop is really cool! But I know my own home printer will only print on very thin card so I would be very wary of buying something I needed to print myself - definitely much prefer to buy a quality, pre-printed card. The good thing about Christmas is that it happens every year, so even if you don't sell out, your cards won't be out of date next year, or the year after that... :) ”*

The help she received satisfied her and make her more confident to deal with her challenge.

“That's a good point! I think I'll get some printed and see what happens, can always use them myself!”

Blog: The members of this team usually use the blog to make awareness about their craft fairs, art collections, and promotions.

“I have just blogged about our day at the Dolls House fair in Rayleigh Essex yesterday 5th october 2014”, “my latest craft-related blogpost”, “I've blogged this morning about miniature art and fun ways to display a miniature art collection”, “Pic from & thoughts about yesterday's craft fair:”, “Craft fairs, discount code & reduced postage:”

Collective goals

Shared location: Shared location of the members of this team enables them to add to the collective knowledge of the team. For example, by sharing the new national policy about the “Royal Mail” that affect their business.

“...as of October 20th, there is a new small packet rate for within-UK deliveries, and also a new (lower) 0-60g rate for airmail items which are over 5mm. More info here”. Then they share how to apply and fit to this new policy “I've just adjusted my delivery profiles - the changes don't affect very many of my items (really just the badges which are very light but have to ship as small packet) but do make a difference to overseas p&p of £1 or £0.75 in those cases. Who knows, that might be enough to gain a sale over a pass. I'm also planning to add some more bulky-but-lightweight items (just as soon as I get a digital camera...) and I think it will really make a difference to their saleability, too. If you sell bulkier items within UK, the small packet size has been increased - so you can send more for less - so make sure you take a look (link in first post)!”

In another example, a member asks about the cost of tracked package abroad:

“...what a tracked package abroad would cost” and seeks advice on how to determine the shipping costs “How did you determine your outside shipping costs?”

Another member provides practical advice.

“Maybe you could do a mock parcel of your biggest/heaviest item and get the post office to tell you how much that would be with tracking to Europe and Australia/US then add another item to it to see if it increases the cost.”

In the other occasion, a member asks a question about International postage cost.

“... Thinking of expanding my postage options to ship to the USA, Japan and Australia. However, when looking at international postage costs I have been surprised by the quotes. For example, cheapest price to send a small parcel weighing 1kg to USA is £19! However, after looking at other people's postage costs for similar items (eg China tea cups) they are quoting £10 or £12! I'm confused! Why are their postage costs so much cheaper from the UK?” another member from the UK has already used this service and share her/his experience. “I'm in the UK and regularly send to the US, with parcels weighing between 500 grams to 1 kilo. The price for 750 grams to 1 kilo using Royal Mail Airmail is just £12.85, rising to 17.85 if you add tracking.”

Country, UK team (Etsy UK)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highest volume of social capital generated in promotional activities in game formats • Within these games, they were very creative in presenting their products in new ways that are lacking in <i>Etsy</i> • social intelligence is significance in creating the games • They mix promotional games with other activities such as Networking • Rules and sanctions created by leaders are significant to keep the team active and manageable • Very often the members use social media for network creation • The intellectual capital often generated by shared location of the members • Shared location facilitates sharing of information about national policies and international guidelines and add to the collective knowledge of community • Members usually use blogs to make awareness about their craft fairs, art collections, promoting themselves, sharing their knowledge, and even to feel good

Table 9. Summary of qualitative findings (Country UK team)

5.3.1.4. Continent, Europe (European Street Team)

In this team, like the country team, the collaboration types are less diverse (9 types). Also the largest amount of social capital generated in “Visibility” dimension as promotional games. These games require regular mutual obligation of members to create collective value for the community. The team leaders have strong social intelligence. They set up some rules and sanctions to keep the team active and be able to control the team in a healthy manner.

This team belongs to the largest location-based setting in this research. It is a highly active community and the leaders cannot monitor all members’ activities all the time. Therefore, other members need to put effort and take some responsibility, which requires social intelligence.

Another significant finding in this team was the high volume of the “Network creation” dimension in the relational capital. One of the highest activities amongst the members of this team was to share their social media links and follow and like each other for network creation, inspiration, and more sales. Sometimes they were using social media to create games and follow and like each other’s pages.

Intellectual capital usually generated in this team in the form of monthly and weekly activities. They set up some specific tasks for contributors that create value for the members and the community.

Within this team, there were so many members, who were interested in “bartering”. They paired with each other and swapped their favourite items. This activity has been considered very helpful for increasing their sales, reviews, and feedback.

Visibility

Promotional games: Within this team, the highest amount of activities involves in promotions and almost all of the promotions happen as games. These games demand mutual obligation from members to create aggregate value for the community as well as the individuals. The most frequent game in this team is the “24 hours game” that take place every day and in 24 hours will be closed by the leader. This game generates hearts (favourite) for the items. Members must follow instructions and rules carefully. They also have a sanction rule in the place. If a member does not abide by the rules, his/her post will be deleted, and if it happens for few times he/she will be expelled from the team. All the members are also responsible for reporting the abusing posts to the leader.

In their treasury games, the admin usually teaches them step by step how to create treasury and what themes to look for. Often they use the criteria based on their shared location.

“Create a new Treasury list here... Homepage Criteria: - At least 8 items ship FROM Europe. - All items SHIP TO at least one European country (or "Everywhere Else"). - 16 items total. - Treasury tagged "EtsyEUR" (without quotations) - That's how we'll find them!”

Self-presentation: In this team, several members present themselves by sharing their biography and sometimes the story of their lives.

“Hello team! Good to read everyone's short bio here :) Just wanted you to know, it's my birthday today, just turned 22! I have a coupon for today, using BIRTHDAY22 for anyone interested. ”, “My name is ...I live in Rome and I am a mother of two beautiful children. After the birth of ..., my first son, I decided to quit my day job (...) and I turned my love to create jewelry in a job. The story of my shop... Ever since she was a child ... has always had a passion for jewelry and all the items that reflect a particular lighth. One day her friend ... gave her the tools to work the first few trinkets and since then ... has not stopped. She began to create jewelry for her, some gift for her friends and starts to get the first custom orders. This is how "... born, handmade jewelry, with imagination and passion was. ... Strong point is her family. "... is almost a family business, everyone has a role: I create my objects, try new techniques, observe any jewelery worn by women. I create jewelery with stones quartz or lava stone, polymer clay, and during spring and summer use colored ribbon as send me a great charge. My husband takes care of the photos and the update of the social networks (facebook, twitter, my blog and now Etsy). My little ones? They are the judges, if they like the mix of colors I've used for a jewel, it is ready to be put on Etsy”

Relational interactions

Social intelligence: Within this team, our observation revealed that team leaders and captains generally pose strong social intelligence. For example, they set up rules and sanctions in “Who can join” to keep members active and prompt them to contribute to the community. Shops that are not listings and do not have activities for four months will be removed from the member list. Members who do not follow *Etsy* rules, Do and Don'ts will be removed from the team.

In another example, in creating games for different events and setting the rules for these games within their team. These games are set up to be purposeful and practical for the individual members such as reviewing other shop policies. They also set up sanctioning rules.

“The posts that abuse the rules will be deleted! If you will abuse the rules few times, you may be expelled from the team, consider this.”

The leader motivates other members to contribute, and they are open to hearing others opinion.

“Thinking about Christmas season. You can sign for Holiday Boot Camp here: You'll receive weekly tasks and information how to prepare your shop for holidays.”, “That's all, folks! Please, share your experience! I'm really interested to read all your thoughts (bad and good) about this month we spent together.”

This team is a large and active community, and the leader cannot monitor all members' activities all the time. Therefore, other members need to put effort and take some responsibility, which could enhance their social intelligence. For example, the leader asks for all the members to report the abusing posts that violate the rules.

“As I not mandatory play myself I may go and check the thread not very often during the day. If you see the post that abusing the rules, please drop me a link or page number via convo.”

Network creation

My observation revealed that one of the highest activities amongst the members of this team is to share their social media links and follow and like each other for network creation, inspiration, and more sales.

“I would create this thread to share our social networking sites etc to help build more connections outside of Etsy. It could also be a place where we could share any info knowlege links for info to pimp or drive more traffic to these sites etc.”, “Post your Pinterest profile if you like! We are always looking for inspiration!”

Often they use the existing groups in other platforms to attract new members and to create better networks.

“This is a continuation from the yahoo group - it might be easier to have everybody in one place!”

Occasionally the members of this team use social media to create games and follow and like each other’s pages. For them, it is important to increase the number of likes on their social media. Within these games, they also encourage others who do not have a social media account to create one.

“Show all links you have, on Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest...If you don't have any social Networks it doesn't matter, follow what you have. (If you want, this is the moment to create a account where you don't have a page)”.

Often they make these games, even more fun by creating a contest to win an item or a prize to give away from their shops.

“To celebrate and thank you, what about a contest ? :)...It's simple : All you have to do is like and follow page..., share on your facebook profile, and let a comment in the dedicated album saying that you're in . The winner will be picked by random among all the comments, and will win a Decenerios bracelet, especially made for the contest!”, “I'd like to invite you all to the early CHRISTMAS GIFT GIVEAWAY I'm having on Facebook with a friend: D Just follow the link and, if you like the prizes (a dragon sculpture and a butterfly charm), please join! The more the merrier! The giveaway is open worldwide, with free shipping wherever you are”

Nevertheless, the observation revealed that the members are not welcoming this idea, and it might indicate that they are not interested in participating for incentives and they are involved for goodwill and to support other members.

Intellectual interactions

In this team, they create monthly and weekly activities and specific tasks for contributors that create value for the members. For example, in one week the

members become partners with other members and review each other's shop policies. Within their monthly practices, they share articles and learn to plan for their shops, set new goals, bookkeeping, time management and how to grow their businesses.

*“Now, when the shop is "polished" you still have something to do :)”,
“Thinking about Christmas season. You can sign for Holiday Boot Camp here...You'll receive weekly tasks and information how to prepare your shop for holidays. Also I have great articles about different aspects of running your shop:...about bookkeeping ... really interesting about growing mobile buyers how to grow your business beyond one person (you)... time management... 5 Ways to Work Smarter, Not Harder... wholesaling...”*

They also practice teamwork and how to work with others.

“You can share your review with your partner. Share your thoughts about your team work, do you want to work on Holiday Boot Camp together, do you need some time to work on your own to improve your shop and make all changes.”

They also review their monthly plans systematically and plan for the future.

“Now it's time to review your goals and make further plans. You can share your review with your partner. Share your thoughts about your team work, do you want to work on Holiday Boot Camp together, ...make new plans, set new goals. I suggest to set goals for Christmas season and for year or half of year.”

At the end of the month, they celebrate with the treasury game.

“END OF MONTH CELEBRATION...We are going to have treasury game! I'll post the list of all participants here in this thread on Friday September 27. And till October 1 we'll make treasuries featuring at least 5 participants. Please, be sure that your treasury also meets the guidelines for Euro Front page (you can check it when your treasury is almost done using the blue button on the right). Please, use the tag ESTmentormonth for your treasury.”

The members of this team put a mutual effort and create an online magazine for different occasions such as “The handmade Christmas guide”. Many members add to the collective knowledge of the community by making awareness and sharing their

knowledge about some capabilities of *Etsy*. “Etsy on sale”, and explaining in easy to understand language as well as providing the link.

Blogs: Within this team, several members are using blogs for promoting themselves, and sharing their experiences and knowledge. For some, sharing blog even make them feel good.

“Just thought I'd share the blog I've been featured in..... It's quite a big deal for me - I feel quite famous!” Occasionally they work together and promote each other in their blogs. “I am in the middle of organising some pre-christmas promotion for my shop and I was wondering if any of you would consider featuring my shop ... on your blogs?”

Some members offer incentives for the users of their blogs.

“I also have a special “free small gift with every order” offer for readers of your blogs.”

However this observation revealed that the members are not interested in incentives this might indicate that they participate for goodwill and to support other members rather than the incentives. This team also has a team blog.

Collective goals

Having the shared location in common with other members facilitates the collective actions that affect all the community. For example, in this team, a member make awareness about the new European VAT rules and asks another member to sign a petition against it.

“Please sign official petition against new European VAT rules!!!

“Hi European Etsy sellers, Perhaps you have received Etsy mails about new VAT rules on digital items. The rules are devastating for sellers like you and me. Seller are obliged to pay VAT to the country of your individual (European) buyer, meaning 17 different countries and 75 (!!) different VAT rates!! Not only that: you have prove your client really comes from the country its says it comes from and safe your administration for 10 years! This is such and administrative disaster that many of us will have to end

their selling or even close their shop. And beware: plans are already made to add physical products to the same law! An official petition has been launched. 15.000 signatures are needed so PLEASE sign and share to protect small and personal business on Etsy:"

Some members help their team financially for some costs such as the blog/ web host and advertising the team. These collective actions provide benefits for the community as they represent their team, and more specifically the contributors get benefits by presenting their shops.

"We decided to give the opportunity to have team mates buy ads for a very low rate. As the purpose isn't to make profit but only to cover the expenses and maybe put a little bit aside for advertising etc, the ad will cost 5€. By buying an ad you will help the team greatly, but will get something nice in return too :)"

Bartering norms

Within my observation, it has been revealed that there are so many members, who are interested in bartering and swapping their products. These members paired with each other and swapped their favourite items.

"I have recently been trading my items with other Etsy sellers. It has been really great to get handmade gifts for christmas, as well as to get feedback for my new shop." Bartering has been considered very positive for increasing their sales, reviews, and feedback. Many community members enjoy it and love the idea as it supports other members. "I love the whole idea and how it helps to support fellow crafters in a whole new way.", "We are many European shops interested in bartering of our respective products. The exchange between stores is very positive about increasing sales and reviews, and to be the buyer and seller at the same time on Etsy."

Despite the fact that *Etsy* does not have a bartering feature, social intelligence and helpfulness norm in the community drive the members to use their skills and capabilities and to act in new ways. For example, a member provides a solution to barter by the existing features of the *Etsy*.

“Just put below if you'd like to offer up any items for trade along with a list of the kind of things you're looking for. If anyone is interested then they can send you a private message and you can barter amongst yourselves to arrange the trade. You should aim to trade items that are equal in value but really it is up to you if you want to offer more (I sometimes do if I really like something). Once you've agreed on the trade, you each checkout the usual way using 'Other' as the payment method, thereby bypassing the whole Paypal process. Next, send your items, wait for your items to arrive and then both leave feedback for each other... simple :)”

Continent, Europe (European Street Team)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highest volume of social capital generated in promotional activities in game formats • Most Games created in regular formats (e.g. 24 hours game) that demand mutual obligation of members to contribute to the community • When games created as contest to win a prize, members are not welcoming; it might indicate that they participate for goodwill and to support other members • One of the highest activities observed is network creation by sharing the social media links and following and liking each other for inspiration and more sales • Rules and sanctions created by team leader are significant to keep the community active and manageable • Due to highly active nature of this community, leaders cannot monitor all activities, and other members take responsibility, which involves social intelligence • Intellectual capital usually generated in form of monthly and weekly activities by setting up specific tasks that create value for the members and the community • Several members are interested and do “bartering”, an instance of OCC that considered very helpful for increasing their sales, reviews, and feedback • Shared location facilitates the collective actions that affect all the community such as making awareness and taking action in international policies and regulations • Some members contribute financially to some costs such as the blog/ web host and advertising that benefits the community and presenting their shops also

Table 10. Summary of qualitative findings (Continent, Europe team)

5.3.2. Topic-based teams

In this point, the qualitative findings of ethnography from two topic-based teams as high technical and low technical will be discussed.

5.3.2.1. High-tech topic-based (Etsy relevancy & SEO Team)

In this team, unlike the location-based teams, most social capital formation were in the “Intellectual capital” construct. The members of this team prefer to answer the specific questions. Most discussions consisted of very few posts. The posts are informative and often directing to a page for further information. Sometimes the members add to an existing thread rather than starting a new one since the existing thread has already some knowledge that is beneficial to review them before going for further discussions.

“I joined etsy SEO group and found it was a lot of info but no discussion”.

The leader as an expert in the topic plays a major role in this team to keep the focus of the conversations on the subject. Since s/he is an expert in the topic her responses and judgments are significant for the members of the community. Sometimes she makes awareness that is valuable for the members and adds to the collective knowledge of the community. Advice from the expert also reassure the members and enable them to trust the advice better on the topic and avoid the “Bad advice”.

Often members share their experiences without anyone asking a question about that that become valuable example for others. Sometimes members carry out a collective effort that is useful and practical for the community knowledge. For example, the team leader let the others know that he/she is looking for a test that makes their job easier. Other members contribute to the effort, and they found the solution that leads to learning for other members and add to the collective knowledge of the community. Usually, the intellectual interactions and knowledge exchange happens within joint

discussions, where some members declare their lack of understanding of others' questions and responses.

Relational interactions

Social and emotional support: Often members do not know the answer to others' problems, and they have the same issue, they declare that and try to support them emotionally.

"Hi guys, I created a particular collection and listed it in my shop about a year and a half ago. It's one style necklace which I made in 10 different colours. I get tons of views and favourites on this collection, but have only sold 2 since I started listing them. In my keywords list for "all time", one of the top 6 terms belongs to this collection "fabric necklace", but still no sales. What am I doing wrong? Why are people loving this collection, but not buying it? I've experimented with low price, medium price, high price, and still, nothing. It's being found, but not bought. I really need some advice to help me push this collection. Thank you!" Response... "Hey ..., wish I know, but truth is I'm experiencing the same thing with some of our pocket notebooks. On another note, your shop is doing great!", "It may be SEO or it may be other issues, such as ... noted. People can find something attractive yet not want to buy it at any price, after all. ..., you need to fix that, pronto. Do some keyword research on the multitude of other phrases people would search for that type of necklace. This isn't a critique team so we can't brainstorm with you - sorry"

Intellectual interactions

In this team, members prefer to answer the specific questions. *"We don't do critiques here but we can answer specific questions in that thread."* The leader as an expert in the topic plays a major role in this team to keep the focus of the conversations on the subject. Most discussions consisted of very few posts. The posts are informative and often directing to a page for further information. The replies are mostly from the team leader who is an expert in the field. The majority of the posts focused on verifications and clarification of the information. In this team, the answers are usually short, and the

questions are often longer than the responses, as they want to make themselves as clear as possible.

“Any pages that are substantially similar to other ones are a problem, regardless of whether or not they are on the same domain”, “Sorry if I seem to be laboring this point, but I want to be sure before I go and change hundreds of listings to unique descriptions - ugh! When you say similar listings are a “problem”, I’m not sure what that means as I have had conflicting advice. Does this mean that they are ALL invisible to Google? Or does the original listing (the first one put up) remain visible and the others are ignored because of duplicate content? I list the same items on all my sites (varies between 9 online venues) and the thought of writing 9 unique descriptions is mind-boggling. If all the listings become virtually invisible to Google because of duplicate content, how come I get quite a lot of Goggle views? ...I am truly confused about this and would appreciate any advice. It would take me a year to rewire every listing I reckon, but I will do it if necessary - just want to be sure it is first”

Often the conversation is more than just one off and the member with expertise that help others should come back to conversation for clarification. For example, a member asks about the social media listing duplicate content.

“Sites that always link back to the original should be ok - it lets Google know which is the original. However, if you want the pin/post on another website to get its own Google ranking, changing it would be preferred. Most people are not aiming for that, however.” Response... “Thank you ... for clarifying this for me.”

There are also a lot of clarifications after reading and following some standard rules.

“So to clarify, does it help to put the keywords from the title in your description, but reworded in natural sentence form?”, “yes. If you are writing naturally for the customer & the title is accurate then the keywords you used in the title will automatically pop up in the description. Don’t overthink these things, or try to game Google. Whenever someone tells you there is an easy way to improve your Google ranking & their method adds no value for the reader or isn’t about getting your product in front of your target market, then the “tip” is almost certainly bad.”

Often the members add to an existing thread rather than starting a new thread because the existing thread has already some knowledge within it and it is beneficial to review

them before going for further discussions. For example, a member brings up an existing thread about tagging.

“Someone in a critique recommended I use “Handmade” in my titles and tags. I feel like that is unnecessary, because someone searching on etsy is going to assume everything is handmade and not search for it. I also have used google keywords and handmade never shows up as a good keyword.” The response was: “It won't hurt to try it on one or two things if you want; I think I have it in two titles & get very few hits for it. But do the research & find which items it is most likely to be used on.”

Sometimes there was no solid answer for the existing thread. Therefore, the member adds to the existing thread to find a better answer for that.

“I know this is an old thread, but rather than starting a new one, I'll post here.”

In this team, usually the intellectual interactions and knowledge exchange happen within collective discussions. In these debates, some members declare their lack of understanding of others' questions and responses. For example, a member asks a question about tags and titles.

“Anyone else out there feeling hopeless when it comes to tags and titles, I have read and read so much now I am confused. And if and when sometimes I think I have it sort of right then someone tells me it is all wrong, so I try to fix it, then someone else said it's wrong, I don't know what to do anymore, I can create just about anything but when it comes to putting it down on the computer screen it just does not happen.”

The expert gives response and explanations.

“It is all very simple - do keyword research to find out what people search, then use those phrases in your title. If you do proper keyword research you will never run out of phrase ideas! And the phrases are key; don't just throw a bunch of words together. Use both broad & specific phrases in each title. Copy them into the tags, then round out your tags with more niche phrases you can actually get relevant for. There is lots of bad advice out there, so don't waste your time reading it. ..., Google crawls different pages of your shop every day. It can take over a month for any given page to be crawled, but more importantly, it can take many months for the value of your page to grow - unlike Etsy search, SEO is a very long game. ”

Other member states that she does not understand correctly the answer.

“However..... I'm not sure what you mean by this: "And the phrases are key; don't just throw a bunch of words together" Is a "phrase" several adjectives separated by commas as you do in this listing?:" Then the expert clarifies the answer by giving examples. “Yes, those larger groupings of words, usually including both adjectives & at least one noun, are what I mean. Each long specific phrase also breaks down into smaller, more generic phrases - all of which I have the potential to rank for if I do the tags right & have a clickable photo/product. So I might be able to rank for:.... I have covered both broad & specific phrases that people search. On the rare occasion I get a really popular item, I can rank for several relatively broad phrases from one title.”

This also helps other members to understand better the explanations and add to the collective knowledge of the community.

*“Thank you, again, for how you clarify SEO and Etsy Relevancy.....”,
“This is beginning to make a little sense now-- Thanks... (and while I have your attention.....:)”*

Collective goals

Within this team often members carry out a collective effort that is useful and practical for the community knowledge. For example, the team leader let the others know that he/she is looking for a test that makes the job of the members easier.

“not sure if this is worth starting another thread over but I will keep an eye on it. Please let us know if you see anything anomalous. (I don't seem to have this test anywhere so I can't really comment)”

Other member has it and shares it.

“I have the test search and there are some things about it that do make search easier. Here's a screen shot of it:”

This collective effort is one of the examples that worked, and the leader can conclude on the topic.

“Interesting! Thank you (yes, we can probably all agree that the original Etsy category system makes little sense LOL)”

The process of collective problem solving enables members to learn from others' problems and the responses to the problems. For example, a member asks a question about using the correct words in SEO.

"I am working on boosting up SEO for the monthly baby stickers that I sell. There are a gillion other shops selling them too and the norm is title stuffing with similar words. I have been educating myself on this forum and have read that repetition is not necessary on Etsy and that Google frowns on it. So.... I have a slew of words to use but many of them have the word 'sticker'. Is it considered repetition if I say something like this "baby monthly sticker, first year stickers, monthly baby stickers for baby girl, baby photo stickers" Yikes.... what to do???? "

Then she received some helpful responses such as:

"It seems to be okay to mention a word up to twice in a title, but anymore then that doesn't help and may hurt. You can mention it as many times as you'd like in tags though. ", "..., seems like everything I've learned so far has meant changes to my existing posting. I'm trying to follow advice and only change a little at a time. I'm also making a check list for myself to help me to remember what little snippet of info I might need to look at again. I have the same problem I reuse some words in keywords and in titles..... sigh, back to the edits lol. Thanks so much to this group I am seeing improvement though. "

Solving problem for one member leads to learning for other members that have the same problem.

"Hi, I had no idea that was the case. This is my first day on the team and I learned something already. Thank you ...! ... ", "Thank you so much for accepting me and sharing all your knowledge! As a new seller on Etsy, I realize I have so much to learn! From reading only a few pages so far, I can see some of my questions will be answered here! Thank you again! "

Authority

In this team, the leader is an expert on the topic, and her responses and judgments are significant for the members of the community. Sometimes she makes awareness that is valuable for the community. For example, she makes awareness about the need for backup for suggestions.

“If you want a free SEO critique, try the main discussion forum, but just beware that you need to back up any suggestions with verified links, & keyword suggestions should always be (at a minimum) checked out on Etsy to see if anyone is searching them”.

Or in another example, she makes awareness about a paid service.

“Those services are completely useless, & could violate Google rules because you are paying for links (although Pinterest pins don't pass PageRank anymore, I believe, so that may be a moot point) If you want to to pay someone good money to promote you, pay a real internet marketer who will do it correctly & hit your target markets. Don't pay for fake followers & pins from people who will never buy your product. In generally, 98% of Etsy sellers do not need to pay a penny to anyone for anything other than Etsy selling fees & payment processors. These "services" love ripping off the gullible who don't really need services anyway. If your business is small & does not have a polished presentation yet then paying for marketing, editing etc..... Some tips on getting your shop in top shape.”, “I tried their free trial, and only got 9 repins in a month. I have had much more luck doing my own social media marketing than letting someone else do it. ”, or “here's the thread on how to do that:”

The members of the team express their gratefulness explicitly in a thread that demonstrate the value and significance of the expert advice.

“This is such a VALUABLE Team - I am just so happy to have been recommended to you ... gosh - I m going to be working diligently on retagging and retitling my site - such a relief to have found someone who is willing to SHARE this information! - I am delighted and excited ... thank you so much ... - you ROCK!!!”, “I absolutely agree!!!! ... information has been invaluable!!! Thank you!”, “..., you are an angel, really! Thank you for all your time and your good heart to share your immense knowledge with us”

Advice from the expert has also assure the members about the topic and enable them to better trust the information and avoid from the “Bad advice”.

“Repeating the title anywhere is a bad thing - don't do it! If you are writing a good description of the item & the title fits the item then the keywords will show up naturally”... “I'm glad to find this out, because I read the same advise, and wondered if it was true. I didn't want to do it. I find it annoying when I look at listings that do that.”, “Looks like I saw that same bad advice... now i wish I hadn't listened, but on the bright side, I'm here now where I can actually learn to do things the right way. ”

In this team, the leader keeps the focus of the conversations on the topic. For example a member asks a question that is not relevant to the topic.

“Your favourites are public - I can see them. This team is for info on Etsy search, SEO & statistics - other types of general questions go in the main forum or on teams for that purpose. Thanks!”.

In another conversation the leader tries to keep the conversation on the topic and advise her to use the general help forum.

“Hi ... - this is not a general help forum, & I am not on Facebook so I can't help you. You should try posting in the main forum. Good luck!”

Other member provides information about other team that is more relevant and wants to be contacted in convo.

“There is a Team here called Social Network/Etsy or FB/Etsy - it headed by ... who knows A LOT. They offer a way to link our Etsy Shops to Facebook via Orange Twig. If you can't find the Team, please convo me and I will provide more information.”

Norm of helpfulness

Often members share their experiences that become valuable example for other members. For example, a member shares her experience without anyone asking a question about that.

“I just offered this example in a forum thread. My experience. I had an antique New York State map (what it called itself). I titled it New York State Map and couldn't find it anywhere. When I used the search bar I found out people search for New York Map, I removed the word state from my title and 30 minutes later it was on page 2 for that search.”.

This has become a “great example ...!” for the other member. Then another member provides detailed feedback and valuable advice for the person who shares her experience.

“I did glance at your shop & pointed out the things you need to pay attention to - did you read my post just above? There are lots of places

that will do "tag critiques", but many won't take the proper amount of time to really check that you are using the correct phrases. It is always best to do that yourself, through keyword research. A proper "check my tags/titles" can take someone else an hour or more, & most of us are too.... Keep working on improving photos (some have white balance issues) & figuring out your target markets. All of those things are crucial to success."

High-tech topic-based (Etsy relevancy & SEO Team)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The highest social capital formation is in the “Intellectual capital” construct • The members prefer to answer the specific questions • Most discussions consisted of few posts, which are informative and often directing to a page for further information • Sometimes members add to an existing thread rather than starting a new one since it has useful knowledge to review before further discussions • The answers are usually short, and the questions are often longer, as they want to make themselves as clear as possible • Leader plays an important role to keep the focus of the conversations on the topic • The responses and judgments of the leader as an expert in the topic are significant for the members and enable them to trust the advice better • Often members share their experiences without anyone asking a question about that, and it became valuable example for others • The intellectual interactions usually happen within collective discussions, where members state their lack of understanding of others’ questions and responses. This helps the collective understanding of the knowledge within the community • Often members do not know the answer to others’ problems, and they have the same issue, they declare that and try to support them emotionally

Table 11. Summary of qualitative findings (High-tech topic-based team)

5.3.2.2. Low-tech topic-based (Etsy Success Team)

In this team like the high-tech topic-based the most discussions were towards the generation of the “Intellectual capital” but unlike the high-tech team, the interactions were more diverse and much greater amount of the “Relational capital” was generated.

Many of the conversations are about testing their shops and getting advice and others opinions on how to improve them. Team members not only share their experiences and give advice, but they provide social and emotional support that are valuable for them. Within these responses, they support emotionally, encourage and complement each other's works and strong points. They also kindly critique each other shops and provide much constructive criticism and valuable advice. The observation revealed that having the advice and critique with social and emotional support seems more effective, pleasant and acceptable to the members.

Within this team, some members have better social intelligence that helps to start conversations and motivate others to contribute to the community. Sometimes they start a discussion only for the sake of socialising. Often their social intelligence helps another teammate in their social interactions and give them more confidence in their written communications. It has been revealed that when members are more open and tell stories from their lives, they get better and more responses.

Intellectual interaction in this team often consists of a mixture of the fact, opinions, and individuals' experiences of different subjects. Different responses from the other members make the community read, review, and learn more about this topic. Within the act of reciprocity and helpfulness they not only help another member who asks the question they also learn from the conversations about different topics by reviewing what other people like or dislike and how to satisfy different people tastes. The team members often share their experiences and generate experience based knowledge.

Often team members make awareness about a common problem such as changes in *Etsy*, where they share their difficulties and challenges and even they do not ask for others opinions. However, as it is a common issue for all of them they contribute to the

discussion and give their opinions, experiences and how it affected them. This reveals that whether other members have the same problem and knowing how others deal with this problem could help them to tackle the issue.

The observation within this team also revealed the significance of having a shared vision and language. The shared language and vision enable members to understand each other better and for some advice and practical knowledge the members of the community are the best people to get advice from.

Relational interactions

Social and emotional support: In this team members not only share their experiences and give advice, but they provide social and emotional support that are valuable for them. For example, a member shares her experience with *Etsy* in a passionate way. She does not ask for any suggestions, but she gets several compliments and social and emotional support.

*“I am so excited that I have opened my Etsy shop. Does anyone else have a daily pit in their stomach as they wait for an order to come in. I got my first 2 orders at the end of January - WOW! ...Wishing everyone all the best in life both here and at home! Etsy is truly an inspiring place and without each and every unique person here it just wouldn't be the same”.
“Yayy, congratulations! You have such a cute shop - I'm not surprised at all that people want to put your creations in their home.”, “..., your shop is absolutely adorable! Congrats on your first February sale! :) ”*

In another example, a team member who is frustrated and hopeless as she does not sell enough and she is divided whether to stay or close her shop in *Etsy*.

“I'm ... and i' m crafting for almost 2 years now...I paint on cotton tote bags and on wooden house ware (which i mainly hand cut). At first just as a hobby, but after my best friend's instigation and encouragement i decided to start a little business.Began from Facebook 1,5 year ago and my Etsy shop "aired" 3,5 months ago. I really work my butt off and trying to get better and better..., but still....ONLY 1 SALE IN 3,5 MONTHS!!!! I have thought about pricing.....some say they are cheap, some say

expensive...either way they take many hours to be made!!!!' m starting to think that they are useless, that's why i' m not selling! Anyhow.... I would REALLY TRULY appreciate any advice on how to boost it up a bit, cause honestly if there weren't the free listings i don't know if i would keep going."

She receives several responses that support her emotionally, encourage her to stay and be hopeful and confident. Within these replies, they complement her works and strong points. They also kindly critique her shop and give her many constructive criticism and valuable advice.

"Your products are nice by the way! I would suggest staying for a little bit longer, and working on your SEO and marketing. Once people start finding you, I'm sure things will start picking up. Don't quit just yet.", "DO NOT give up !!!! You are very talented ! I think you're prices are great. It really does take a long time to build up your business on Etsy. I've found it to help a lot to promote on teams in order to move you up in the searches. (where you post 1 fav 5 etc) If you don't already do this, I strongly encourage you to do this often. That's when I started getting regular sales..... The more listings you have, the better your chance of being found. One more thing....have you considered making front door hangers personalized with the family's name and also door hanger for the hospital when a baby is born with the name ,birth weight, time of birth etc.? People love personalized items and I would encourage showing samples of several of your items with personalization. Best of luck to you. Hang in there. I know exactly how you fell but just keep it up and the sales will come.", "I am a new to ETSY and this is the best thread for ETSY advice I have read! Thank you all! Good luck..."

Social intelligence: The observation revealed that within this team some members have better social intelligence that helps to start conversations and motivate others to contribute to the community. Sometimes the team members start a discussion only for the sake of socialising and not for the purpose of the topic for their shops and so many members contributing to it. For example, a member (admin) asks *"How do you define your clothing style?"* Within their discussion, they socialise by determining their likes and dislikes and personal characteristics. Then he relate the discussion somehow to their community and make awareness by sharing blog.

“While we're on the topic of clothing, I wanted to share a brand new article from the Etsy Blog: 4 Top Tips for Selling Clothing on Etsy” then other member also add to the discussion even more article “I recently did a massive edit of my wardrobe inspired by Marie Condo's "The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up: The Japanese Art of Decluttering and Organizing." The idea is quite simple, only keep items of clothing that bring you joy, get rid of everything else. Here's a related article about the closet cleaning method for those interested...”

Often members’ social intelligence help another teammate in their social interactions and give them more confidence in their communications. For example, a member asks a question about how to say no to a customer order question.

“I requested a custom order with a fellow etsy seller. I asked for the price through a conversation. The seller created a listing and sent it to me. But... It's more expensive than I thought it should be and I do not want to purchase it. I feel bad saying no, because she has already made the listing. How should I say no?” Another member advised her to be honest and declare that she likes to be treated this way. “Just flat out tell them that the price is higher than you thought. I'd rather someone tell honestly why their not making a purchase than having to guess and wonder why I list the sale”, “I agree with Did they just create the listing as their way of telling you the price? They should have told you first via the convo that was started than assuming and creating the listing” These comments give her more confidence in her communication. “Thank you all! I'm going to write to her. :)”

Within this team, it has been revealed that when people are more open and tell stories from their lives, they get better and more responses.

“We are two friends, working in Paris and building great handmade products here in Paris. We had opened a shop on Etsy in August to book our name, ..., four months ago, i had a pretty bad bike accident, I was broke in many pieces, and I was stuck on a bed for nearly two months, unable to move, unable to work. And actually, that was one of the best things that happened to our business. At this time, we had made no Etsy sale. I had nothing else to do than reading all your advices in this team, blog posts, and everything that could help to grow a great Etsy business. So at this end of December, we re-launched our shop, with nice description and titles, correct tags and good looking pictures!”

Also, some people have similar stories, so they reveal and share them to have a conversation.

“Hi ..., I don't have anything to add. All the info above is right on! I just want to wish you the best of luck in your healing. I broke my ankle a year ago and Etsy saved me too. I was really laid up for a long time too. Your shop is great!! Keep up the good work. Tags and titles are your #2 priority. Photos #1. Good luck!! You are super handsome too!”

Network creation

The observations revealed that in some occasions team members contact each other directly (via chat) to help each other in a private manner. For example, a member asks for help for how to print an international shipping label.

“All morning I have been trying to print an International Shipping label. When I select International shipping, I get my zip code and buyers' country. When I complete the label and try to print, I get errors asking for zip code. There is no place for their zip code and at the country a zip code cannot be added. Any solutions or tips” other member wants to help privately... *“Is the customer's address an international address or a US address? If you want to, convo me the error information and I'll look at it privately”*

“Thanks for your help and ideas I learned a lot from you all! I add you to the list of my treasures! And Come and join me also in Instagram! Have a wonderful week everyone”, “Glad to hear there are other Instagram newbies out there. In my experience so far, I agree with everyone who said that smart use of hashtags is key on Instagram. IG: I love to follow other Etsy folks!”

Intellectual interactions

In this team, many of the conversation are about getting advice and others opinions on how to improve their shops. Within these conversations, the members are kind, friendly and encouraging when they provide suggestions and guidance.

“I think your earrings are really cute! However, I do see some areas that could be improved. You can work on your brand, your photography and your social media presence.... Here is a link about building your brand and developing marketing materials:... Now, when you are online photos are really important. I stumbled upon this great blog post about the key types of photos your should include in your listings:... Finally, you should develop you presence on social media. It's a great way to market you, your brand and your products! Here is a blog post I put together on how I

use social media:... I hope this is helpful! Let me know if you have any questions. :)"

It has been revealed that several members test their shop with the other members and get valuable advice, feedback, and suggestions. For example, a new member opens his shop based on a new and different concept and want to find out whether others understand and like the concept or not.

"Hey guys, I'm very new to Etsy and we sell a very complicated product (once yo get use to the idea it is quite simple, but it is new, so strange for many people to grasp). This make the ordering process complicated. We sell leather sandals with interchangeable straps. Thus, you have to choose your sandal base in our shop and then also choose your strap colors. Please can you check out my shop - 37sandals - and see if the way it is put on there makes sense? Do you understand how to order?" He receives several responses with appreciation of the concept as well as many valuable advice. *"I like the idea of your sandals. I think how you have them listed now might be a bit confusing for people when they would want to order. For instance, this listing (as well as the brown one), its not entirely clear i.... I would make it clear if its just the soles. I'm assuming its just the soles, but you'll want to make this clear", "Great work! Be sure to write your policies! I would also like to see sole and strap in one listing with drop-down menu. And someone modeling the sandals... Good luck"* And he is grateful and happy. *"Thank you so so much!! All of your advice is WONDERFUL and I am definitely going to take all of it in consideration, You guys are AWESOME!"*

In this team, members contribute to the team reciprocity and learning by adding to the collective knowledge of the community. For example, in one discussion a member asks about the copyright law.

"I purchased a pattern recently that I had to modify excessively to get it to work on every row. would it be against the law to say it is my pattern now? her instructions did not work at all. I redid the whole thing?" Different responses from the other members make the community to read, review, and learn more about this topic. *"Yes, it would be against the law! Modifying someone elses pattern and then calling it your own and use it to make money is wrong", "To protect yourself from copyright infringement, you need to come up with a design completely on your own, and then write the pattern, even if it is a simple every day object", "I understand... and I've taught myself to design this way too. I need to spend more time designing and less time buying patterns and trying to*

figure out what the designer meant to say.”, ““I remember reading that you have to change X% of an idea for it to be your own.” That's an urban myth. You can NOT use some elses design for your commercial purposes. It's as simple as that”

Sometimes some members ask questions, and later themselves come up with the answer for the community information.

“Can you get tracking on snail mail? If I took it to the Post Office? Or is tracking only for packages?” then the same person answer the question: “Just FYI incase anyone else wants to know: You cannot get tracking on snail mail. Certified mail is what they do and thats \$3.30.”

The norm of reciprocity and intellectual interaction in this team often consists of a mixture of the fact, opinions, and individuals' experiences of different subjects. For example, a member asks about the customers' rating.

“Is it just me, or have the half stars disappeared? My shop was at 4 1/2 stars, but is now at 4 stars with no new reviews... On another note, has anyone else experienced buyers who love your product but don't give it the full 5 stars? So far all of my customers have given me 5 other than one who loved the item she purchased but gave me 4. As a customer in general, I tend not to give full ratings because I think there's always room for improvement rather than because I find something missing, and I wonder how many other buyers do that too. Has anyone else had this experience?”

Experiences:

“I had someone leave me a three star because she didn't like the scent. I have no idea how that's my fault...”, “. I had a lady leave 4 stars because the vintage necklace clasp got tangled in her hair when she wore it...mind you, I didn't make the necklace, but she still felt the need to lower my rating for that.”

Opinions:

“How is there room for improvement if you got what was pictured in a timely manner? Don't give 4 stars if all went well.”, “If an item is as described, in good condition, and ships in the allotted time frame I will give a 5 star rating”, “I rather not make a sale to anybody who would give me less than 5 stars just because it is in their culture or thinks that it will give room for improvement and do not realize it hurts the shop and its owner too”

Fact:

"It may have to do with dates. The ratings they average are only for the last 12 months. Older reviews will still show up, but not count in your average. That way, bad reviews eventually won't count", Responses "Ah, thanks for the info ...! I didn't know about that", "Good information..."

At the end the conversation they concluded and added to the collective knowledge of the community as:

"Sometimes it really is a matter of culture... After shopping online a while, I think a lot of buyers like myself will realise that giving full stars is important to the seller. I don't mind 4 stars if the buyer says they liked the item though. Just curious to see how many others get those kinds of reviews too."

When the practical advice comes from an experienced member in the particular topic, it gives better assurance and makes them "feel much better". For example, a member having a problem with shipping abroad and asks for advice.

"I'm located in North Carolina, US and had my first out of country order to Canada earlier this month. I filled out the shipping label AND the custom form here on Etsy, printed it, signed it and everything. My post office said it was good to go. I've been tracking the package and it was taking forever. I contacted the buyer and apologized for the slow shipping and told her I had been watching it. It appeared as though it was shipped to Florida successfully where.... Then today I checked the tracking and it appears that it is getting returned back to my address here in NC! I've already contacted the buyer that I'm really sorry that I can send a replacement now or offer her a refund on her purchase. I was wondering if anyone has had any experience with this? Was this is post office error? Or did the Etsy shipping label not really work right? Any advice would be really appreciated. This makes me want to remove my "global shipping" option." Then a team mate who has years of experiences in that field gives her advice and shares her experience. *"Personally I would wait to see where the package ends up. I've been shipping internationally for over 20 years and on many occasions the packages get scanned incorrectly at some point. I send packages to friends in Canada every month and they take some of the strangest routes if you follow the tracking. The most recent package that followed had gone from here in Arizona on the 1st day to California, then over to Florida, to New York, back to Arizona on the 10th day and then was delivered in Canada on the 12th day. And I know that the tracking was way off since it takes at least 3 days for the packages to*

get from the main customs office in Canada to the final destination". This advice not only helps her practically but also comforts her and makes her feel better. "You all have made me feel much better. Thank you for the advice! I never realized that the tracking could be incorrect like that."

Blog: The teammates in this team, share their opinions and their purpose behind the using of blogs by different individuals. They usually use blogs to promote their businesses, exchange information and learn something new, and to know about the blogger.

"This is my blog ... What I like in other blogs, is information. I like to learn something. I try to give information for free, build followers that way. For now I am not sure how 'deep' readers would like to go into a subject", "My blog is very separate from my shop. But you can check out my layout. My layout is very much my doing with some input from my designer. ... I will not read a blog if it looks disorganized or if it is hard to figure out what is going on. I actually left a blog the other day and didn't re-pin because I could find out nothing about the blogger/blog. Just a bunch of posts. I didn't trust that it was her own work, not stealing a bunch of other people's stuff. I need to know the blogger is a person", "I'm going to start a blog soon too, so this is an interesting thread! I bought... a few years back, and have been redirecting it straight to my Etsy shop, but I'll use it for my own website very soon (hopefully this month!). I'm using a Weebly template, and since I know CSS and HTML, am happily customising it to suit my needs. Also, if you want to see, I have a personal blog at ... that I have been running for seven years."

The members help each other by exchanging information on how to create a blog. For example, a member asks advice on creating and pitching to blog.

"My name is ... I have a paper printables shop on etsy. I've been contemplating pitching to Design and DIY blogs once I have a full shop but I don't really know how to go about it. My idea was to offer to do a free DIY tutorial for the blog. My problem is I don't know how to represent my work, do i just send an email with my photos and a short blurb about my shop? Has anyone had experience with pitching to bloggers? Any advice is appreciated :)"

Many other members also show an interest in the topic and want to know about it.

"I second this question", "Great question, I've also been thinking about doing the same thing, matter of fact i was researching pitching to bloggers yesterday and today".

One teammate adds a valuable post and suggests a chapter in a book as well as little practical advice. She also gives some food for thoughts with a question.

*"I have a book called the "The Handmade Marketplace" by Kari Chapin that has a good section on this topic from Grace Bonney of Design*Sponge. It's too long to type out here, but the highlights are: -be short and sweet -be POLITE -include great, professional looking photos - address the blog editor by name (not to whom it may concern) -explain why your work is different/innovative. I'm rereading the book and would recommend it to any sellers on Etsy. Oh and this is a bit old but worth looking at I think... Now, MY question is, how do you find what blogs to submit to? I only read a couple of blogs regularly and am not sure where my work would fit in (any suggestions would be most appreciated!)."*

Collective goals

The observation revealed that often team members make awareness about a common problem such as changes in *Etsy*. Within this awareness, they share their difficulties and problems and even they do not ask for others opinions. However, as it is a collective issue for all of them they contribute to the discussion. They give their opinions, experiences and how it affects them. This reveals that whether other members have the same problem and knowing how others deal with this problem could help them to tackle the issue.

"I just looked at few of my items and found out that because of the new listing categories Etsy has taken liberty of guess which category my items are in. On each I get the message a below. "We've changed our listing categories and did our best to update yours below. Please double-check our work and change anything we got wrong. "Guess what Etsy? You got them WRONG and now I have to go through 300+ listings and change them all manually. Assuming it takes 30 seconds per listing that's 2.5 hours of work. Who's paying for that Etsy? Who?"

Within this team, sometimes the members help other teammates by sharing their practical experience that adds to the collective knowledge of the community. For example, one member asks advice on how to deal with the order pending problem.

"I had a reserved listing for a customer yesterday, and got an e-mail from them saying that they paid. But when I go to my orders I see this: You have orders that are still being processed. View now Has this happened to anybody else? It's been about 12 hours now. I'm not sure what's causing the delay. When I "view now" it takes me to a page with the order, says it was paid via direct checkout, but yet it does not appear in the Shop Payment account. Any advice on who to contact or what to do next would be appreciated. I'd like to get this order out of limbo!"

Two of the teammates share their knowledge and practical experience that are so helpful. One of them had the same problem last week.

"The order hasn't processed through the credit card company yet. If it does go through, it will stop saying Order Pending. Don't ship anything out until the card clears, though. If it doesn't clear, you'll need to contact your customer to let them know", "This happened to me last week, unfortunately it was a \$300 custom order that needed to be shipped within 1-2 days. It did eventually clear through the credit card processing, which can (and does) take 24-48 hours. You can let your customer know that the order is pending- it's on their credit card processing side, not your shop or Etsy. They may be able to contact the CC company to see if that's the challenge. When it does actually get processed it will be automatically put into your Sold Orders according to when the item was purchased, NOT when payment actually cleared. For my order, that showed it was placed on Thursday, when it didn't even clear until later on Friday, so obviously I couldn't shipped it on Thursday! Contacting Etsy will be pointless and a waste of your time, there's nothing they can do and they didn't even get back to me until 3 days later saying "it all looks good, don't ask for help until at least 48 hrs have passed". There's really not a single thing you can do other than wait. Hopefully you'll be more calm than I was... If they paid through Paypal with an e-check, that takes 3-5 business days before it will be cleared to ship,... Good luck"

In another example, in a discussion a member ask question about the shipping refund.

"If you have to refund partial shipping, do you just go ahead and do it or do you contact the buyer and let them know first."

She gets her responses such as:

"I have not had to refund a partial shipping as a shop owner but as a customer I have received partial shipping refunds and some shop owners have contacted me and others have not. I liked when I was informed so I knew why I had a credit on my account. Hope this helps :)"

And she is satisfied.

Then another teammate asks a question about understanding the whole shipping process, within the same discussion.

“Help!! I haven't opened my store yet because I don't understand the whole shipping thing. As an example.. I have a 9 x 11 framed item that will be bubble wrapped but when it comes to getting a box and how to ship it...I'm at a loss!!! I've spent hours online and even went to a Mailboxes Plus store and all the prices seem so high. I would not want to pay so much in shipping if I were buying something. How do I figure all of this out in order to move forward?”

She receives many helpful responses that are from people that have experienced within the same area such as:

“to cut your own costs down, you can go to hardware stores which usually have a section of discarded boxes of all sorts of different sizes. Just reuse. However, charging for shipping a parcel will be the cost of whatever it is that the post office charges. If you lower your shipping charge, then you may have to increase the sale price of your item to absorb it. I would also weigh everything you would put in (e.g. bubble wrap, item, business card, etc.) with a kitchen scale and ensure you charge the customer the appropriately according to postage rates in your area.”

Members of this team often discuss, share, and get advice about their supplies such as postage boxes and bubble wrap. They share where and how much they buy their materials. They also share the alternative materials they use for postage, their suppliers' sources and tips for buying cheaper supplies.

“If you live anywhere nears mom and pop owned places you can almost always get their boxes and packing materials. i have local businesses save it for me and i go get it every few days as i live very close to them. i dumpster dive for clean dry boxes all the time and never buy them. in a pinch i will go to a big box store and if i see boxes i know they will discard i ask and am able to take them. your shop sells small light things...why not use the free boxes you get from usps, both flat rate and online ordering of the free small boxes and envelopes”, “I also got bubble mailers from Amazon 6 by 10 inches 100 mailers for 11\$, bubble is a bit thin on these so I add some tissue paper for some extra padding”“Thanks for the tip. I usually order 500 or more which sometimes gives me a discount”

Authority

The observation revealed that within this team, members make awareness about common and collective subjects. For example, one team member makes awareness about the suspicious group he came across.

“has anyone ever been involved with a group like this... when i joined about a week ago, there was 36 members a week later there is 786, it seems to be very popular, you have to buy into the group, either a \$10 - 50 purchase then you are put in a group of 3 other people and what you spent is the group your in, so if you buy in for \$10 then you will be put in a group with 3 other \$10 buyers and each in the group buys from the other 3 and then of course you got a few sales, a few reviews a few products you bought from your other team members you may or may not have like,”
“i was invited to that one, or something similar, but i haven't joined. i'd like to hear more about it too”

The responses and collective knowledge concluded that it is a scam, and they should avoid it.

“They are BS....I'd call it a pyramid scheme but even those at the top arnt really making money”, “..., I think they really are making money though since they require a buy-in but don't themselves need to buy from others, so they're getting tons of poor suckers (almost me, for instance) to buy from them just to maybe get a few sales from other individuals. So it really seems to cost them nothing! I think the idea without a buy-in is spectacular, but with a buy-in, it seems like nothing other than a scam”, “I agree, it is a bad plan. In my opinion, the money spent in those groups is better spent by investing directly in your own business. What does an etsy shop possibly gain from that kind of group? ...I do not play the games that claim if you buy from someone you will get more sales (like the pay it forward or BNR games”

In another example, one team member let other members know about her new experience that could be useful for them.

*“Wow! I put a few photos up and got like twenty likes in two minutes! There must be a lot of people on Instagram. I haven't experienced anything like that since before I got kicked off the forums on etsy! *This* is the place to promote”*

Other teammates find this helpful and appreciate it. *“Thank you for the tips, i'm gonna try this!:)”, “going to try now”,* another member even provide a link for this subject.

“woohoo. congrats! Here's an article about marketing with instagram. hope it helps”, “Ohhh! Thank u for the link ...! My mission today is to work out instagram”

Norm of helpfulness

Within the act of reciprocity and helpfulness they not only help other members who ask the question, but they also learn from the conversations about different topics by reviewing what other people like or dislike and how to satisfy different people tastes. The team members often share their experiences and generate experience based knowledge. For example, a member asks about *“Best photo editing program”*. This works like a survey between them within the team, and they share their experiences with different programs and why they are using them. The members who help others admit that they are in the process of learning, and they are open to other member’s opinions who know more.

“You have some cute items! I am by no means an expert at using tags, but those really need some work. From my understanding use 2-3 word tags that a buyer would to look for your item. The one I pulled up was the Hulk mug. The title doesn't make sense. I would not any of those words to look for that item. Use things like, Hand painted green hulk mug, or coffee cup. Then you want to correlate your titles with your tags for better exposure. ... I just made my first 2 sales yesterday, so like I said, I'm learning too. Those are just some things I would do right away.”, “Best of luck, I'm new to etsy myself and still learning, so take my advice with a grain of salt, but I hope some of this helps you”, “I think, someone who knows more can correct me, that a favorite doesn't show up as a view. I know sometimes I have several favorites show up, but the number of views do not match”

In another example, a member asks advice about “work with bloggers and vlogers”, then other member wants to know what vlogers is. Then the other member reply that “Vlogers review your item by video like in a Youtube series.” This shows that the teammate is contributing or even lurking learning within the community. “Thanks ...! I learn something every day.”

Sometimes the process of helpfulness and the question and answers accumulating collective knowledge and help other members to learn something new. For example, a teammate asks advice on the customer order request.

“A customer sent me a custom order request for one of my items which I have created and created a listing which she has purchased. During the conversation she also requested another custom order for another of my items, do I have to ask her to send me another conversation so that I can create another listing for her? ”

She receives two valuable responses that meet her need.

“you dont need a new convo, you can simply create a new listing and put all necessary info in it, for instance use "custom order" picture, write the "custom order for..." in the title, add the shipping option based on location of your customer, etc”, “You could definitely do what ... suggested. The difference though, is that if you do it through a convo, you don't pay the listing fee until your customer buys the item, but if you do it like this, you pay it up front. If you think your customer will definitely buy it, then you can go for either!”

These responses also help other members to learn.

“Love this team! I learn something new every day! I had no idea if you made a custom listing through a convo you didn't pay the listing fee upfront.”, “I get custom orders all the time. I didn't know that I could create a custom listing from convo either. So helpful!”

Shared vision and language norm

The observation revealed that for some advice and practical knowledge the member of the community are the best people to get advice from as they have a shared vision and better understand the language of each other. For example, a member asks guidance for selling other kinds of items and whether she needs to open another shop or not.

“I am currently selling mostly bags/pouches and hair clips with scifi/comic book themes. And I feel this goes well with the theme of my store, The But I would also like to sell items that fall outside the genre of science fiction, like wire jewelry, and other accessories that don't have geeky

emblems. Would this be successful within my current shop, or would I need to open a new shop?"

Some members suggest opening another shop with their rational reasons.

"You probably should start a different shop for the items you want to do, and an earthy feel would go good, like we have with our shop", "I would start a second shop. If it doesn't work out you can close it and say, "well at least I tried.". Otherwise it will always bug you and you will wonder what might have happened had you opened the new shop".

But another member has a different view.

"From what I have heard, having two shops is a lot of work, so see how having both works in one shop".

Having all these views that come from the people who have a shared vision, help her to make the decision better.

"Thank you guys! The advice you give really makes sense to me. I'll get to work on some new stuff and see how it goes."

In another example, a member having an issue with a customer who does not want to sign for an item delivery.

"I always ship registered and with tracking number. This means that the customer has to sign in delivery. Apparently I have a customer now that wants not to have to sign. What should I do? What if my package gets lost, it is a OOK item. I have emailed her in order maybe to give me an address that she will be there to sign, but 2 days now I have no response. Any ideas how to handle this?"

The responses are mixed about the possibility of income and intend of the customer.

For example:

"It does not make sense why she does not want to sign it since she ordered it!?? Well, it makes me think that she wants to receive it without signing it and later claimed she has not received it! Otherwise why not sign the package that you ordered yourself??", "There are legitimate reasons to not want to sign. Maybe she works at a place that doesn't want people to receive personal packages at their business. Maybe she's mobility-challenged and getting to the post office is a terrible pain. Maybe she's handicapped."

The collective discussion advice that. “get a postal receipt to prove”, “mention in your policies”, “insure it”, “have a tracking number and insurance”.

In another example, a member from Russia ask advice on refunding a customer in the US, the members from the US help her and share her experience with the US post problem.

“Hello, I am ... from Moscow Russia. I've opened my shop in the end of last year. I was lucky to sell some items since then. Every order was shipped surprisingly quickly within 2 weeks, except one order to the USA. The customer contacted me after almost 1 month telling the order hasn't arrived. The tracking info stopped after the export and the USPS web site did not pick up the tracking number as it usually does. So I decided the package lost in mail and refunded the customer in full via PayPal to email address which was stated on the PayPal transaction. The customer replied she could not pick up the refund since PayPal becomes Russian and she could not understand what to do. I suggested she could switch to classical view to change the language, but no answer from her since then. Please advise is there anything else I could do to help customer to pick up the refund. Thank you”

The response of a member from the USA who shares the common language becomes very helpful for her.

“..., congrats! It seems like you are well on your way! I think you did all you could in your end. If she contacts you again, maybe you could walk her thorough it and guide her step by step on how to switch to classical view. I'm not sure what else you could do”, “You should wait a little more. Expecially if tracking says "origin post is preparing shipment". It means it is in customs. USPS is having delays lately:...”

Shared language often facilitates understanding of the other member’s problem and add to the collective knowledge of the community. For example, a member asks for help about a shipping address in United Kingdom.

“this is a adress !! what is Near Basingstoke?Zipcode ? I google it, and didn't come out anything!! help PLS!!”, “Hi. Near Basingstoke is basically what it says it is (a place near Basingstoke, usually a village next to a town.) If you write the address in this format then it should be fine.”, “If you are using the Etsy shipping labels, don't change anything. It'll be fine. Just

be sure to complete the customs form and sign it before mailing it. Good luck.”

The member asks for more clarification:

“If I write the way she show me. After add a name on the top. It would be 8 ROW..... Which one is better???? I have no ideas”, and the helper provides specific written address. “Hi, You can write it as in your last post.... Cottage is the property name ... is the district... is the town... is the county... is the postcode. Even if you only wrote the property name town and postcode it would get there. Hope this helps”

Low-tech topic-based (Etsy Success Team)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The highest amount of social capital generated in the “Intellectual capital” construct; but a substantial amount of “Relational capital” was also generated, and the interactions are more diverse compared to the High-tech team • Complementing the advice and critique with social and emotional support have more effect, and make them more acceptable to the members • Social intelligence helps to start conversations and motivate others to contribute to the community and giving others more confidence in their written communications • When the members are more open and tell stories from their lives, they get better and more responses • Intellectual interaction often consists of a mixture of fact, opinions, and individuals' experiences • The act of reciprocity not only help the member who asks the question but enables others to learn from the collective discussion by reviewing other members' views • The practical advice comes from an experienced member on a topic gives better assurance and makes members to “feel much better” • Shared language and vision facilitate members to understand each other better and to provide the best advice for their problems • Members make awareness about common and collective subjects and problems that are valuable to the community

Table 12. Summary of qualitative findings (Low-tech topic-based team)

5.4. Summary of the findings

In the first part of this chapter the results of the quantitative analysis demonstrated the existences and frequencies of the predefined social capital dimensions and collaboration types within different teams. Different location-based and topic-based teams have been studied in parallel, to compare their differences in social capital formation. First, the location-based and topic-based have been investigated, which revealed mainly the formation of the relational capital in location-based and intellectual capital in topic-based teams. (Figure 18.)

The study of location-based teams extended to investigate the social capital formation in different cultures and geographical settings such as city, country, and continent. The highest amounts of collaboration in these teams are Promotion and Self-presentation, both referring to “Visibility” dimension generating “Relational capital”. These collaborations generally performed in the game formats, which require regular mutual obligation of members to create collective value for the community. In the smaller geographical setting such as city teams, there is higher level of intellectual capital generated. “Authority” dimension creating “Trust” is another varying dimension within these teams. In City UK team that is the smallest geographical setting in this study, both Volunteering and Awareness collaboration types observed in the highest degree. In these teams, more diverse collaboration types have been revealed, compared to the larger geographical setting teams. In the larger geographical setting teams such as country and particularly continent setting, the significant finding was the high volume of the “Network creation” dimension in the relational capital. Network creation dimension tends to generate bridging social capital that could provide informational benefits, which are less redundant and have more new opportunities due to the sparse and open network of this teams. (Figure 19.)

The topic-based teams also extended from the high technical to the less technical topic-based team to compare and learn their differences in social capital formation. These findings reflect that however in both team the generation of the intellectual capital is significant, but in the less technical team, the collaboration types are more diverse and much higher volume of relational capital generated. Other findings revealed the increase of the Trust construct in the less technical team. (Figure 20.)

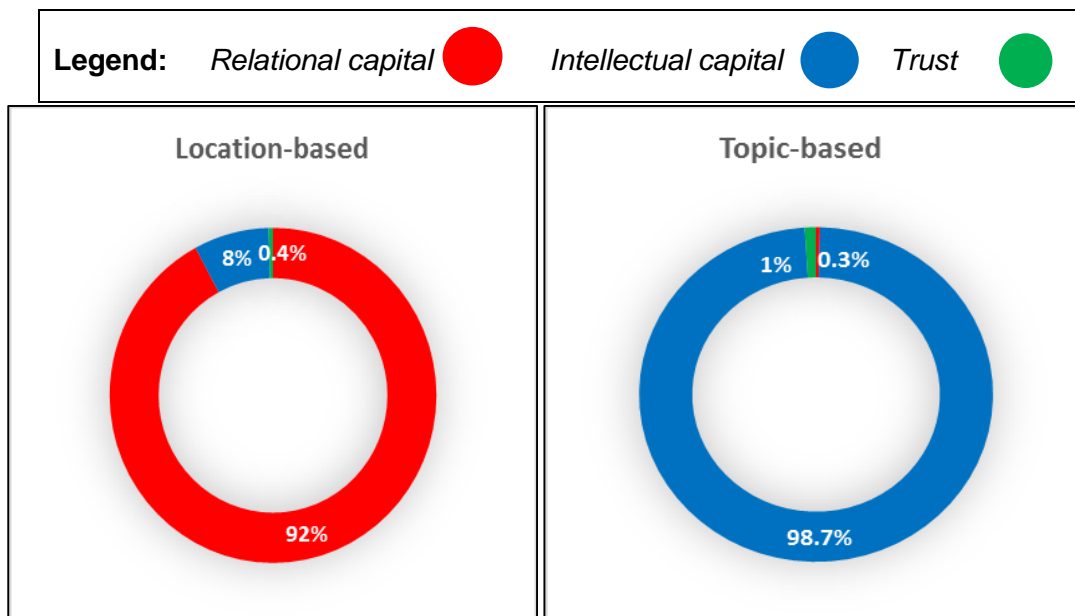
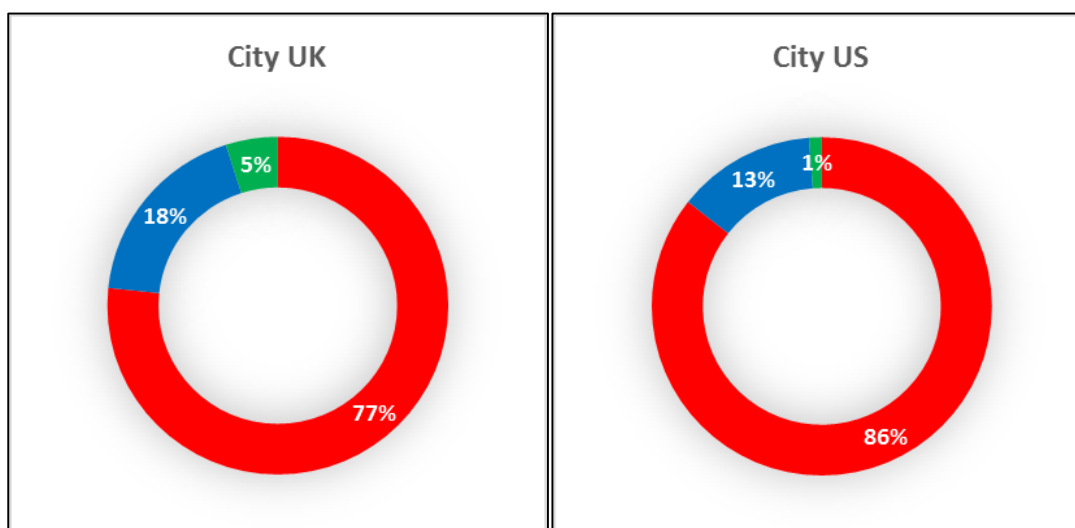


Figure 18. Location-based vs. Topic-based teams



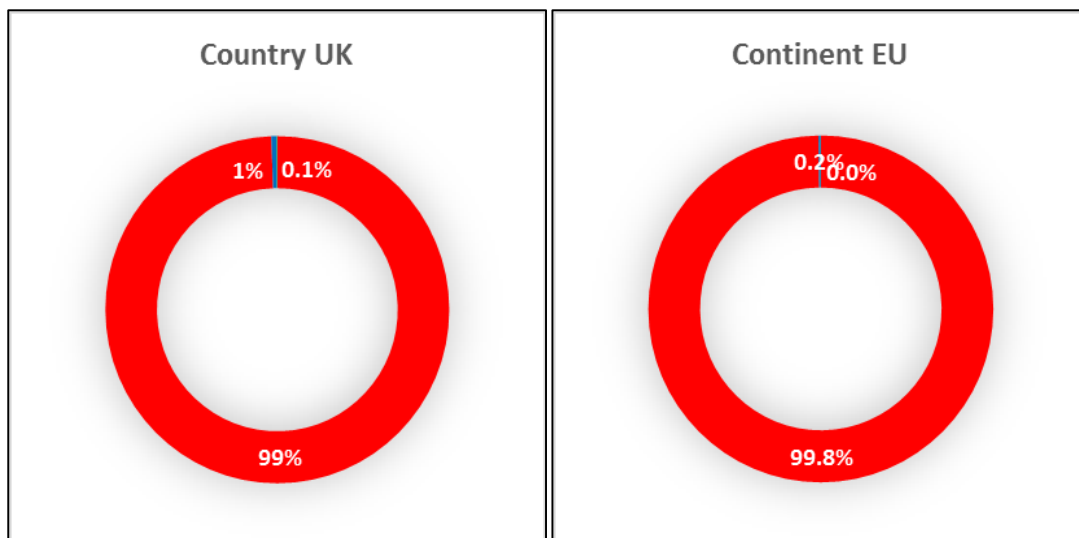


Figure 19. Location-based teams

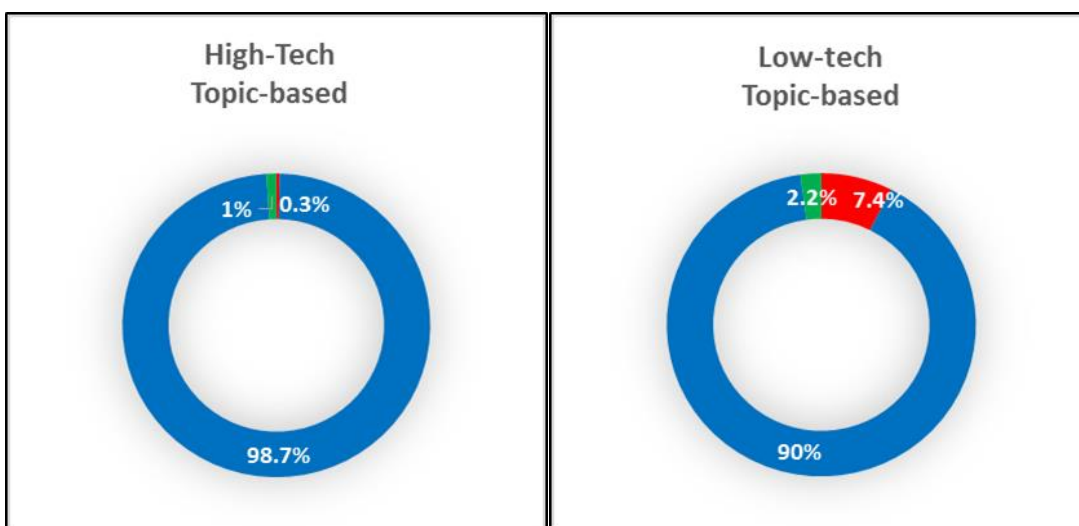


Figure 20. High-tech vs. Low-tech topic-based teams

In the second part of the study of the social capital formation, online ethnography was applied to produce qualitative results to reveal the different interaction patterns and social and technological needs of diverse teams.

In the location-based teams, most discussions were towards generation of the “Relational capital”. Their reciprocity tends to go beyond intellectual and information sharing since they are usually collocated. The observation revealed that these teams have stronger norms that could be results of longer socialising and reciprocity compared to the topic-based teams. The results suggest that the members of the

location-based teams tend to be more creative in their collaboration. This could be related to their varied type of collaboration types. They often help each other by creating a game like activities such as posting one item and clicking the ten items above, which generate more views for their items. Within these collective actions they not only help each other, but practice the abiding by the rules. When a game activity is created, a number of well-defined rules must be set and the members are required to obey the rules to take part in the game. Understanding and abiding by these rules that are created by themselves are indispensable for socialising in these online communities.

In the smaller geographical setting like city level teams, when they are in need of materials and supplies they tend to exchange spare and unwanted materials, which could increase networking and trust. In these teams, individuals tend to support their local trades and to shop locally. This represents the localisation that is one of the key indicators of sustainable consumption in a new economy (Seyfang 2007). Despite the fact that trust is the baseline for the reciprocity in all teams, the direct trust construct and collaboration types such as awareness and volunteering in these teams are higher than the topic-based teams. UK City team that is the smallest geographical setting in our study has the most diverse collaboration types. This is the only team that all the three collaboration types of “Face-to-face meeting” dimension (Creating meeting events, Event awareness and Event request), practiced. The members are very open and transparent in exposing themselves such as locations, skills, characteristics and weaknesses. It also has the highest level of the trust within all the teams. Having an event organisation tool is very significant in these teams that is missing in *Etsy*. A feature to facilitate and arrange the local pick up transactions, also in necessitate.

The bigger geographical setting teams in country and continent level, mostly used for creative promotional games for presenting their products in new ways and mixing the promotion with other activities such as Networking. “Network creation” that could create relational capital is one of the highest activities amongst the members of these teams. They share their social media links and follow and like each other for network creation, inspiration, and more sales. The intellectual capital generated in this team often facilitated by shared location of the members exchange information about national and international policies and guidelines. The EU continent team, which is the largest geographical setting in this research is an extremely active community, and the leaders are not able to monitor all activities all the time. Therefore, other members need to put effort and take some responsibility to help the team leaders, which could enhance their social intelligence. Within EU team, there were several members, interested in “bartering” and they paired with each other and swapped their favourite items, which considered very helpful for increasing their sales, reviews, and feedback. In this team, some members contribute financially to some costs such as the blog/web host and advertising of their team. These collective actions provide benefits for the community to promote their team, and more specifically the contributors get benefits by representing their individuals’ shops also. In these teams, having the option to manage and simplify the social media links and networking tool seems necessary. Also, a feature that facilitates Bartering could be very helpful for the members of these teams.

In topic-based teams, unlike the location-based, most social capital is generated in the “Intellectual capital” construct. In the high technical team, the members prefer to answer the specific questions. The leader as an expert in the topic plays a major role in this team to keeps the focus of the conversations on the subject. Since s/he is an

expert on the topic, her responses and judgments are significant for the members of the community. The majority of the posts focused on verifications and clarification of the information. In this team, the answers are usually short, and the questions are more frequent and often longer than the responses, as they want to make themselves as clear as possible.

In the less technical team, the interactions were more diverse and much greater amount of the “Relational capital” was generated compared to the high tech team. The observation revealed that increasing the amount of relational capital and having the advice and critique with social and emotional support seems more effective, acceptable, and create a better user experience within members. In this team, members with higher social intelligence sometimes help other members in their social interactions and give them more confidence in their written communications for example. Members of this team, often tend to share their experiences that generate experience based knowledge.

The observation also revealed that in these topic-based teams, when the practical advice comes from an expert and/or experienced members in the specific topics, provides better assurance and create a better satisfaction. Hence, enabling the members in exposing their identity, such as expertise and experiences in certain areas, could improve trust creation and the quality of content significantly. In these teams, when members want to answer a question, they need to repeat the question to show that the answer is for which question this point to an issue and creates confusing. Furthermore, the observations revealed that there are some difficulties and sensitivity within the written communications in these communities that could lead to conflicts that are a hindrance to the generation of the social capital.

6. Socio-technical gaps data collection and results

Following the pilot study on the proposed methodology by this study, predictive ethnography, the data gathering for socio-technical gaps has been carried out with consideration of lessons learned from the pilot study with an extended period of time. The data collection has been carried out within three weeks in February and March 2015. In total, 1011 posts have been collected and coded from 97 threads. These posts have been selected and coded based on their relevance to the heuristics. The coding followed the same procedure as the pilot study; using Nvivo application based on the sociability and usability heuristics.

This chapter structured as follow, first the results of the quantitative analysis reveal the significance of identified heuristics (success factors) containing the existing gaps in *Etsy* community. In the second part of this chapter, the qualitative findings from the online ethnography will discuss how the gaps generated within the range of revealed heuristics. Finally, a summary of the findings will present a list of discovered gaps and a brief of the results from this chapter.

6.1. Quantitative analysis results (Socio-technical gaps)

The results from the first part of analysis demonstrate the most significant heuristics that comprise the gaps. The frequency of identified heuristics demonstrates that the coded data are within the the scope of 21 items, out of 36. A sample of the coding (approximately 10% of posts) checked by a third party researcher to confirm the consistency of the coded data. Three new items (*Awareness tools, Update Users with new Policy & Design changes, and Easy customer feedback*) have also been identified and added to the heuristics. These results revealed that the socio-technical gaps for this community are associated with these 21 heuristics. The frequency of identified

heuristics demonstrates their level of importance since the members of the community discuss and raise issues that are more important for them. (Figure 21.)

These results show that sociability has been discussed more compared to usability issues. This finding is in line with Hart et al. (2008) study on Facebook, in which they found that users are less concerned about the bad usability of the system when there are enjoyable aspects that compensate the usability inadequacies. The most significant gaps concerned *Trust creation features* such as customers' reviews and rating systems, *Relevant rules of behaviour*, *Clear displayed policies*, and *Social presence tools*.

<u>Legend:</u> S: Sociability ● U: Usability ● SU: ●

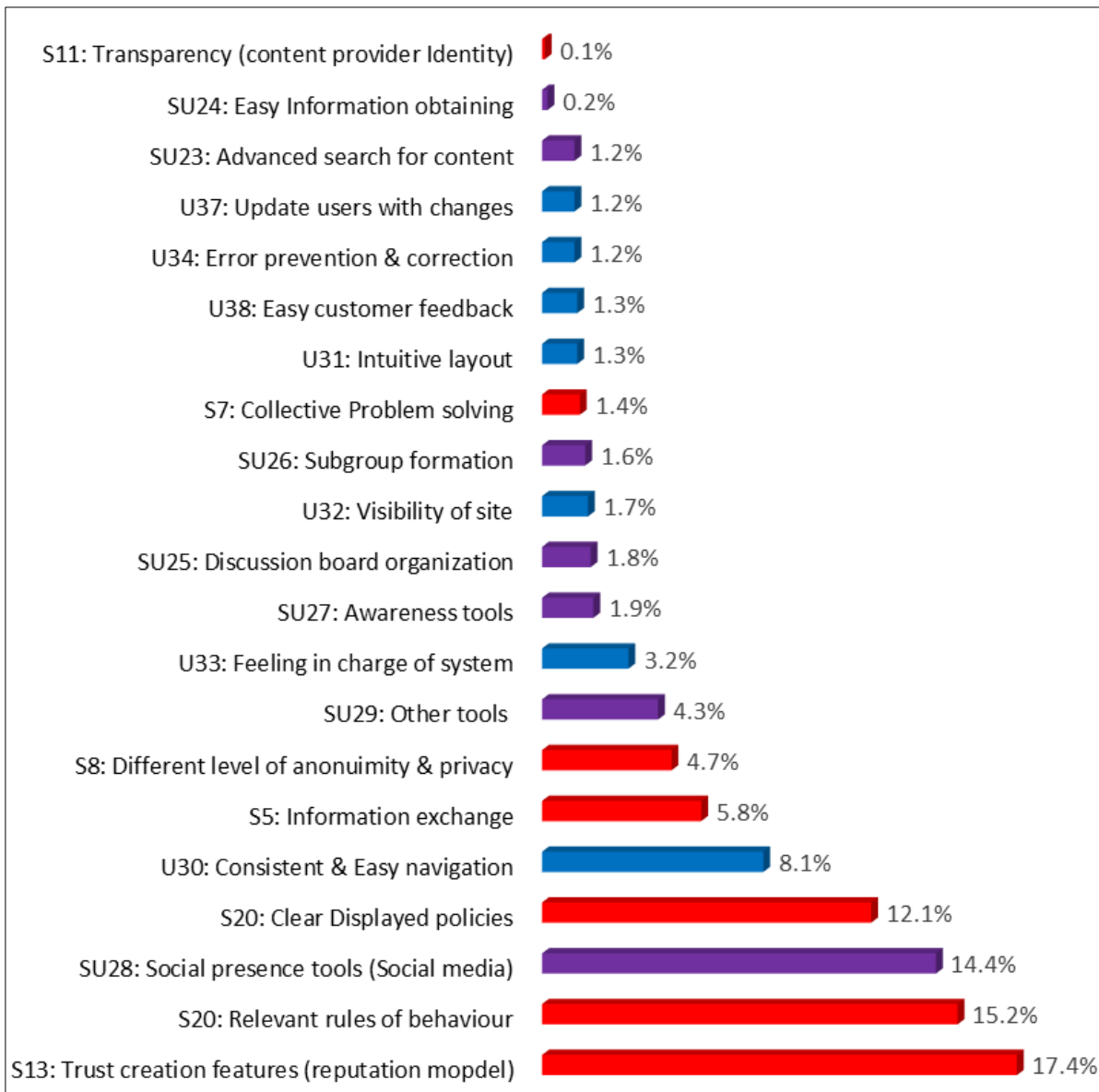


Figure 21. Frequencies of the identified heuristics (out of 100%)

6.2. Qualitative (Online ethnography) results (Socio-technical gaps)

The quantitative results demonstrated the issues that could lead to the socio-technical gaps in the range of heuristics. It also verified their level of significance in this community. The missing elements from such quantitative analysis are why members are doing what they are doing, and how the gaps generated. Qualitative studies, and specifically ethnography provides a construction of understanding on behaviours, motivation, and interaction of the members. It also helps to dig deeper into what is

being said and done and why. Accordingly, online ethnography was applied in this study on the collected data to focus on how the lack of enough support for these heuristics could create socio-technical gaps, and providing a detailed understanding of them. In the following section, the gaps will be presented with G#. These gaps are associated with the previously identified heuristics that shown by S, U, or SU #. The heuristics are categorised under eight constructs (Reciprocity, Trust, Purpose policies & procedures, Information design & presentation, Technology support, Navigation, User control, and Reliability). The results come as follow.

6.2.1. Gaps in reciprocity

In this construct there are two heuristics have been observed as *Information exchange and Collective problem solving* which come as follow.

S5: Information exchange (5.8%): The observation from this study revealed that members are usually very open to sharing their personal and business experiences and information when it comes to helping each other. Most of the community members prefer to find their information and ask their questions in the forums and teams discussions. The communication in this community only relies on textual interactions that could create some difficulties. The main gaps within this heuristic include *Generic Help & FAQ pages, Difficulties in written communication, and Bad advice*.

G1: Generic help & FAQ pages: The problem with *Etsy* help is that their answers are very “generic”, “it is hard to navigate and frustrating” and when the questions need to be digging deeper, they should go to the forums. Members prefer the forums as they can ask “real live people”, sometimes to network with them, and most are coming from the real experience. However, forums also could be problematic, for example,

sometimes the answers are not correct, and the actual responses, and also the same questions are repeating on a regular basis.

“I think that people like coming to the forums and asking real live people. It's a great way to network as well. I have never found Etsy help helpful. They answer generic questions and 99 percent of the time people's questions require digging deeper hence coming to the forums. Even the bottom of the Etsy help page says something like ...Cant find it here? Ask in the forums.” “I agree that Etsy help is so general it usually isn't helpful at all. I don't think I have ever found a solution to anything by using it. The only thing less helpful than Etsy help is Ebay help!” “I know that Etsy Help is hard to navigate, it is frustrating and should be easier to find and use. I think that people should be able to find their answers from Etsy and not the crap shoot that Forums sometimes is. You may get the correct answer to you question but you may not and you could end up with big problems as a result.” “I ask questions and i am sure that some of the answers are on there... But I always want real experience.” “I have to agree with you and admit that I fall for it. I find that I go and check out shops of the sellers that are responding to questions.”

G2: Difficulties in written communication: online communities such as *Etsy* that rely only on the written communications. They have many limitations and the lacking of the face to face contact with their facial expressions, the tone of voice, body language, along with the impression given by their appearance could lead to several difficulties and sensitivities. Several members have a problem with understanding the technical explanations as well as knowing the right words to ask their questions. These difficulties could sometimes create misunderstanding, challenges, and complications. For example, a response from a member:

“You really need to speak to an attorney that specializes in copyright law. You are walking a gray line...”

And a confirmation from another member offends the person who asks the question and replies:

“Walking a gray line? I'm not walking any kind of line. Its amazing how complicated this subject is. Everyone has their own opinion on this subject.... But I don't see the need of screaming at people obnoxiosly

about copywrite and just saying the same thing repetively". But the responder does not mean that "..., I am sorry if you were offended. That was not my intent. I was only trying to help".

Often members are using emoticons to smooth their conversation and to demonstrate their emotion. The automatically generated snippet could be also helpful and give the members more comfort and confidence. Snippets can help several users in their communication since they tend to use so many words and phrases that are repeating over the time. *Etsy* provides an option for creating and editing Snippets, but it would be useful to have an automatic option that could provide new snippets automatically.

"Hi, I use the snippets feature for convos on my phone. I want to edit some of them... is there any way to do so on the desktop site? Would be so much easier on my laptop, but I can't seem to find this feature!" "If you are on your convo page, click on 'compose' to open a new message window, then you should see your snippet icon. If you click on that it should bring them up and you can edit from there." "I looked in the help section, but couldn't find anything about saved snippets for convos. That was odd." "hmmm, there is no snippet icon when I've clicked 'compose'. Can anyone else see one?" "Yay! Glad we got it figured out. Those snippets save me tons of time!" "This team needs an FAQ and a saved snippets function, like with convos. :)"

G3: Bad advice: is among the main issues in virtual communities. Bad or wrong advice come from the lack of expertise of members, and they could be very costly since individuals take and apply this advice. One solution to this problem could be rating the expertise of the individuals in specific fields and to reveal who knows what. Another possible solution could be evaluating the comments and advice by users to reveal their usefulness.

"Sheesh! I am so glad to have asked this question from the experts! I find that there is a lot of bad advise in the forums, so I now double check stuff like this. When I opened my shop, I would believe everything I read. I once changed ALL my listings (can't remember exactly what the advise was now...) But the comment said "I doubled my sales by doing _____". I later read that she had gone from 4 sales a year to 8 sales a year..."

S7: Collective problem solving (1.4%): the findings from the observation revealed that due to the collaborative culture of the community, there are a high number of responses from members when they deal with a common problem. These reactions are usually very quick and within less than one hour or even 30 minutes, the collective discussions conclude, and they reach a solution. The most significant gap in this heuristic is the *lack of scam awareness*.

G4: Lack of scam awareness: scam is a mutual concern, particularly in virtual environments. The observation revealed that due to the active and collaborative nature of this community, as soon as someone raises a concern about a suspicious case they collectively solved the problem and detected that. However, there is a lack of a particular space for these issues, which enable the members to make awareness about them as well as facilitating them to solve the problems easier. A voting system could also be very useful in resolving the collective problems by enabling and easing the participation of the members.

“Scam or spam? Someone in your network thinks you are awesome :). You were recommended to us as a top, 98th-percentile ‘Maker’ who might be interested in our Exclusive, Invite-Only beta launch for Etsy sellers. We engineered a way for you to sell the products you create - with one touch - via your social media feeds. So all your friends & followers can buy, with a single click. We have raised conversions over 1700%. We charge less commission than your fees on Etsy + PayPal. We will waive the seller fees for the first 1,000 people who sign up. The list is first-come, first-serve and will fill up quickly...”

Many members think it is spam.

“Sounds more like spam than a scam.” “It’s spam.” “In my opinion, any legitimate company would not be: 1-Violating Etsy’s TOUs by sending promo spam. 2-Violating the federal CAN-SPAM act of 2003. 3-Promote their business using a competitor’s message system. It’s illegal, and it’s tacky, and it shows a lack of morals and judgement.”

But some other members think it is a scam.

“So do I ! Scam in every detail. Stay away from it, and NEVER click on any link, even to see what it is they are offering.” “I just got the same convo. Glad I found this Post in the Forums. I also think it is scam”

7.2.2. Gaps in trust

Three heuristics have been observed within this construct as *different level of anonymity, Transparency, and Trust creation features* which come as follow.

S8: Different level of anonymity (4.7%): The observation revealed that given the different time and circumstances of the members, they need to have a different degree of anonymity. This gives the members the liberty and freedom to define how much they like to reveal their identity and privacy. There are three main gaps have discovered within this heuristic as *Sellers’ contact details, Non-admin login, and Guest checkout.*

G5: Sellers’ contact details: the other issue regarding the limitations of privacy is finding the sellers’ contact number online by the buyers and contacting them by phone. There is a mixed opinion among members; although some sellers prefer to be contacted by the buyers, others don’t like to be contacted on certain hours since they do business from their home. One solution used by some *Etsy* members is the “google voice account”. It provides a separate business number that could be used in their same phone, and the business calls could be accepted in certain hours.

“I received a call this morning from a woman inquiring about my buckles who said she searched my name on line and found my phone number. She was asking a question about one of my buckles. Has this ever happened to you? She was a very, very sweet young lady, and I had zero problem with her contacting me, but it made me realize just how much of our info is just a click away.” “I actually had a customer call me a couple of weeks ago. I always put a business card (with my cell #) in my orders and she got one of my pendants as a gift with the business card included. She loved it so much she wanted me to make 5 more! As long as people use it for good, I’m ok with it! :)” “Just to be contrary. :-D I’m your age, and I hate the phone. In fact, I hate it so much that I only turn it on in the late

morning, and not at all on the weekend. I embrace the modern technology, (which our generation invented!) and love the fact that I don't have to unexpectedly have my day interrupted anymore.” “Hi ..., I actually get calls all the time! -All part of owning a business. What I finally did was get a google voice account on my phone so that I could have a separate number as my "business number". I put that in my store and on my business cards so people don't call my personal line. Both numbers ring on my phone, but I can set google voice to only accept calls within certain business hours, not on weekend, etc. :)”

Also, Etsy provides a prototype solution for the US members only.

“Etsy provides a prototype as Burner App which gives a phone number you can use for business calls. Burner is an app that gives you a separate phone number so you can call and text with your customers while keeping your personal phone number private. You can create multiple numbers and keep them as long as you want, but you can also “burn” a number anytime and people... Please keep in mind that currently Burner will only work with US phone numbers.”

G6: Non-admin login: sometimes members have difficulties to manage and do all the admin work of their shops, and they need to hire someone to do it for them. Since they do not want to give access to all of their account, they would rather give a partial access, such as Non-admin login, which is missing in this community.

“Has anyone hired or considered hiring people to help run their shops? If so, how has this worked out for you?” “I doubt I could do that, because I'd have to completely trust them, because they would have access to EVERYTHING in the back end of my shop. If Etsy ever allowed limited access (non-admin), maybe. But as it is set up now, I wouldn't do it.” “I've never done it, but I might consider it if things were to pick up quite a bit here. I've considered hiring people off and on for other tasks, and actually do have help lined up for an upcoming show, but it just hasn't been needed here yet. I like the idea of a non-admin sign-in option -- some way to restrict the view of things like bank accounts, credit cards, security questions and things like that.”

G7: Guest checkout: enables the people who are not a member of the community to buy items without registering and becoming a member. The observation revealed that this feature is lacking in Etsy and several members are requesting for this option.

"I want to buy something from a shop that only accepts paypal. I don't have a paypal account and wanted to use guest checkout but there is no such option. I tried on friday and the option was available, but since saturday paypal always wants me to log in or create a new account ...no guest checkout." "Etsy does not offer a "Guest Checkout" option like some other sites do. Everyone who wishes to buy on Etsy must first register." "I am so disappointed in that. To be frank, that is really stupid. It closes down an entire league of buyers who don't want to be a member - they just want to buy an item." "We have all been asking for guest checkout for quite some time."

S11: Transparency in characteristics of the content provider (0.1%): exposing and revealing the identity, skills and characteristics of the members who contribute to the community is an important matter in this community. Knowing the characteristics of the content provider can increase the level of trust to the content within the content users. It also can prevent the *Bad advice*, which defined above as one of the gaps in information exchange.

S13: Trust creation features (17.4%): As shown in the quantitative results, this is the most discussed and significant heuristic in the members' discussion. The observation revealed that these features have a major impact on the members' reputation that is vital to thriving in OCC. Five gaps have been observed in this heuristic range as *Customers' feedbacks and rating system, Digital products review, Cultural differences in the rating system, Sellers' feedback, and Negative feedback*.

G8: Customers' feedbacks and rating system: are very significant for increasing trust and reputation in using virtual environments and have been one of the most frequently discussed issues in this community. Getting reviews make the members excited and happy, and they consider them as a compliment. For example, in a conversation members describe their feeling about when they receive a review.

"...And it's five stars. I couldn't be happier! This is almost as good as good as my first sale!" "My highlight of the day was seeing my shop get views from Facebook. I just decided to put my shop link on there and it has been

bringing in lots more views which was exciting. :)” “Congratulations I agree the reviews are so exciting.” “It may be a small thing but it feels pretty great when you have a customer give you a really great review.” “I was so excited! It was awesome. I still get excited when I get reviews.” “Not a small thing at all! It is such a huge compliment to have a customer take the time to publicly appreciate something that they bought from you. It's like they want to help you be successful. I agree, it is an awesome feeling!”

Given the significance of the reviews, often some members are trying to find ways for getting more reviews that could lead to some issues such as spams. For example, some members ask whether they could contact the customers after the sale to get reviews.

“I have recently read you can't ask people to leave a review if they enjoyed their item. How do you all go about getting a review from a customer? Do you just let them leave a review if they choose?” “i find a lot of my customers never even let me know if the item has arrived let alone leave feedback, the ones that do are always pleased with their item. should i follow up with an after sale email. your comments will be appreciated.”

But most members agree that contacting and asking for feedback can be considered as spam, and they are not allowed to do that.

“Just leave it alone :) they'll come eventually. I hate..getting request for reviews, ebay sellers are notorious for this and it beyond annoys me” “Etsy sends "review reminders" to buyers. Main problem is that it is impossible to write review before some amount of time pass (Etsy decide how long it is basing on distance between seller and buyer) so I get emails about how much people like my jewelry when possibility to write review is not unblocked yet. And then they receive reminder, excitement is gone because pass time. Result = no review.” “No it's not allowed to ask for feedback. I always try to give my best, sometimes I will send a gift or a thank you code for the next purchase, you know small details that any customer loved. But even with that is not a guarantee that they will leave feedback. So just keep doing your best! That's all I can said!”

The review system is based on the whole shopping experience of the customer. However, there is some mixed opinion whether it should be per item rather than the whole experience.

“Reviews are for the entire shop, not per item. Yet, a customer gets to leave as many reviews as items she bought. If the review were just for that particular item, like Amazon reviews, fine. Otherwise, it should be 1 review per order. My shop is new, and I've gotten all positive reviews so far, but I'm terrified that one person who ordered like, 5 little things is going to come along and leave bad reviews. No one customer should have that much power over a shop's reputation. From what I've seen, the reviews are more about the whole experience as opposed to just the quality of the items. Delay in shipping? Bad reviews. Etsy states that reviews are the customer's opinion - Well, if it's an opinion of the whole shop, each customer's opinion should count the same.” “I agree, sometimes I would like to see reviews on a CERTAIN item. There should be an option for certain item, for all items, and for the overall shop.” But other members believe that individual items could reflect the entire shop and the whole experience of shopping. *“Where do you get the idea that reviews are for the shop? Customers can and do review each individual item, so that future buyers can determine whether to purchase. If the entire experience is good, it will reflect on the shop and shop owner as well, but reviews are for the purchase.” “Granted reviews are for individual items but the review system can affect the entire shop. I sold 3 items to a customer and got 5 stars on 2 of them and 3 stars on the last one. I do understand your concern, but you can't let it worry you.”*

G9: Digital products review: Feedback form is sent to the buyers after a period of time from purchase date. This creates concern among some members as they believe this delay could make them forget to leave feedback.

“No wonder so many people don't leave feedback, they probably just forget!” However, other members this process make sense. *“They did this people would leave poor review before they received the item, not allowing the seller time to make the item and for the post to deliver it.”*

But this process creates concern for the digital products since their deliveries are instant and require a different option for leaving feedback.

G10: Cultural differences in the rating system: The observation from this study suggest that, despite the fact that the rating system is extremely significant for the *Etsy* sellers, this sensitivity might vary in different cultures. For example, the *Etsy* members from the US expect to get full 5 stars if all went well for the customers.

“How is there room for improvement if you got what was pictured in a timely manner? Don't give 4 stars if all went well.” “Sometimes it really is a matter of culture... After shopping online a while, I think a lot of buyers like myself will realise that giving full stars is important to the seller.” “I rather not make a sale to anybody who would give me less than 5 stars just because it is in their culture or thinks that it will give room for improvement and do not realize it hurts the shop and its owner too” But other member from Holland remarks that: “I learned that in the US it is normal to give 5 stars if you are happy. In Holland I think that people use 4.5 or 4 also as a satisfied number to give. 4 is also good they think, it is a culture difference”.

G11: Sellers' feedback: Etsy community enable the customers to write feedback for the sellers, but they removed the option that allows the sellers to write feedback for the customers. The observation revealed that many of the community members want to have this feature as well.

“This is going to sound dumb but for the life of me I can't figure out how/where to leave a buyer feedback! I've looked all over and don't see where to go so I can give them feedback for making a purchase. Am I missing something? Thanks!” “This feature doesn't exist anymore.” “Sellers can't leave feedback any longer. That changed when they changed to the current review system. I wish we could though!” “I know, that was the worst idea Etsy could come up with! They should bring it back, for sure!”

G12: Negative feedback: Having negative feedback causes a lot of concerns among the members. Often the sellers want to be able to remove somehow or amend the negative comments, however, this could be challenging and could cause several issues.

“I recently had a one star review from a customer who stated that one of my necklaces wasn't new and had been worn. All my items are new! I think to say that an item has been used is very damming and my star rating has gone down to three. All my reviews up to now have been excellent so I'm not happy. I have posted a reply to the customers remarks and emailed the etsy team to ask them to remove it What would you do!”

Once the customers leave the feedback they can modify them within a limited period of time (60 days).

“Hello! I was just wondering if a customer leaves a bad review, but then wants to change it because the issue has been resolved, how long do they have to change it before it becomes permanent? Thanks!” “The 60-day window is from the time that feedback was available to be given. If this window has expired, then no changes are able to be made.”

In this stage, the communication problem arises as several members having difficulty in handling the situation and resolve the problem. Sometimes their response to the customers could upset them and make the situation worse, which is not their intent. A member wants to know how to respond to a negative review.

“I know that when I see shop owners respond to reviews I cringe because usually it seems combative. However, I received a semi negative review the other day and responded to it today. I think that I came off more informative than combative, and actually hope that it will help other customers understand my method. But, I wanted to know how you all respond to negative reviews.”

In another example, the wording in the convo to the customer upset her. However, it was not the intent of the seller.

“I don't at all think that was your intent. Just that it could be interpreted that way worded as it is.” “Yes - I think it was just the way you worded it that upset the customer. I can understand her misunderstanding your intent.”

Many members would prefer to be contacted by unsatisfied customer first to resolve the issue before posting the bad review.

“Feedback here and other online selling forums carries so much weight for a seller, it would be nice if an unsatisfied buyer would contact the seller first and offer an opportunity to resolve”

One way to be contacted before the bad review is to have the right policy in the place.

“Since you have no policies in place, the buyer may have thought that leaving feedback was the only way to relate their concerns. Maybe fill that section out, to help your buyers in regards to any concerns they may have.”

6.2.3. Gaps in purpose, policies & procedures

Within this construct, *Relevant rules of behaviour and clear displayed policies* have been revealed as the most significant heuristics in this community which come as follow.

S20: Relevant rules of behaviour & clear displayed policies (27.3%): are the most discussed and important topics in this community that affects all aspects of members' collaboration and behaviours. Lack of clarity in policies and guidelines in this community created several concerns and confusions over how the rules are working. Often confusion was created by language and words that were difficult to understand. They also request to have detailed and in-depth policies. Three main gaps have been observed in this area as *Copyright, Lack of clarity in policies, and Lack of return policy*.

G13: Copyright: The observation revealed that considering the nature of this community that is related to crafts and art, copyright is one of the main gaps in this community. This issue could cause concern in the virtual environment where the boundary of copying and inspiration is not clear. Copying photos, products descriptions, and even shop policies from others create a lot of concerns amongst the members of this community. For example, a member complaining about another member who has the same products and even descriptions.

“Have you ever run across another Easy seller that is not only doing the exact same thing as you but the description is the same too? Is that weird or is that just how it is?”

Another member also shares the same concern.

“I did come across this last year. I did contact the Shop Owner and stated my complaint with her and she not only removed the listing but closed her shop down. I do hope that you can get this resolved.”

The other member is having the same problem.

“Yes, in my other shop my entire description has been copied practically word for word by a competitor. I feel like there is nothing I can do about it because this shop has been around a little longer than me, so I feel like they may argue this fact if I confront them on it or complain. I think you can message them, but if they refuse to change it on their own, there really isn't much you can do. Especially if there is a word or two changed, for example, 99% of a copy - you know they've taken it, but it's not 100% plagiarized. Obviously you're something right if they feel like they need to copy you! Just concentrate on making the shop the best it can be and know you're on the right track and lead your niche.”

Another person is having the same issue even for the shop policies and photos.

“Hi Steph! Glad to meet a local seller:) Also, I used to work for Digidesign maybe we have some other things in common! To answer your question, yes it is that rampant. I have had shops copy my policies, my about page and even stolen my photos and just set up shop!”

It has been revealed that despite the fact that most of the members share this concern but there is some mixed opinion amongst members on how to face and tackle this gap.

For example, one member believes that crafts cannot be protected, but descriptions violate the copyright law.

“If the description is exactly copied, that violates your copyright. You can demand they use their own wording. Craft items themselves often can't be legally protected though.”

Other members agree and warn about the descriptions and asks if the description is word by word it could also create a problem in search engine optimization.

“If they're copying your listings word for word this could hurt both of you when it comes to google. If it's not word for word, I don't think there's much you can do about it. You can also explain that it's just not good for either of you when it comes to seo.” “The reason you need to do something is that Google will penalize both of you for having the same text.” This is worrying for some members. “I feel like with all the shops and items on Etsy, it would be so hard to find this out! Now I need to go search to make sure no one is copying my descriptions... ;)”

Another member believes that it is inevitable.

“Unfortunately, rights issues are going to increase as the internet expands so it pays to have some idea of A- what kinds of misues can happen, and B- what you can do about it.”

The other member is not sure about her feeling.

“I find my stuff pinned all over peoples DIY boards. I have even found my images used on a few DIY blogs...w/ the writers idea about how I do it. Not sure how I feel about it... For the most part when I find my images on a DIY blog it does link back to my Etsy shop. So I am less bothered by it...”

The observation exposed that the best and safest solution for this gap is to copyright the work, product or concept, and keep the intellectual property safe.

“This stuff happens all the time. It is so important to do the work that it takes to keep your Intellectual Property safe.” “The few that do everything they can to safeguard their Intellectual Property are the winners.”

However, the copyright law is very tricky, and it is not straight forward how it works.

“The problem is in the legality - it takes time and energy to copyright, trademark, and patent our brilliant products & concepts.” For example, a member claims that someone started following her, stolen her “exact idea”, and is selling identical items. “Hired a model who LOOKS LIKE MY MODEL and photographs her wearing /holding it in the same position, wearing identical blouse.”

But other member thinks that *“Ideas can't be copyrighted.”* In another discussion there are conflicts of opinions about what breaks the copyright law, what is copyrightable, and what is not. A member asks:

“I purchased a pattern recently that I had to modify excessively to get it to work on every row. would it be against the law to say it is my pattern now? her instructions did not work at all. I redid the whole thing.”

She receives responses such as:

“Yes, it would be against the law! Modifying someone elses pattern and then calling it your own and use it to make money is wrong.” “The design is still hers, and the pattern is still hers. What you have done is edit it so that it makes more sense to you (and possibly other people). What if the designer eventually decides to be more professional and have all of her work tech edited and tested? Selling it would be illegal.”

She is confused over design elements and design patterns:

“I guess I need to review the copywriter laws. You know I see so many people copying each other. Like log cabin quilts, Dolman sleeves in sewing, then we come to sweaters.....there's the crew neck, boat neck, cardigan, tutrtle neck, saddle shoulder, and the style where the sleeves are knitted in diagonal. In knitting and crochet everyone claims these classics to be their own original designs. I remember reading that you have to change 75% of an idea for it to be your own. But I don't remember where I read it. Maybe the copywrite laws.”

Another member makes this clearer on what is copyrightable and what is not:

“..., the different things you mentioned are design elements. If I decide I really like boat neck sweaters, and I decide I want to design one... I can, and I can call it my own design. Clothing characteristics, or design elements are not copyrightable. However, a pattern is. You couldn't make up a design from using someone else's pattern, that would be against copyright laws.... BUT if you really like boat neck sweaters, you can draw one, make crochet swatches to figure out what stitches and fabric you want to use, and you can sit down and design one. Then, you can write the pattern and sell it as your own even if there are already 126,800 crochet patterns for boat neck sweaters. So, just remember, design elements (or garment characteristics) are not copyrightable, but actual patterns are.”

They include that it is crucial to review the copyright law and some even suggest to consult an attorney that specialises in copyright law.

Watermarking the photos considered by some members as one solution for protecting the photos' copyright. “*Watermark your picture*”. But other members believe that watermark can be removed and replaced by others.

“I watermark my photos. Doesn't matter. I've had many stolen by sellers on there. They remove the watermark and put their own on the photo. I have one store, now, where they're using 5 of my photos on their Aliexpress homepage, including one of my daughter :(”.

Other member says that it works as it declares that the photos are not the public domain.

“RE: watermarking- while yes, it can be removed, at least you are calling out visibly that the photos aren't public domain. You could also add a line about the photos in your shop policies/about that the photos are copyrighted.”

The collective discussion concludes that while the watermarking could be a solution, they need to file and report the case.

“Agreed; file the DMCA if for no other reason than to protect yourself and be able to answer questions if someone who sees the ... stuff contacts you.”. “Try filing a DMCA takedown request. You can find info on that here:...”. “Have you claimed a file against the other seller?”.

However, many members suggest that it can be handled in a nice way by communication before making a claim.

“I haven't because I just emailed them and let them know that I do enjoy their work but I would prefer it if they wrote their own description instead of using mine. If it doesn't change then I need to figure out how to move a step further.”

A member tells his story and how he contacted the person.

“Last night the same thing happened with a complete copy of my wording and research. on a item . I contacted the seller and wrote this : Good evening , please remove the information you have copied and pasted from my listing which you have used in your listing here for these (XXXXXX) I have taken a screen shot. If not removed , i will file a complaint with Etsy under terms of Intellectual property and copyright infringement .Best regards. They were gracious enough to reply , remove my written material and apologize.”

Also, several members believe that having a part in their policies regarding the copyright is very useful.

“This too since she's already copying. She's got to know you're aware of what she's doing. ALSO, make sure you have something in your policies about copying your work so you can always refer to it.”

Some members are asking for better technical solutions such as a feature to be designed by *Etsy* to detect and prohibit the copyright violated contents.

“Isn't there a way for Etsy to program the browse section to not include obvious rule breaking items? I decided to check out "browse" today to see if I could find some unique items I wouldn't find in search, because many things Etsy would show me, I might never find myself because I don't know to search for them. It was a bit disheartening. Some things were great, but many were items/shops that sell things that are copyright/trademark infringements and/or against the rules. I get that Etsy can't police the items that are copyright/trademark infringements, but isn't there a way to NOT promote items that are against the rules? No wonder there is so much confusion for both the sellers and buyers, it looks like Etsy is endorsing them (I know they're not, but for some it may look like they do). So, I guess my question is - Isn't there a way for Etsy to program the browse section to not include obvious rule breaking items? I am really just curious from a programming point of view. I have no knowledge in these areas.”

However, there are some concerns regarding this.

*“The items aren't against the rules until the copyright holder says it is.”
“Like I said in the post, I know Etsy can't really police the copyright/trademark infringements, but what about the other rules/guidelines they have? Why do they "promote" items that break their own rules? And is there even a way to do this?”*

G14: Lack of clear displayed policies: Lack of clarity in how the rules and regulations are working create confusion. The observation revealed that several members are asking multiple questions and asking for clarifications for the policies. They like to see some clear and detailed guidelines.

“It is very confusing how the rules are working. They are difficult to understand and FAQ is very basic and not explaining in depth...” “Hey ... it's just about how promoted listings work and how to use them, it doesn't matter what your selling :) The FAQ Etsy did on this is very very basic and it doesn't explain in depth how they work. Which is reallllllllly confusing for people - and was for me until someone here on Etsy took the time to explain them to me in a way I could understand.”

The observation revealed that using videos are very helpful for several members and help them to understand the policies and regulations better. For example, a member provides some useful links and a link to a video and many other members understand better and appreciate her help.

“So helpful thank you! :)” “Thank you ...! I am finally starting to understand how the promoted listings work.” “Thanks for sharing Just watched your 2 videos.Great clear info. I'm sure there are lots of people who could use the help. :)” “You're welcome I'm one of those intensely visual learners. To the point it's almost a fault, so I figured there had to be more people out there like me.”

The new policies developed by *Etsy*, create even more confusions and frustration among some members.

“Does this mean that if you ask a seller to shut down or combine shops, they'll won't ever be able to open a new shop, even if it is something totally different? If not - can you please elaborate on what that portion of the guideline means?” “I have three shops with very different items, they in no way have anything in common, one is a very new relaunched shop that I have spent a month rebranding. I was taking my time migrating the items over to it when they were about to expire and putting announcements all over my old shop so my regular customers can find me, but due to this new, out of left field move I have had to deactivate items so I don't have to choose between my oldest shop and my new one.”

Most the times members like to have a support where they can go to ask if they are legal or not since they are not sure how these new policies affect them and whether they need to do some changes to their shops.

“Can any one tell me where I go to ask if I'm "legal"? Looking through the Contact us, I don't fit any of their response questions, and I'd rather not wait until Etsy contacts me - if they are going to contact me.” “this sounds like it would be difficult to enforce? is there going to be a new button to report shops that are doing this? or is etsy going to find the shops themselves?”

Some members also like to have a new design feature created by *Etsy* to help them for these new policies.

“I would guess when you click "Report This Shop to Etsy" or "Report This Item" under > "Why are you reporting this shop?" Etsy should or will have to include a new choice for "Violates Multiple Shop Policy". “I truly hope that they will enforce this new policy,and create a new option when reporting shops.It is utterly depressing when I see the exact same manufactured item in search and browse by multiple shops.How can we ever hope to have a fair marketplace in that environment? Even more

importantly - for anyone who comes to Etsy to find unique artisan made items they will be turned off completely.”

My observation revealed that most members of this community like to receive a direct email and a clear awareness towards these changes.

*“I really wish Etsy would send emails about important changes like this.”
“it should happen for all the "big changes". It's just the click of a button for Etsy to inform everyone by direct email!” “Not everyone comes into forums to find out what's happening...in fact...I was an etsy seller for at least 3 years before I found out about forums!”*

G15: Lack of return policy: the observation also exposed that Etsy community users often encounter problems due to lack of return policy when people buy products. For example, one member was asking: *“I wish Etsy make a compulsory tick box”*, other members suggested to comply with *“Distance selling regulatory”* law in the UK, since they were based in the UK. However since these online communities go beyond the geographical borders and the local laws and regulatory between countries might differ; there is a need for a standard policy for these communities.

“A customer recently purchased a butterfly magnet from me but wants to return it as it does not stick on glass. It clearly states that it adheres to anything magnetic ie metal. Do I have to accept the return as I don't think im at fault.” “Since when have magnets stuck to glass! Poor excuse that one. What are your policies on returns?” “Etsy doesn't have policies regarding returns. YOU need to have policies regarding returns. So whatever is in your policies is what you should adhere to.” “Etsy does not have policies on returns, sellers do, and as you are in Liverpool you should be complying with the Distance Selling Regulations.” “Again - I would point out that I wish Etsy would make a compulsory tick box that buyers have to check to say that they have read the terms and conditions of sale otherwise it makes it difficult for the seller to protect themselves.”

6.2.4. Gaps in information design and presentation

In the scope of this construct three heuristics have been revealed as Advanced and filter search for content, Easy information obtaining, and Discussion board organisation which come as follow.

SU23: Advanced and filter search for content (1.2%): the main gap observed in this heuristic is the *Difficulties in finding an existing discussion*.

G16: *Difficulties in finding an existing discussion*: it is not easy in the forum and teams discussion board to find an existing threads or posts and many members are complaining about this issue. This issue makes the members repeat the same discussion to solve their problems.

“I swear we discussed this before, but I can’t find any thread about it. :(Where do you guys get the cheapest boxes (and bubble mailers) for shipping.”

There is a need for *Etsy* to create an advanced search to filter the content of the forum and teams.

SU24: Easy information obtaining (0.2%): finding the information about the products in this community is significant for the customers. The observation revealed the significant gap in this heuristic as *Lack of advanced category system for products*.

G17: *Lack of advanced classification system for products*: Given that *Etsy* is a marketplace for artisans there could be so many products in each seller’s shop. This makes it difficult for buyers to find the product they like and there is a need for an advanced category system that enables the sellers to categorise their items in different ways that are appropriate for them and to better support the customers to find their desired items easily. *Etsy*’s listing category is not very helpful, and it creates frustration.

“I just looked at few of my items and found out that because of the new listing categories Etsy has taken liberty of guess which category my items are in.” “I noticed a HUGE drop in views on my bottle openers about a week ago. They’ve been my #1 since Christmas, with the customizable listing consistently being on the fist page (albeit at the bottom, or somewhere near the top of the second page) with multiple search terms entered. Now, I can’t find a single listing when I look for them. I went

through and checked the categories, etc., and all seems right. It is soooo frustrating. All of the countless hours poured into getting the listings right, FINALLY getting a little traffic into my shop, and poof! New changes and I am disappeared. Again.”

It has been revealed that several members also would like to have alternative ways (such as drop down menu) to find the products easier.

“Also Ebay and Amazon have a much better category drop down box. Actually so does Vista Print, just to name a few. THATS the way search/categories should work. Make is as easily as possible for buyers to find what they are looking for!!” “So true. Having drop down categories makes so much sense, be more user friendly and would help clean up the page.” “I’ve been pushing for sub-categories to be drop down for a while - to help maybe compensate for sub-categories having been placed under unrelated top-level categories that people would never dream of clicking on to find what they want. If they were drop down menus, at least there would be a fighting chance that the mouse might hover over them in passing! The more ways to fine things or even to find the unexpected the better.”

SU25: Discussion board organisation (1.8%): two main gaps have been distinguished in this heuristic such as *Convo organisation, and Lack of an indicative way to answer a specific question.*

G18: Convo organisation: the visibility help members to understand what is going on on the page and what features are available to facilitate them. This usability issue has been observed in several instances in the community. This issue also could create navigation problems. The most significance visibility problem found was related to the “Convo system” that is the messaging system in this community. In “Convo” inbox all the messages are not shown until the invisible “All” option clicked. This issue cost many members losing their messages and buyers and contacts as a result. There is also a lack of visibility in sent messages option. (Figure 22.)

“I had an issue in the past two weeks myself, I messaged a Shop regarding an order I had made and never knew she had sent a response because it didn't show in my "Conversations" Inbox. Not until I later

messaged her again to confirm she did in fact get my first message, did I click on "All" and low and behold there they were, both of my messages, and the one she sent, pretty much right after I sent the initial message.”
*“One other thing you can do, in case you missed it earlier - go to your Convo page and click on "All" on the middle left. Sometimes then, *all* your convos show up - where they didn't, if the "Inbox" was the selected link. Took me a while to notice that - I was missing convos and some that I knew I had sent, I could'nt find. So now whenever I go to convo page I always click on "All", first thing.”*
“Is it possible to see sent messages as i can only see received messages on my etsy account thank you for your time i am very new to this site. i don't want to annoy sellers by sending the same message more than once”
“In your Convo area, over to the left, there is a "Sent" link, along with the other links. Click that.”

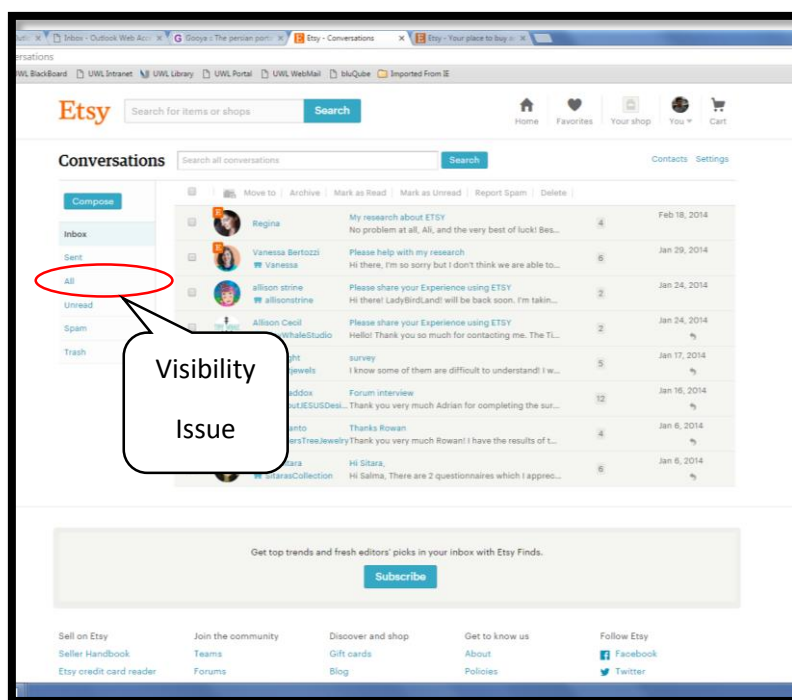


Figure 22. Convo organisation

There is also a visibility problem in the setting the email. If the members want to receive their convo messages to their email, they need to go to the setting of their account and check a box.

“I've sent many questions to myself and have not received any I checked my setting My e=mail seems correct I've allowed my self to receive email from me. Can any one help me correct this. I'm afraid I;m not receiving clients request.”
“Are you asking why convos aren't also coming to you via email? Check under You, Account Settings, Emails, and under Email Me

When ... check the box in front of Someone sends me a convo. Be sure to click on Save Settings button at the bottom of the screen.”

G19: Lack of an indicative way to answer a specific question: the asynchronous nature of textual interaction in online communities changes the sequencing of the questions and posts and make the communication problematic. For example, when the members want to answer a question they have to repeat the question to show that the answer is for which question.

“... from ...says This may sound like a silly question Cindy, but I cannot find the answer anywhere in etsy documents. Does capitalization matter in tags/titles? Because I often use my iPad to list tags, it automatically capitalized the first letter. Will this hurt my SEO? Thanks!” “I was positive I answered this (maybe you asked twice?) but just in case the post didn't stick, there is no effect.”

6.2.5. Gaps in technology support

In the range of this construct, four heuristics have been observed as Subgroup formation, Awareness tools, Social presence tools, and Other tools.

SU26: Subgroup formation (1.6%): the observation exposed the significance of this heuristic when the members want to team up with other members who has some commonalities. The main gap observed is the *team organisation features*.

G20: Team organisation features: Very often the members of this community are looking for good teams to join. Since *“Most of the teams are promo teams”* or either *“sleepy and slow”* they like to discover new active teams. The observation revealed that one common problem within the teams that is a hindrance for exploring new teams is spam.

“I am irritated by spam so I have not explored into other teams. Curious to see if anyone else has suggestions so just bumping the thread... Do teams send spam?” “I have a large SEO team and never send anyone Etsy Convo messages or emails. Everyone is welcome to join and learn more about SEO”.

Another member comments that:

“Teams don't send spam, but many teams get spammed by sellers, where they post links to their products in every single team thread. Threads not meant for promoting. It often happens in this team too, during the weekend”.

“This team needs an FAQ and a saved snippets function, like with convos. :)” “If I had the energy to put together an FAQ post, that would probably be good.”

SU27: Awareness tools (1.9%): this new heuristic discovered within the preliminary ethnography of this study and has more significance in the local teams. Two gaps have been identified as *Event awareness tools, and Scam awareness*.

G21: Event awareness tools: could help the members to organise new events such as a calendaring tool that the people who want to confirm the suitable date to attend. It could also make awareness about the current and existing events in local, national, and international level. It has been revealed that this tool that is missing in *Etsy* could be helpful for the members, and they usually use social media for this purpose.

“If you're like to know more about the event tonight then here is the official invite on Facebook...” “The address is ... Buildings ... Street, Manchester... if you'd like to come I'd love it if you joined the facebook event to give me an idea of numbers :)” “To emphasis YOU DO NOT NEED A TICKET. We had originally hoped to use Kickstarter but due to issues with the application process we're using Eventbrite as a convenient way to donate money.” “The event is being held downstairs in can be tricky to find, I find the easiest way to get there is to go to the ... Center, turn around so the main entrance is at your back and walk down the pedestrian ally way for about 20 second! If you have any problems contact us on facebook or twitter and we'll come and find you!”

SU28: Social presence tools (14.4%): facilitate the development of a sense of presence in the online environment and help members to improve their reputation and to promote products. Two gaps discovered in this heuristic such as *Social Media support, and Video promotion*.

G22: Social media support: social media are very useful tools that help individuals to have a better online social presence and to promote themselves. Sometimes when the members use social media for promotion, there isn't a way to post to some of them from *Etsy*.

"There isn't any way to post to IG from Etsy, though some Etsy sellers report that IG really helps them. If you take your shop pics with your phone, you're ahead of the game. Otherwise, you need to retake pics on your phone OR download your shop pics to your phone so you can post them to IG. So far this has felt too tedious for me."

But it has been revealed that due to a large number of them (e.g. Instagram, Facebook, Pinterest, etc.) they became very time-consuming and unmanageable.

"So, I often wander down the Etsy apps they offer. About 6 months ago I started using Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr and Pinterest as free marketing resources. The only problem for me, was to post every hour around the clock was Wayyyyyy too time consuming."

Often individuals have to get a third-party program to manage them. The collective discussion observed suggested to:

"master 1 or 2 (which are the best for you), keep it simple, not use same content in all, don't obsess, use 3rd party program". "App for social media. It posts up to 4 sites 14 posts a day" "I do not benefit from this (someone has to use my link for me to benefit) but it has doubled my direct traffic, my sales are up to an average of one to two a day from 3 to 4 a week. I am AMAZED.....so I thought I'd share this, as a pay it forward." "I use the EtsyFu app to tweet my items for me. I enjoy not having to worry about at least that venue. I'd be interested in finding it for other venues."

The Social media name consistency could also create concerns. For example, a member having this problem:

"I currently have Pinterest, Fb, and Twitter, and I've been thinking about consistency... I've been focusing on Pinterest these few weeks, which has been working well so far. Fb will probably be next, then Twitter. The thing is that I have different usernames for them... On Pinterest I'm "openquote," and on Fb I'm "openquotedesigns." That'd be fine, but I couldn't get either for Twitter, so I'm now with OpenquoteHQ... I think two is okay, but three

different usernames doesn't seem to fit well with branding, unless it's just me.”

A member suggests using punctuations.

“Hey ..., I have run into this issue myself and would put punctuation in my name before adding any additional words - i.e. HoneyThistle & Honey.Thistle If punctuation is not an option, then that makes it a bit more difficult and you'll have to strive for consistency in terms of the content and branding you put out - i.e. similar types of photos/shots of products, similar 'voice' in writing, etc.”

Piggybacking is another way to harness the power of social media, which could enhance the online reputation of individuals by indicating who they are and get the real value from the online reviews provided by third party endorsements.

G23: Video promotion: The other effective promotion tool is the video commercial.

Videos are a great help for several members to advertise and to have an online presence. Supporting YouTube links, for example, could enable members to have the video promotion, which is absent on *Etsy*.

“Anyone ever produce a video advertisement for their shop? I started playing around with the idea last night, and wondered if anyone here has ever made one, or knows of an Etsy shop that has.” “I think video is a great idea and if Etsy can't provide this capability in the About section, then sellers can maybe offer a link to you-tube.”

SU29: Other tools (4.3%): technology could support better the members' collaboration and interactions. Lack of these tools could lead to gaps. The gaps in this heuristics include *Lack of local pick up, No support for digital products, and Spams*.

G24: Lack of local pick up: it has been noticed that this option was required for items, which are not suitable for shipping and should be collected by the person.

“I want to have local customers for pick up only on huge paintings. Any suggestions on how to... I mean so I can get to the local crowd from my area that goes on Etsy to shop. Did I confuse you further? I already ship throughout the country. It would be to sell some unshippable items only.”

Some members provide some solutions such as:

“Try Craigslist. Etsy isn't set up for local pick up. You need to ship anywhere in the country you live in.” “I have customers do local pickup all the time. I set up a reserved / custom listing and change the shipping to zero. Sometimes I use the the Sell On Etsy App and set the shipping to zero. It is actually very easy to do and saves a TON of \$\$ on larger items. I "advertise" this service in my Shop Policies and on my stand alone website. ” “I'd put in the shop announcement that if you are within the zip code (insert your zip code here) you can have a local pickup option, and to contact you for the free shipping code (usually something like TOWNNAME or LOCALPICKUP). I've seen other shops that do that, and always wished I was closer so I could just pick it up!”

But it would be helpful to have a feature from *Etsy* to set up for this option.

G25: No support for digital products: the observation revealed that as digital products (e.g. photos, postcards, etc.) becoming more and more popular, they require different supports compared to other products. For example, they were causing problems such as printing layout and delivery confirmation. Therefore, there is a need for a standard format for printing these products as well as online delivery confirmation. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, they require a different timing for feedback.

“My shop sells digital products and most of my customers have no problems. Periodically though I have a customer with "technical" issues. The most common ones are the colors printing incorrectly or a problem with the page margins or setup. I try to help out my customers, but if their printer is not capable of printing my templates there is not much I can do. I test print everything in my shop at home and at print shops, so I know that they should print just fine. ...how do you handle these situations.” “I recently had two issues with printing crop up (first time, actually.) The first issue was solved by emailing the item again. The second was resolved with a refund. It is what it is. I want my customers to be satisfied, whatever the outcome, and two issues in a year in a half is more than acceptable for me.” “Out of 90 sales I've had this happen twice, considering PDF files are universal and operate/print the same no matter the platform or equipment I figure they need a software update or have a virus of some sort. Rather than try to act as a "help desk" I offered to add static text that they cannot change to solve the problem. Worked fine both times. As far as color is concerned I put a disclaimer that colors appear differently on screens than in print. Even though I keep my favorite color swatches

printed, I still test print the final design to make sure the shades look nice together.” “If it's pdf, there are different margin and print selections on their print screen. Make sure they have the same ones "checked off" that you do. Having the wrong selection chosen on the print screen will create a different size of your image(s). Play around with yours, by selecting different print variations on the print screen, and you'll see what I mean. I actually had instructions for that on the top of my pdf's that I sent them.”

G26: Spam: is one of the most common issues in the virtual environments that also create several concerns in *Etsy*. As it noted earlier, several members want to contact the customers and ask for the feedback and also to promote their products. However, many people don't like to receive these emails, and they could cause frustration. It can be considered as spam, and they are not allowed to do that. A solution to this problem could be a *Newsletter* for product updates and *mailing list* asking the customers to sign in to receive emails.

“You can't send it to any past customers. That's spam & not allowed. You need to get permission from current/future customers if they want it.” “i know it's smart to build a mailing list and something i need to do! could you include that in your thank you note when you send out orders? ask them to opt in? i don't know what's allowed and what isn't...” “For the last year I had over four thousand customers, and like to create a mailing list. Is there an easy way to do that..?”

6.2.6. Gaps in navigation

In this construct, three heuristics as Consistent & easy navigation, Intuitive layout, and Visibility of the site have been observed.

U30: Consistent & easy navigation (8.1%): consistency make the navigation easier and the site easy to use. The major gap in this heuristic is *Inconsistencies in design*.

G27: Inconsistencies in design: It has been observed that there are several inconsistencies in design that create difficulties in navigation. They also make the members frustrated and confused.

“How do I get back to being able to share with my Face Book page. Seems that after Etsy Changed the categories, I am no longer able to share to my Page at FB. I also can't share to my groups. I don't know what went wrong. I push the share button and a window pops up telling me I am not approved to share. Please help if you have experienced this problem.”
“Copy & paste the URL of your newly listed item.” “I think sometimes that happens if you are using facebook logged in as your page, rather than your personal FB. I would use the copy and paste method.”

U31: Intuitive layout (1.3%): the design layout should support their way without consciously thinking through the process. *Lack of intuitive layout* is the main gap in this heuristic.

G28: Lack of intuitive layout: The observation revealed that in many occasions the members having problems with identifying the design elements. They often come to the forum and ask other members about these design elements.

“What is the yellow star that appears in the corner of my listing when viewed on my phone??? Just wondering.” “Can anyone tell me how to get the old version of etsy. I can't see my list manger nor can I edit my items. I was able to see the listing manager at work. I have windows 8.1.” “Are you clicking on Your Shop > Listings Manager?” “Go to your dashboard, click on Listings Manager, and you should see near the top left the clickable text to revert back to the classic listing manager.” “I went to the dashboard and clicked on listing manager and there is nothing on that page.” “Have you tried a different browser? I have windows 8.1 and have had no issues. I use firefox. If you can get to the Listings Manager, you can switch to the old view. The link is near the top of the left side of the screen. Right about the title "Listings Manager".”

U32: Visibility of site (1.7%): could help the users in their navigation by informing the users about what is going on in the site. The main gap distinguished in this heuristic is *Lack of good visibility of the site*.

G29: Lack of good visibility of the site: could create problems for the members in finding what they are looking for that could create frustration. For example, one member having the problem in finding Shipping, Refund, and Payment.

"I am wanting to edit my shipping and refund policy but I do not know how to get into it. If I click on shipping policy, it tells me I have no shipping policy listed. I just want to edit payment, refund and shipping please. Help"

Other member helps her in finding the way.

"It's in your "Policies" section. Go to "Your Shop" then "Shop Settings" then "Info & Appearance" then "Policies.""

In another example, the Search option disappears as the users scroll it down. (Figure 23.)

"Etsy, Why do you make SEARCH disappear?" "Should not SEARCH be front and center of EVERY SCREEN? Can you just imagine how great sales would be if folks didn't need detailed instructions on how to search here? (What they get once they do search is another discussion). Search just kinda disappears the way it is programmed now. I am just astonished by what I learned yesterday. So Etsy, can you program it so that Search is front and center, dumbed down, and in-your-face prominent when BUYERS come calling? I bet we all would profit from that! Thank you." "I have no probs with including the trending/tastemarkers or whatever, but SEARCH should travel along down the page so that BUYING what they came for is easier, not looking at what someone else liked." "Great post, you explained something I had been wondering for a while better than I ever could. Search should ALWAYS be the most prominent thing on the site."

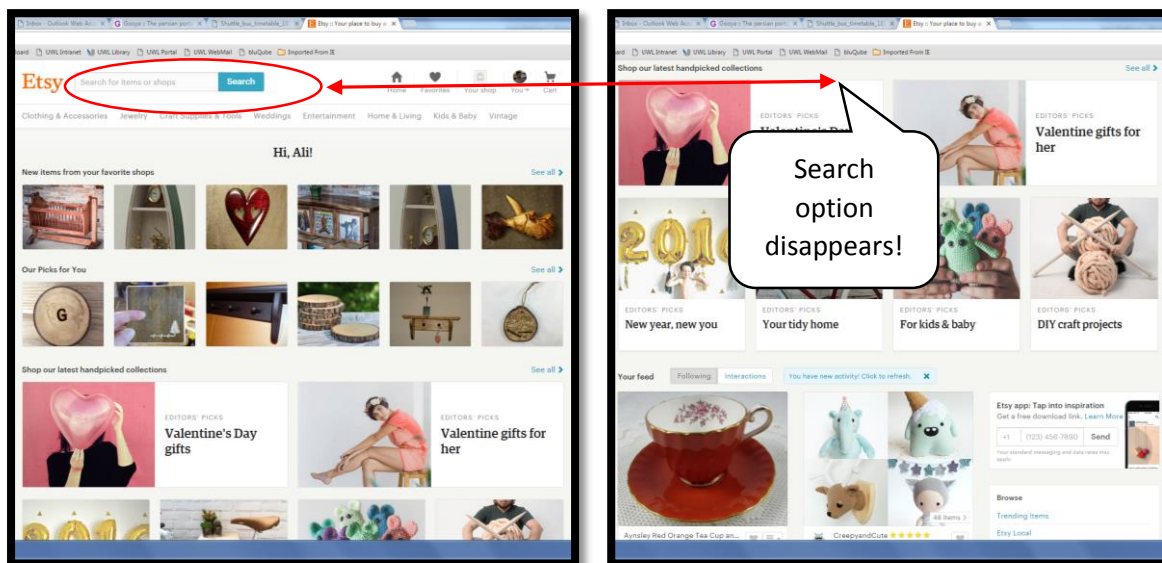


Figure 23. Visibility Issue

6.2.7. Gaps in user control

Two heuristics have been revealed in the scope of this construct as *Feeling in charge of the system* and *Error prevention & correction* which come as follow.

U33: Feeling in charge of the system (3.2%): having a sense of being in charge of the system provide more satisfaction in the users. The significant gap observed in this heuristic is *The lack of control over the system*.

G30: *The lack of control over the system*: could create frustration and dissatisfaction within the members. It has been observed the significance of this heuristic in several instances that created them problems.

“How to turn off shipping notification? I send out lots of packages and I am tired of shipping notifications filling up my mailbox. It seems that there is no way to turn them off. I KNOW when I ship a package and don't need to be told. Is there really no way to turn this off??” *“When you purchase the label, there is a check no at bottom to opt out of notification under the label size selection. Next time you print label make sure to uncheck that box.”* *“Can I default my shop so that my oldest (open) orders come up first?”* *“I saw how to do that but I can't figure out how to change the order of my open orders.”* *“Thanks ..., I was really hoping that I could change it permanently. I hate that I have to go back to the first page all of the time. I guess if I would get busy I wouldn't have 2 pages of orders ;)”* *“Is there a way to check off, or, mark shop activity. Maybe get rid of the notification so you can easily scroll through them?....”*

In another example disabling the Review reminder is creating some dissatisfaction. If buyers do not want to write a review on a purchase, the review reminder appears every time they go to their page until about 45 days after the purchase date, and there is no option to disable it. This observation revealed that despite causing the frustration in buyers, there are mixed opinions among members whether to have this option or not. Other problems have been noticed such as lack of an option to turn off some notifications and announcements.

“Every time I visit Etsy, a "review reminder" pops up, for a purchase made well over two months ago. I have no intention of leaving a review for the item, as it would be negative (poor quality; not as described) and the seller means well. Yet that irritating reminder pops up every single time I access Etsy. Is there no way to get rid of the reminder??” “i,m sorry, i can,t agree with you, i think etsy is doing well reminding” “I'e been wondering the same thing! Had a purchase I wasn't super happy with so I'm not going to leave feedback. (A first for me!)”

U34: Error prevention and correction (1.2%): systems should prevent the errors in the first place, and if they occur the users should be able to recover from that. The main gap is the *lack of error prevention and correction*.

G31: Lack of error prevention and correction: This creates some concerns in *Etsy*. For example, the turning off the promoted listing is confusing and cost members a lot to pay.

“I have been charged by Etsy with promoted listing charges. I have called two or three times and they refused to give me a refund. I have paused and stopped them many times but according to my bill it wont work. Because of this I have been charged over \$100 should I leave this website?” “This may seem like a really silly question, but are you absolutely sure you used the little 'gear' icon at the top right corner of the promoted listings section to halt your campaign. I only ask because some people seem confused at how to turn them off.”

6.2.8. Gaps in reliability

In the scope of this construct, two new heuristics identified as *Updating users with new policy & design changes* and *Easy customer feedback* they come as follow.

U37: Updating users with new policy & design changes (1.2%): this is a new heuristic that identified through the observation. Given the new OCC concept and environment, there are also some changes are happening within the policies and design of the technology. The members need to be informed about these changes. The main gap arises as the *Lack of updating users with changes*.

G32: Lack of updating users with changes: It has been observed that when changes happen in this community, they create panic and frustration between members. In many occasions, the members were not sure when the policy changes start and how they work. The design changes without earlier notice also created panic as members thought there is something wrong with their pages. Therefore, it is vital to have the policies as transparent as possible and help the members in better understanding them. It is also important to update the members about these changes.

U38: Easy customer feedback (1.3%): this new heuristic also identified within the observation of this study as another success factor for the online communities. The significant gap in this heuristic is *Restricting feedback giving with a minimum number of words.*

G33: Restricting feedback giving with a minimum number of words: Etsy feedback system requires a minimum number of words for giving feedback and a simple “thank you” does not work, this could create frustration and customers could leave without giving feedback.

“This is ridiculous why make the buyer add a few more words, Great thank you, Fabulous very pleased, Awsome love it, Arrived thank you, Very pleased none of the above is enough words for etsy” “I nearly backed off leaving feedback for a seller as had to add more than I wanted to, and then had to think of what else I could say?????”

Some members suggest that repeating the words or putting few dots could work.

“For some reason Etsy decided that too few words is not going to work for a review, so if you do not reach the maximum words just put in several dots.” “I just repeat the same word over and over - love it love it love it love it. I know I always love what I buy on Etsy!”“I split up my words! “Tha nk you very much!””

But having this restriction does not make the job easier, it would be better to give the users freedom of choice on how to leave their feedbacks.

“I don't like having to leave at least 5 words for a review. I'm sure it does contribute to buyers leaving less feedback, and I wonder if maybe it even causes some buyers to leave only 4 stars, because they get annoyed.”

6.3. Summary of findings

In the first part of this study, the quantitative data verified that the socio-technical gaps for this community are associated with 21 heuristics. It also demonstrated their level of importance for the members by quantifying the frequency of the identified heuristics. These results show the significance of the sociability problems compared to the usability issues. (Figure 24.)

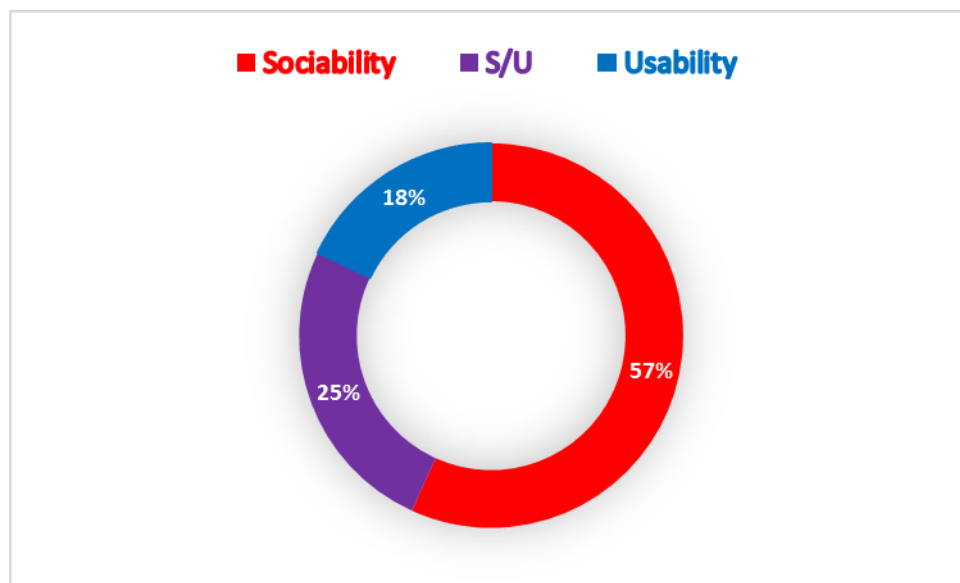


Figure 24. The ratio of Sociability and Usability issues

In the second part of the study, ‘ethnography’ was applied to produce qualitative results. It has been revealed that one of the reasons for usability problems being less significance, compared to sociability ones, could be the adaptability of the humans to the technology. Most questions regarding the usability issues are coming from new members, or from the members who did not use that technology features previously. Members usually can adapt to some of the usability issues such as navigation and visibility of the system. However, some other usability issues such as user control and

reliability cannot be adapted by members and always create frustration and concerns. Other reason for the importance of the sociability issues, could be the complex nature of the online social interaction and communication via the technology. The communication in this community only relies on textual interactions that have many limitations and the lacking of the face to face discussions with their facial expressions, the tone of voice, body language, along with the impression given by their appearance. This leads to several difficulties, sensitivities, and create misunderstanding and complications in reciprocity that is the base stone of the collaboration. Emoticons often used to smooth the conversation by demonstrating the members' emotion. The automatically generated snippet could also be a part of a solution for the communication by providing the members more comfort and confidence in their communication.

The most significant gaps concerned Trust creation features, Relevant rules of behaviour, Clear displayed policies, and Social presence tools.

Several studies verify that trust, one of the main findings of this study, as the most important factor in OCC and sharing economy (Lauterbach et al. 2009; Botsman and Rogers 2011; Schor 2014). The observation of this study revealed that a significant amount of trust exist amongst the members as well as between the members and the *Etsy* as a platform. This significant amount of trust derived from the OCC that creates a "we" and collective culture, rather than "I" and individual values. Most the discussions and gaps generated in the Trust creation features such as rating system and customers' feedback, which concern the reputation of the members. Given the nature of this community that is entrepreneurship, reputation for them can be considered one of the most important factor to have a shop on *Etsy*.

Relevant rules of behaviour and Clear displayed policies are the most discussed and important heuristics, indicating to regulations, which have also been considered as challenges (Geron 2013) and the most important barriers to the future of sharing economy (Cannon and Summers 2014). They affect all aspects of members' collaboration and behaviours. The observation revealed that conventional regulations and policies are not always applicable to the new business models enabled by OCC. It also reveals the significance of well-defined and clear rules of behaviour that are relevant to the purpose of the online communities. Lack of clarity in policies and guidelines, one of the major gaps in this community created numerous concerns and confusions on how the rules are working. Often confusion was created by language and words that were not easy to understand by members. Detailed and in-depth policies with simple terms could be helpful in better understanding of these rules and regulations.

Social presence tools and social media are very useful tools that help individuals to have a better online presence and to promote themselves. However, due to a large number of them (e.g. Instagram, Facebook, Pinterest, etc.) they became very time-consuming and unmanageable. The collective discussion observed suggested to: "master 1 or 2 (which are the best for you), keep it simple, not use same content in all, don't obsess, use 3rd party program". The other effective promotion tool is the video commercial, which is not supported by *Etsy*.

The holistic nature of the ethnography facilitated the providing of a thick descriptive understanding of the natural setting of the community. This thick description (Geertz 1973) goes beyond the traces of interaction and increases understanding of the implicit notion of meaning and attitudes that are sometimes different from explicit behaviours. Given the collaborative nature of the community, most of the findings

come from the collective discussions of the members in asynchronous mode. Therefore, the meaning making of the discussion derived from different layers, from various individuals' perspective within a different time of conversation, which provide the thick descriptions from the collective discussions. The methodological process of 'predictive ethnography' enabled the discovery of three new heuristics (Awareness tools, Update users with new policy & design changes, and Easy customer feedback) as the success factor for this community. Ethnography also enabled to investigate further the identified heuristics and facilitated to expand them further to more explicit sub-categories to define the gaps. Most of the Usability issues are more explicit, and the lack of support for these heuristics as success factors generated the gaps. But the majority of the sociability problems are more implicit and complex, and the ethnography was very useful to dig them further and revealed more numbers of gaps in each heuristics. A total number of 33 gaps were elicited from 21 heuristics. A summary of these gaps with the possible recommendations to narrow or bridge them comes as follow. (Table 12.)

Constructs	Heuristics	Gaps
Reciprocity	S5: Information exchange 5.8%	G1: Generic Help & FAQ pages Generic information in help
		G2: Difficulties in written communication Emoticons and snippets are helpful
		G3: Bad advice Lacking of rating the expertise of members and the contents
	S7: Collective problem-solving 1.4%	G4: Lack of scam awareness Provide a particular space and systematic awareness for scams Provide a voting system
Trust (Privacy & Security)		G5: Sellers' contact details Google voice account is one solution

	S8: Different level of anonymity 4.7%	G6: Non-admin login Enable sellers to give a partial access to others, such as Non-admin login
		G7: Guest checkout Provide an option for non-members to shop without registering
		G3: Bad advice Lacking of rating the expertise of members and the contents
	S11: Transparency in characteristics of content provider 0.1%	
	S13: Trust creation features 17.4%	G8: Customers' feedbacks and rating system Provide better support for feedback system
		G9: Digital products review Feedback form needs a different timing
		G10: Cultural differences in rating system There are various sensitivities among different cultures
		G11: Sellers' feedback Enable the sellers to write feedback for the customers
		G12: Negative feedback Have the right policy Enable the unsatisfied customer to resolve the issue before posting the bad review
	Purpose, policies & procedures	S20: Relevant rules of behaviour & clear displayed policies (15.2% & 12.1%) 27.3%
G14: Lack of clear displayed policies Provide clear and detailed guidelines Using videos are very helpful to understand the policies and regulations better Have support where members can ask if they are legal or not		

		G15: Lack of return policy Provide a standard return policy for the community
Information design & presentation	SU23: Advanced & filter search for content 1.2%	G16: Difficulties in finding an existing discussion Create an advanced search to filter the content of the forum and teams
	SU24: Easy information obtaining 0.2%	G17: Lack of advanced classification system for products Provide alternative ways to find the desired items easily
	SU25: Discussion board organisation 1.8%	G18: Convo organisation Make the convo features more visible
G19: Lack of an indicative way to answer a specific question		
Technology Support	SU26: Subgroup formation 1.6%	G20: Team organisation features Support active team creation
	SU27: Awareness tools 1.9%	G21: Event awareness tools Enable the members to organise new events
		Facilitate making awareness about the existing events
	SU28: Social presence tools 14.4%	G22: Social media support Enable to post to all social media from <i>Etsy</i> Facilitate piggybacking
		G23: Video promotion YouTube links could enable members to have the video promotion is lacking in <i>Etsy</i>
SU29: Other tools 4.3%	G24: Lack of local pick up Support non-shippable products that should be collected by the person	
	G25: No support for digital products Provide a standard format for printing and delivery confirmation for digital products	
	G26: Spam <i>Enable</i> Newsletter for product updates	

		Provide Mailing list asking the customers to sign in to receive emails
Navigation	U30: Consistent & easy navigation 8.1%	G27: Inconsistencies in design several inconsistencies in design that create difficulties in navigation
	U31: Intuitive layout 1.3%	G28: Lack of intuitive layout Problems with identifying the design elements
	U32: Visibility of site 1.7%	G29: Lack of good visibility of the site Provide a good visibility for all the site The Search option disappears as the users scroll it down
User control	U33: Feeling in charge of system 3.2%	G30: The lack of control over the system lack of an option to turn off some notifications and announcements (e.g. the review reminder)
	U34: Error prevention & correction 1.2%	G31: Issues with error prevention and correction Turning off the promoted listing is confusing and cost members a lot to pay
Reliability	U 37: Updating users with new policy & design changes 1.2%	G32: Lack of updating users with changes Update users with design and policy changes
	U 38: Easy customer feedback 1.3%	G33: Restricting feedback giving Remove minimum number of words restriction for feedback

Table 13. Summary of Socio-technical Gaps

7. Discussions and conclusion

This research revealed some interesting outcomes, which have both theoretical and practical implications. This chapter will review and discuss the most significant findings of this study by re-capturing the literature review. First, it discusses the results from the social capital formation in *Etsy* community. Then, the socio-technical requirements of social capital formation in different teams will be presented. Afterwards, the results of socio-technical gaps in *Etsy* community will be discussed. Finally, in conclusion, the contributions, limitations and possible future research implications will be presented.

7.1. Discussion of social capital formation in *Etsy* online teams

The studies on social capital in various types of online environments, such as virtual learning communities (Daniel et al. 2003) and social networking sites (Ellison et al. 2007) suggested that social capital formation in these environments is not always straightforward. Information sharing and socialising in these environments have several affordances and constraints that were not seen in other settings (Huvila et al. 2014). For example, in online communities, tangible rewards systems that foster knowledge sharing is weaker; consequently, individual motivation is more significant in this environments to sustain contribution. In contrast, the multimodality of communication in virtual environments has been considered to enhance social exchange, learning (Warburton 2009; Minocha and Reeves 2010), and the information use practices (Ostrander 2008).

In order to investigate the formation of social capital in *Etsy* online communities, this study focused on tackling the four challenges defined by Kransy et al. (2013) as follows: "(1) clarity of the construct, (2) level of analysis, (3) multidimensionality, and (4) contextual factors such as age and culture." in this study, first, the three primary

constructs of social capital have been clarified as relational capital, intellectual capital, and trust. Then the dimensions and collaboration types were derived from these three constructs to extend the level of analysis. The collaboration types investigated in quantitative format by coding them and measuring their frequencies in different teams. In social capital dimensions level, qualitative study and online ethnography have been applied to investigate them, and the results reflected earlier in chapter 5. Here the findings are discussed in constructs level. A new construct also considered at this level as "Norms" that is the shared behaviours of the members, to reflect better the multidimensionality and contextual factors of the communities. These norms were mainly derived from ethnographical part of this study.

This research intends to specify and distinguish the important aspects of social capital to understand behaviours and outcomes of these communities to define their social needs, rather than reviewing such constructs exhaustively and measuring them. Although these constructs are differentiate, they could also be highly interconnected. For instance, the relational dimension that has been considered as the cornerstone of social capital is essential to develop shared meaning and collective knowledge (Widen-Wulff et al. 2008), which is part of the intellectual capital.

7.1.1. Relational capital

Social capital is generated from the social relationship of individuals that provide access to the resources (Bourdieu 1986). People come to online communities not only looking for information, knowledge, and solving their problems; they also use these environments to meet people, to get support, and to find a sense of belongingness (Andrews 2002; Zhang and Hiltz 2003). The relational dimension of social capital is

the cornerstones and primary motive for gaining social opportunities to access other resources and act as networks for information flows.

The findings suggest that self-presentation and promotion are amongst the highest activities in *Etsy* teams (particularly in location-based teams) that generate social capital. These two interaction types reflect visibility that enhances weak ties (Granovetter 1973) and identification that is associated with relational capital in virtual communities (Wasko and Faraj 2000). Social identity can increase the possibility of members' contribution in a virtual community (Dholakia et al. 2004). These activities usually take place within game formats that required some guidelines and rules, which the members must consider and obey. Following these rules make the members feel that they are part of the game and it creates a sense of community. Furthermore, the guidelines often provide theoretical and practical knowledge that are valuable to the community members. The games also bring creativity for members such as presenting their products in new ways (that is lacking in the *Etsy* website) and mixing promotion with other activities such as networking that are beneficial for this community of artisan. These games increase the intrinsic motivation of members to contribute and help the online communities to sustain (Chang and Chuang 2011). They create a sense of mutual obligation and expectations that are elements of social capital (Nahapiet and Ghoshal 1998; Coleman 1988). They stimulate the participation of members that is significant to create aggregate value for the community, and to generate social capital in these virtual communities.

Another activity amongst the members of this teams is to share their social media links by following and liking each other for network creation, inspiration, and more sales. Sometimes they are using social media to create games and follow and like each

other's pages. Considering the Bourdieu's view on social capital, these activities could be a potential source for new tie generation.

The observation on social capital formation in *Etsy* teams revealed that social intelligence has a strong impact in the effective creation of social capital in these communities. The social intelligence that is closely connected to the social capital is considered as the ability to manage people's relations and regulate their behaviours in different social contexts (Huvila et al. 2014). Some members such as the team leaders and captains have better social intelligence, which enables them to act in new ways to create mutual obligation and motivate other members to contribute to collective actions of the communities. This ability enables them to start a discussion often only for the sake of socialising that is necessary for the community to be more active. The observation also revealed that this ability is very important when it comes to dealing with conflicts in these communities. Conflicts are considered as a hindrance for social capital (Boden et al. 2009), especially in online communities where they are a higher risk of misunderstandings (Olson and Olson 2000; Billing and Watts 2007). Therefore, having a higher level of social intelligence could enable individuals to deal better with these conflicts.

The location-based teams, especially the teams from smaller geographical setting such as city, facilitate members to take advantage of being local and create face to face events that increase trust and creativity. Within these events, team members meet several new people and communicate with some afterward this can result in new ties generation and enhance the trust. These events have been set up to discuss on different topics about their problems and practical solutions to help each other. The

result of this research revealed that these events generate several ideas and inspirations that motivate the members and make them more creative.

Several members of these teams also provide valuable social and emotional support to each other. This support can create a social enhancement that is the value created by gaining acceptance and approval by other members (Baumeister 1998). Within these interactions, members support emotionally, encourage and complement each other's works and capabilities. The emotional side of relation has also been considered important in the context of informational activities and social capital generation in virtual environments (Huliva et al. 2014).

7.1.2. Intellectual capital

Intellectual interaction in these online teams has often consisted of a mixture of the fact, opinions, and individuals' experiences of different subjects. Different responses from the other members make the community read, review, and learn more about the topics. Within the act of reciprocity and helpfulness, they not only help another member who asks the question they also learn from the conversations about different topics by reviewing what other people like or dislike and how to satisfy different people interests. One of the advantages of the online environments is the formative feedback that enhances collective learning (Gikandi et al. 2011). These asynchronous discussions enhance the learning process by creating opportunities for immediate and ongoing feedback that allow the members to rethink and assess their own understanding of content. The observation of this study revealed that very often participants come back to discussions and answer their own questions and correct mistakes.

The intellectual capital usually generated in these teams, as members share their experiences voluntarily that become valuable examples for others and produce experience based knowledge, which is an aspect of intellectual capital (Nahapiet and Ghoshal 1998). Occasionally, these exchanges of expertise happen in a diary format sharing. Very often members carry out collective efforts in the form of daily, monthly, or weekly activities. These activities performed in predefined specific tasks that are significant in the motivation of members for contributions that create value for them and the community. Usually, the knowledge exchange happens within these collective discussions, where some members declare their lack of understanding of others' questions and responses.

Shared vision, language and location that involve in the cognitive side of social capital (Nahapiet and Ghoshal 1998) showed significance in solving the common problems and adding to the collective knowledge of the teams. Shared language and codes results in mutual knowledge creation (Cramton 2001) and enhance the understanding between members and the quality of the knowledge (Chang and Chuang 2011). The shared language and vision, which could improve the quality of the contributed content in virtual communities (Chiu et al. 2006), enable members to build their own vocabulary to understand each other better this has also shown to enhance their efficiency of communication. For some advice and practical knowledge, the members of the community are the best people to get assistance from. The intellectual capital facilitated by shared location of the members enables them to exchange information and discuss national and international policies and guidelines that add to the collective knowledge of the teams particularly in the larger geographical setting such as country and continent teams.

Blogs can also play a major role in social capital formation. These online personal spaces can be a source of social capital by enabling interaction, sharing knowledge, and enhancing the credibility and reputation of the individuals (Recuero 2008; Vaezi et al. 2012). The member of *Etsy* teams usually use blogs to promote their businesses, make awareness about their craft fairs and art collections. By using these online environments, members also exchange information to learn something new such as how to create the blogs, to know about the blogger, and even to make friends.

7.1.3. Trust

Trust has been considered as significant facilitator and motivator in online environments (Hall and Widen-Wulff 2008). However, in these online environments trust is more challenging, since it is usually built over a longer period of time compared to conventional communities (Wilson et al. 2006).

The findings from results of this research suggest that in these communities of OCC, there is a sense of expected mutual trust due to the culture of collective "we-intention" and goodwill (Botsman and Rogers 2011). The role of trust in relation to social capital is reciprocal, and more volume of reciprocity lead to knowing each other better and increase trust consequently.

The observation revealed that the norm of helpfulness can build trust and go beyond the helping subject. Sometimes it can pay back the contributor by attracting potential customers who are the receiver of the help.

In the occasions of advice seeking, when the practical advice comes from an expert or an experienced member in the particular topic, it gives better assurance and makes them "feel much better" and enable them to trust the advice on the topic better.

Members of virtual communities are likely to trust other members with expertise, identity and personal information (Lai and Turban 2008). Therefore, exposing members' identity such as expertise and experiences in certain areas, has shown to improve trust creation significantly and enhance the collaborations, particularly in topic-based teams.

In the smaller geographical setting of location-based teams that enable members to create face to face events, the trust level is higher compared to the other teams such as bigger geographical setting and topic-based, which have no face to face events. These findings are in line with the results of a study by Chang and Chuang (2011) on social capital in virtual communities that suggest that periodic face-to-face events can increase social interaction and trust. One of the reasons, as suggested by the finding of this study, could be that in these events many members are ready to volunteer for individual efforts to donate their time, money and product items to contribute and run events. Furthermore, trust takes longer to build in virtual teams (Wilson et al. 2006). Therefore, face to face meeting can help the members to know each other better, and enhance the creation of trust in these communities.

The findings from online ethnography of this study exposed the significance of rules and sanctions in these online communities. Member of these teams set up rules and sanctions that not only keep members active and prompt them to contribute to the community, but they also maintain the community healthily and avoid conflicts. The sanction could secure trust by applying to those who ignore the rules or fail in their social responsibilities (Pretty and Ward 2001).

7.1.4. Norms

The shared location of members creates norms to help each other in their collective problems such as finding local services and supplies. It also facilitates localisation, an instance of OCC that enables individuals to shop locally. Localisation usually leads to face to face meetings that can potentially enhance trust, new tie generation, and consequently generate social capital.

The members' shared vision in OCC influence several members to be interested in "bartering" within some *Etsy* teams. Within bartering, they paired with each other and swapped their favourite items. This activity has been considered by several members as very helpful for increasing their sales, reviews, and feedback. It also can be a very good potential for social capital and new tie generation.

The results from the observation suggest that the norm of helpfulness could increase social capital in different ways. In these teams, helpfulness is not limited to only answering to a specific question or asking for help. Often, when members realise other's problem, they provide solution voluntarily, which could enhance their trust (Castiglione et al. 2008). The observation has also revealed that individuals with helpfulness norm have skills and capabilities to act in new ways, which is a component of human and social capital (Coleman 1988). The norm of helpfulness also creates a learning environment and information use (Huvila et al. 2014), as the members voluntarily share advice adding to the collective knowledge of the community and helping others to learn.

The findings of the online ethnography also exposed the significance of intrinsic motivation within these communities. Often, the team members try to make their

promotional games more engaging by creating a contest with the intent of winning an item or a prize from their shop. Nevertheless, members are not welcoming this idea, and it might indicate that they are not interested in participating for incentives, and they participate for goodwill and to support other members. These findings are in line with the results of studies such as Malinen (2009) and Bock et al. (2005), which suggest that extrinsic rewards and incentives might well hinder and decrease the motivation rather than enhancing the contribution to the virtual environments (Bock et al. 2005; Malinen 2009). Another study by Chang and Chuang (2011) also confirm the importance of intrinsic benefits compared to extrinsic rewards in knowledge sharing of online communities (Chang and Chuang 2011). The contributions such as providing support and sharing knowledge with other members is experienced as emotionally satisfying and rewarding. Members of these communities might feel an obligation to contribute something back to other members in return (Maloney-Krichmar and Preece 2002). The results from the observation of this research on *Etsy* teams suggest that one way to improve the intrinsic motivation is openness. When members are more open and share stories of their lives, they get better and more responses. Gordo et al. (2016) suggest that through the sharing of personal experiences emotional trust is enhanced (Gordo et al. 2016).

In conclusion, the social capital formation within OCC communities of this study suggests that social capital can be considered as a collaborative consumption act. Social capital intertwined with the concept of community that is one of the core values of OCC. Social capital has been reflected as one of the motivations of sharing economy and OCC since individuals are interested in meeting others, creating and strengthening of their social ties (Belk 2010; Dubois et al. 2014). The act of reciprocity and sharing activities as principles of OCC are required in generation of the social

capital in sharing of relational and intellectual capital. Rules, regulations, and policies, which are essential for the OCC platforms, are associated and determined by social interactions. Trust as one of the main constructs of social capital, also considered as vital and “social glue” that facilitate the OCC and sharing economy (Rinne 2013). However, a number of studies as mentioned earlier approve the finding of this study and positive association of social capital and OCC, but some also revealed limitations. For example, the study on Couchsurfing (Parigi and State 2014), and another study on the time banking that pointed to limitations in the ability of these platforms in the formation of social capital and community (Dubois et al. 2014). Having revealed and discussed the patterns of social capital in different types of teams, it is necessary to learn their requirements and limitations in the formation of the social capital. The following section discusses these requirements that contribute to the main question of this study that is the socio-technical gaps within OCC communities.

7.2. Socio-technical requirements of social capital formation in different teams

The findings in the topic-based teams were in line with those of Kuznetsov and Paulos (2010) on online DIY communities: commenting, question asking and answering are the most frequent contribution of these communities. Individuals in these teams mostly exchange information and knowledge such as existing procedures and practices related to their shops such as website and internet search protocols. This reflects “know what” and explicit knowledge (Nahapiet and Ghoshal 1998). In many occasions, individuals refer and provide links to other threads or existing internal or external resources, which could be a reflection of organisational issues within the website as they cannot find the resources in the first place. Often, after visiting these resources, they come back to the community and ask for further help. Their difficulties are in

understanding the procedures' writing, and sometimes how to apply these procedures, which could indicate to the language problem and level of explicitness within the written procedures. This could point to "know how" and tacit knowledge that is differentiated by Polanyi according to its incommunicability (Polanyi 1967).

Communications in online environments are usually more ambiguous than face-to-face communication (Kock 2004). The findings revealed by online ethnography is that in these occasions of ambiguity, complementing the explanations with visual representations (e.g. images, videos, and a link to their own page as an example) were a very effective way of understanding them. These findings also echo media richness theory by Lengel and Daft (1986), which argue that communication media have various amounts of characteristics so-called richness. This theory states that matching media richness capacities and characteristics to the needs of the organisations could improve their performance. Lengel and Daft classified the communication media as low-media and high-media richness. Low-media richness considered as more appropriate for sharing information or explicit knowledge, whereas high-media richness is considered as more suitable to transfer know-how or tacit knowledge (Daft and Lengel 1986). As a result, it can be concluded that facilitating the teams with (the topic-based teams in particular) more richness in their communication media could support the "know how" and tacit knowledge exchange in better ways.

Tacit knowledge is also associated with the cognitive dimension of social capital that involves the norms (Polanyi 1966), which are learned by informal socialising processes (Schein 1990). Informal socialising is much weaker in topic based teams, which could be a cause of problems in communication of tacit knowledge and need more attention

to be improved. Within this domain, it is worth mentioning the transactive memory system focuses on the knowledge sharing within the teams.

Transactive memory system is represented by Wegner et al. (1985) as a knowledge management system for humans. It embodies the knowledge sharing within a team, and how the members encode, store, retrieve, and communicate their knowledge (Wegner et al. 1985). Many researches suggest that the development of transactive memory systems has positive effects on team performance in different environments (Austin 2003; Moreland and Myaskovsky 2000; Oguntebi 2009). Transactive memory is expected to be limited in virtual environments (Hertel et al. 2005). An important factor in the development of transactive memory systems is the regular communications that could improve the overall team performance (Ariff et al. 2011).

The results of this study suggest that informal socialising activities are stronger in location-based teams. This finding point to the stronger norms in these teams that could be the results of longer socialising and reciprocity compared to the topic-based teams. The result from the Low-tech topic-based team also revealed an increase of relational capital and an improvement of the quality of reciprocity and user satisfaction. Considering of these results one way of improving the communicability of the tacit knowledge and transactive memory systems of topic-based teams can be by increasing the informal socialising activities. This can be achieved by learning a lesson from the location-based teams and creating the game like activities within periodical time formats related to the topic of the discussion. These games create frequent contributions and interactions, which affects the development of transactive memory systems (Choi et al. 2010) within the topic-based team. According to Kanawattanachai and Yoo (2007), these frequent communication within teams could improve the

credibility among its members. Credibility within transactive memory systems reflects the extent to which the team members can trust to the knowledge and expertise of the other members (Lewis 2003). Improving the credibility could aid the team members to better utilise knowledge and expertise of other members. It could lead to a better team performance by facilitating the members to make higher quality decisions and to coordinate their tasks in a more efficient way (Kanawattanachai and Yoo 2007; Sharma and Yetton 2007). The findings of this study reveal that lack of quality of contents could lead to one of the main gaps within the OCC communities such as “Bad advice”, which can lead to risky decisions that could change the social capital from an asset to a hindrance (Bourdieu 1986).

In location-based teams, the observations of this study revealed the significance of awareness features that is lacking in these communities. These features can raise awareness and communicate updates, which is also considered as another way to improve the transactive memory (Wegner et al. 1991). The “Event awareness” and “Event creation” tools are very important particularly in the small geographical location-based teams in creating and making awareness about the face to face events. Currently, the members are using the social media for making awareness, and the text-based communications used for creating and managing the meetings, which are not efficient. Another feature that exposed by this study as the necessity within teams, is the awareness tool for scams and suspicious activities. Local pick-up and bartering features also revealed as the essentials in these teams that will be discussed more in the next chapter as the socio-technical gaps.

7.3. Discussion of socio-technical gaps in *Etsy* community

7.3.1. Gaps in reciprocity

Reciprocity as the foundation of OCC, in several online platforms such as *Etsy*, rely on written communication. However, the online communication has many limitations due to its lacking of the social cues and context that could lead to gap such as Difficulties in written communication. In general, communication in online environments could involve a higher risk of misunderstandings (Olson and Olson 2000; Billings and Watts 2007). The absence of the face to face contact lacks the facial expressions, the tone of voice, body language, along with the impression given by their appearance that could lead to several complications and sensitivities. The results from the observation revealed that on several occasions, members have problems of understanding the technical explanations as well as knowing the right words to express themselves and ask questions. Emoticons are generally used by several members to smooth the conversations and express their emotion. Snippet could also be helpful and give members more comfort and confidence since they tend to use so many words and expressions that are repeating over the time. A lesson learned from the social capital formation of this study suggests that complementing the explanations with visual representations (e.g. images and videos) is a very effective way of understanding them. The more richness in the communication media could better support the tacit knowledge exchange.

The act of reciprocity also deals with the retrieving and organisation of the existing information and knowledge within online communities, which are amongst the ways that improve the transactive memory system (Wegner 1985). Help and FAQ pages play a major role in organising and giving easier access to the existing information

within the online environments. However, the Generic Help & FAQ pages gap raised concerns within *Etsy* community members when the answers are generic and broad. The more specific help and answers can be useful in refining this gap. Another way to improve this issue could be a feature to enable members to dig deeper the help and questions such as drop down or extending options.

Another significant gap in reciprocity revealed by this study is the “Bad advice” within the *Etsy* communities. Lack of awareness about the content providers’ expertise and background could diminish the quality of the content. Sometimes members of this community, due to the lack of expertise in the field, provide incorrect information and comments on others questions or problems. This bad advice could be costly to individuals since they take this advice and apply them in their life. For example, some members exposed that they applied the advice in tagging hundreds of items in their shop for SEO (search engine optimization). It took hours or days of their valuable time; then they found that advice was wrong, and they had to redo all the work again. This could decrease the trust, and become a hindrance to the social capital generated from the OCC communities since members have to take risky decisions (Bourdieu 1986). Therefore, it is vital to pay better attention to contents of online communities and how to improve the quality of these contents. To decrease the bad advice, improve the quality of contents and the credibility within the transactive memory system, a number of approaches can be utilised. Firstly, the rating of the contents can be applied by enabling the members to evaluate the contents and rate them based on their experience. This not only makes the members’ tasks more efficient by knowing the quality of the content but also is a way to increase the members’ contribution to their team. Another approach to avoid and lessen the bad advice is the transparency in characteristics of content provider (increase the trust), which distinguish who knows

what and who has expertise in which particular field. This is also a significant element of the transactive memory system that deals with the developing an awareness of individual expertise (Borgatti and Cross 2003). Transactive memory system embodies the shared understanding of who knows what (Wegner et al. 1991) and who does what in a team (Brandon and Hollingshead 2004). The team members' expertise is valuable to other members when they are aware of its presence (Ariff et al. 2011). Exposing of who knows what and revealing the members' distinctiveness such as expertise and experiences in certain areas, could improve trust significantly, and improve the quality of the contents in these communities. The results from this study revealed that when the advice are coming from the experts and experienced members of the team, provide more assurance and the members feel much better. This can be done in two ways, first by enabling the members to expose their skills and expertise (e.g. within their personal profiles). Second by facilitating other members to rate and endorse these skills and expertise.

Collective problem solving is a common practice of reciprocity within the communities of OCC. Scams as a common problem and threat to the members, taken seriously and members try to detect them. However, the Lack of scam awareness tool exposed as an issue. Members of the team must update one another of new information and knowledge they acquired to improve the transactive memory of the community (Wegner et al. 1991). This awareness tool revealed by this study as the necessity within the community, to facilitate them to let other members know about the scams. Providing a voting system could be useful in ameliorating this gap by facilitating the members to expose their opinions in solving their common problems.

7.3.2. Gaps in trust

Trust has been revealed as one of the major constructs within *Etsy* community. Several studies consider it as the most significant factor in OCC and sharing economy (Lauterbach et al. 2009; Botsman and Rogers 2011, Schor 2014). It is the social glue facilitating the marketplaces of collaborative consumption and the sharing economy (Rinne 2013). OCC develop a collective culture based on openness, co-operation, and mutual empowerment that naturally intertwined with trust. Trust can be reflected in two level such as the trust to the platform and the trust between the individuals. The platform as a facilitator can play a significant role in developing and enhancing the trust level between the members by organising and regulating the interactions. Their major role is to enable the members to evaluate the others' trustworthiness and to represent themselves as trustworthy (Keetels 2012). *Etsy* as an established community created a trustful platform for the members. This trust level could be more challenging for the newly formed communities as trust developed over a period of time.

Different level of anonymity is one of the significant principles in enhancing the trust and smoothing the collaboration within online communities of OCC. Sharing activities relate to the interactions amongst individuals and the continuous changing of the privacy settings between the public and the private state of their lives (John 2013). The findings of this study suggest that given the different time and circumstances of the members, they need to have a different level of anonymity. This gives the members the liberty and freedom to define how much they like to reveal their identity and privacy. One of the gaps identified in this area is the Sellers' contact details as regards to the limits of privacy in finding the sellers' contact number online by the buyers and contacting them by phone. One solution could be the "google voice account" that

brings flexibility and provides a separate business number, which could be used in the same phone number and the business calls could be accepted in certain hours. Another revealed gap concern with the Non-admin login. This feature can enable the members who have difficulties to manage all the admin work of their shops, and they need to hire someone and give a partial access to them since they do not want to provide access to all of their account. Guest checkout is the other feature exposed as a necessity within the different level of anonymity that allows the people who are not a member of the community to buy items without registering and becoming a member.

Trust creation features are shown by quantitative results of this study as one of the most discussed and significant principles of *Etsy* community. These features have a considerable impact on the members' reputation that is vital to thriving in OCC. Virtual reputation is considered as one of the key approaches in facilitating the trustworthiness between the peers in sharing economy marketplace (Pick 2012). Virtual reputation is the new currency in OCC that generated by the crowdsourced information facilitated by technology. For example, a study on Airbnb revealed that the reputation has a direct impact, and it can be diverted to the price of the rented property. This study exposed that some hosts are prepared to decrease their prices for more trustworthy guests who have better reputations (Ikkala and Lampinen 2015).

Nevertheless, many research notices the limitations of the existing reputational mechanisms used by some platforms. For example, in a study by Lauterbach et al. (2009) that investigates the reputation and trust in CouchSurfing platform, revealed a positive effect of the reputation system on the number of exchanges. The reputation system enables users to "vouch" for each other through references and explanations of their experiences. They also exposed major problems with the reliability of the

information provided in its reputation system. The vouching is easily given by members who know each other through the platform and one-quarter of them had vouched for each other. They consider this as problematic and a sign of inflating members' reputations. Furthermore, the public nature of the reputational system could induce the vouching with the social pressures rather than genuine confirmations of members' trustworthiness (Lauterbach et al. 2009). Another study also considers this public nature of these systems and anonymity, as problematic due to the positive biases and avoidance of payback for providing of not positive reviews (Overgoor et al. 2012). Additionally, the vulnerability of these peer rated reputation systems threatened by the individuals who cooperate and conspire with other peers to expand their own reputations (Wang and Nakao 2010). This vulnerability avoided in *Etsy* as it only allows the user to post reviews who actually used the service.

Other limitations revealed by this study of *Etsy* community in Customers' feedbacks and rating system. The review system is based on the whole shopping experience of the customer, which include the flow of the communications and collaborations. One study on non-monetary OCC also demonstrated that the user experience of social exchange is often the concern with the whole process of the exchange rather than only the outcome (Lampinen et al. 2013). However, there are some mixed opinions amongst members whether it should be per item rather than the whole process. This divide of opinions arises from the challenges of some parts of the process that are out of the members control such as delays by the post. Another gap revealed concerned with the Digital products review. Digital products require a different mechanism of feedback, due to their different formats, and instant delivery. For example, the feedback form is sent to the buyers after a period of time from purchase date, which raises concern among some members as they believe this delay could make them

forget to leave a review. The findings from this study also exposed the Cultural differences in the rating system that is generated from the differences in sensitivity towards the rating (the number of stars) within different cultures. These differences could be problematic and should be well thought in the internationalised communities of OCC since they have a significant impact on the expectations of the members from other members' rating. The other gap concerned with the Sellers' feedback. *Etsy* community enables the customers to write feedback for the sellers, but the option that allows the sellers to write feedback for the customers is lacking. Several members of the community want to have this feature as well. The prior literature suggests that enabling the members to review ratings for both sides of the transactions (RelayRides and Airbnb for instance) can provide a consistent system to overcome the barriers of trust involved in sharing among strangers (Schor and Fitzmaurice 2014). Negative feedback as another gap revealed by this study causes a lot of concerns among the members. Many members would prefer to be contacted by unsatisfied customer first to resolve the issue before posting the bad review. Often the sellers want to be able to remove somehow or amend the negative feedbacks, however, this could be challenging and could cause several issues. One way to resolve the negative feedback is to support the members with their communications to sort out the problems with the customers. The communication problem arises as several members having difficulty in handling the situation and resolve the problem. Sometimes their response to the customers could upset them and make the situation worse, which is not their intent. Another way to avoid this gap is to have the right policy for the shop and predict the potential conflicts.

7.3.3. Gaps in purpose, policies and procedures

Purpose, policies, and procedures affect all aspects of members' collaboration and behaviours, from communication and social interactions to trust creation features and transactions. Regulations, policies, and laws can help or hinder the OCC. The business models created by OCC and sharing economy are still relatively new, besides more new models still to arrive. Most policies and regulations drafted for the traditional and ownership models, therefore they do not apply to the new models of OCC since many of their activities are neither legal nor illegal. Literature suggests the issues of sharing economy in this area such as tax policy, insurance, zoning and licensing, and consumer data protection (Rinne 2013), standard warranty, obligation rules, and drafting contracts (Leismann et al. 2013).

The results from this study revealed that Relevant rules of behaviour and clear displayed policies, is the most discussed and important heuristic. This heuristic reflects the policies and regulations, which have also been considered as challenges (Geron 2013; Leismann et al. 2013; Dillahunt and Malone 2015) and the most significant barriers to the future of sharing economy (Cannon and Summers 2014). One of the revealed gaps is concerned with the Copyright issue. This issue creates concerns in the virtual environment in general and especially in crafts and art community such as *Etsy*, where the boundary of copying and inspiration is not clear. Some go beyond the inspirations and copy photos, products descriptions, and even shop policies from others that create a lot of concerns amongst the members of the community. The possible solutions for this gap could include the watermarking the photos, to copyright and protect the products or concepts, enable communication before making a claim, and have a feature to detect/prohibit the copyright violated contents. Another major

gap concerned with the Lack of clear displayed policies. Lack of clarity in how the rules and regulations are working create confusion. The observation revealed that several members are asking multiple questions and asking for clarifications for the policies. Often the new policies developed by *Etsy*, create even more confusions and frustration among some members. Sometimes the confusion was created by language and words that were not easy to understand by members.

Having clear detailed and in-depth policies with simple terms could be helpful in better understanding of these rules and regulations and in closing this gap. Another solution could be using the videos in communicating the policies and regulations between members. Having the support for members where they can check if their activities are legal or not could also be another solution. Lack of return policy is exposed as the other gap in this community that could create frustration among members. Due to the lack of a unique and standard policy for the community, members should comply with their regional policies, which could be different in various countries. Therefore, there is a need for a standard return policy, since the Esty community goes beyond the geographical borders. The findings of this study revealed that conventional regulations and policies are not always applicable to the new business models enabled by OCC. To benefit from the potential of the new models created by OCC, a comparable and complementary set of rules and regulations are suggested to be developed (Rinne 2013). This could provide the legal certainty to the consumers and close the gaps in legislation by creating a transparent legal environment (Leismann et al. 2013).

7.3.4. Gaps in information design and presentation

Information design and presentation help the members to find the information easy and fast, through their navigations. It is significant to the success of online community

design (Iriberry and Leroy 2009). The findings of this study suggest that lack of advanced and filter search for content lead to a gap as, Difficulties in finding an existing discussion. The filtered and personalised content motivate members to be more involved in the community (Malinen 2009). Filtering the content becomes more significant when the community is mature, and there are masses of members and interactions in the community (Malinen and Ojala 2011). Given the maturity and enormous volume of discussions and interaction in *Etsy* community, there is a need for an advanced search feature that facilitates filtering of the content of forum and teams. The other solution to this problem, particularly in the topic-based teams, where most intellectual interactions occurring could be creating the FAQ (frequently asked question) pages in these teams.

Observations from this study have identified another gap as the Lack of advanced classification system for the products. This issue arises from the Easy information obtaining that concerns with the ease of use in finding the information that considered as crucial in online community design (Iriberry and Leroy 2009). Providing alternative ways such as drop down menu to find the desired items easier could help in closing this gap. The observation revealed the importance of the Discussion board organisation that leads to two gaps. The Convo organisation concerns with the visibility issue in the messaging system in this community that could be costly since members losing their messages and buyers and contacts as a result. Therefore, all features of the convo (the messaging system) should be visible to the members. The other exposed gap is the Lack of an indicative way to answer specific question concerns with the textual communication within the forum and teams. Due to the asynchronous nature of textual interaction in online communities the sequencing of the questions and answers make the communication problematic. Therefore, there is a need for an

option that allows members to indicate their answers and comments into the relevant post.

7.3.5. Gaps in technology support

Technology support could facilitate and smooth collaboration by providing different features that come as follow. Subgroup formation feature, for example, reduces the information overload and manages the teams in a more effective and efficient way, and offer a sense of intimacy. Many research suggests the significance of this feature to control, facilitate discussions and decrease information and administration overload for members and operators, particularly in the stage of maturity in online communities when the member contributions reach a new height (Andrews 2002; Maloney-Krichmar and Preece 2005; Iriberry and Leroy 2009). Given the maturity and establishment of the *Etsy* community, the issue with this feature leads to a gap as team organisation features when members want to discover new active teams to join. The observation revealed one common problem within the teams that is a hindrance for exploring new teams is spam. Therefore, the community should support active team creation within members. Awareness tool has been revealed by the preliminary observation of this study as one of the success factors in this online community. It could support the members to arrange and organise new face to face events. It could also make awareness about the current and existing events in local, national, and international level. The calendaring tool, for example, could facilitate members to choose and confirm the place, date and time and allow them to confirm what is suitable for them. In online communities, members are invisible, and anonymity is a barrier to developing trust (Boyd and Heer 2006). Social presence tools could facilitate the development of a sense of presence and help members to improve their reputation as

well as promoting their products. One gap in this area is the Social media support to enable the members in using social media for promotion and to post to them directly from *Etsy*. The finding from this study suggests that due to the large number of them, they became very time-consuming and unmanageable and often members have to get a third-party program to manage them. Video promotion also revealed as another gap within the social presence tools. Videos are very helpful in advertising and having an online presence. Supporting YouTube links, for example, could be useful in ameliorating this gap and facilitating members to have the video promotion, which is lacking in *Etsy*. Another way to harness the power of social media is piggybacking. It could enhance the online reputation of individuals by indicating who they are and get the real value from the online reviews provided by third party endorsements. Lack of local pick up feature also revealed by the finding of this study as a gap that supports arranging of collecting by a person for products that are not suitable for posting. This feature can be important in enhancing the localisation that is an instance of OCC. Other gap exposed by the observation that is concerned with the technology support, is No support for digital products. Digital products are becoming more and more widespread, and they need different supports compared to other products. For example, they need a standard format for printing as well as online delivery confirmation. Spam is another gap revealed by this study that concerns with technology support. It is one of the most common problems in the virtual environments that also create several concerns in *Etsy*. A possible solution to this gap could be a Newsletter for product updates and mailing list asking the customers to sign in to receive emails that avoid the spam.

7.3.6. Gaps in navigation

Navigation as one of the significant usability constructs could have a strong impact on the success of online communities. Consistency in design make the navigation easier and the site easy to use. The gap in this area is Inconsistencies in design that has been observed in this community. These inconsistencies create difficulties in navigation as well as frustrations and confusion among members. Hence, *Etsy* should provide an easy and consistent navigation within the community. The layout of the pages should be intuitive, and the users should be able to understand how to find their way without previous experience or training. The results from this study revealed the Lack of intuitive layout as a gap in many occasions when members are having problems with identifying the design elements. The visibility of the site could also help the users in navigation. The system should always keep the users informed about what is going on on the site by providing appropriate feedback (Nielsen 1994; Preece et al. 2004). Lack of good visibility of the site revealed by this study as the gap in this area. It could create problems and frustration for members in finding what they are looking for.

7.3.7. Gaps in user control

User control deals with the usability of the systems and how the systems support the users by providing a sense of feeling in charge and having control over the system. Systems should prevent problems in the first place, and if the problems occurred, they should enable users to correct and fix the problems (Nielsen 1994; Preece et al. 2004). The lack of control over the system revealed by this study as a gap in this community. It has been observed in several instances such as disabling the review reminder, and lack of an option to turn off some notifications and announcements, which create

dissatisfaction and frustration within the members. Another gap exposed in this area is the Lack of error prevention and correction that creates some concerns in this community. For instance, the turning off the promoted listing that is confusing and could be costly for the members.

7.3.8. Gaps in reliability

Reliability of the system as another usability construct also revealed by this study as significant in the success of this online community. In the range of this construct two new heuristics identified by this study and added to the existing heuristics as Updating users with new policy & design changes and Easy customer feedback. Since the concept of OCC is new, there are always some changes are taking place within the policies and design of the technology and members need to be informed about these changes. The main gap arises as the Lack of updating users with changes, which create panic and frustration amongst the members. In many instances, many members were not sure when the policy changes start and how do they work. The design changes also created panic as members thought there was something wrong with their pages. Therefore, it is vital to update the members about these changes. Within other new heuristic identified by this study as The Easy customer feedback, the major gap revealed as Restricting feedback giving with a minimum number of words. In this community feedback system requires a minimum number of words that could create frustration and customers could leave without giving feedback. Therefore, the system should give the users the freedom of choice on how to leave their feedbacks.

7.4. Answering the research questions

This research intended to address the main question regarding the identification of socio-technical gaps in OCC to support the design of these platforms better. In order to pursue the answers to the above question, this study investigated how social aspects and technical factors affect the users' collaborations and sharing practices through online communities of *Etsy*. The 33 gaps revealed and presented with possible recommendations in Table 12, in chapter 6 that also discussed in summary earlier in this chapter, are the main results of this research. The gaps exposed within the scope of 21 heuristics. Most significant gaps concerned: Trust creation features, Relevant rules of behaviour, Clear displayed policies, and Social presence tools. The main implication of these findings is that conventional regulations and policies are not always applicable to the new business models enabled by OCC. The results from this research also have significant implications for understanding of challenges of different features dealing with trust, which have major impact on the members' identity, privacy, trustworthiness, and virtual reputations. These findings are consistent with the results of other research on collaborative consumption and the sharing economy. These results also demonstrated the significance of the sociability problems compared to the usability issues. Adaptability of the humans to the technology could be one of the reason as they get used to some usability problems. Other reason can be the complex nature of the online social interaction and limitation of communication via the technology.

The other question answered by this study was: how the social capital developed in the OCC communities. The formation of social capital investigated at collective and more specifically in "non-tie" level, where the individual ties between the members of

the online community are not a necessity. The results revealed that these online communities have several affordances and constraints in social capital formation. For instance, the multidimensionality of communication enhances collaborative learning by ongoing review and feedback. Conversely, the difficulties of online communication cause misunderstanding and conflicts that considered as a hindrance for social capital (Boden et al. 2009). This study investigated the social capital formation in two different types such as topic-based and location-based teams. In the topic-based team, the significant amount of knowledge sharing and intellectual capital and less volume of social interactions have been observed. There was more communication of tacit knowledge and more amount of misunderstanding. The low quality of content can cause issues such as “Bad advice”, which could be due to the lack of features to expose expertise and rating of the content and expertise of others. These communities require high richness of media to support better the communication of the “know how” and tacit knowledge. The periodical game like activities can also improve these teams by increasing the informal socialisation. In location-based teams, most interactions are within the relational capital. Members are very creative in their collaboration. More amount of trust has been observed in these teams. Lack of awareness tools and bartering feature have been noticed in these teams. Intrinsic motivations are shown more significance than extrinsic ones. One way to improve the intrinsic motivations is the openness of the members about themselves; another way is the periodical game like activities to increase the informal socialisation.

How to evaluate online communities was another question, which this study investigated. Due to a lack of standard method, a new approach proposed by this study by complementing the ethnography with heuristics as the success factor for the online communities. This research intended to make use of ethnography in a more

practical way and contribute to the ongoing discussion about the ways to get the most out of this method. Online ethnography gain insight from the member's perspectives and experiences by going beyond the explicit meaning in the common information space and the big data that is available online. It helped to reveal the hidden aspects of the socio-technical by gaining insight not only from the member's perspectives but the emergence of "thick descriptions" and meanings from explicit and implicit behaviours from individual and collective discussions (Geertz 1973). The heuristics were very useful in collecting, coding and analysing the data. They were also helpful in understanding the causes of the problems, gaps, and helped to interpret the ethnographic insights into the design recommendations.

7.5. Theoretical and practical contribution

The literature on OCC and sharing economy is still comparatively young and undeveloped. This research expanded the literature from the very first definition by Felson and Speth (1978), which was so broad and how it was developed. This research contributed to the better definition of this phenomena by providing a more focused perspective and outlining the online context of collaborative consumption. It also distinguished the distinction between the OCC and the sharing economy. Many articles in this area are theoretical, and the few empirical studies mostly rely on the quantitative results that point to the lack of qualitative studies in this field. In this research, the combination of the qualitative and quantitative findings revealed the quality of user experience within the exposed gaps in *Etsy* community. These results can contribute to an enhanced economy by revealing new and improved socio-technical aspects and support OCC design features and functionalities.

The study of social capital within different teams enhanced and extended the understanding of practices and outcomes of social platforms, and helped to define the users' requirements and issues better within different teams. Some studies investigated whether the social capital generated by OCC or not. But this study makes use of social capital as a tool to define how it is created to understand the requirements to improve the process of its generation. Studying of the social capital contributed to the socio-technical requirements and revealing the gaps within different teams. These findings could contribute to the socio-technical design in supporting the OCC in a more enhanced way of community formation.

The introduced socio-technical framework in this research was effective in providing the researcher with the perspective for studying the gaps. It contributed to the holistic view required by the methodological approach of this study by enclosing the social and technical aspects involved in the context of the socio-technical systems. This framework was useful in outlining the constructs and heuristics for the new methodological approach represented in this research. The revealed socio-technical gaps by this research, as discussed earlier are within the range of 21 heuristics. These heuristics are in the scope of eight constructs that are shown in golden bubbles below (Figure 25.). Although, these constructs have been situated in the social or technical parts, but some of them may overlap with each other and could belong to the both social and technical parts. This framework could also be beneficial in other similar studies of the socio-technical systems.

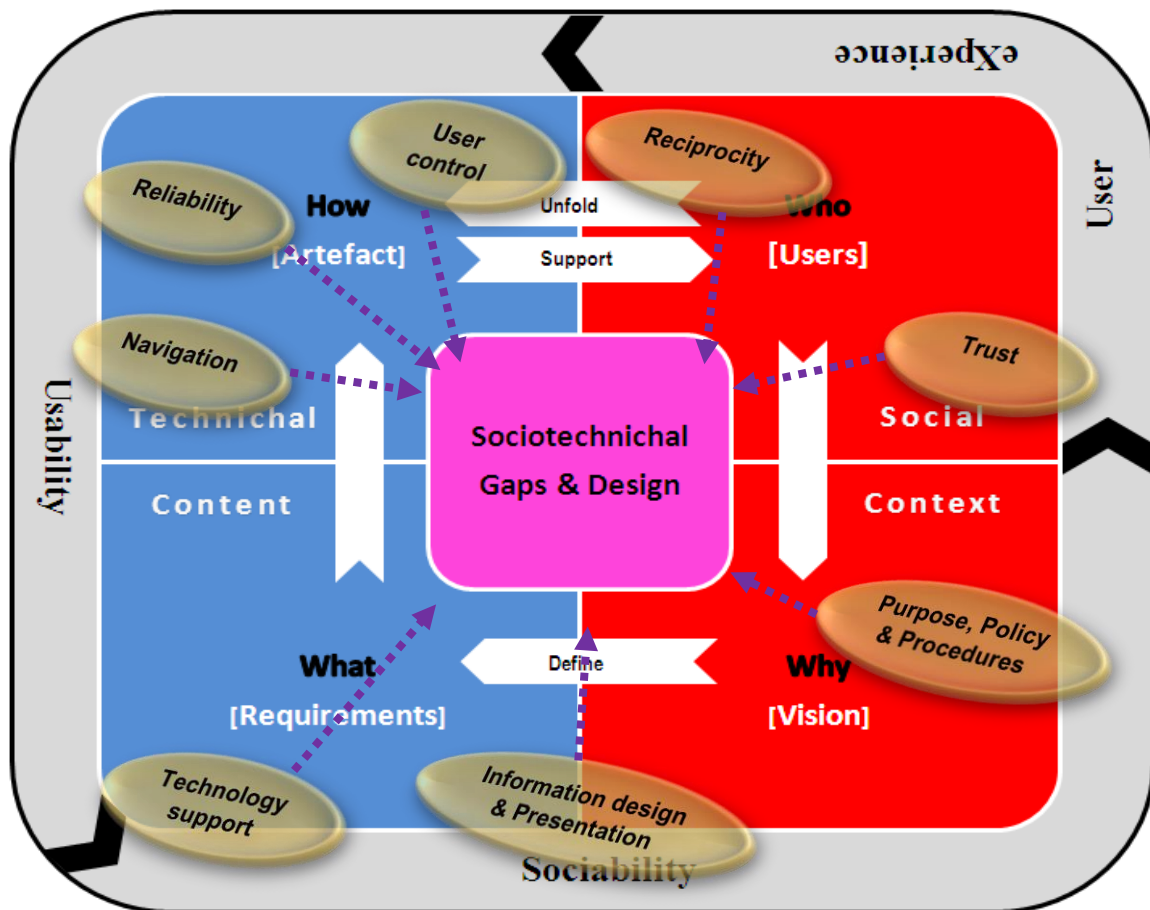


Figure 25. Revealed constructs of gaps in socio-technical framework

This research has also contributed empirically to HCI research. First, it has demonstrated a new way of using online ethnography and added to the ongoing debate on how to make the most of this method in evaluating the online communities. Heuristics were used as a structural framework for the ethnography both in data collection and analysis. These heuristics as guidelines helped the ethnographer in data collection to emphasise and recognise the significant areas to investigate. They also were useful in providing the outcomes and communicating them in a more abstract and efficient way since the designers are familiar with these heuristics. Furthermore, this methodological framework could provide less subjective results since there is a structural framework for the ethnographer. It also has shown its practicality to study the social capital formation. Second, the distinguished and

collected heuristics by this study intended to not only meet the needs of this type of community but to be more extensive. This could increase the reliability of these heuristics as success factors for online communities and can be utilised for evaluating other communities. Furthermore, a number of new heuristics discovered as the success factor for these communities were added to the existing ones.

7.6. Limitations

The identified gaps and their significance could be specific to the *Etsy* community and on the other communities and platform the gaps and their importance could vary. The findings for this research came from naturally occurring of the real users' discussions within the field study. Therefore, the researcher had no control over the number of members for different teams in social capital studies. Controls of the demographic indicators of the members also was out of the researcher's control.

One of the limitations of this research was the complexity in coding of some of the textual discussions to the designated heuristics. Some of the collected data were very close amongst two heuristics, consequently, differentiating and designating them between the heuristics were not very straightforward. Carrying out the pilot studies were useful in revealing this limitation. To enhance this limitation, a third party researcher carried out a sample coding of the data that helped the consistency of the coding procedure.

Another limitation of this study could be the lack of comments and posts from the lurkers and inactive members of the community. All the data for this study came from the members' textual posts, which reflect the opinions and point of views of the members who are active and participate in the public discussions. Therefore, the views

of the inactive members who do not contribute to the conversations, are not revealed in the discussions and in this study as a result. However, the inactive members could also be the case in other studies as many members/users prefer not to reply to questions of interviews and surveys.

7.7. Future research

Results from this study came from an established and mature community such as *Etsy*. The future research could be conducted to evaluate other less established and younger online communities similar to *Etsy* by applying the predictive ethnography approach. It would be interesting to see how the issues and gaps vary; and which success factors are more prevalent in different online communities.

In the study of OCC gaps, this research only investigated *Etsy* community that is in the 'Redistribution markets' category. Future studies could examine socio-technical gaps and social capital formation in other categories of OCC such as 'Product service systems' such as Airbnb, and 'Collaborative lifestyles' such as Taskrabbit that is a task sharing platform. Comparing the issues, social and technical requirements of these different categories could be very useful in designing of platforms for OCC.

The methodological approach proposed by this research can be further developed by adding some linguistic analysis such as speech act theory that could expose better the social capital formation and the socio-technical gaps from the users' words and discourses. This could be helpful in understanding of the limitations and inadequacies of the textual communication that revealed by this research as one of the main challenges of these online environments.

Future research is also recommended applying the proposed methodological approach by this study, to other online communities and virtual environments. This could enhance this approach by discovering its strengths and weaknesses.

The heuristics as success factors introduced by this research can be utilised and complement other methods such as surveys, interviews and focus groups, which could be helpful in confirming these heuristics within the different online communities. This could also reveal that to what extent online ethnography uncovers the same aspects of the phenomenon studied, as the other methods might do.

The social capital measures presented by this study, could also be applied by other methods in investigating of the social capital formation within other online communities and virtual environments. This can be helpful in learning of social capital formation in different contexts of online environments.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. US team sample data

October Check-In

This topic has been closed.

This discussion is public.

Original Post

Leader

... says

Monthly "Check-In"

Happy October!!

If you are making it to this thread we assume you have done some sort of activity to help promote the team and/or your fellow team members in some way. So instead of asking what activity you have done, we are going to require you to answer a simple question each month for roll call. We are hoping that this will help us better understand wants and needs, spreading news, get feedback and simply get to know each other better!

Question for October: Are your views and sales being affected by the recent changes Etsy has made? and are you Happy with the changes?

Posted at 4:37 pm Oct 1, 2014 EDT

Responses

Leader

... says

My views are lower but my sales are consistent with last years, actually a little better.

and I'm not sure about this new Front Page.

Posted at 4:42 pm Oct 1, 2014 EDT

... U from ... says

Nothing seems too different for me. I hadn't added any new items since I was gone for a few months, so that may have had an effect on my September sales being lower then last year.

I don't about the front page either since I never view it.

Wishing all of us lots of sales this month!

Posted at 6:08 am Oct 2, 2014 EDT

... says

I don't know. I paid for advertising with fb and received over a 1000 shop views directed from it. However, I have sold nothing. My shop being favorited keeps fluctuating, but I've created treasure chests galore yesterday for the team and others. Therefore, I don't know where I am not meeting par, what is affecting me or not, I just base it on sales. .. of which, I have none. :-)

Posted at 10:04 am Oct 2, 2014 EDT

... says

My sales continue to fluctuate from month to month, but I think that really depends on the time of year and the items I sell. My views have gone up a little....so not really sure if any of the changes are affecting me.

Posted at 12:02 pm Oct 2, 2014 EDT

... says

I'm also not sure if the changes have affected me or not. I do know that I was not happy when they took away my banner. It's back now, so I'm glad for that. My shop was brand new almost a year ago, and I didn't have any sales for a few months when I first opened, so I am doing better since then, but I can't tell if it has anything to do with Etsy's changes.

Posted at 2:21 pm Oct 2, 2014 EDT

... says

Still undecided about whether the changes are good or bad, but I'm adjusting to them. :-)

Posted at 5:16 pm Oct 2, 2014 EDT

... says

Hey Team!

Not to be the downer of the bunch.....but I absolutely hated the changes they had implemented! Hated the way it looked, the way it was organized, the way it made everyone's shop look basically the same-due to the removal of our Shop Welcome & graphics. I wrote

them and told them just how much I hated the changes they had made to the design & overall visual of my shop and how they had completely destroyed my efforts to try to introduce & establish my shop's visual branding by removing everything in their latest streamlining attempt, and about a week later they changed it back for me, thank the Lord! Etsy isn't supposed to be a bunch of cookie cutter stores all lined up one after another, I mean, we're artists for crying out loud, and you want to strip our shops of all our creative and distinctive personalization?!?!??? I'm so glad they took what I said to heart and gave me my shop back! Until recently I had always wondered if the feedback we leave for them was ever read.

...stepping down from my soap-box...

Posted at 5:28 am Oct 3, 2014 EDT

I had more sales in Sept this year than last year but less sales in August so who knows! I definitely see a difference if I neglect my store and don't interact on Etsy tho.

Posted at 8:34 am Oct 3, 2014 EDT

I am undecided about whether the changes are good or bad, but I am trying adjust to them. :-) views and sale are not good on my part but still trying to see what i can come with. This month i have selected items in my shop at 10% OFF so lets see what happen.

Posted at 10:38 am Oct 3, 2014 EDT

Responses

September was my worst month of the entire year. I actually lost money because my listing fees were more than my sales. Views and favorites were also suddenly non-existent. There's no way of knowing if it was due to the changes Etsy made but my shop was doing better than ever up until that point. I also do not like the way it looks now.

Posted at 10:39 am Oct 3, 2014 EDT

Hello, Im new to this group. Im not sure what this really is and why Im having to do this. I just opened my shop in June, so when teams or the forums speak of changes, I have no clue what they are really. I haven't seen any changes on my end in my shop since I opened. If there have been, I haven't noticed. I felt extremely overwhelmed when I opened my shop, trying to figure out each area, how to do things, etc.

Im still trying to figure out how to add a banner for my shop. The size they say to use, isn't working for me, and no offense, Im not paying someone to make me a banner.

So with all that said, I guess all I can do for "role call (?)" is say "here" lol

Posted at 10:44 am Oct 3, 2014 EDT

I am getting a lot of views but not the amount of sales I think I should be getting considering the views.

Hopefully the holidays will help pick things up for all of us.

Posted at 10:55 am Oct 3, 2014 EDT

Leader

I absolutely HATED the new design and left feedback three separate times telling Etsy as much. Someone else said that it took away our ability to "brand" ourselves, and I totally agree. They talk in tutorials and articles about ways to make your shop stand out and reflect your personality, and then took all of those capabilities away. I was seeing different views when I looked at my shop at home and when I looked at it at work, I don't currently have Internet at home, but the shop view that I have now is the old one, so I'm hoping that enough people raised a stink to convince Etsy to switch back.

My shop views had been terrible lately, but I think a lot of that had to do with me not having the time to really work on it. Now that I'm back in Jacksonville and not commuting 15 hours a week I have been working on improving my photos and have started running ads again, so hopefully I see an improvement.

Posted at 11:22 am Oct 3, 2014 EDT

I have been happy with the changes. My sales and views have been slowly but steadily improving. I am definitely getting more of both over same dates last year.

Posted at 2:40 pm Oct 3, 2014 EDT

Not loving the new front page, but haven't noticed fluctuation with views or sales.

Posted at 3:01 pm Oct 3, 2014 EDT

No, I haven't seen any changes in sales. I have alot of treasury exposure, aand I did redo my whole shop for SEO, but not any more views or sales :(

Posted at 3:30 pm Oct 3, 2014 EDT

I seem to be getting a lot of views this past week, which I think may have to do with all of the treasuries our team is including me in. But I'm not sure about that. As far as sales go I have sold one item in 3 weeks. That's not very good considering the amount of views I'm getting. I have a friend that also has a shop doing basically the same thing I am and she is selling like crazy! She keeps telling me it's because she has been open since 2007 but I'm not so sure if that's why.

As far as the changes go if you mean our dashboard it took a little getting used to. I have been lucky enough that they didn't mess with my shop. Hoping for a great holiday season!

And thanks everybody for all of the team work and promoting.

Posted at 5:06 pm Oct 3, 2014 EDT

heather c from SoFour says

I haven't been as active as I would like so it's hard to say if it's Etsy or me. :)

Posted at 7:41 pm Oct 3, 2014 EDT

I'm a little on the fence about the changes - my views are down and most of my traffic is coming from the teams lately (yay!). I expected the change in promoted listings to be for the better but I don't think it has....when it first started, the promoted listings were relatively low cost (\$0.10/click), now what I am seeing is that they have to be upwards of \$0.25 or more to be competitive. Definitely not what I was hoping for. I had one customer who purchased several items last month so I did better in my month sales which I'm happy about....but that was not attributed to the Promoted Listings.

Posted at 7:58 pm Oct 3, 2014 EDT

Responses

My views seem are much lower than last year's but I've already surpassed last year's sales by 25% -- and fall is my busy season! So I'm hoping this bodes well for the rest of the year.

Posted at 9:15 pm Oct 3, 2014 EDT

I'm here, staying very busy. I'm ready for the holiday season. Bring on the orders!!!

Posted at 8:02 am Oct 4, 2014 EDT

The views and sales have not been good for me, so i would have to say no. i haven't had a sale in a couple of months here on Etsy. I do well with personal sales though.

Posted at 9:22 am Oct 4, 2014 EDT

Captain

I think the individual front pages/landing pages are more difficult to shop from. I would have preferred more prominent shopping categories or more complete browse categories like they had before. And it the location of the search field takes getting used to. That said, about 80% of my traffic from within Etsy is from Search, so someone is using it.

My issue is how Google is seeing us. I'm getting essentially no views from Google because of the new content and relevancy that are part of their search. I'm not sure Etsy has fully addressed this - and they certainly haven't given good instruction from Admin on how to make yourself more visible outside of Etsy. There's a lot of Etsy users - but there are a lot of Etsy stores - and we need outside traffic to keep growing.

And Happy First Cool Front Approaching South Florida! (I hope it gets all the way down here!)

Posted at 9:24 am Oct 4, 2014 EDT

I don't really have a problem with the changes in appearance. I haven't been able to be too active lately and that is reflected in the views my shop is getting. Hope to get back on track soon.

Posted at 12:12 pm Oct 4, 2014 EDT

I am undecided as to whether the changes have impacted my sales or not.

I had a fair month in September but August was terrible and the economy has more to do with that than Etsy's changes in my opinion.

I have been so busy lately that it is hard for me to be as active as I would like to be on here. I know that has a lot to do with sales and shop views.

Working hard to get inventory up for the holidays and hopefully Etsy will leave things alone and stop changing things. I would like to know what happened to that old saying....if it ain't broke....don't fix it!! :)

Posted at 7:56 pm Oct 4, 2014 EDT

My views haven't changed that much but my sales are definitely down. Last August 2013, 15 sales. August 2014, 4 sales. September 2013, 6 sales. September 2014, 2 small sales. Searches on Google for our type of products is disappointing. Etsy has a very small presence, sometimes only advertising ONE shop! Not one Etsy search of all similar type shops, but one shop! That's unacceptable. Also I have never had a sale I know of that was related to doing treasuries, even treasury blitz's. I wish that wasn't the case but it is. At this point, I don't know what will make the difference. Unfortunately, with our type of shop we are seriously thinking of going to another online venue. I hate to be so negative but I have been watching how the changes have been affecting our shop and it is definitely not good. I am working on trying to be better informed of SEO so we'll see how that goes for the next couple of months. If anyone has any suggestions for us, please don't hesitate to speak up!

Posted at 12:02 am Oct 5, 2014 EDT

It is really hard for me to tell because for the past week I have been totally overhauling my shop and listings based on info I am leaning from the SEO secret in another thread here. I will say though that before I started making changes my sales were way down and have been this year. I don't particularly like the new look of the Etsy Front page, but I do see where it could be beneficial with the snowball effect. The more people like your items and your shop, the more it will show up. I think that is what they are trying to do.

Posted at 7:08 am Oct 5, 2014 EDT

I've not noticed significant changes one way or another-- still fairly new so don't have history to compare.

Happy October !

Posted at 9:13 pm Oct 5, 2014 EDT

My sales seem to be about the same. I miss the front page, though.

Posted at 11:45 pm Oct 5, 2014 EDT

Responses

Same here (second shop)

Posted at 11:46 pm Oct 5, 2014 EDT

I don't think the changes are affecting sales. rather it's the time of year when people are busy with back-to-school and the associated costs of all that, too.

As for the front page, I'm getting views from it for the first time ever -- I never could find time to splurge on treasuries -- so of course I like that change!

Posted at 7:48 am Oct 6, 2014 EDT

Etsy tweaked my shop so many times, I don't remember the old days. I never lost my banner and m biggest problem is trying to find where they put the message button,etc. I am resigned to never having great sales. Same with views. I get spurts and I don't think the shop adjustments have anything to do with it. One of these days. :)

Posted at 9:10 am Oct 6, 2014 EDT

I'm not sure. My sales are about the same but I'm not making lots of sales anyway.

Posted at 1:57 pm Oct 6, 2014 EDT

I don't like having to learn something new, hehe, so didn't like the changes. Have been managing to adjust to it all so that's okay. As for any other changes, I'm not sure.

Posted at 2:00 pm Oct 6, 2014 EDT

I am not seeing a difference but my shop is new so it is hard to tell.

Posted at 7:15 am Oct 7, 2014 EDT

Edited on Oct 7, 2014

I have three shops. During the first two weeks of September, I was so busy my head was spinning. Then I got the message about the promotion system changing. I have had *some* luck with the promoted listings system that was just discontinued so I thought I would probably have just as much luck with the new system. I initiated the new promoted listings program mid-September. On that day my sales died and I had ZERO sales for the next two weeks. I had so few views that I had to stop looking at my dashboards.

On October 1st I received my first bill from the two shops where I was using the promoted listings and with zero sales, I had a bill for \$13.00 just for the promotion charges. So, I stopped the entire campaign in both shops.

Yesterday (4 days later) my views and sales came back.

These things could all be coincidence but I can't afford to pay for clicks that don't result in sales. It just doesn't make financial sense to me. My shops are relatively small so, thank heaven, my costs were quite low for the half-month trial. But even a small investment for zero return doesn't make a lot of sense.

I will continue to promote on Facebook, I will continue to renew listings daily (sometimes only one a day but sometimes more), and I will continue to add new items daily. That was my goal for 2014 ... to add at least one item per day per shop. That seems to be the key but who knows really...

I am working my way through the research involved in "The SEO Secret" from the thread here about SEO and I hope that helps eventually. My thanks to the OP (Mary Van from CleverRuthie) for that SEO secret - it's complex but I've made a spreadsheet and that speeds it up a bit.

Posted at 10:42 am Oct 7, 2014 EDT

Same comments as above ^^ for my supply shop.

Posted at 10:48 am Oct 7, 2014 EDT

Lower views, lower sales. Summer was amazing, fall terrible.

Posted at 1:42 pm Oct 7, 2014 EDT

Leader

I really cannot say whether it has or has not. I have not been 'all in' lately regarding shop activities or building inventory as I'm trying to catch up on personal things on the home front.

Posted at 2:13 pm Oct 7, 2014 EDT

Responses

My comment on them is meh. Right now there is very little for a lot.

Posted at 5:39 pm Oct 7, 2014 EDT

So far I haven't had any problems with the changes ~ but I've been neglecting my little shop recently, so any drop in views or sales would have to be on me. :(

Posted at 8:50 am Oct 8, 2014 EDT

I'm not quite sure if that are good or bad, but i do not like the new changes I find it harder to find things...

Posted at 10:57 am Oct 8, 2014 EDT

I am not a fan of the front page new look. But as with all things...time makes it all better. I will get used to it! My sales are great, as are my views...so that's a plus.

Posted at 12:23 pm Oct 8, 2014 EDT

I guess I haven't been paying too much attention because I haven't noticed a big change. My views and sales haven't changed much, but they can only go up from where they're at.

Posted at 8:59 pm Oct 8, 2014 EDT

My shop is too new for me to be able to answer.

Posted at 12:40 pm Oct 9, 2014 EDT

I do not like the new look. For the customer who logs in infrequently , they may have a lot of junk on their front page and nothing to entice them to click further like the front page treasuries did. At least with the etsy selected treasuries we knew our guests were met with a pleasing store front.

Posted at 5:54 pm Oct 9, 2014 EDT

So until right now I had NO idea they made changes. I have been SUPER busy. Sales have been really high for me on and off Etsy and every time I get on Etsy, I'm already logged in so I hadn't noticed the changes. I haven't spent much time on my shop either as I have been just trying to deal with the craziness of the season for myself. I am getting a lot of traffic and have made more sales in the past month than I have since I opened shop earlier this year so

I am NOT complaining at all. Of course, that might have more to do with the time of year and my product more than anything else but whatever. I'll take it!

Posted at 9:07 pm Oct 9, 2014 EDT

I do not like the changes either. I made sure to leave feedback about it when they gave us the survey. I think it affected my sales, for sure.

Posted at 5:21 pm Oct 12, 2014 EDT

I have mixed feelings about the changes. I didn't like the way things looked at first but they have made a few more changes to those changes making it easier to navigate. There are some things I don't like under the home screen as well. I feel my sales and views are up and down so I am not sure if it because of the changes or not. But with as with any changes there is a period of adjustment and getting used to that needs to happen. Time will tell.

Posted at 1:55 pm Oct 13, 2014 EDT

Responses

I have no idea if my shop is effected by anything at all. I've had about the same amount of sales & views each month, although its generally more than last year.

Posted at 10:03 pm Oct 13, 2014 EDT

I noticed that views are different. I get more bounce outs. I like the views on my pc but not on my tablet. I have 4 shops and I've sold a bit from each. I can't see a difference yet.

Posted at 11:21 pm Oct 13, 2014 EDT

Like many, I'm not sure yet. My views are very up and down. It does seem like my International sellers have come back after almost entirely falling away due to postal increases last year.

Posted at 11:45 pm Oct 13, 2014 EDT

Maybe to many changes! My views are Ok, but my sales are very low.

Posted at 9:01 am Oct 14, 2014 EDT

Edited on Oct 14, 2014

I've had about the same number of sales, but have more items in my shop. Thank goodness I can rearrange my shop again, and display my banner. I hated the mess they created during all the "tests". The changes I see are not substantial. I'd still like to see more enforcement on shops that sell "non" handmade items, and copyrighted items that should not be for sale in

the first place...anywhere. So many violations that are just blatant, and ignored by etsy. I wish there was more accountability and integrity amongst sellers. I think etsy should spend more time on these important issues, than always tweaking the entire site.

Posted at 1:57 pm Oct 14, 2014 EDT

Edited on Oct 14, 2014

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FEST ALCHEMY

Leader

Shop local: Florida

Shop team: FEST

Shop support: Etsy

The purpose of this thread is to help each other get the products they may specifically be looking for and don't see it on a team members shop and would prefer to shop local:
FLORIDA FEST ETSY

if you have a custom order you would like or have a special someone you are trying to buy for then let us know and let us contact you with our products and see if we have what you like!

remember we are all here on Etsy to make some money and to sell our talents and we are all here on FEST to learn, make friends and promote so this is just intended to be another tool for us

Posted at 7:56 am Feb 11, 2014 EST

I crate hand painted, and or mixed media bags along with vintage in my Pursueit! shop. I also have a shop in which I sell primarily vintage called Rue Trouve'. I also love to shop local and offer free pick up, or I can meet part way If you are close to Tampa or Orlando area!

Posted at 8:05 am Oct 4, 2014 EDT

I am looking for pearlized abalone shards for my seashell designs. Either a cream or blue color.

Thanks!

Posted at 2:29 pm Oct 4, 2014 EDT

I will ship free within Florida for any of you Team Etsy Buddies! =)

Posted at 12:55 am Oct 14, 2014 EDT

I am also looking for anything camels. Charms, pendants, findings. I just love camels...:)

Posted at 11:00 pm Oct 20, 2014 EDT

I'm always looking for wire and semi-precious stones. I usually use fire mountain but love the idea of going local.

Posted at 12:34 pm Oct 21, 2014 EDT

...I can supply you with pearlized abalone, both shards and full shells. Message me and I will be happy to tell you what I have available.

:) Posted at 5:49 pm Nov 17, 2014 EST

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Appendix 2. UK City team sample data

A 'Choose something from the shop above' Game!

Original Post

Captain

The rules are simple. Check out the shop above you and choose an item. Post a link to it and then say one thing you think they've done well and one thing they can work on! Remember, make it specific, achievable and nice. We're all friends here. So....

Useful: The tags are too short, try putting "leather satchel" as one tag as opposed to two.

Not useful: The tags are rubbish

Critiques from other people can be invaluable so remember, you need to put a critique to post! ;) Have fun. x

Posted at 10:26 am Nov 4, 2014 EST

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Amazing event to celebrate having 500 members!!

Original Post

Captain

Ruth Abbott from OMGoshShop says

Edited on Sep 16, 2014

As many of you know we recently hit an amazing target with over 500 people joining Etsy Manchester. To celebrate we wanted to do something that showcased the incredibly talented people that we have in our group, to the general public.

To do this we are teaming up with Fred Aldous and offering all members of the Manchester Etsy team the chance to display their work and talents in a one-day-only pop up window display! On Saturday the 25th of October we will be taking over the spacious window displays of the premium art shop in Manchester and putting on a live crafting event. With space for two tables in the window we will have artists and makers from the team crafting in front of the public. Whether you want to make items that you list in your shop, something that you're hoping to release soon or even just want to indulge in a craft that you currently don't normally sell, it's up to you. Located in the middle of the Northern Quarter the shop is surrounded by our ideal target audience and in the run up to Christmas the timing couldn't be better.

Have I got your interest yet? Did I mention there will be a great big after party as well!

So, how can you get involved? To pull off this celebration of the team we really need the whole team to get behind it! Firstly, we need you to speak up and let us know what you want your event to look like. Over the next few weeks we're going to be asking a series of questions about what you think should happen. Please tell us exactly what you think so we can make this event a true reflection of all of us. Secondly, you can donate; there are three things we need:

- 1) Time, both on the day and running up to it to help turn the ideas into reality
- 2) Resources for decorating and advertising and...
- 3) Money for supplies and those things that we simply can't make ourselves.

We need also your feedback on the best ways to secure all three of these.

We will be running voting polls over on our facebook group page.

www.facebook.com/groups/etsymanchester/ if you'd like to join just send an Etsy message to any of the leaders with the title "facebook" and your email address.

Over the next few days there will be regular updates on the event including how you can get a table. For now I would love to hear your thoughts and opinions below and look forward to making this a great celebration of Etsy Manchester.

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Next Social Event.

Original Post

Captain

Hello All. This is an ongoing thread that you can quickly check to find out when our next social event and meet up is. We will pin the latest event at the top of the page (right under this announcement). This thread might not contain all the details about the event but will tell you a date, time and venue as well as pointing you in the right direction to find out the full info.

Posted at 2:39 pm Aug 3, 2014 EDT

Highlighted Responses What is this?

Captain

Highlighted Post

Quick reminder that the next social is on Thursday the 9th at 6pm. The very talented Sian is coming to talk to us about how to promote your business using Twitter and she should know as she's a social media consultant in her day job.

The event is being held downstairs in Cord in the Northern Quarter. Cord can be tricky to find, I find the easiest way to get there is to go to the Craft and Design Center, turn around so the main entrance is at your back and walk down the pedestrian ally way for about 20 second! If you have any problems contact us on facebook or twitter and we'll come and find you!

Posted at 6:20 am Oct 7, 2014 EDT

Captain

Highlighted Post

Quick reminder that tomorrow is the Pre Pop up party. The event link is below but the main info is:

- * Drop in anytime between 3pm and 9pm (even just to say hi).
- * Kids are welcome - if they don't want to craft we have a TV.
- * If you have any spare standard white emulsion, rollers, brushes etc or paper/fabric for bunting please bring it along.
- * Address is 44 Tib Street. Further instructions on arrival.

What's the difference between Follow, Shop Favourite, Add to Favourites, and Item Favourite????!

Original Post

I'm hoping someone can help me figure all this out!

I've not been on Etsy for a long time and been trying to get my head around all the different aspects. But one aspect has me very confused which is the whole follow and favourite thing.

I've managed to find these 4 buttons so far:

Favourite (an item)

Favourite (a shop)

Add to favourites (not sure what this is as it's different to favourite a shop?)

Follow

Also, when I navigate to my profile and click on 'following', I have a list of people I'm following who I don't remember adding?

It all seems a bit confusing and I'm not sure if I'm clicking the correct buttons!

If someone could explain what each of these buttons do and also what 'Admirers' are I would be very grateful as everything I find on google seem to make my head spin (it doesn't help that it's almost 10pm either).

Thank you,

Posted at 4:56 pm Oct 7, 2014 EDT

Responses

Leader

Edited on Oct 8, 2014

As far as I understand it you can have two levels of favourites;

1. Items. You can add an item(s) to multiple, customizable favourite lists too - like folders - which you can name whatever you like, such as "For the Girlfriend"). This helps you separate out your favourite items and can help you keep track of them.

2. Shops. Useful if you particularly like the items a person makes and regularly look at their items)

As for following...following is for individuals - not shops - where their favourites will appear in your feed. It's normally assumed that the people you follow will have similar interests to you so it's a kind of lazy way to see more of the things you like without seeking them out yourself. You can follow anyone on Etsy, whether they have a shop or are just a purchaser/user.

I hope this helps a little.

Regards,

Posted at 8:49 am Oct 8, 2014 EDT

..., that's a brilliant explanation. Makes far more sense than what I found on other forum posts.

I've just been trying out all the different follow / favourite buttons and it all makes sense now! My understanding is that by following other shops and people it helps to boost my own profile and 'hopefully' for more people to see my work and increase sales.

However I may need to limit myself as I could spend hours trawling all the other shops!

Thank you,

Posted at 6:12 pm Oct 8, 2014 EDT

P.S.

Just popped over to your shop and spotted a brilliant picture of the vaults at Fountains Abbey. I have a thing about geometry so I really appreciate it!

Going to have to save my pocket money up as I'm rather broke at the moment though.

Posted at 6:17 pm Oct 8, 2014 EDT

Leader

Hey,

I'm glad I could be of assistance, sir. In truth I had to re-write my response several times before it made any sense. Etsy don't do a very good job of highlighting the difference between all the favourite types.

It's nice to find a fan of my work. I'm glad you appreciate the image. It was a nightmare to stop people from walking into the shot, it required a bit of patience. I'm actually back at Fountains on Saturday...I've got my fingers crossed for the weather!

If you like the Fountains Abbey image then you might appreciate the more recent ones from John Rylands library, which is stocked full of fantastic architecture.

\$20.08 USD

Favorite

To help save your pocket money even further, good sir, if you use the coupon code LOCALPICKUP then you can take advantage of being relatively local. Please note that the LOCALPICKUP coupon is for face-to-face, Manchester Centre-based handovers. But if it helps then it's a good thing.

I also had a scoot over to your shop and instantly saw where you got your eye for geometry and symmetry. Excellent work and your stuff looks really well made!

PS. Welcome to the team.

Posted at 9:10 am Oct 9, 2014 EDT

Hi

Thank you for the compliment on my work - it means a lot as it can become very demoralising when you're busy making all this work and not selling much!

As for the prints I'll be back at some point to get a print of the Fountains Abbey. I'm really having to watch the pennies at the moment - more bills keep coming through and I've budgeted up until the New Year (it's going to be a frugal Christmas in the Williams household!).

The John Rylands is a stunning piece of architecture - the Victorians just going mad with Gothic revival. Haven't been in for a while actually.

Hope you got some good photos today at Fountains, there are some really nice examples of geometric mosaic tiles near the alter end of the abbey (I'm quite a ceramics geek). Hope the weather was good as it was hailing here in Glossop.

I've applied to do the EtsyMCR Fred Aldous popup but I'm waiting to see if I'm picked. I may see you there?

All the best,

.....

Captain

Highlighted Post Edited on Oct 7, 2014

Hello Everyone. Last week we shared how you could donate time and resources through the Pre Popup Party. This week we're sharing how you can get your shop noticed and how you can donate to ensure the event goes ahead.

We have had lots of people asking if they can donate an item. Due to the limited space we have this isn't the most effective way of showcasing your shop. We are however going to be handing out leaflets with the code. Tag items in your shop with this phrase and also use it as a discount code. The level of discount is totally up to you - it can be a percentage, free shipping or even a little freebie. Don't forget to add into your listing what the code does. This should create an amazing pool of handmade gifts!

For this promotion to work well the event needs to look amazing and enticing. We've kept the price as low as possible but to look professional and to showcase your shops we want to get nice leaflets, posters and backdrops. Donation amounts start from just £3 and we've even added some nice little gifts to say thank you.

To donate please follow this link. www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/etsymcr-fredaldous-popup-donations-tickets-1...

To emphasis **YOU DO NOT NEED A TICKET**. We had originally hoped to use Kickstarter but due to issues with the application process we're using Eventbrite as a convenient way to donate money.

ps - if you donate please send me a message with the amount, your name and shop as often the name on people's paypal doesn't match their shop.

Posted at 6:08 am Oct 7, 2014 EDT

Responses

Would have loved to have been involved but I'm at the Craft and Design Market at Altrincham Market that day. Sounds brilliant though, good luck with it!

Posted at 4:40 am Sep 17, 2014 EDT

This sounds like a great idea, shame its only for 1 day. I'll look out for the updates.

Posted at 3:41 am Sep 19, 2014 EDT

Sounds great but could we please involve/include those of us on Twitter not Facebook too? I only heard about this from a friend who is on fb. You can get far more exposure and interest on Twitter. x

Posted at 8:36 am Sep 19, 2014 EDT

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Appendix 3. UK Country team sample data

Greetings/Christmas Cards

Original Post

Hi all,

I was wondering if anyone else sold greetings and Christmas cards. I currently offer them as a digital card that you can purchase and print yourself but was thinking that I should maybe be printing them myself and selling in packs in the run up to Christmas.

Can anyone recommend a good way to do this, sites to print from etc.

Is this how other people go about selling their greetings cards? I'm a bit worried spending too much money getting a load printed for them not to sell!

Any tips and advice would be much appreciated!

Posted at 7:18 pm Oct 29, 2014 EDT

Responses

I would get some printed, if I were you. Try www.printed.com - they're very reasonably priced. The PDF card design I saw in your shop is really cool! But I know my own home printer will only print on very thin card so I would be very wary of buying something I needed to print myself - definitely much prefer to buy a quality, pre-printed card. The good thing about Christmas is that it happens every year, so even if you don't sell out, your cards won't be out of date next year, or the year after that... JMO. :)

Posted at 1:47 am Oct 30, 2014 EDT

That's a good point! I think I'll get some printed and see what happens, can always use them myself!

.....

Royal Mail - new (lower!) prices from October 20th

Original Post

Not all of them, I'm afraid, but as of October 20th, there is a new small packet rate for within-UK deliveries, and also a new (lower) 0-60g rate for airmail items which are over 5mm. More info here www.royalmail.com/prices-2014 and here www.royalmail.com/sites/default/files/RM-Our-prices-20-October-2014....

Posted at 2:48 pm Sep 20, 2014 EDT

I've just adjusted my delivery profiles - the changes don't affect very many of my items (really just the badges which are very light but have to ship as small packet) but do make a difference to overseas p&p of £1 or £0.75 in those cases. Who knows, that might be enough to gain a sale over a pass. I'm also planning to add some more bulky-but-lightweight items (just as soon as I get a digital camera...) and I think it will really make a difference to their saleability, too.

If you sell bulkier items within UK, the small packet size has been increased - so you can send more for less - so make sure you take a look (link in first post)!

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International Postage

Original Post

Hi

Relatively new to ETSY. Am thinking of expanding my postage options to ship to the USA, Japan and Australia. However, when looking at international postage costs I have been surprised by the quotes. For example, cheapest price to send a small parcel weighing 1kg to USA is £19! However, after looking at other people's postage costs for similar items (eg China tea cups) they are quoting £10 or £12! I'm confused! Why are their postage costs so much cheaper from the UK?

Thanks for your help

Posted at 3:47 pm Nov 19, 2014 EST

Responses

I'm in the UK and regularly send to the US, with parcels weighing between 500 grams to 1 kilo.

The price for 750 grams to 1 kilo using Royal Mail Airmail is just £12.85, rising to 17.85 if you add tracking.

x

Posted at 4:09 pm Nov 19, 2014 EST

Thanks

Posted at 3:44 pm Nov 20, 2014 EST

Appendix 4. EU Continent team sample data

August European Homepages Treasury Trends

Original Post

Admin

...says

Hello,

You want to see your Treasury collection on the European homepages? Here's how...

Create a new Treasury list here:

Homepage Criteria:

- At least 8 items ship FROM Europe.
- All items SHIP TO at least one European country (or "Everywhere Else").
- 16 items total.
- Treasury tagged "EtsyEUR" (without quotations) - That's how we'll find them!

★ PRO TIP ★ click "Curating for European home pages" on the sidebar to check whether your Treasury fits the necessary criteria. See this handy screenshot: etsy.me/TKycMs

Themes we're looking for this month:

★ Back to School: Storage & Organisational Solutions, Gadget Cases (laptop, ipad, phone, etc), Backpacks and book-bags, Writing utensils, Lunch bags, Room Decor.

★ Intro to Harvest/Autumn: Fall Fashion, Decor, Preserving the Summer.

★ Worldly travel/beach vacationing: colorful, seaside.

★ Outdoor activity: hiking, biking, camping, swimming.

★ Star Signs: July 23 - August 23: Leo, August 24 - September 23: Virgo

★ Birthstone: Peridot

★ Important dates:

August 12: International Youth Day

August 25 - Sept 8: US Tennis Open Tournament

Keep in mind we're looking for gorgeous collections with great item photography.

You can post links to your Treasuries in the comments below to share them with your teammates!

Thanks so much,

.....

FAV-A-TON Thursday 30/10/2014 - 24h game

Original Post

Leader

This game is going to bring hearts to your item.

Please Read Instructions Carefully!!!

Post ONLY 1 ITEM from your shop once.

Please be sure to HEART THE WHOLE THREAD. It's better to come few times a day and come back next morning. In 24h the threads will be closed, no new items will be added.

Please note, if you've hearted an item in the past, you need to reheart in this game. Click on the heart to remove the red heart then click on it again to make it red.

Your favorites need to be set on public to participate in the team.

There is "300 hearts a hour" limit. If your hearts are not sticking you will need to wait about an hour (new hour) to be able to get hearts again. You can refresh the page or go back to previous page to check if your hearts stick.

If you sell the item you can replace it.

The posts that abuse the rules will be deleted! If you will abuse the rules few times, you may be expelled from the team, consider this.

Thank You!

Posted at 2:44 am Oct 30, 2014 EDT

.....

Leader

***As I not mandatory play myself I may go and check the thread not very often during the day. If you see the post that abusing the rules, please drop me a link or page number via convo.

You are free not to fav rule-breakers!

***A lot of members experiencing that re-hearting doesn't work. please, check from time to time (by refreshing a page) if your re-hearts are there!

There is a way to be sure that you did it correct, is to make a click in between. For example, to unheart all items on the page, then reheart everything on the page, so you know you get them all.

Posted at 2:44 am Oct 30, 2014 EDT

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Marathon Social Networks

Original Post

Hi everyone,

As seller it is very important to have many accounts on Social Networks.

So, here it is a game:

We have to follow, like... all pages.

Show all links you have, on Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest...

If you don't have any social Networks it doesn't matter, follow what you have.

(If you want, this is the moment to create a account where you don't have a page)

Important: please like all Facebook Pages with your personal account, it is the only way to see increase the number of Likes and we all like how grow up the number of Likes.

Come, and visit the thread severas times for follow all Pages.

Here it is the rules and have Fun:

My links:

.....

Etsy Mentor Month - Week 4

Original Post

Leader

FINISHING TOUCHES

It's the last week of our adventure, I really hope you enjoyed so far!

The first task for this week is to review your partners policies. Here is great article to read and follow: www.etsy.com/blog/en/2012/service-tips-for-sellers-creating-policie...

Next important thing to think about is Customer Service. It's the part of your general philosophy, but there are some ways how to use it to attract customers.

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Now, when the shop is "polished" you still have something to do :)

Back on the first week we've made plans for this month, and now it's time to review your goals and make further plans.

You can share your review with your partner. Share your thoughts about your team work, do you want to work on Holiday Boot Camp together, do you need some time to work on your own to improve your shop and make all changes.

And of course, make new plans, set new goals. I suggest to set goals for Christmas season and for year or half of year.

Thinking about Christmas season. You can sign for Holiday Boot Camp here:

www.etsy.com/blog/en/2013/register-for-holiday-bootcamp-2013/

You'll receive weekly tasks and information how to prepare your shop for holidays.

Also I have great articles about different aspects of running your shop:

about bookkeeping www.etsy.com/blog/en/2013/getting-started-with-income-and-expense-t...

really interesting about growing mobile buyers www.etsy.com/blog/en/2013/top-5-steps-to-a-mobile-friendly-shop

how to grow your business beyond one person (you) www.etsy.com/blog/en/2013/3-ways-to-grow-your-etsy-business-without...

time management www.etsy.com/blog/en/2013/time-management/

5 Ways to Work Smarter, Not Harder www.etsy.com/blog/en/2013/5-ways-to-work-smarter-not-harder/

wholesaling www.etsy.com/blog/en/2013/4-sure-signs-your-business-is-ready-for-w...

END OF MONTH CELEBRATION

We are going to have treasury game! I'll post the list of all participants here in this thread on Friday September 27. And till October 1 we'll make treasuries featuring at least 5 participants. Please, be sure that your treasury also meets the guidelines for Euro Front page (you can check it when your treasury is almost done using the blue button on the right). Please, use the tag ESTmentormonth for your treasury.

That's all, folks!

Please, share your experience! I'm really interested to read all your thoughts (bad and good) about this month we spent together.

p.s. I'll also will make weekly threads where we'll discuss Holiday Boot Camp tasks, so stay tuned :)

Posted at 12:11 pm Sep 22, 2013 EDT

Good morning!

www.etsy.com/treasury/MjQ2MjEyODh8MjcyNTA1NjExNA/autumn-ornaments

Posted at 3:27 am Oct 1, 2013 EDT

Have a good day (ô_ =)

www.etsy.com/treasury/MjYxMTM0Njl8MjcyNTA1NjQ1Mg/mentor-month-celeb...

Posted at 5:50 am Oct 1, 2013 EDT

Hi everyone! another treasury

www.etsy.com/treasury/MjU2Njl2NTN8MjcyMjQ5NjE0MQ/european-street-te...

Posted at 8:35 am Oct 1, 2013 EDT

www.etsy.com/treasury/MjAwMjg2NjF8MjcyNTA1MzQ2Ng/mystic-royal-purpl...

Posted at 10:01 am Oct 1, 2013 EDT

www.etsy.com/treasury/Mjk5NDI1NzB8MjcyNTA1ODM5MA/autumn-in-shades-o...

Posted at 2:55 pm Oct 1, 2013 EDT

www.etsy.com/treasury/Mzl3NDQ3MzZ8MjcyMjQ5ODA1NQ/keep-fall-in-your-...

Posted at 4:15 pm Oct 1, 2013 EDT

I don't find myself on the list, probably because I've signed up later. Please add me, too. Thanks :)

Posted at 5:51 am Oct 2, 2013 EDT

I was paired up with ... fromwriting desk

Posted at 5:53 am Oct 2, 2013 EDT

Leader

..., sorry that you weren't in the list. Though the treasury game has already ended on October 1.

Posted at 8:00 am Oct 4, 2013 EDT

Responses

I didn't have time to create a treasury, but I wanted to thank you ... and specially ... for your effort! The mentor month worked out great for me!

Thanks again!

Posted at 8:32 am Oct 4, 2013 EDT

This is my treasury. Do you my treasury?

www.etsy.com/treasury/Mzg3NTYwMDN8MjcyNjg0Njg1OA/the-orange?index=0...

Posted at 1:42 pm Oct 12, 2014 EDT

.....

Christmas trading of crafts for crafts

Original Post

Hi Everyone,

I didn't see anything in the team about trading so I thought I'd start a thread.

I have recently been trading my items with other Etsy sellers. It has been really great to get handmade gifts for christmas, as well as to get feedback for my new shop. I love the whole idea and how it helps to support fellow crafters in a whole new way.

Obviously Etsy is very US based so most of my trades have been with US sellers so far. I thought this was a shame really since Europe has so much to offer in the way of crafts. Here I am opening up the idea to all anyway.

Just post below if you'd like to offer up any items for trade along with a list of the kind of things you're looking for. If anyone is interested then they can send you a private message and you can barter amongst yourselves to arrange the trade. You should aim to trade items that are equal in value but really it is up to you if you want to offer more (I sometimes do if I really like something). Once you've agreed on the trade, you each checkout the usual way using 'Other' as the payment method, thereby bypassing the whole Paypal process. Next, send your items, wait for your items to arrive and then both leave feedback for each other... simple :)

Hope people will want to join in. It really is fun.

Posted at 12:49 pm Nov 8, 2012 EST

Can we redo the trades? :-)

Posted at 9:08 am Oct 8, 2014 EDT

I'm up for it again !

Feel free to contact me, we will discuss your wishes and try to find the best agreement !

..., I think last year you had some christmas decor in your shop, will you do some like this again ? I liked them vey much :)

Posted at 6:45 am Oct 10, 2014 EDT

Hi! I'm in!

I do handmade things in wool and cotton (bookmarks, little goodluck owls, jewelry)...

Don't have a real idea of what I'm looking for, so if interestd contact me and I'll see if there's something that fits good for my christmas gifts! :)

Posted at 1:22 pm Nov 25, 2014 EST

I noticed after commenting that this thread is old :(

Could we make it this year as well?

Posted at 4:01 pm Nov 25, 2014 EST

.....

Appendix 5. High-tech topic-based team sample data

Using Multiple Sites For The Same Items

I noticed I don't get little or no search from Google but after reading a lot of comments and information here, I went and request my account to be closed from another site that I had my listings. Could this really be the reason why I had no traffic from Google?

Posted at 3:38 pm Aug 16, 2012 EDT

Responses

Edited on Aug 16, 2012

I think I misread your question, so ignore this please if I did (I can't delete it):

don't know and I'm sure ... or a more seasoned team members may be able to answer your question.

I just want to say that there are lots of Etsy shop members who have a website outside of Etsy and they appear to be doing quite well. After reading so many of these threads, I'm now working on setting up another website listing most of what I have on Etsy.

As I understand it, and I'm still learning, it's important 1) to avoid duplicating info from one site to the other; pay close attention to your seo, and 2) don't direct people to buy from your Etsy shop to your other website.

You may want to ask/or search for a thread on what other shop members are doing to make their websites successful, and pitfalls. I suspect you just needed to tweak your site.

Posted at 6:24 pm Aug 16, 2012 EDT

@Well, thanks for your comments. I have seen some Etsy sellers with a personal website that link to their Etsy shop so they don't have to list the same items again. However, I'm not sure which is best. I had listings on other handmade site like etsy and I believe it put me into trouble rather than creating traffic for potential buyers.

Yes, the question is, to have or not to have a personal website. I would love to hear from people who have personal sites.

Posted at 8:15 pm Aug 16, 2012 EDT

I have a personal website though I just launched it a couple of months ago so I don't have a lot of experience/advice to share. I look forward to hearing what other team members have to say about this because I am definitely still in the learning process.

Posted at 8:59 pm Aug 16, 2012 EDT

Leader

there is no problem with having your items listed in multiple spots online, as long as each title & description has a lot of unique text.

Posted at 3:15 am Aug 17, 2012 EDT

Is a lot of unique text when you list the same item/s on more than one venue or between here and a web site you run still a necessity? Or is it duplicate content within one web site that is more of a problem, like having multiple pages of your business web site with the same content, or links to the same page? I've read conflicting information on this and was hoping to get an answer.

Posted at 12:26 am Mar 6, 2014 EST

Leader

Any pages that are substantially similar to other ones are a problem, regardless of whether or not they are on the same domain.

Posted at 3:24 am Mar 6, 2014 EST

Thank you ...!

Posted at 10:15 am Mar 6, 2014 EST

Edited on Mar 10, 2014

Sorry if I seem to be laboring this point, but I want to be sure before I go and change hundreds of listings to unique descriptions - ugh! When you say similar listings are a "problem", I'm not sure what that means as I have had conflicting advice.

I copy and paste my listings from site to site, changing the title and a few minor details only. Same pictures, although the alt names are different on some sites.

The sites include on-markets like Etsy, social media & my own webshop.

Does this mean that they are ALL invisible to Google? Or does the original listing (the first one put up) remain visible and the others are ignored because of duplicate content?

I list the same items on all my sites (varies between 9 online venues) and the thought of writing 9 unique descriptions is mind-boggling. If all the listings become virtually invisible to Google because of duplicate content, how come I get quite a lot of Goggle views? I don't think I have even one product that is only listed in one place.

I am truly confused about this and would appreciate any advice. It would take me a year to rewire every listing I reckon, but I will do it if necessary - just want to be sure it is first!

Posted at 8:14 pm Mar 10, 2014 EDT

I read this:

support.google.com/webmasters/answer/66359?hl=en

and this:

searchengineland.com/googles-matt-cutts-duplicate-content-wont-hurt...

which suggest basically that unless the duplicate content looks like it is designed to deceive or be spammy, google will not penalize you in their rankings - but they will consolidate your possible returns into one.

So I've got a standalone website and stuff here. If I use the same exact text for a listing here and the same listing on the website, when someone searches "organic cotton iron on name tags," instead of getting both my Etsy listing and my standalone website listing, they'll just get one (whichever one google decides is "original").

At least that's the way it sounds from the google explanation.

Posted at 9:19 pm Mar 10, 2014 EDT

Google will give extremely low rankings to sites that are full of duplicate content, though, so if you have your own website, that is the one place you want most things to be unique. Etsy has so much unique content generated every day just from the forum/teams alone that it is a bit immune to a domain wide lower ranking.

Posted at 10:13 pm Mar 10, 2014 EDT

That is great advice thank you to both who responded to my question. What a team!

Posted at 7:20 pm Mar 11, 2014 EDT

What are your thoughts on putting shop listings on sites like Pinterest, Wanelo, etc. that basically allow us and others to put our listings out there, without changing the titles. I noticed on Pinterest, the URL for any Pin has just a number, no title keywords and just a link back to the item on Etsy. On Wanelo you actually see part of the item title in the listing URL along with the item linking back to the Etsy listing. Does that possibly mean that Pinterest is ok, but sites similar to Wanelo are not good for Google SEO and should be avoided if titles are not changed as you've indicated this is duplicate content?

Posted at 1:21 pm Jul 4, 2014 EDT

Leader

Sites that always link back to the original should be ok - it lets Google know which is the original. However, if you want the pin/post on another website to get its own Google ranking, changing it would be preferred. Most people are not aiming for that, however.

Posted at 1:50 pm Jul 4, 2014 EDT

Thank you ... for clarifying this for me.

Posted at 3:15 pm Jul 4, 2014 EDT

I doubt very seriously if identical copy on several sites hurts your SEO. I recently googled a question and got several websites with the identical answer...eg About copied Wikipedia copied Ask copied whoever...same copy, completely different site.

my website was becoming a catalog of dead inventory so I make it like a Facebook feed and refer everyone to Etsy. www.ajmartinonline.com.

Posted at 2:05 pm Jul 5, 2014 EDT

Leader

Googling a question & searching for product are two different things - some queries are simply not competitive. It is well known that the Panda algorithm hit some ecommerce sites

very hard, as many repeat descriptions across sites. That usually gets you a site wide penalty, if enough of your content is copied.

www.koozai.com/blog/search-marketing/google-panda-4-0-e-commerce-bu...

www.sitesuite.com.au/article/how-google-panda-algorithm-is-affectin...

www.verticalmeasures.com/internet-marketing-2/post-penguin-panda-re...

Just because you think you have seen an exception does NOT mean the rule doesn't exist. & the fact you have a website says nothing about the rule, either :)

Posted at 2:58 pm Jul 5, 2014 EDT

.....

This thread is about Etsy search; Google is here:

www.etsy.com/teams/10713/etsy-relevancy-seo-and-stats/discuss/10196...

any major changes will be highlighted to the top of the thread. Etsy has not made any major algorithm changes in a long time, although they do a lot of testing.

The search will always change, of course, as competition improves. So if you want to get found the same amount of times as you did a year ago, you need to constantly be improving. My Google views are up from a year ago, & my Etsy views are about the same right now (I've not been listing much new here lately which is a big factor in increasing your views over time)

Posted at 11:30 am Jul 24, 2014 EDT

Leader

re: tests www.etsy.com/teams/7716/announcements/discuss/14959706/

not sure if this is worth starting another thread over but I will keep an eye on it. Please let us know if you see anything anomalous. (I don't seem to have this test anywhere so I can't really comment)

Posted at 11:47 am Jul 24, 2014 EDT

I have the test search and there are some things about it that do make search easier. Here's a screen shot of it:

www.pinterest.com/pin/256634878741086483/

Posted at 1:23 pm Jul 24, 2014 EDT

Leader

Interesting! Thank you

(yes, we can probably all agree that the original Etsy category system makes little sense LOL)

Posted at 1:31 pm Jul 24, 2014 EDT

Ah, that looks lovely! Sorted by category of item and then handmade/vintage/etc.

Posted at 2:15 pm Jul 24, 2014 EDT

Responses

The categories tend to change depending on what you are looking for. As some people in the forums note, the numbers don't really add up so it's hard to know what Etsy is leaving out of each search.

Posted at 2:54 pm Jul 24, 2014 EDT

Leader

& that is my concern, because when they did this a few months ago they were using the illogical listing categories to filter items out. You also mostly had to list pendant necklaces as either pendants or necklaces, which makes no sense to me.

Posted at 3:33 pm Jul 24, 2014 EDT

Looking at the numbers others have used and doing a little research myself, it does look like a much smaller group of listings that are being left out.

.....

Appendix 6. Low-tech topic-based team sample data

Should i stay or should i go???

Original Post

Hi everyone!

I'm Julia and i' m crafting for almost 2 years now...I paint on cotton tote bags and on wooden house ware (which i mainly hand cut). At first just as a hobby, but after my best friend's instigation and encouragement i decided to start a little business.Began from Facebook 1,5 year ago and my Etsy shop "aired" 3,5 months ago. I really work my butt off and trying to get better and better and have genuine ideas and top quality materials.I try hard to take good photos (at least for my taste), i' m searching and searching for the right tags and titles and try to network as much as i can, but still....ONLY 1 SALE IN 3,5 MONTHS!!!!

I have thought about pricing.....some say they are cheap, some say expensive...either way they take many hours to be made!!!!' m starting to think that they are useless, that's why i' m not selling!

Anyhow....

I would REALLY TRULY appreciate any advice on how to boost it up a bit, cause honestly if there weren't the free listings i don't know if i would keep going.

Thanks in advance!

Posted at 12:44 pm Feb 27, 2015 EST

Responses

You've only been here for 3.5 Months. It takes more time than that to start building up sales.

Selling on Etsy is not for the weak of heart and can't come into this assuming sales and views will just magically happen. To have a successful shop you need to continually work on SEO, pictures, and social media marketing.

Research SEO. See how in your shop it can be improved.

Look at what other successful tote bag sellers and see if it would work for you.

Are you on social media? Instagram and Pintrest are my favorite.

Posted at 12:55 pm Feb 27, 2015 EST

Your products are nice by the way!

I would suggest staying for a little bit longer, and working on your SEO and marketing.

Once people start finding you, I'm sure things will start picking up. Don't quit just yet. :)

Posted at 12:57 pm Feb 27, 2015 EST

....

DO NOT give up !!!! You are very talented ! I think you're prices are great. It really does take a long time to build up your business on Etsy. I've found it to help a lot to promote on teams in order to move you up in the searches. (where you post 1 fav 5 etc) If you don't already do

this, I strongly encourage you to do this often. That's when I started getting regular sales. Your photos are good and you have a nice variety. The other thing I have found to be helpful is to have lots of listings. Even if you don't make a new item, you may choose to have the same item listed in a different category. The more listings you have, the better your chance of being found. One more thing....have you considered making front door hangers personalized with the family's name and also door hanger for the hospital when a baby is born with the name ,birth weight, time of birth etc.? People love personalized items and I would encourage showing samples of several of your items with personalization. Best of luck to you. Hang in there. I know exactly how you fell but just keep it up and the sales will come.

...

Posted at 1:19 pm Feb 27, 2015 EST

We opened shop around the same time! I say search out other tote sellers and compare their photos with yours. What if you had a plain white background for your photos? Some backgrounds can become distracting from the image. Maybe you could lay a white sheet over a table near a window to take photos?

Also, to find the best wording to use for seo, starting typing words related to your items in the Etsy search bar and take note of all of the prompts. The words in these prompts are what will bring you the most hits!

I'm also just learning about the importance of titles. I had been just using seo words without turning them into nice sounding sentences. I think nice sounding descriptive sentences will work better for my items. I'm still in the process of editing all of my titles!

I haven't had a lot of sales yet either, but I'm not ready to give up! I think patience and time are the key to most good things. :)

Posted at 1:30 pm Feb 27, 2015 EST

3.5 months is not that long. You currently have 29 items and how many are there on Etsy?? Millions!

I agree to look at other tote sellers / similar shops and look at their tags. I looked at a few of your items and some of the tags are redundant (i.e. just 'coasters' more than once). Join the group "Etsy Relevancy SEO and Stats" and read the 'SEO for Etsy newbies' thread. It is very helpful.

Try and convert some of your viewers from FB or from in-person interactions into etsy viewers/buyers. Your products are nice and very unique, so I wouldn't give up yet.

Work on getting more items in your shop and on improving your tags/titles.

Good luck!

Posted at 1:55 pm Feb 27, 2015 EST

Hi ... :)

I agree with everything written above, you haven't been on Etsy for long, it really does take time, make sure you connect with others in teams :)

Your work is lovely, pricing is always tricky but if you are making one of a kind items then price accordingly, I mean value yourself :)

I hope you continue and wishing lots of sales soon, cheers, T. :)

Posted at 2:56 pm Feb 27, 2015 EST

Thank you all for your responses. I will take everything into consideration, although some of your advice i' m already following. I know it takes time and i' m not being impatient. It just that i see other people swamped with sales, having their shops for a short period of time as well, and was wondering what was going wrong!

Thank you all again!

Posted at 3:10 pm Feb 27, 2015 EST

Hi ...,

Keep trying 3.5 months isn't long enough. If you want it bas you have to fight for it :) You have a great shop. Keep up the good work!

...

Posted at 3:28 pm Feb 27, 2015 EST

It needs time, I'm here for 3 years and now it starts going up. Etsy is great but crowded. It needs time to grow and be found. Once you have put all the work in it, give it time.

Add some more items to your shop and take a look at the pictures. I love your coasters, they belong on Etsy :)

Posted at 3:08 am Feb 28, 2015 EST

Responses

I would not presume to tell someone else what to do, I can only tell you what I would do. I have been told how stubborn I am my entire life (as if it is a bad thing). Well I have decided to take that stubborn spirit and hang in her with my own shop. I have only sold 3 things in 6 months but that is not going to stop me. I am going to purchase a better camera and take better pictures and work on my tags and seo. You can only be defeated if you allow yourself to be.

Posted at 3:26 am Feb 28, 2015 EST

Stay, stick with it. We're new too and have had 3 sales since October, but are finding if we spend hour or two networking online our views etc go up, ok so it hasn't yet led to a sale but it's getting our name out there, and that needs to be done first. Am thankful to fellow etsians who too network xxx

Posted at 3:57 am Feb 28, 2015 EST

Could the periods without spaces in your title be hurting you? Are you getting views? I just have never seen that. Most people use commas and spaces. I prefer no punctuation. You aren't using colors or a description of what the item is. For example, for the couple kissing tote bag my title would be something like Reusable Grocery Tote Bag Abstract Kissing Couple Handpainted in Red and Blue.

I don't claim to be an expert with titles but there are more words there that bring in views. Try changing each title so it has different words right at the beginning. You could also call it Handpainted Cotton Beach Bag Man and Woman Original Painting in Blue and Red. There are many options.

Anyway, don't give up. You have real talent! You just need to be found.

Posted at 5:11 am Feb 28, 2015 EST

Lori i will check this out...i'm a bit confused about the titles and tags.I am on a few Etsy sellers FB groups and all the advice is about having a bit of "general" information" in the title, not to specific.The punctuation didn' t know had problems...i'll correct everything.and as far as the tags...i have been using the search bar, to see what are the words that come up first as far as my product is concerned and i' ve found an Etsy tool where you give a keyword - item and comes up will all the top sellers and their tags.That's why i use i.e. many times the word coaster in my tags.To have every possible search covered.

Posted at 5:21 am Feb 28, 2015 EST

.....

customer order question

Original Post

I requested a custom order with a fellow etsy seller. I asked for the price through a conversation. The seller created a listing and sent it to me.

But... It's more expensive than I thought it should be and I do not want to purchase it. I feel bad saying no, because she has already made the listing.

How should I say no?

HELP.

Posted at 12:32 pm Feb 25, 2015 EST

Responses

Just flat out tell them that the price is higher than you thought. I'd rather someone tell honestly why their not making a purchase than having to guess and wonder why I list the sale.

Posted at 12:44 pm Feb 25, 2015 EST

I agree with

Did they just create the listing as their way of telling you the price? They should have told you first via the convo that was started than assuming and creating the listing.

Posted at 12:47 pm Feb 25, 2015 EST

Edited on Feb 25, 2015

....,

I think she is in the wrong for making the listing without agreeing to anything before hand. I have people ask for a discount and a reserved listing, but I always state the particulars in the convo before I go and change my listings. Maybe they'll come down to a more agreeable price if they think they'll loose the sale...

Posted at 12:49 pm Feb 25, 2015 EST

Thank you all! I'm going to write to her. :)

Posted at 3:50 pm Feb 25, 2015 EST

Also if they did a custom listing and you cancel the order, they will not be charged for a listing fee.

Posted at 3:57 pm Feb 25, 2015 EST

Oh that makes me feel better! Is there anything special I need to do to cancel the order, because I just sent her a convo?

Posted at 4:14 pm Feb 25, 2015 EST

I think she has to cancel it on her end.

Posted at 4:29 pm Feb 25, 2015 EST

Okay. Thanks again!

.....

Appendix 7. Socio-technical Gaps sample data

Does anyone use Etsy Help before posting a question on Forums?

Add your response

I occasionally read the questions and discussions on the Forums. I find it disturbing that no one seems to use Etsy Help to find answers. Instead they post a question here, and get all kinds of answers. Some that are not accurate. Some times I think that the OP is just asking here to see if they will get the answer they want and not the real answer.

Translate

Add your response

57 Responses

Mark Thread

Marc ... - Commercial Use Digital Graphics and Printable Art from HAUTEGRAPHIQUE 9:51 pm Mar 26, 2015 EDT

I think that people like coming to the forums and asking real live people. It's a great way to network as well. I have never found Etsy help helpful. They answer generic questions and 99 percent of the time people's questions require digging deeper hence coming to the forums. Even the bottom of the Etsy help page says something like ...Cant find it here? Ask in the forums.

Translate

I agree that Etsy help is so general it usually isn't helpful at all. I don't think I have ever found a solution to anything by using it.

The only thing less helpful than Etsy help is Ebay help!

Translate

Yes I did before I posted the other day but I have still had no reply & am no closer to having my question answered

Translate

Reply to

I know that Etsy Help is hard to navigate, it is frustrating and should be easier to find and use. I think that people should be able to find their answers from Etsy and not the crap shoot that Forums sometimes is. You may get the correct answer to you question but you may not and you could end up with big problems as a result.

Translate

I agree. I always just use the search bar there. And even then you don't always get relevant info.

Translate

Reply to

I very seldom use Etsy help, but I do put my questions in the searchbar - there's a wealth of great information in these forums!

Translate

.....

Workers for your shop?

Has anyone hired or considered hiring people to help run their shops? If so, how has this worked out for you?

Add your response

4 Responses

Mark Thread

I doubt I could do that, because I'd have to completely trust them, because they would have access to EVERYTHING in the back end of my shop. If Etsy ever allowed limited access (non-admin), maybe. But as it is set up now, I wouldn't do it.

Reply to ...

I have 2 employees at my store. They don't do any of the etsy orders yet. Between the two they work about 20 hours a week combined. I work the other 50. It works out because I couldn't work 70 some hours a week. Its my responsibility to make sure they are doing what they need to and I can trust them (mostly) :p

Reply to

Nope! I'm a 1 woman sweatshop! But I DO have a supervisor... the cat who sits near my machine and makes sure I never slack off!!

Reply to

I've never done it, but I might consider it if things were to pick up quite a bit here. I've considered hiring people off and on for other tasks, and actually do have help lined up for an upcoming show, but it just hasn't been needed here yet. I like the idea of a non-admin sign-in option -- some way to restrict the view of things like bank accounts, credit cards, security questions and things like that.

Reply to ...

.....

Review System Makes No Sense

Add your response

Reviews are for the entire shop, not per item. Yet, a customer gets to leave as many reviews as items she bought. If the review were just for that particular item, like Amazon reviews, fine. Otherwise, it should be 1 review per order.

My shop is new, and I've gotten all positive reviews so far, but I'm terrified that one person who ordered like, 5 little things is going to come along and leave bad reviews. No one customer should have that much power over a shop's reputation.

From what I've seen, the reviews are more about the whole experience as opposed to just the quality of the items. Delay in shipping? Bad reviews. Etsy states that reviews are the customer's opinion - Well, if it's an opinion of the whole shop, each customer's opinion should count the same.

Translate

Add your response

11 Responses

Mark Thread

Where do you get the idea that reviews are for the shop? Customers can and do review each individual item, so that future buyers can determine whether to purchase. If the entire experience is good, it will reflect on the shop and shop owner as well, but reviews are for the purchase.

Translate

I agree, sometimes I would like to see reviews on a CERTAIN item. There should be an option for certain item, for all items, and for the overall shop.

Translate

I think reviews should be per each item. hypothetically, say I purchase 10 tools and one is absolute crap. Should the whole order be dinged because of one bad tool or should 9 get 5 stars and the one that is crap get an honest rating? Basically this is good for the shop owner because qty. 9 "5 star" reviews balance out the one bad one...

Translate

Reply ...

Granted reviews are for individual items but the review system can affect the entire shop.

I sold 3 items to a customer and got 5 stars on 2 of them and 3 stars on the last one. I do understand your concern, but you can't let it worry you.

Translate

Reply ...

Reviews are for the item purchased. If the review is about USPS delays, that's one reason etsy will delete it if it's reported.

Translate

I didn't know that. Does it have to be specifically USPS? I'm in Japan, and on other Asian shops, I often see bad reviews with just "shipping took forever."

.....

Another seller copying everything?

Add your response

Have you ever run across another Easy seller that is not only doing the exact same thing as you but the description is the same too? Is that weird or is that just how it is?

Translate

Add your response

38 Responses

Mark Thread

I did come across this last year. I did contact the Shop Owner and stated my complaint with her and she not only removed the listing but closed her shop down. I do hope that you can get this resolved,

Translate

I just emailed the seller. We will see what they say.

Translate

I think that's best, hopefully you will receive positive results.

Translate

Reply to

If the description is exactly copied, that violates your copyright. You can demand they use their own wording.

Craft items themselves often can't be legally protected though.

Translate

Reply to J

I like your shop!! Have you claimed a file against the other seller?

Translate

I haven't because I just emailed them and let them know that I do enjoy their work but I would prefer it if they wrote their own description instead of using mine. If it doesn't change then I need to figure out how to move a step further.

Translate

Good approach! ! Hopefully you can get it all settled. Good luck!!

Translate

Reply to

Yes, in my other shop my entire description has been copied practically word for word by a competitor. I feel like there is nothing I can do about it because this shop has been around a little longer than me, so I feel like they may argue this fact if I confront them on it or complain. I think you can message them, but if they refuse to change it on their own, there really isn't much you can do. Especially if there is a word or two changed, for example, 99% of a copy - you know they've taken it, but it's not 100% plagiarized.

Obviously you're something right if they feel like they need to copy you!

Just concentrate on making the shop the best it can be and know you're on the right track and lead your niche.

.....

Leader

If you're like to know more about the event tonight then here is the official invite on Facebook. www.facebook.com/events/1499546373645408

Posted at 9:19 am Oct 9, 2014 EDT

Captain

Highlighted Post

Quick reminder that tomorrow is the Pre Pop up party. The event link is below but the main info is:

- * Drop in anytime between 3pm and 9pm (even just to say hi).
- * Kids are welcome - if they don't want to craft we have a TV.
- * If you have any spare standard white emulsion, rollers, brushes etc or paper/fabric for bunting please bring it along.
- * Address is 44 Tib Street. Further instructions on arrival.

Hope to see you there.

.....

Shop Video/Commercial

Add your response

Anyone ever produce a video advertisement for their shop?

I started playing around with the idea last night, and wondered if anyone here has ever made one, or knows of an Etsy shop that has. My wife said that she saw a great one on Youtube from a seller once, but she cannot remember the sellers name. Anyhow, I was just wondering.

Translate

Add your response

6 Responses

Mark Thread

We saw an empty billboard on the freeway the other day and half-jokingly talked about "I wonder how much that would cost?" But I will admit, having a billboard in our home city freeway would be more about the ego than the marketing. "Hah, all you clueless people that we used to work with who don't really think we're making a real living here out of our garage, check us out!!" LOL!!

Translate

LOL.

Translate

Reply to

I think video is a great idea and if Etsy can't provide this capability in the About section, then sellers can maybe offer a link to you-tube.

Best wishes for great success

Translate

Thank you, I appreciate that.

Translate

Reply to

I have been considering a google ad words / youtube video campaign - the problem is that I do not have any professional equipment and I would have to employ someone to shoot the video for me.

Translate

Reply to

I have customers that post my items with linkbacks in youtube and I do get regular hits off of their videos, it helps that one has a huge following there, on the other hand I can't really link any sales to the clicks, just many views.

.....

Should I leave?

Add your response

I have been charged by Etsy with promoted listing charges. I have called two or three times and they refused to give me a refund. I have paused and stopped them many times but according to my bill it wont work. Because of this I have been charged over \$100 should I leave this website?

Translate

Add your response

9 Responses

Mark Thread

That's really odd! Try emailing, I can't believe that!

Translate

This may seem like a really silly question, but are you absolutely sure you used the little 'gear' icon at the top right corner of the promoted listings section to halt your campaign. I only ask because some people seem confused at how to turn them off.

If they are buggish and not turning off that would be very frustrating, for sure. Leaving etsy would be entirely up to you, but you won't be able to actually close your account until your bills are settled anyway, so that might be a 'catch 22' of sorts.

Translate

Did you set up promoted ads or did you just start getting billed for it out of the blue?

If you set them up but are having trouble stopping them, you need to get help from Etsy, or other sellers here, on how to stop them. Etsy will not refund in this case but at least you won't continue to get charged.

Leaving the site won't negate the fact that you owe Etsy for the promoted ads. Whether you stay or go, you still need to pay your debt.

Translate

This.....

Translate

Yes I have paid every bill and I have set them up but I also have stopped and paused them several times but it seems there has been a glitch and they wont seem to stop

Translate

Reply to

I suggest you post in bugs if you are following the procedure for stopping the ads but they keep reoccurring. Sounds like something is wrong and the techs need to take a look at it.

Good luck getting this under control.

Translate

^^this

Translate

Reply to

When I first started promoting I was spending too much and thought I turned it off. Turns out I did it wrong. Ask the forum to walk you through how to turn it off properly.

Translate

Reply to

Quickly get this posted in the Bugs section of Forums so they can help you !

.....

Etsy Reviews on A FEW MORE WORDS

Add your response

This is ridiculous why make the buyer add a few more words

Great thank you

Fabulous very pleased

Awsome love it.

Arrived thank you

Very pleased

..... none of the above is enough words for etsy

I nearly backed off leaving feedback for a seller as had to add more than I wanted to, and then had to think of what else I could say??????

Back button

Its hard enough for buyers to find the review button and then to make them write a story- totally unnecessary

Translate

Add your response

9 Responses

Mark Thread

For some reason Etsy decided that too few words is not going to work for a review, so if you do not reach the maximum words just put in several dots.

Translate

Reply to

It's been that way for quite some time now. Unfortunately.

Translate

Reply to

11:20 pm Mar 25, 2015 EDT

I loved it, thank you.

Perfect, thank you so much!

Arrived quickly, item as described.

Fabulous, I loved the item.

Great, thank you very much.

While I do appreciate it when people leave more descriptive feedback, there are still numerous simple five word options.

Translate

Reply to



Translate

Reply to - Commercial Use Digital Graphics and Printable Art

It drives me nuts. I'm sure people don't leave feedback because of it.

Translate

Reply to

I just repeat the same word over and over - love it love it love it love it. I know I always love what I buy on Etsy!

Translate

I split up my words! "Tha nk you very much!"

Translate

Reply to Tori

I don't like having to leave at least 5 words for a review. I'm sure it does contribute to buyers leaving less feedback, and I wonder if maybe it even causes some buyers to leave only 4 stars, because they get annoyed!

Translate

Reply to

don't like it either.