

Do You Etsy?
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University of Rhode Island junior, Taylor Dietrich, presented the phenomenon of the online e-commerce site, Etsy. Etsy is a community online marketplace and a globally accessible storefront for small businesses that was founded by Robert Kalin in 2005. Taylor considers Etsy to be a combination of Amazon and Pinterest and the driving force of the DIY movement. Etsy supports handmade crafted merchandise of “crafterpreneurs,” vintage items, and craft supplies. Each of these categories of items has their own guidelines that must be met in order to be sold on Etsy.

As of November of last year, Etsy brought in \$147.5 million in sales for a single month, had over seventeen million unique items listed, and over 800,000 sellers from around the world. As with all things, there are both pros and cons to buying and selling on Etsy. The pros unique handmade goods, contributing to the ongoing green movement, customized merchandise, a user friendly site, DIY, and the availability of a mobile app. The cons of buying on Etsy include the difficulty in finding good quality items at a good price because there is such a high volume of merchandise, communicating to sellers, absence of popular brands, and in some cases, sellers are not offering authentic merchandise. The pros of selling on Etsy include protection and guarantees, free membership, free advertising, networking capabilities, good side job or hobby, and possible profits. The cons of selling on Etsy include listing fees, Etsy sales commission fees, items that do not sell in ninety days are unlisted, no customization of shop, highly competitive, and time consuming.

Some controversies surrounding the Etsy site are that handmade items are hard to make in large quantities quickly so merchandise stock is an issue, there have been privacy complaints, it's hard to market and advertise your brand, and the site has poor search engine optimization. Taylor provided tips in order to be successful on Etsy. Her tips include making your username noticeable because you cannot change it once your shop is created, offer low shipping, build a client base, use keywords in the title and description, and link other social media outlets to your shop.

Regarding technology in the digital age, Etsy has introduced its own digital products that can be purchased and used immediately. They include invitations, calendars, images, art, posters, labels, patterns, stencils, and scrapbooking kits. Etsy also has a mobile app which makes exploring, shopping, discovering, and managing shops convenient and accessible. To conclude, Etsy was designed to promote community rather than competition among sellers. Etsy, along with the advances in digital technology, has created potential for small scale businesses around the world.