

# Lessons learned from starting a design brand in Germany

GIZ Online Training: E-commerce and Business Promotion to Women Entrepreneurs in Mongolia  
06 & 07 September 2022

Pilar Cendales, founder of NATAL Colombia (Munich, Germany)

# AGENDA

1. Welcome
2. Who is Pilar Cendales
3. What is NATAL Colombia
4. Questions I asked myself before doing anything
5. Basics for export/import to the EU
  - What I did totally wrong and how easy it is nowadays
6. Selling online: Expectations vs. Reality
7. Questions

Who is

# Pilar Cendales

Pilar is a Colombian designer and solo-entrepreneur based in Munich, Germany.

Since 2019 and without any experience as founder, Pilar brought to life NATAL Colombia with the goal to open new markets for high-quality and unique Colombian handcrafts in the German market.

After failing the attempt to live entirely as a freelancer and newbie entrepreneur, in a big part thanks to COVID-19, she decided to go back to a full-time job in the lighting industry to keep her business alive.





## The magic of Colombia made handcrafts

With Colombian roots and based in Munich, Natal Colombia offers limited collections of unique jewellery and fashion accessories made entirely by hand in Colombia.

As a Design Brand and Retail Partner, we collaborate and partner with Colombian local artisans and designers to showcase the talent and long-lasting crafting traditions from across all corners of the country.



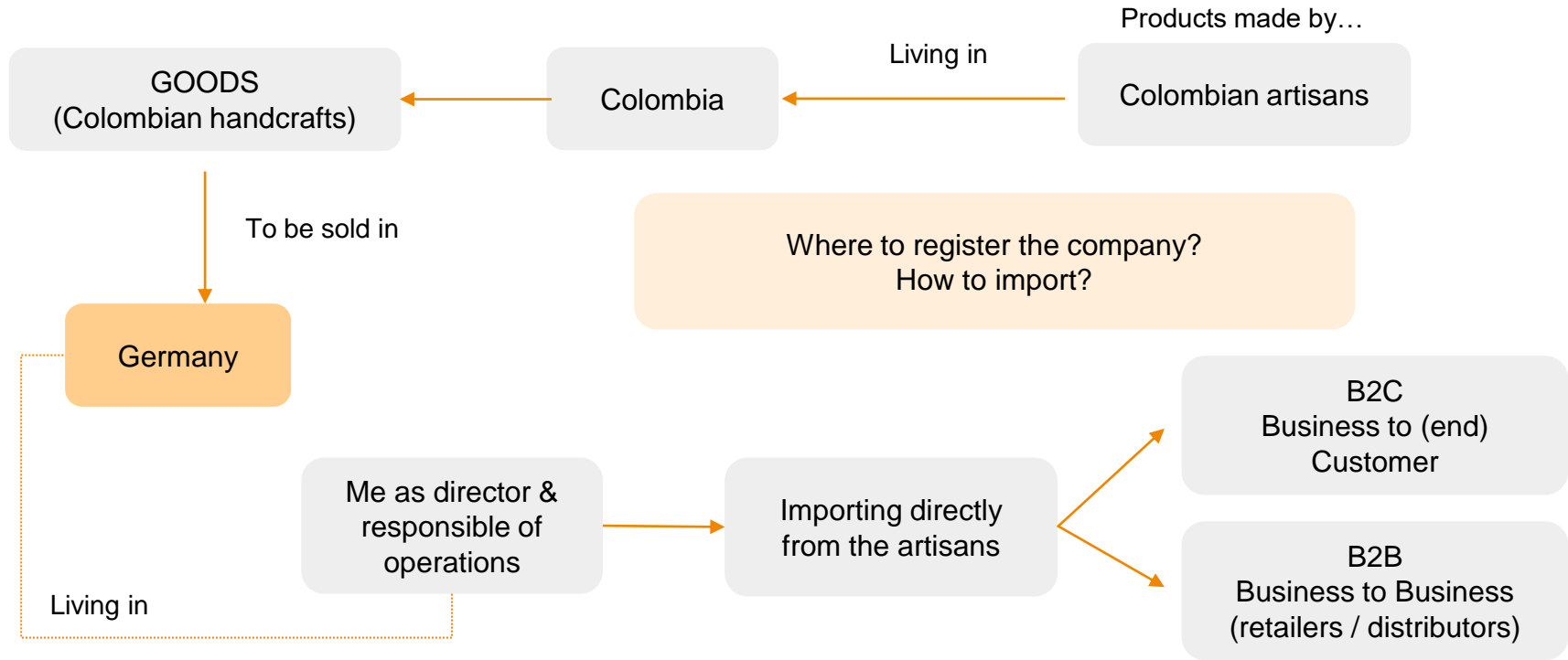
We work currently in close collaboration with about 5 artisans groups, located in different regions of Colombia. Masters in diverse crafting techniques and unique backgrounds, our artisans bring to life our unique collection of pieces.

Some of them belong to minorities and indigenous communities. Others to traditional craftsmanship associations and small workshops. All of them, deeply committed to their craft and environment.

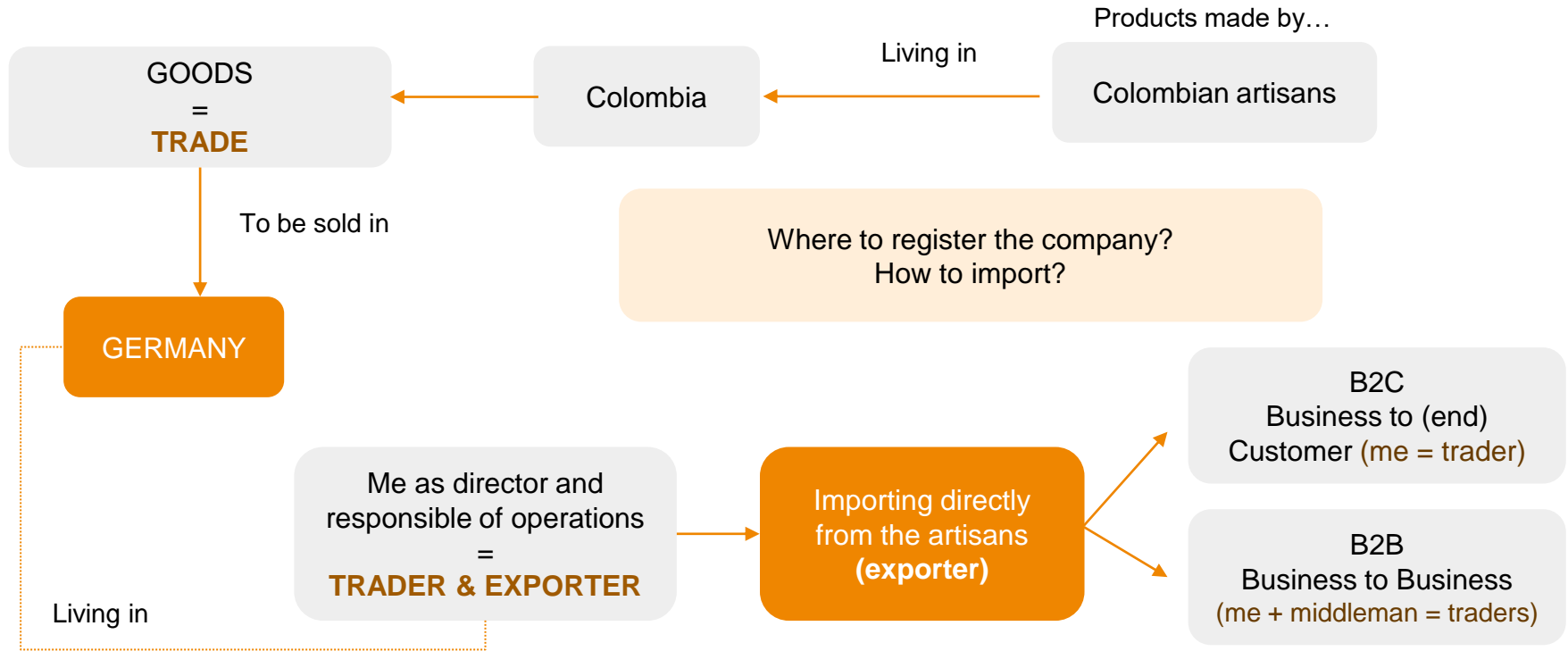
## Questions I asked myself before doing anything.

- What I would like to sell and where? Goods or services?
- Will I produce or manufacture the goods myself? Or will I source them?
- Where am I currently living and where am I planning to live?
- Will I be working alone? Or who are my business partners (z.B. Suppliers, distributors?)
- Where do they live or are located?
- Who is going to take most of the responsibility of my company's operations and where will be the location of these operations?
- Who are my customers and how I get to know them and their buying expectations?
- How do I reach those customers? (Sales Channels)

## Questions I asked myself before doing anything.



# Questions I asked myself before doing anything.



# BASICS for export/import (from Colombia) to the EU

## BASICS for export/import (from Colombia) to the EU

### Residents of EU:

A company or permanent business established on the EU.

#### This means:

- being registered for VAT purposes.
- to register with the national commercial register (DIHK)
- Get an EORI number (identification number as importer)

### Non EU-residents:

Established as a firm or person who needs to:

- have a work permit to carry out an independent commercial activity
- Find a person in the EU acting on your behalf as exporter (logistics provider/customs agent)

What I did totally wrong and  
how easy it is nowadays

## A true Story



## What I did totally wrong and how easy it is nowadays

# TIPS for an easier export/importing process to Germany

- Clear Commercial invoices with prices in USD (US Dollars)
- Correct product descriptions
- Goods nomenclature (CN)
- Control the amount of product categories per shipping.
- Logistics Partners to reduce costs
- Packaging
- Avoid mixing samples, commercial goods and personal items.

*More about import process [this link](#)*

## BASICS for export/import (from Colombia) to the EU

# Main Documentation to process your import

- Customs Import Declaration
  - Single Administrative Document (SAD)
- Entry Summary Declaration (ENS)
- Commercial invoice (prices in USD)
- Transport documents
- Certificates of origin (if applies)

## BASICS for export/import (from Colombia) to the EU

# Import Tariffs

Those are the fees paid for the products coming into the EU, independently the entry country.

### ***Who pays it?***

According to the agreement with the seller. Normally the importer

These tariffs can change/differ from country to country.

- Entry Tax: specific percentage on the price of the product on the invoice. Varies according to the product.
- Customs processing fee: Normally 12.50 EUR per product category.

## BASICS for export/import (from Colombia) to the EU

# Internal Taxes

GERMANY = 19% VAT

Value added tax (VAT) is applied to goods sold on the EU market and thus also to those imported from outside the EU. VAT varies in each EU Member State and is usually paid by the importer.

*The calculation of your VAT payments is based on the value of your goods, your import duty, and excise duties if they apply.*

... Now, the real deal: Selling online!  
Expectations vs. Reality



## Selling online: Expectations vs. Reality

# Expectations

- We will sell only products to end customers! Forget about B2B!
- Online marketing and Social Media is a piece of cake! I will position my brand only using IG.
- Germans might think quite alike Colombians. It can't be so different!

# Reality

- Nobody knew or recognised our products. They even did not know we existed! How to take off then?
- Well actually NO! it is a full time job and I didn't have the time and financial capacity to do it.
- Well ... hahaha!!!

## Selling online: Expectations vs. Reality

Launching a new fashion brand  
solely online is like opening a store  
in the middle of the desert.

The false illusion of easily and effortless positioning and growing your business by using solely your e-commerce and Instagram account in the German market.

## Selling online: Expectations vs. Reality

German people need to trust your  
products and brand before  
adventuring buying from you

Creating a relationship of trust between your brand/products and the audience is priority. German people are fans of writing and reading reviews. There are great source of information to understand their expectations and how they rate the products/services

## Selling online: Expectations vs. Reality

# The importance of a physical experience with handmade products.

The German audience value enormously the hand work, and they go nuts when talking about quality. Digital will never beat the true of real (palpable)  
If they are not satisfied, they will simply send them back (it is legal and normal)

## Selling online: Expectations vs. Reality

# What about your story or the story of your products?

Nothing better to engage customers than offering them a real and sound story behind your products!

If the story is connected to a purpose or a good action, they will love you!

## Selling online: Expectations vs. Reality

Have you thought about finding a  
brand ambassador in Germany?

Well, if you are not willing to wear/use your products, nobody will. There is no better way to reach / find possible customers than having a couple of fans who help you to spread the voice. Best marketing strategy ever!

## Selling online: Expectations vs. Reality

Best sales in Germany can be achieved using the “Tupperware party” technique.

Find your right target group. It might be that your customers love organising come-together events, inviting friends over, drinking some prosecco and buying each others gifts in the process. They like feeling VIP

## Selling online: Expectations vs. Reality

Do not be afraid to find new customers around people from your same cultural background/country

I did not wanted to exhibit my products on Latin-American events as people from Latin-American are not my target group. However, they have already opened an important cultural window to access possible customers.

## Selling online: Expectations vs. Reality

# Find partners online and offline to push your brand and products forward

Connecting small business with retailers: Fairling, Orderchamp, Ankorstore

Distributors: Avocado Store, Kauf dich Glücklich

Platforms: ETSY, Amazon, eBay

Look for normal people finding providers to open business as middlemen.

## Selling online: Expectations vs. Reality

# Why I do not want to sell on amazon or eBay

It is all about values, philosophy and vision.  
Unfortunately, ours are not aligned with theirs.

## Selling online: Expectations vs. Reality

# B2C or B2B That is the question!

It depends on your business strategy, on how fast do you want to be recognised and on how you want to invest your marketing budget

## Selling online: Expectations vs. Reality

Be careful playing B2C and B2B at the same time. The customer final price always has to be the same!

Plan in advance which Sales Channels you would like to use and try to make a good pricing calculation before launching: Take into account: Commissions for Retailers | Payment fees (credit/debit Cards) .. etc

## Selling online: Expectations vs. Reality

# Target group vs real customers The ultimate surprise for Natal Colombia

I expected young women interested in other cultures and willing to experiment fashion in other ways. Well, noup. My real customers are grouped in a totally different category.

## Selling online: Expectations vs. Reality

Evaluate seriously the style of your products vs. the season of the year.  
But hey, really... you must do it!!

German people buy according to the temperature outside.  
Actually people behave totally different in summer than in winter.  
So do not expect them to buy summer clothes when it is snowing outside.

*Do you have any questions?*



Thank you!

Instagram: @natal.colombia  
Email: hola@natalcolombia.co

[www.natalcolombia.co](http://www.natalcolombia.co)