

ARTICLE

Work values in the context of the creative economy: a study of female artisan-entrepreneurs in natural cosmetics

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Abstract

Work values represent what individuals consider important in the work environment, such as motivation, behaviors, and attitudes. Research on this topic reaches different groups of workers, including those in the creative economy, whose products and services reflect creativity, talent, and local culture. In this scenario, the artisanal natural cosmetics sector, specifically soapmaking, proposes a production guided by social, environmental, and economic sustainability. Thus, this work aims to analyze how work values manifest among female entrepreneurs in the artisanal natural cosmetics sector. The locus is the Brazilian city Fortaleza, which, in 2019, was recognized by Unesco as a Creative City. Data was collected through interviews based on a qualitative adaptation of the Revised Work Values Scale. Content analysis was conducted using Atlas.ti software. The results show that professional fulfillment and social relations are the most present values, especially in terms of creative work and collaboration for the development of society. The existence of a collaborative network was demonstrated, and the lack of specific regulation was found to be the main obstacle to growth. In addition, different meanings emerged from those brought by the theory for the values of stability and fulfillment, pointing to other configurations for activities not inserted in hegemonic economic models.

Keywords: Work values. Creative economy. Female artisan-entrepreneurs. Artisanal natural cosmetics. Artisanal natural soapmaking.

Valores do trabalho no contexto da economia criativa: um estudo com artesãs-empendedoras da cosmética natural

Resumo

Valores do trabalho representam o que os indivíduos consideram importante no ambiente laboral, suas motivações, seus comportamentos e suas atitudes. Pesquisas sobre esse tema alcançam diversos grupos, inclusive os de economia criativa, cujos produtos e serviços refletem criatividade, talento e cultura local. Nesse cenário, o setor de cosmética natural artesanal, especificamente a saboaria, propõe uma produção pautada pela sustentabilidade social, ambiental e econômica. Assim, este artigo busca analisar como os valores do trabalho se manifestam entre as artesãs-empendedoras do setor de cosmética natural. O locus é Fortaleza, capital do Ceará, chancelada em 2019 como cidade criativa pela Organização das Nações Unidas para a Educação, a Ciência e a Cultura (Unesco). Na coleta de dados, foram realizadas entrevistas baseadas numa adaptação qualitativa da Escala Revisada de Valores Relativos ao Trabalho (EVT-R). O processo se deu por meio de análise de conteúdo, com auxílio do Atlas.ti. Os resultados mostram que valores de “realização profissional” e de “relações sociais” são os temas mais mencionados, em especialmente ter um trabalho criativo e colaborar para o desenvolvimento da sociedade. Evidenciou-se uma rede colaborativa e revelou-se que a inexistência de regulamentação específica é a principal barreira para o crescimento do trabalho. Ademais, emergiram sentidos diversos daqueles trazidos pela teoria para os valores de estabilidade e de realização, apontando outras configurações para atividades não inseridas em modelos econômicos hegemônicos.

Palavras-chave: Valores do trabalho. Economia criativa. Artesãs-empendedoras. Cosmética natural artesanal. Saboaria natural artesanal.

Valores laborales en el contexto de la economía creativa: un estudio de mujeres artesanas empendedoras de cosmética natural

Resumen

Los valores laborales representan lo que los individuos consideran importante en el entorno de trabajo, sus motivaciones, comportamientos y actitudes. La investigación sobre este tema llega a diferentes grupos de trabajadores, incluidos los de la economía creativa, cuyos productos y servicios reflejan la creatividad, el talento y la cultura local. En este escenario, el sector de la cosmética natural artesanal, específicamente la jabonería, propone una producción guiada por la sostenibilidad social, medioambiental y económica. Así, este artículo pretende analizar cómo se manifiestan los valores del trabajo entre las empendedoras del sector de la cosmética natural artesanal. El *locus* es Fortaleza, capital del estado de Ceará – Brasil, que en 2019 fue reconocida por la Unesco como Ciudad Creativa. Se utilizó una adaptación cualitativa de la Escala Revisada de Valores Relativos al Trabajo (EVT-R) y entrevistas semiestructuradas para recopilar datos de artesanas de cosméticos naturales. Para la observación de los datos se aplicó el análisis de contenido utilizando el programa Atlas.ti. Los resultados muestran que realización profesional y relaciones sociales son los valores más presentes, especialmente tener un trabajo creativo y colaborar al desarrollo de la sociedad. Se demostró la existencia de una red colaborativa de mujeres y se encontró que la falta de regulación específica es el principal obstáculo para el crecimiento de las artesanas. Asimismo, surgieron significados diferentes de los aportados por la teoría para los valores estabilidad y realización, señalando otras configuraciones para actividades que no se insertan en modelos económicos hegemónicos, como la actividad artesanal.

Palabras clave: Valores laborales. Economía creativa. Artesanas empendedoras. Cosmética natural artesanal. Jabonería natural artesanal.

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INTRODUCTION

Work has a central place in human life, since it is a source of income and subsistence, a mechanism for participation and social insertion, as well as for making it possible to achieve goals. In this context, the theory of work values seeks to understand the reasons why individuals work, their alternatives, their behaviors and their attitudes towards their profession (Porto & Tamayo, 2003).

Derived from Schwartz's (1992) values theory, work values have been applied to different occupations, culminating in the construction of scales. In Brazil, Porto and Tamayo's (2003) Work Values Scale (WVS) stood out, revised by Porto and Pilati (2010), consolidating the Revised Work Values Scale (WVS-R), which groups 34 items into 4 factors: fulfillment, social relations, prestige and stability.

This study investigates work values in the field of creative economy, using a taxonomy that differs from the Anglo-Saxon idea of creative industry. In this research, creative economy represents a more endogenous economic model (Leitão, 2018), focused on sharing knowledge and practices, as opposed to intellectual property, which is the motto of the Anglo-Saxon conception and is of little use in the context of the natural cosmetics artisans, the subjects of this research.

Creative economy is an alternative for the development of emerging economies, combining aspects such as continued growth, dynamism in international trade and employment opportunities in crisis contexts (Gouvea et al., 2020). As a set of activities whose inputs are creativity and knowledge (Leitão, 2018), it materializes the simultaneity of economic and cultural development, seen as parts of sustainable development (Yan & Liu, 2023).

This research focuses on artisanal and natural cosmetics, specifically soapmaking, an ancestral practice based on the use of flora as a base for personal care, hygiene, beauty and therapy products (Joshi & Pawar, 2015). This activity brings with it a proposal for reducing pollution, using renewable resources, preserving species and animal welfare, as well as self-care, valuing natural beauty, fair trade practices and reducing consumption (Lin et al., 2018; Liobikiene & Bernatoniene, 2017; Rodrigues et al., 2021).

Studies linking the theory of work values to the creative economy are still incipient. During this research, a survey was carried out on Brazilian and international scientific production databases, concluding that work values have been widely studied in relation to traditional professions inserted in linear and hegemonic economic models, resulting in a theoretical-empirical gap when it comes to activities related to creative economy.

In view of the above, this article, which takes a qualitative and exploratory-descriptive approach, aims to analyze how work values are manifested among female entrepreneurs in the artisanal natural cosmetics sector. The locus of the research is the city of Fortaleza, capital of the state of Ceará (Brazil), designated a Creative City of Design (Prefeitura de Fortaleza, 2019) by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. The research investigates the entrepreneurial environment for artisanal natural cosmetics businesses and expands studies on work values within the creative economy, an association that is still little explored. Artisanal natural cosmetics is emerging as a growing segment, in line with social demands such as changes in consumption and sustainability (Jog & Singhal, 2019; Lin et al., 2018), which puts the sector in the spotlight.

WORK VALUES

Work values are hierarchically organized principles or beliefs about goals or rewards that people seek through their jobs and that guide their evaluations of results, context, work alternatives, as well as their behavior (Porto & Tamayo, 2003, p. 146), revealing motivations. Until the 1990s, most research on the subject was not based on solid models. In Brazil, Porto and Tamayo (2003) developed the WVS. The instrument contained 45 values, grouped into 4 factors: professional fulfillment (seeking pleasure, stimulation and independence of thought and action), social relations (seeking positive social relations and contributing to society through work), prestige (seeking influence over other people and success) and stability (seeking security and financial stability).

Studies such as those by Campos et al. (2017), M. R. M. S. Silva et al. (2010), and F. E. R. Silva et al. (2020) have focused on analyzing work values in relation to the male and female genders. M. R. M. S. Silva et al. (2010) show that women prioritize values linked to professional fulfillment and stability, such as pleasure and achievement, independence of thought and action, as well as intellectual autonomy and the exercise of creativity, security, and order in life. Men, on the other hand, prioritize values related to social relationships and prestige, such as authority, professional success, and power of influence.

These results corroborate the studies by Porto and Tamayo (2007), for whom women seek professional fulfillment as a compensatory mechanism, since the goals sought in other contexts are historically disadvantaged due to the structural differences in male and female roles. At the same time, the growing role of women as breadwinners could also explain why they value aspects related to stability (M. R. M. S. Silva et al., 2010).

Campos et al. (2017) pointed out that women emphasize the search for fulfillment, expressed by the practice of intellectually stimulating work, autonomy, freedom of thought and action, and stability, manifested by material security.

F. E. R. Silva et al. (2020) assessed the work values of women who work in the creative economy in Fortaleza, showing that those of fulfillment are the most evident, which is manifested through personal satisfaction, achievement and happiness with a job that requires originality and creativity.

The WVS was revised by Porto and Pilati (2010), resulting in a scale with 34 items, grouped into 6 factors corresponding to Schwartz’s (1992) motivational types, which, in turn, were grouped into motivational sets, corresponding to the factors of Porto and Tamayo’s (2003) WVS, as shown in Box 1. The WVS-R is therefore a validated and revised scale, which gives it reliability. Porto and Pilati (2010) point out that the new items bring the WVS-R closer to Schwartz’s (1992) values theory.

Box 1
WVS-R items and motivational types and sets

Motivational sets	Motivational types	WVS-R items
Social relations	Universalism/ Benevolence	Helping others
		Collaborating in the development of society
		Fighting social injustice
		Being useful to society
		Having social commitment
Stability	Conformity	Following work regulations
		Respecting the hierarchy
		Having a work environment with a clear hierarchy
		Having an organized workplace
	Security	Earning money
		Being able to support myself financially
		Being financially independent
		Better living conditions
Prestige	Power	Obtaining financial stability
		Competing with colleagues to achieve professional goals
		Supervising other people
		Fame
		Having prestige
		Having a risky job

Continue

Motivational sets	Motivational types	WVS-R items
Prestige	Achievement	Demonstrating my skills
		Being admired for my work
		Being successful in my profession
		Being recognized for the results of my work
		Being respected for my skills
Professional fulfillment	Stimulation/ self-direction	Having a creative job
		Having innovative work
		Having a job that allows you to see new places
		Having a job that allows you to meet new people
		Having a job that allows you to express your knowledge
		Having a job that requires originality
		Having a socially recognized profession
		Having autonomy in carrying out tasks
		Having constant challenges
Having the freedom to decide how I do my job		

Source: Adapted by the authors based on Brandão et al. (2015), Cammarosano (2012), and Porto and Pilati (2010).

The WVS-R has been used in several studies. From a gender perspective, Potrich et al. (2015) developed a model of work values by testing for gender invariance. The results show that the model is variant, with women attributing greater importance to the factors “self-direction and stimulation”, “universalism and benevolence” and “achievement and power” than men. The “power” factor was the one with the greatest difference in valuation, showing that women attach far greater importance to it.

Brandão et al. (2015) showed that the hierarchy of values for the group of women surveyed is as follows: stability, professional fulfillment, social relations and prestige. Priority stability values are more related to financial stability (security) than to job stability (conformity).

Cammarosano (2012) arrived at the following hierarchy: social relations, professional fulfillment, stability and prestige, revealing that women attach greater importance to the values of professional fulfillment and prestige than men.

Veiga et al. (2020) analyzed the predictive role of entrepreneurial profile and work values in entrepreneurial intention, finding that it is related to the search for opportunities and risky and innovative work, linked to aspects of power and prestige. Women attributed greater importance to dimensions such as universalism and benevolence, while men attributed greater importance to aspects relating to autonomy and opportunity.

As for entrepreneurship, Andrade et al. (2014) found a positive relationship between entrepreneurial creativity and pure challenge, while Veiga and Parreira (2015) concluded that there are significant correlations between all the dimensions of the entrepreneurial profile and the values of self-direction and stimulation, as well as professional fulfillment.

These studies focused on subjects in multinationals, research and development organizations, the public service and even students. Thus, there is a lack of research relating the theory of work values to the field of creative activities.

CREATIVE ECONOMY AND ARTISANAL NATURAL COSMETICS

Creative economy refers to activities whose processes and products are based on culture, skills and everyday knowledge (Gouvea et al., 2020), bringing economic, cultural and social impacts by mobilizing identities and boosting territories (Santos & Davel, 2022), as well as aspects that point to a transition from the hegemonic (predatory) economic model to a more sustainable one, which seeks to reduce the environmental risks of economic activities and improve social well-being (Pratt, 2022; Troiani et al., 2022).

Creative economy activities stand out for their sustainability principles, as is the case with fashion, handicrafts and artisanal natural cosmetics. Natural cosmetology, especially soapmaking, in which the artisans participating in this research are involved, is an ancient practice of civilizations such as the Egyptians, Indians, Africans and indigenous Brazilians. It consists of using herbs, roots, leaves and fruits as the basis for personal care products, hygiene, beauty and healing and therapy items (Joshi & Pawar, 2015), demanding a concern for clean and adequate production, taking into account the increasingly limited availability of natural resources (Iyengar & Chandrashekar, 2023; Fortunati et al., 2020; Rodrigues et al., 2021).

In order to be artisanal, cosmetics require the creative work of the artisans, who uses their skill to create a product that, in addition to its cosmetic value, also has symbolic values and cultural identity. Artisanal natural cosmetics represents the recovery of traditional peoples' knowledge, such as knowledge of flora and botany, and evokes aspects such as the sacred feminine and esotericism, culminating in products loaded with meaning and symbolism (Achilles, 2019; Ministério de Desenvolvimento, Indústria e Comércio Exterior, 2010; F. E. R. Silva et al., 2020).

This difference between artisanal and industrial cosmetics should have an impact on the organization of the sector and the regulation of the activity. However, the Brazilian Health Regulatory Agency (Anvisa) equates the small artisans in natural cosmetics with the large cosmetics industry, establishing the same conditions and requirements for both. The current rule does not take into account the particularities of artisanal workers. The Brazilian Bill nº. 331 (2016) seeks to amend the text of the Handicrafts Law (Lei nº 13.180, 2015) to include the activity of artisanal soapmaking, arguing that soapmaking artisans "suffer from excessive legislative rigidity, since there are no clear distinctions between handicrafts and large industry in the soapmaking activity".

Such barriers are harmful, "since stimulating the activity would contribute to the proliferation of micro and small businesses in the sector, as well as valuing the elements of identity and cultural affirmation present in artisanal soapmaking" (Projeto de Lei do Senado nº 331, 2016, p. 3). However, on consulting the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies' website in June 2023, the Bill, proposed in 2016 and approved by the Senate in 2017, was still pending approval. Furthermore, artisanal cosmetics is not even recognized as an economic activity by the Brazilian National Classification of Economic Activities (CNAE).

Thus, there are a number of barriers to the growth and viability of artisanal natural cosmetics businesses, which is a loss of potential for the activity, according to Jog and Singhal (2019), Lin et al. (2018), and Liobikiene and Bernatoniene (2017). Given the strong consumer market for cosmetics in Brazil and its rich biodiversity, there is an urgent need for civil and governmental initiatives to strengthen the sector.

METHODOLOGY

The research is classified as qualitative, exploratory-descriptive and field research (Marconi & Lakatos, 2021). The subjects investigated were women artisan-entrepreneurs in the artisanal natural cosmetics sector in the city of Fortaleza (state of Ceará, Brazil). The entrepreneurs were reached using the snowball technique (Vincent & Thompson, 2022). The selection criteria were to be a natural cosmetics artisan, to work in Fortaleza and to agree to the terms of the research.

Primary data, collected through semi-structured interviews, guided by a script structured in blocks, were used: the first block with questions about the socio-economic profile of the participants, the second block with questions about their enterprises and their work with artisanal natural cosmetics and, finally, the third block consisting of the qualitative adaptation of the WVS-R (Porto & Pilati, 2010), in which the artisan-entrepreneurs were asked about the meanings they attributed to each value of the WVS-R and how these were manifested in their daily working lives.

The option of adapting a quantitative instrument to a qualitative script was justified by the interest in understanding, beyond the mere hierarchization of work values, which meanings the group surveyed gives to these values. The WVS-R has already proven to be a suitable model for industrial jobs, but little can be said about its suitability for creative economy trades. Thus, the qualitative adaptation could provide new elements for thinking about work values in realities that have already changed since 2010, when the WVS was revised.

Seven natural cosmetics women artisans were interviewed remotely, all in accordance with the informed consent form. This number is justified by the low number of businesses in the sector, as well as the data saturation point (Chitac, 2022).

To analyze the data, content analysis was used (Bardin, 2016), carried out in 3 stages: pre-analysis (floating reading and constitution of the data *corpus*), exploration of the material (coding, enumeration, and categorization of the records) and treatment and interpretation of the results obtained. Theoretical (Box 1) and empirical (Figure 2) categories were used (Vaismoradi & Snelgrove, 2019), with the help of Atlas.ti software.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Aiming for anonymity, the names of the interlocutors have been replaced by code names (Artisan 1, Artisan 2 and so on). Their ages range from 29 to 42, making up a profile of young adults with previous experience of their ventures. Two of them are mothers – one of them solo. One aspect they have in common is that, despite their different paths, they have all sought training in their new craft.

Concerning their businesses, they have been in existence for an average of 3.5 years and are the main source of income for the interviewees, with the exception of Artisan 2. They pointed out difficulties and barriers regarding their businesses, with the lack of regulation being a unanimous aspect. For Artisan 3, this is the biggest challenge.

As for work values, a semantic network was generated in Atlas.ti based on the categorization of the reports (Figure 1). The image summarizes the research findings, explaining the work values items that were most relevant and meaningful to the artisans. Items that were not important, such as those related to hierarchy and competition, were excluded from the figure, while those with similar meanings were grouped together.

Professional fulfillment

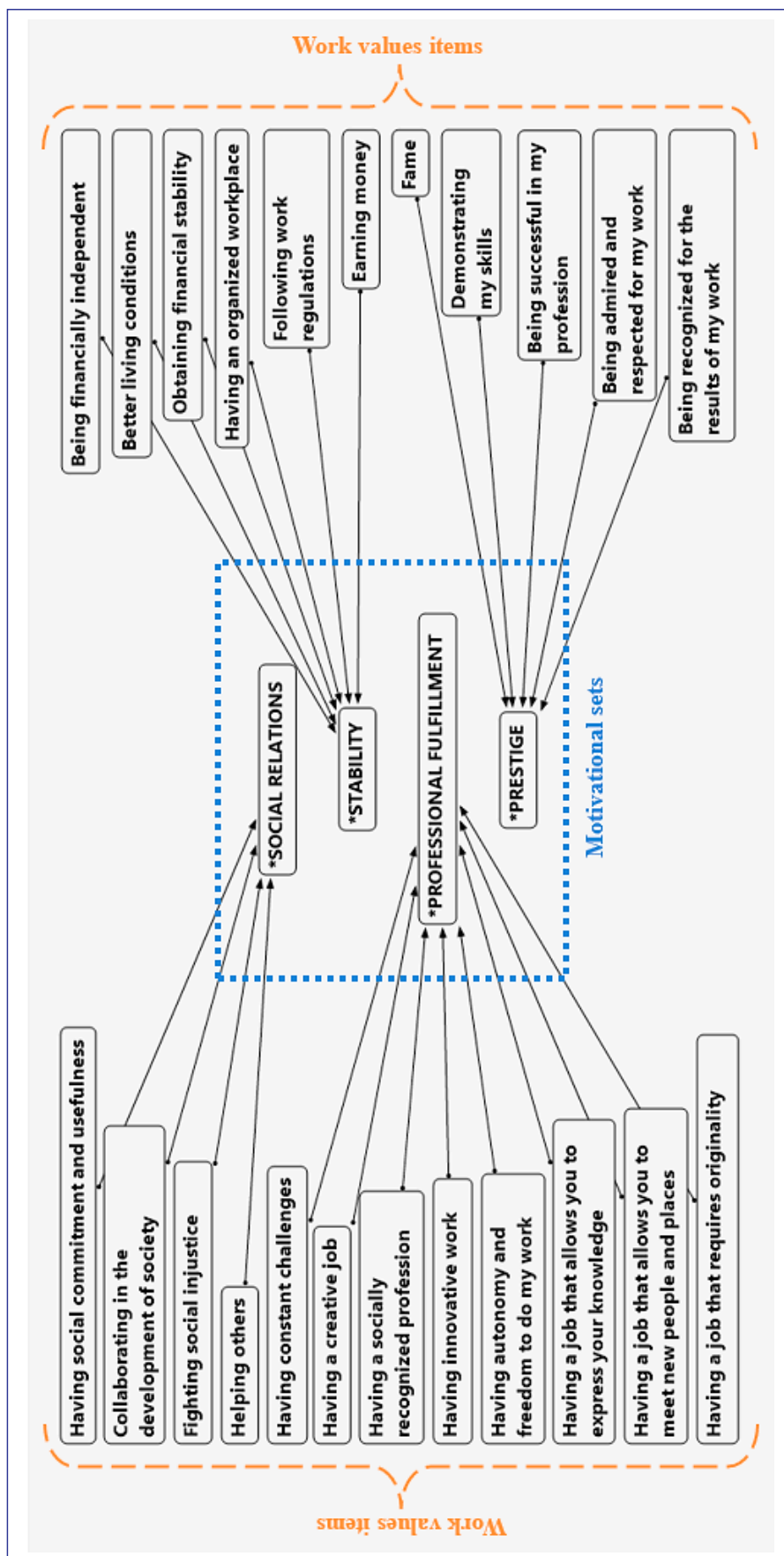
In terms of professional fulfillment, the most valued item was having a creative job, as Artisan 2 exemplifies: “I wouldn’t be able to work with something I couldn’t create. I’m creating all the time”. Artisan 6 points out that it is the possibility of using her creativity that generates satisfaction.

The reports also showed that creativity is an essential part of the work. Artisans 3 and 5 emphasized that creativity is important in communication, especially in the use of social medias to promote their businesses. The items “having innovative work” and “having a job that requires originality” were also highlighted. For Artisans 1, 4 and 7, artisanal natural cosmetics is already innovative in itself.

These results are to be expected, since artisanal cosmetics, by its very nature, requires the use of creativity, manual skills and techniques, as well as talent (Gouvêa et al., 2020; Ministério de Desenvolvimento, Indústria, Comércio e Serviços, 2010). The value placed on creative work is echoed in the research done by Cammarosano (2012), Campos et al. (2017), M. R. M. S. Silva et al. (2010), and F. E. R. Silva et al. (2020), for whom female workers attribute great value to the motivational set of professional fulfillment. The findings also corroborate those of Andrade et al. (2014), Veiga and Parreira (2015), and Veiga et al. (2020), which show a positive relationship between entrepreneurial individuals and values linked to creativity, stimulation and fulfillment.

Another item highlighted was having autonomy, which was also the main reason for entrepreneurship (Artisans 4 and 7). Artisan 4 came from negative experiences, and entrepreneurship meant emancipation for her. For Artisan 7, who is a mother, it means more time for her family: “[Autonomy] motivates me. I can have this balance: take care of myself, my family”.

Figure 1
Semantic network of work values



Source: Research data.

For Artisan 1, this autonomy is expressed in a dichotomous way. On the one hand, “it’s almost a seal of approval: I know everything that’s going on, all the processes. I can control the beginning and the end”. On the other hand, being a solo entrepreneur puts a strain on her. “It’s very tiring, the accumulation is bad”. The item “having the freedom to decide how I do my job” is pointed out by Artisans 1, 4 and 7 as very important, while Artisan 1 reinforces that this gives her control over the processes. Because of their similar meanings, the two items were grouped together and appear in Figure 1 as “having autonomy and freedom to do my work”.

Thus, the very nature of entrepreneurial activity justifies the high frequency of these values. Again, Andrade et al. (2014) and Veiga and Parreira (2015) have their findings strengthened, since the positive associations between entrepreneurial individuals and aspects such as creativity, self-direction and stimulation are corroborated.

Therefore, valuing the freedom to decide on one’s own work, as well as having autonomy, characteristics evidenced by the artisans, is justified by the freedom to create, take risks, overcome challenges, independent action and preference for novelty in work (Andrade et al., 2014; Porto & Pilati, 2010; Porto & Tamayo, 2003; Veiga & Parreira, 2015).

The item “having a socially recognized profession” was also highly valued, as illustrated by the issue of regulation and the devaluation of artisanal work by the general public. For Artisans 1, 4, 6 and 7, the lack of regulation of the activity creates barriers, including the feeling of distrust from society. For Artisan 2, “it’s as if we were very amateurish, but we’re not”. Legislative barriers and the slow pace of regulation miss an opportunity to develop the activity.

As for the item “having a job that allows you to meet new people and places” (grouped by similarity of the items “having a job that allows you to meet new people” and “having a job that allows you to see new places”), the artisans say that their jobs have increased their contact networks. Artisans 2, 3 and 5 say that fairs are opportunities to interact with the public, since their main means of dealing with customers is online, a fact also pointed out by Rodrigues et al. (2021). They report that these exchanges are a means of receiving feedbacks and sharing information, extending to workers in other sectors. It follows that professional fulfillment also involves social exchanges.

As for having constant challenges, the interviews revealed a positive assessment, recognizing that “it’s not a choice to have challenges” (Artisan 1), especially when it comes to entrepreneurship, but associating the challenge with “growth”, “maturity” and “creativity”.

Finally, in relation to the item “having a job that allows you to express your knowledge”, Artisans 1 and 4 reported that it was a very important factor. The first mentioned that she uses her business profile on Instagram as a way of expressing her knowledge. Rodrigues et al. (2021) concluded that artisans use social media to showcase their production processes and raise public awareness of sustainable practices and greenwashing.

Social relations

Concerning the motivational set of social relations, the most valued item was “collaborating with the development of society”. For the artisans, their work itself already collaborates with society by bringing to light issues such as slow consumption, environmental sustainability and female entrepreneurship. For Artisan 1, this collaboration extends not only to the product itself, but also to the information that her work brings to people. For Artisan 2, this collaboration represents giving society “tools for self-care, in all aspects, especially the emotional one”. She adds the environmental contribution of her work, which is corroborated by Artisan 7.

As for having social commitment and usefulness (grouping the items “being useful to society” and “having social commitment” by similarity), the artisans consider it very important that their businesses are committed to society. They point out, for example, the choice not to use plastic in their production (Artisan 1) and supporting projects for women from the outskirts (Artisan 5) as expressions of social commitment. Artisan 4 pointed out that it took her a while to recognize that her work was useful, but that when she took part in an accelerator program, she understood this.

Thus, the expressions of collaboration with society, social commitment, fighting social injustices, helping others and being useful to society are aligned with the very proposal of artisanal natural cosmetics, according to Lin et al. (2018), Liobikiene and Bernatoniene (2017), and Rodrigues et al. (2021), for whom the activity seeks to reduce environmental risks, improve social well-being and encourage conscious consumption (Iyengar & Chandrashekar, 2023; Fortunati et al., 2020; Pratt, 2022).

The data on social relations in the working reality of these artisans show a high valuation of collective aspects, which corroborates research such as that by Potrich et al. (2015), in which women appear as the gender group that most values factors such as universalism and benevolence, represented by items such as collaborating for the development of society, having social commitment and being useful to society.

Prestige

With regard to prestige, the item that stood out the most was “fame”. For Artisan 2, the important thing is public recognition, “not fame for fame’s sake”. Others associated fame with terms such as “superficial” (Artisan 3) and “dazzling” (Artisan 7). For Artisans 4 and 5, however, fame can also mean visibility: “Unfortunately, we need fame, we need to stand out to fight for what we want” (Artisan 4).

The items “having prestige”, “being admired for my work”, “being respected for my skills”, “being recognized for the results of my work”, “being successful in my profession” and “demonstrating my skills” were positively valued.

Using the criterion of similarities in the reports, having prestige, being admired for their work and being respected for their skills were grouped together under the item “being admired and respected for my work” (Figure 1). For Artisan 7, prestige means respect for the work she does, while for Artisan 4, it means having her values recognized. Artisan 5 reports that being admired for her work is central, comparing her work in artisanal soapmaking with her previous job, where she did not feel recognized.

As for being successful, Artisan 3 reveals: “I want to be successful, but I’m not desperate. Doing my job, getting results, reaching more people: that’s good enough for me.” Regarding the item “demonstrating my skills”, they were unanimous in citing it as very important. The term most associated with the reports on this item was “reference”, in the sense of being recognized by the public as professionals who demonstrate ownership of their knowledge and are reliable in their work (Artisans 1, 2 and 5).

The valuation of prestige items, such as recognition and admiration for one’s work, is pointed out by Potrich et al. (2015) as a reflection of social changes related to gender equality, economic independence, female empowerment and recognition of women’s work by society.

Thus, the fact that artisanal natural cosmetics is an activity apparently dominated by women contributes to the perspective pointed out by Potrich et al. (2015) and Veiga et al. (2020), for whom being recognized in their professions is one of the aspects most valued by entrepreneurs, as is the case with these artisans.

Since the natural cosmetics discussed here are artisanal, it is legitimate for these artisans to value items related to being admired for their work, since it is the direct result of their skills. What’s more, reports of the feeling of being devalued by some of them reinforce this aspect.

As for having a risky job, Artisan 6 makes a distinction between risk and challenge, the latter being a positively valued item, associated with growth, and the former a negatively valued item, associated with instability.

Another item addressed was supervising other people. Since the artisans in question are solo entrepreneurs, the reports were aimed at working with a future scenario in which they already have collaborators. Artisans 1, 2 and 6 revealed that they feared the impact that new employees might have on the brand. Artisan 1 talks about her attachment to the production process and the image of the brand, which is corroborated by Artisan 2: “It would have to go through my quality supervision. The [business] has a face, an identity, that I can’t lose.”

Finally, when it comes to competing with colleagues to achieve goals, the reports reveal a non-competitive environment, permeated by collaboration. Artisan 7 comments: “There’s much more mutual support than competition. The more we support each other, the more visibility we’ll have. We have a market for everyone.”

In the words of Artisan 3, a support network was identified, which includes not only emotional support and mutual encouragement, but also commercial partnerships, sharing information and knowledge. Artisan 7 says that they usually get together to buy supplies: “We get together and create a group to buy inputs, to make it viable”. Artisan 3 alludes to the fact that they are women supporting other women.

The findings show that this network, with the aim of helping each other, is characterized by a sense of collaboration, as well as a survival strategy, since it refers to the visibility of the sector and partnerships.

Stability

In terms of stability values, the most highly rated item was obtaining financial stability. For Artisan 1, this item differs from earning money, as the latter gives her a sense of limitlessness. “For me, stability has to do with constancy, with frequency. That’s more important than making money,” she says. Earning money is only important because “we live in a capitalist system and money is what makes things possible”, Artisan 3 agrees.

The items “being financially independent” (grouped by similarity to the item with the same name and “being able to support myself financially”) and “better living conditions” were also cited as very important. Artisan 1 stated that she has been financially independent for two years now and that she does not need to go back to work elsewhere.

The data are in line with studies with various other groups, showing that financial stability is an important factor from a general perspective. Andrade et al. (2014) concluded, for example, that even students prioritize values related to security and stability. The results of Cammarosano (2012), in turn, showed that knowledge workers work for financial factors as much as for merit and recognition.

In relation to the female gender, Brandão et al. (2015) showed that women value stability more than social relations and that older women attach less importance to security. In the case of the women interviewed, their profile as young adults may explain why they value this factor, since stability is not yet a guarantee for them.

As far as hierarchy is concerned, the reports go in the direction of recognizing it, but they emphasize their belief in a more horizontal and circular organizational model (Artisan 7), based on collaboration and respect (Artisan 4).

With regard to having an organized workplace and following work regulations, the statements show that these items are valued positively, with reports dealing with the daily routine of artisanal work, safety and hygiene rules, reconciling time between the work and motherhood, as well as aiding the creative process.

For Artisans 1 and 4, organization is fundamental for solo entrepreneurs, with specific days for each task. Artisan 3, on the other hand, says that organizing her work is crucial in order to reconcile time with domestic activities and raising her two daughters.

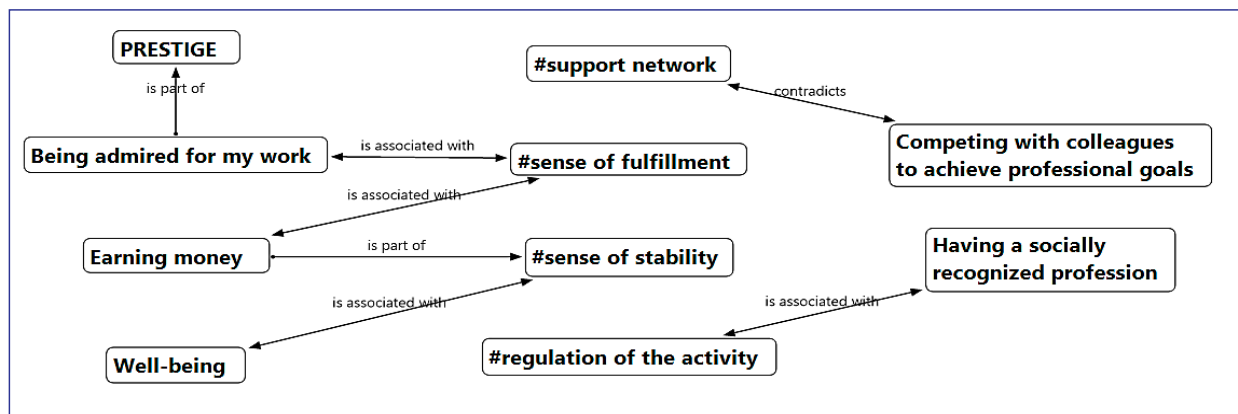
As far as working standards are concerned, the women point out that, as these are cosmetics products, it is essential to pay attention to production safety and hygiene (Artisans 5, 6 and 7). They also mention that it is important that the public understand that the artisanal nature of the product does not mean that the cosmetic is made in any way (Artisan 2).

Finally, the data partially converge with the results of F. E. R. Silva et al. (2020), who argue that the “stability” factor is the second most important, behind only professional fulfillment. Items relating to financial independence, earning money and better living conditions were emphasized in the survey.

Empirical categories

The qualitative adaptation of the WVS-R made it possible to access reports that expressed the meaning of certain motivational sets for the artisans, represented in Figure 2 by the empirical categories “sense of fulfillment” and “sense of stability”. The categories “support network” and “regulation of the activity” were discussed earlier.

Figure 2
Semantic network of empirical categories



Source: Research data.

With regard to professional fulfillment, Artisan 1 says: “Fulfillment is earning money from something I’m talented at and being recognized for it, while doing something good and meaningful, not just something you extract from nature.” For her, fulfillment includes economic, social and sustainable factors, as well as personal recognition.

For Artisan 3, professional fulfillment has to do with doing what you love: “It’s what makes me happy; I feel like I’m making a difference”. Artisan 4 says: “Fulfillment is being happy where I am, with what I’m doing. It’s not being at the top; it’s being happy and comfortable where I am.”

For Artisan 5, the concept of fulfillment has changed over time. Frustrated with her academic career, a previous idealization of success, she says that today she considers herself fulfilled: “Obviously, I want more, but I’m working from home, doing what I like, telling people about what I like to do.” For Artisan 6, fulfillment is also related to “doing what I like, doing it well and people liking it, earning money from it”. For Artisan 7, professional fulfillment is having positive feedback from the public.

Thus, there is a sense of fulfillment that is associated with pleasure, satisfaction from work and the financial aspect, originally linked to stability (Porto & Pilati, 2010), as well as recognition for a job well done, referring to prestige (Porto & Pilati, 2010).

As for stability, the reports associate it with the financial aspect: “earning money and being able to have comfort, to give comfort to the people I love” (Artisan 1); “having financial security” (Artisan 7); “having money to pay my bills, being financially organized” (Artisan 6).

For Artisans 3, 4 and 5, the meaning of stability is broader and involves mental and emotional health, represented in Figure 2 by the term “well-being”. For Artisan 3, stability has to do with getting her message to reach people: “It’s not just about being financially stable. I’m not going to feel good just because I’m making a profit. I need people to get my message.”

Artisans 4 and 5, for their part, emphasize that “stability is knowing that, at the end of the cycle, everything will be all right, financially, emotionally or mentally” (Artisan 4), and that “both stability and success evolve” (Artisan 5).

These findings shed light on new meanings for values related to stability and fulfillment, different from the configuration presented by the WVS-R, in which the former emphasizes the financial aspect and the latter, pleasure and satisfaction with work. For them, stability is also related to other meanings, such as emotional well-being and mental health, while fulfillment is linked to recognition and earning money. These meanings therefore lead to new perspectives on the theory. We need to analyze that instruments such as scales reflect the characteristics of the time and space in which they were conceived. At the time of the WVS and its revision (WVS-R), the creative economy was still in its infancy as a field of study. Academic production and socio-political organization around the subject were not yet as extensive as they are today, so the theory and its scales take into account many more working models from the traditional economy.

Thus, along with these new meanings, the results showed that the artisans in question value creative and autonomous work, consider that they contribute to the development of society through their natural cosmetics trades and seek material security and greater social recognition for their profession, for which regulation of the activity is essential. Similarly, values related to competition, risk and hierarchy have no significance for them.

Finally, groups of creative workers have not been sufficiently analyzed through the lens of work values to be able to modify their scales. However, initial efforts are beginning to be made, including this research, showing that the world of work is undergoing changes and theory needs to keep up with them.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

These findings shed new light on the theory of work values and its scales, pointing to a possible theoretical revision, at least in terms of its evaluative instruments and the categories that refer only to dominant economic models, which need to consider contexts based on creative and collaborative activities.

A natural cosmetics network has emerged in Fortaleza, made up of solo entrepreneurs, which is home to support and social exchange, but also to commercial partnerships and the sharing of knowledge.

Finally, the results lead to the conclusion that the political environment does not favor artisanal activities. This reality is reflected in the lack of legislative interest in discussing the regulation of artisanal natural cosmetics. The requirement that they meet the same standards as large companies discourages and threatens the creative ecosystem.

The findings linked to the network of artisans and the alignment of their jobs with environmental demands, such as clean production and the appropriate use of natural resources, refer to aspects of the collaborative economy, as well as the green and circular economy, which is proposed as a research agenda for future studies on the creative economy and artisanal natural cosmetics.

The methodological limitations relate to the COVID-19 pandemic, whose necessary social distancing prevented the use of other approaches, such as ethnography.

The article adds new data to research in the field of work values, especially when it comes to applying them to creative economy activities, which until now had been little explored. In addition, the qualitative approach has revealed new meanings that can help to reformulate instruments in relation to categories built on traditional models that no longer have the same meaning in the transition to creative economies.

From another perspective, the findings can be used by artisan-entrepreneurs and other creative workers to rethink the management of their businesses. In fact, after presenting the results of this study, which is not intended as action research, to the participating artisans, they formally organized themselves as a collective. In addition, the research stimulates a necessary reflection on the treatment given to policies to foster the creative economy, calling public authorities to action.

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DATA AVAILABILITY

The entire data set that supports the results of this study has been made available in the Institutional Repository of the Federal University of Ceará and can be accessed at <http://www.repositorio.ufc.br/handle/riufc/65449>.

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