

CAPSTONE PROJECT

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**Can the perception of Artisanal Fashion in Latin America evolve in comparison to its value
in developed countries ?**

ABSTRACT

Can the perception of Artisanal Fashion in Latin America evolve in comparison to its value in developed countries ? Is Fashion Artisanhip in Latin America not perceived as a craft that can have the same level of value as western European and American high fashion and crafted art?

Within the fashion luxury market almost every piece of clothing we see has a story and a crafted roadmap leading to what the finished product is. Similarly, this tends to happen when we talk about artisanal products, made by hand or by traditional means. Today we can notice that the traditional process of manufacturing clothing has evolved and become less common.

In Latin America consumer culture has had influence from the colonial times until today, alongside the influence of socioeconomic levels that have marked clear differences in these countries known as under developed or third world countries.

The goal of my capstone project is to explore what is the value that millennials living in Latin America give to artisanship and fashion compared to western European society. As well as questioning if it is possible to re-contextualize and emphasize the value of artisanship through the partnership of tradition and sophisticated design in Latin America. The research will aim to help answer what are the challenges that do not allow the advancement of Fashion artisanship in the Latin American context today and where can artisanship be part of the fashion luxury landscape. Analyzing research will provide us with the difference between a local and foreign artisanal fashion consumer. As well as finding out if the value and perception of artisanal fashion from Latin American consumers can change for the better, and what might be needed in order to do so.

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Introduction

Can the perception of Artisanal Fashion in Latin America evolve in comparison to its value in developed countries ?

Everything that exists and surrounds us is a product of the society we live in. Luxury Fashion showcases what is happening in the world translated into garments more than just clothes. It can be considered one of the strongest expressions of art because it allows everyone to use it as a form of self-expression. Within the fashion luxury market almost every piece of clothing we see has a story and a crafted roadmap leading to what the finished product is. We may find artisanship behind a garment, just as much as in an art piece. Throughout history we are able to see how the manufacturing of garments has shifted with the invention of the sewing machine and industrialization, before handmade garments were most common than they are now. Clothing that is made by hand with certain processes and different traditions that are passed down through time, have become part of what we call artisanship today, made by hand or by traditional means. Art can be similar, starting with our hands and what we create with them. As time has passed, we can see that the traditional process of making things has evolved and become less common. Not everyone knows what a treasure it is to find something artisanal made, with gentle hands and traditions from different cultures that have been passed down from generation to generation.

Is Fashion Artisanship in Latin America not perceived as a craft that can have the same level of value as western European and American high fashion and crafted art? In Latin America consumer culture has had influence from the colonial times until today, the developed

countries mark it by overshadowing the treasure that is craftsmanship and what is original / native from its people; not to mention the considerable influence of socioeconomic levels that have marked clear differences in these countries known as under developed or third world countries. **Is this true? If so how can that change in the Latin American region.**

This dissertation sets out to explore what is the value that millennials living Latin America give to artisanship and fashion compared to western European society. Since the 18th century we see a clear hierarchy in the Latin American society, separating the people into different social categories such as Spaniards, *castas*, and Indigenous people. As time evolved these lines began to blur with the access to education and overall exposure to Western European culture; yet, there is still a clear social, economical and racial division in this region. This leads us to today where millennials, a generation that has been exposed to media. Especially social media which has provided them more information on the world of fashion and art, developing into a generation that can potentially start to be more appreciative and understanding of craftsmanship and artisanship in and out of their home countries. Questioning if it is possible to re-contextualize and emphasize the value of artisanship through the partnership of tradition and sophisticated design in Latin American.

The use of deductive approach with a focus on ethnographical qualitative research will determine what are the challenges that do not allow the advancement of Fashion artisanship in the Latin American context today. By identifying where artisanship can be part of the luxury landscape. Questioning what is the accessibility to the fashion market that the communities who develop

and use artisanship have. Along side examining the growth of the fashion industry in Latin America and exploring their buying behavior.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research for this topic includes primary and secondary research sources. For primary research an interview was conducted with an industry professional, founder of a Fashion artisanal luxury brand from the Latin American region with its products being sold worldwide including The Real Real and other luxury concept stores. (Appendix, p.28).

Secondary sources include books and journals with a focus on fashion and cultural studies, Fashion Cultural Studies by Susan B. Kaiser, Fashion Sociology, Fashion as Craft and others. As well as traditional fashion and non-fashion media websites like, BOF, WWD, Smithsonian magazine, Common Objective to analytical and report sources such as UNESCO, Statista and the UN online library. Magazines like Vogue, Harper's Bazaar and L'Officiel also served as valued sources from industry professionals.

A deductive approach with a focus on ethnographical qualitative research will be used in order to analyze the existing theories on artisanship as luxury and its difference in value between the Latin American and Western Europe region. The objective of this research is to find out if it is possible to emphasize more the value of fashion artisanship, and in if it can be consider a fashion luxury product within the Latin American region and how.

WHAT IS ARTISANSHIP?

The different types of artisanship.

According to the Oxford Dictionary, artisanship is defined as a skill in a particular craft most likely made by hand in a traditional way, creating what we call an artisanal or craft product. There is a special nature within these products that create very distinctive features coming from different points of inspiration, history and necessity. According to the Keirsey Temperament Assessment group, 2021 there are many different types of artisanship and artisans. The artisan promoter who has a theatrical talent that makes even the most routine events seem exciting, the crafters are considered the masters of tool work, with an ability to use tools to become experts at all the crafts that need tool skills. The performers they have extraordinary skills in music, comedy, drama, and the Composers who have a great ability to work with differences in color, tone, texture, aroma, and flavor. This descretion will further explain the artisan crafters and composers, as well as the different types of traditional craftsmanship that is one the most tangible manifestations of cultural heritage.

The artisan crafters and composers skills can be combined to create different ranges of artisanal art and products. The combination of both; are artists who have created exquisite pieces with their ability to work with color, texture and different tools. The example of Sheila Hicks, an American textile artist born in 1934, who is captivated by structure, form, and color, has looked to weaving cultures across the globe to shape her work at various scales. By traveling abroad to places like Latin America, she has been able to expand her understanding of the medium she chose to practice with. Similarly to Sheila is Sarah Zapata born in 1988 in Peru, who specializes

in fiber art and creates pieces made from common materials, such as yarn, fabric, paper and other everyday objects.

Craftsmanship within artisanship.

According to the Oxford Dictionary, craftsmanship is defined as the quality of design and work shown in something made by hand; artistry. There are numerous expressions of traditional craftsmanship tools, clothing, jewelry, costumes and props for festivals and performing arts, etc. Most of the products become a heirloom that is passed from generation to generation. Some of the craft expressions are decorative, fashionable, like textiles, and functional. Each share the same core characteristics of tradition, handmade, uniqueness and exclusivity but differentiate in use, design, creativity, process and the use of tools.

All forms of craftsmanship poses the challenge to keep up the traditional forms of craftsmanship alive especially with globalization. According to a study by UNESCO many artisans struggle to adapt to the competition of mass production and multinational corporations that can often supply goods at a lower cost, both in terms of currency and time.

EXPLORING THE COLONIZED MINDSET

‘Because before a piece of art there is a man and before the man there is a society’.

The Sociology of Fashion, A Privileged Point of View, Pedro Mansilla Viedma, 2017.

The socioeconomic environment of a society can create a weight when it comes to the non-acceptance of artisanship. According to Sass Brown on her article Can Global Craft be the future of fashion, 2019. She states that artisanship from developing countries is generally undervalued, it can be consider irrelevant to the history, culture and craft that went into its production.

America was colonized in the 1500's after Europeans “discovery” of the New World. The motives to examine the environment were many, the satisfaction of curiosity, the pursuit of trade, the spread of religion, and the desire for security and political power. This led to a change in dress, tradition, values, religion and way of life which built the society we know today. Pedro Mansilla in the Sociology of Fashion from a Privileged Point of View, 2017 mentions that for a long time we use to dress following a particular social construct that declare how we should dress for every occasion.

Before fashion was a plus that would differentiate the new and the old, but now it is more so the prestige of the brand, due to the fact that fashion was only accessible for the elite, now is accessible for everyone. (Pedro Mansilla. P 2017)

According to Mansilla, 2017 today only the brand can be in charge of setting the difference that exist between the elite and the rest of the population. ‘Clothing is the reproduction of the

geography of a language. Each civilization speaks in a way, eats in a way, dresses in a way.’ (Mansilla, 2017). This can lead us to believe that fashion speaks to what part of society we belong to as individuals, and it can describe us with details of high social value. (Mansilla, 2017), also mentions that we dress as who we are but also as who society tells us we are. This goes back to what was taught since the colonization by the Spaniards imposing their culture onto the Indians, which includes religion, clothing, language, and the idea of property. Latin America was submerged by these new ideas and acquired them in order to survive the colonization; it became their new way of life. This led to traditions and knowledge being forgotten. This would include the know how of certain crafts that now only a few still practice and is passed on from generation to generation.

The understanding of Consumer Culture in fashion.

According to Oxford Bibliographies last updated in 2015, consumer culture is a form of material culture facilitated by the market, which thus created a particular relationship between the consumer and the goods or services he or she uses or consumes.

Steven Miles expresses in an academic article on Oxford Bibliographies 2021 that, consumer culture gives us the tools to express who it is that we are, but while doing so it simultaneously reinforces an economic system in which the individual’s ability to be free or to choose is constrained. ‘Consumer culture is about the relationship between the material and the cultural’. (Miles, 2021). When it comes to fashion, we consume it because of necessity, to be covered and protected by clothing. Analyzing what consumer culture means, and our ego desire to have more,

it can be said that buying garments has become more than a necessity. We could say that is way to showcase who we are and our status. According to Erchart Tolle in his book *New Earth*, 2005 ‘In many cases you are not buying a product but an “identity enhancer.” Designer labels are primarily collective identities that you buy into’(Tolle 2005). That can be an example of how Haute Couture and Luxury fashion can play a role where the consumer is able to pick pieces that are tailored to satisfy their need of expression, where the fashion pieces are unique, quality can be a priority and status a plus. ‘The satisfaction of our “need for expression”, the ego is short-lived and so you keep looking for more, keep buying, keep consuming’ (Tolle, 2005).

As a consumer society we may have created a connection with material things, with having more in order to feel identified, to create a sense of achievement. We tend to measure our progress and success with more, an endless growth manifested to the world by showcasing the amount of tangible and recognizable things we own. Having something incredibly well made, but without a big designer label to show, could easily count as nothing because it may not be recognizable to others. A brand with small recognition can be pushed off as a popular known identity, so people tend to move away from it, and follow trends that are on peak which can help to showcase their status and never ending growth.

The world today shows us how the colonization has shaped the way of living, especially when it came to imposing ideas of property and the ways to showcase status. This can bring us to consumer culture. It can be said that what we call today high fashion has always been something

that only a few can afford, it is a luxury to be able to obtain high-end pieces that not only showcase beauty and identity but represent success.

THE SOCIOECONOMIC LANDSCAPE IN LATIN AMERICA

With the analysis of social trends which measure the socioeconomic impact of 2020, the Social Panorama states that the region of Latin America is characterized by poor and ineffective health and social protection systems, with marginalized urban settlements where there is a lack of access to basic services. It is also affected by migratory flows and population displacement. Unfortunately this region was hit by COVID-19 as hard as the rest of the world which aggravated different scenarios of exclusion and discrimination that could spark great vulnerability when it comes to the health, social and economical effects of the disease. The population's living conditions hardens because of the Pandemic but also the slow decrease of poverty and inequality from five years prior, where public discontent was already growing. The hit of the Pandemic maximized the current economic and social problems in Latin America including the loss of labour income due to the ongoing interruption of employment.

Inequality can lead to a lack of social protection to certain groups which can include, afro-descendants, indigenous people, rural dwellers, people with disabilities and immigrants. Social unrest in the Latin American region is very much linked to inequality and discrimination according to The Social Panorama of Latin America, 2020. As well as the perception that the inequalities in all areas can be the result of an one sided social and economic system. The Latin American Economic Outlook (LEO) 2020 focuses on the role of digital transformation in helping to navigate through challenging times where access to resources, revenues and power remained unequally distributed at local, national and international levels. There has been a significant amount of emigration, especially to oil-rich Venezuela and to the United States, (Britannica 2022). Emigration leads towards exposure to other cultures and perspectives of the world.

It can be implied that fashion shifts due to different variables including what is happening in a region or country. Latin America is rich in cultural heritage which can influence artisanship within the fashion industry. ‘The role of the church is embedded in this region’s cultural heritage’ (Britannica 2022). When it comes to creative influence, imagery and symbolism can be seen in different products but when talking about traditional and artisanal goods the people practicing this craft are usually part of communities that follow different beliefs. The local consumers of these handicrafts are most likely to be part of a recognizable religion. Approximately 57 percent of Latin American countries claimed to be catholic. (Statista, 2020). Probably leading to a wake of curiosity when it comes to a variety of artisanal goods procedures, designs and history. Which can bring growth in textile production, artisanal craft and the manufacture of ceramics and pottery.

The class structure in Latin America is still very much defined by race, which is a problematic cultural aspect leftover from Spaniards rule, leaving a lot of indigenous communities at the bottom of the chain, where they most likely are part of a marginalize group and experiencing poverty. As mentioned before each of Latin American indigenous community has different traditions, like a traditional style of dress, food and craft practices. This includes in Colombia, the Wayuu bag, in Ecuador, the toquilla straw weaving and more. Some of the handmade textiles created by these cultures could be considered ones of the most beautiful and well crafted. Especially when there is a use of fascinating practices, like in Peru the Shipibo-Konibo culture uses Ayahuasca, a hallucinogenic vine to create hand-painted textiles. According to Britannica,

2021 they face competition from cheap Chinese textile imports. By acquiring local artisanal products made within 100 percent traditional, handcrafted and natural standards. Journalist Carmen Baroiu in *The Ethics behind artisan-made for Ammalaya 2022*, mentions that the consumer is supporting local workers, helping reduce waste, and promote a transparent supply chain. 'These products are more labor intensive, and people are able to see the details on the final products, which makes their cost much higher than any equivalent mass-produced version of the item'. (Carmen Baroiu, 2022). The price is higher in the national and international market, which sometimes makes it difficult for these artisans to be able to reach economic growth. This also is part of the lack of social protection to these groups because of the socio-economic context they are exposed to.

The perception of artisanship in Latin America.

Traditional craft often lacks the amount of design process to get to the final product in difference to what we see in luxury houses. This can result in an undervalued craft product that would most likely not gain popularity in the luxury market, which ultimately is the best placed market to appreciate artisanship and craft. Luxury goods tend to, as every other product and art piece, gain popularity when they have visibility and when they come from an already established brand or artist. For any new comer offering any type of product is hard to gain credibility and popularity, but especially when it comes to luxury fashion, accessories and art. More so in the Latin American region where fashion usually trickles down from the European / North American society, where trends tend to be developed and usually people look up to these powerful fashion hubs Paris, Milan, London and New York.

‘The lowers classes imitate the life-style and appearance of the upper classes’, forcing the latter to innovate in order to maintain their social distinctiveness, which initiates yet another round of mimicry and innovation, and so on’. (The Empire of Fashion, Gilles Lipovetsky 1987).

Having brands like Dior, Valentino and Alexander McQueen presenting Haute Couture which means high dressmaking, where most of the pieces are crafted by hand with certain criteria. “Haute couture is a spearhead in terms of creation — a fantastic laboratory of both craftsmanship and design innovation,” says Ralph Toledano, president of the Fédération de la Haute Couture et de la Mode. This all started in the mid 19th century by Charles Federick Worth who brought to life the first Haute Couture house in Paris, which was exclusively for elite upper class women. According to the history of haute couture in Hapers Bazaar, 2017 and Chere Di Boscio for Eluxe Magazine, 2020. During this time designers could label themselves as couturiers by following certain specifications like, designs must be made-to-order for private clients, with one or more fittings. Each atelier must have at least 20 members of staff and each season, the couture house must present a collection of at least 35 runs with both daytime and evening wear to the Paris press. This whole process and qualifications brought success to some of the most well known couture brands. Today brands like Valentino, Dior and others mentioned before not only show Haute Couture but also ready to wear, which is clothing that is pre-manufactured and sold after is finished, it doesn’t involved the same amount of time and craft work like couture. With this being said it makes the pieces cheaper and more accessible to the consumers, which is often what is bought within the Latin American market. Usually statement pieces from high-end brands are

what is most seen and sold. This is often because of the media influence, and as mentioned in chapters before they can showcase in a subtle way wealth and status.

Artisanal Products tend to be recognized by locals because of the region they come from and less by the name of a brand or specific artisans designers.

Latin America and fashion artisanal products.

Visibility and world recognition often lack when it comes to local products, like artisan made or locally designed. There are many skilled artisans, artists and workers that can make a quality and well designed product. Like the Panama Hat, the Wayuu bag, straw bags, and more. This products are known around the globe and have been reproduced everywhere with different materials and designs by millennial non-artisan brands, like Chloe, Sandro, Loewe, who have the resources to mass produce and market. In difference for local artisans, the Latin America economic landscape creates an obstacle for the producer and the consumer. Without resources there is a lack of growth, visibility and knowledge. As mentioned before artisans are usually the ones who make up the lower-middle class so, bigger brands reach out to hire them because their expertise and knowledge since it is harder for them to be able to invest in their own brand.

Local brands like Colombian Style who are dedicated to sell Wayuu Bags, work directly with the artisans from the Wayuu Tribe, yet they are not known worldwide but the product is. The Wayuu bag comes form the indigenous Colombian Wayuu Tribe. They have conserved their cultural traditions including the weaving taught through their mythology by the spider Wale Kerü. This bag takes around 15 to 20 days to create and each shape represents how the Wayuu tribe is

connected with the world and nature. They are known as people from the sun, water and soil, these elements are represented by the bag's unique style.



Mochila Wayuu, La Guajira, Colombia - Imagen: Artesanias de Colombia

A similar well known artisanal fashion accessory is the Panama Hat, which comes from Ecuador's coastal provinces Guayas and Manabí, where the toquilla straw grows. Pre-Inca cultures practiced the weaving of head gear with toquilla straw, the material is very thin and lightweight which was perfect for farmers to work in the sun. The hat, which takes around three to four days to be made became popular when the Canal of Panama was being built and it was exported from Ecuador to Panama and to the rest of the world. Toquilla straw is now used to create and design other accessories like handbags.

One of the brands who has opened its horizons from Ecuador to the rest of the world is Marina. All of their products which include hats and handbags are manufactured by artisan women in the western coast of Ecuador with an artisanal concept and design aesthetics. They are dedicated to provide creative job opportunities for artisans, highlighting their skill and ensure the survival of Ecuadorian crafts. According to the Founder of Marina, artisanal products are within the premium category because it doesn't represent fast fashion. A product made by hand, with a unique technique and love will always be an object of luxury.

“Ecuadorians should be very proud of their artisanship; since the weaving of the Straw hat has been named an Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO”. (Fernando Abad 2022).



Bag Cirlo, Toquilla Straw, Ecuador - Image: Our Marina



Toquilla Straw Placement, Marina - Image: MyPanamaHat

THE VALUE OF ARTISANSHIP FROM LATIN AMERICA IN WESTERN CULTURE

The global market of artisanal goods is growing. IMARC Group expects the market to grow at a CAGR of around 10%. North America is the region where consumers are willing to spend substantially on handcrafted goods according to the IMARC group on the handcraft market forecast 2021-2026.

As mentioned before, Haute Couture is a huge part of the culture in western countries especially where it originated, in France. With that said, craftsmanship has been valued and over valued for a while with the birth of artists and designers that use handcraft and traditional practices as part of their DNA. For example big luxury brands that target millennials like Chloé, in an article by Flaunt Magazine, Olivia Novato, 2022 mentions that in the brand's Spring/Summer 22 collection Chloé created a goal to “value the relationship between consumers and local producers, by expanding the number of products that are handcrafted by independent artisans.” (Novato, 2021).



Chloé SS/22- Image: Chloé



Fringes Bucket bag in calfskin - Image: Loewe

Another luxury brand worth mentioning because of its appreciation of artisanship and art is Loewe. Their foundation established in 1988 supports and promotes creative educational programs and safeguards heritage in the fields of poetry, dance, photography, art and craft. According to the Loewe foundation, 2022 the Craft Prize seeks to acknowledge and support international artisans that create objects of superior aesthetic value. It can be said that the invention of new technologies and mass producing has made millennials appreciate more the time and process that it takes to make, create and design new things as well as increasing the appreciation of the old and the history behind pieces. The example of Loewe and Chloé can lead us to think that people are looking to highlight this, to put into view artisanship and its contribution to the culture of our time.

According to the Founder of Marina, the majority consumers of Latin American handicrafts are foreigners, specifically Europeans who value work by hand. They admire when an artisan women weave such a fine hat (Straw Hat) with only their fingertips. We could say that the difference between a foreign buyer and a local, when it comes to handicrafts goods is that a foreigner could be more curious about the ancient history of the Latin American community, the creativity and process at the moment of creating their handcrafted products. An example can be Tagua Palm buttons or mostly known as Corozo buttons, made with a precious stone that is collected from the Ecuadorian coast and is carved by artisans. The carving of the stone creates white tagua buttons that are dyed in various colors and modified in different sizes. The founder of Marina, Fernando states that currently European premium and luxury companies are interested in having in their collections buttons made by an artisan community consolidated by women and men with fair pay and creative work. This is the case for a new premium UK brand Issue Twelve,

where their majority of fabrics, yarns and trims are sourced using natural and certified fibers, processed in low-impact mills, that favors family run businesses which value the environment, social responsibility and craftsmanship. All these examples can lead us to believe that foreigners admire and value the handmade, creative work with fair pay for artisans.

CONCLUSION

After analyzing what is behind the value of artisanal fashion in Latin America vs in the Western European region; it can be said that in order to see a change in perceptive and in value there needs to be more visibility in the story, the process, in other words the behind the scenes of it all. National and international brands could create a better communication strategy that includes the history of traditions, communities and countries where this all started. For international brands like the ones mentioned before, Chloé, Loewe and Issue Twelve, should shift their storytelling on artisanal made products more towards the history of the artisans and why was this style of production born. There needs to be an inclusion of the artisans and their cultural background within the communication strategy to promote these luxury products. These products made with care and with excellent quality need brands that are able to communicate well the story of their artisans and their traditional processes.

Moving back to the national issue when it comes to the value of handcrafts; Latin America is a region with a lot of difficulties within their socioeconomic context. It makes it hard for national brands or even the artisan workers to stand out of the crowd without external help. There are brands that are trying to make a difference with their investment in artisanal crafts and in trying to grow local interest to bring in local customers. This comes to a lot of work and money with probably a limited amount of resources. With a well portrayed history, clients will be able understand more why a higher price highlights a luxury product. It is a difficult thing to achieve especially with the COVID-19 crisis, income and social inequality that exists in the Latin American region. But we live in a society where social media holds great power, which helps

local brands get exposure and opportunities of collaborations with already established and recognizable brands.

Perfectly made images are posted on our feeds every single day with its caption and tags, once it catches our attention we tend to keep digging. Pairing a quality product plus, a quality image with a well told story tends to create more interest in the consumer. The perception of fashion artisanal products in Latin America can slowly change for the better, gaining local value with the help of brands collaborating with artisans and creating collections that are appreciative of these all different, beautiful and surly not very common traditional crafts.

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Appendix:

Interview:

Fernando Abad, Founder of Marina

Marina is an Ecuadorian Panama Hat and Handbag brand handcrafted from toquilla straw by women artisans. Their products are sold worldwide, including The Real Real, Someone Somewhere concept store in France, Wild Fabric in Dubai and other luxury concept stores.

1. Do you think that Artisanal products are valued well in Latin America? What do you think is needed for its consumption to grow?

I think that artisanal products made with wood, Teca, toquilla straw, or clay are not well valued in Latin America. For the consumptions of these type of products to grow there needs to be a development in their history of the artisans and why was this way of production born. An example can be artisanal products made with ceramic and clay from the Valdivia community or the lovers from Sumpa in Santa Elena.

2. Do you think that artisanal products can be consider a luxury or premium product?

Yes, handcrafted products are a premium or luxury product because they do not represent Fast Fashion. A handmade product, with a unique technique and made with love, will always be a luxury object. An example is the toquilla straw hats, which each artisan cuts and sulfurize their own straw to then weave a hat that takes between 3-4 days, 100% by hand.

3. Do you think that Latin Americans are the majority of consumers of artisanal goods in their countries?

No, Latin Americans are the smallest percentage of purchasers of handicrafts from their own countries. It can be said that is because they have a lot of history at hand, these products are not valued and they consider that because they are part of their day to day they should not have such a high price, showing it as a NON-PREMIUM price.

The majority consumers of Latin American handicrafts are especially foreigners, specifically Europeans who value work by hand. They admire when an artisan women weave such a fine hat (Straw Hat) with only their fingertips and a bit of water.

Just as Mexicans are very proud of their accent and their food, which is a cultural heritage of humanity. We Ecuadorians should be very proud of our food and our crafts; since the weaving of the Straw hat has been named an Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO.

4. What is the difference between the foreigner buyer and the local in Latin American artisanal products?

The difference between a foreigner buyer and the local ones about handicrafts in Latin America is how they value designed and handmade objects. Europeans trust the ancient stories of each Latin community, where they have customs, creativity and happiness when creating their products by hand.

An example could be Tagua buttons, a precious stone that is collected from the Ecuadorian coast and carved by artisans. This carving creates white Tagua buttons that are dyed in various colors and modified in different sizes. Currently European premium and luxury companies are interested in having in their collections buttons made by an artisan community consolidated by women and men with fair pay and creative work.

Foreigners admire the handmade, creative and fairly paid work of the artisans.

5. What do you think is missing in Latin America to promote and elevate local artisanal products?

I think that a good story and a good plan would help to promote handicrafts in different Latin American countries. Handcrafted products with excellent quality do not have brands that tell their story well, their processes and also that tell about the artisans behind the production.

With a great story, customers will understand why a high price highlights a premium or luxury product.

6. Do you think is important to change and elevate how artisanal products are represented and market in the country so they can gain importance and generate more interest for the local consumer?

It is important that the products are well represented, that the history, the labels and the packaging represent the work that it took the artisan to make that product. A good strategy to generate more interest locally is to include this everywhere...for example, every time you go to the beach, don't miss a toquilla straw hat, or always involve local purchases.

7. If there was a change on image, marketing or design of artisanal products do you think that could create a rise in local consumption?

I think that with an excellent strategy, a good brand and good communication, the percentage of local buyers would increase. Always loving the local is the most important thing.

ARTIFACT:

For my artifact I decided to create a physical photobook showcasing some Latin American artisanal fashion accessories, through a fashion editorial called “Más allá de...” which means that beyond a product, a brand or something handmade there is an artisan who, with every knit tells their story.

Más allá de...

Más allá de una cartera

Más allá de un sombrero

Más allá de una marca

Más allá de lo hecho a mano hay un artesano

que con cada tejido cuenta una historia.

This book is a way of showing artisanal fashion with premium quality imagery, along side creative storytelling which brings attention to not only the products, but the history behind them and the artisans. Each image will be accompanied by different interesting facts of the history behind the products. The photobook will portray how artisanal products from Latin America can be elevated while including elements for the consumer to gain interest about the cultural history these have.