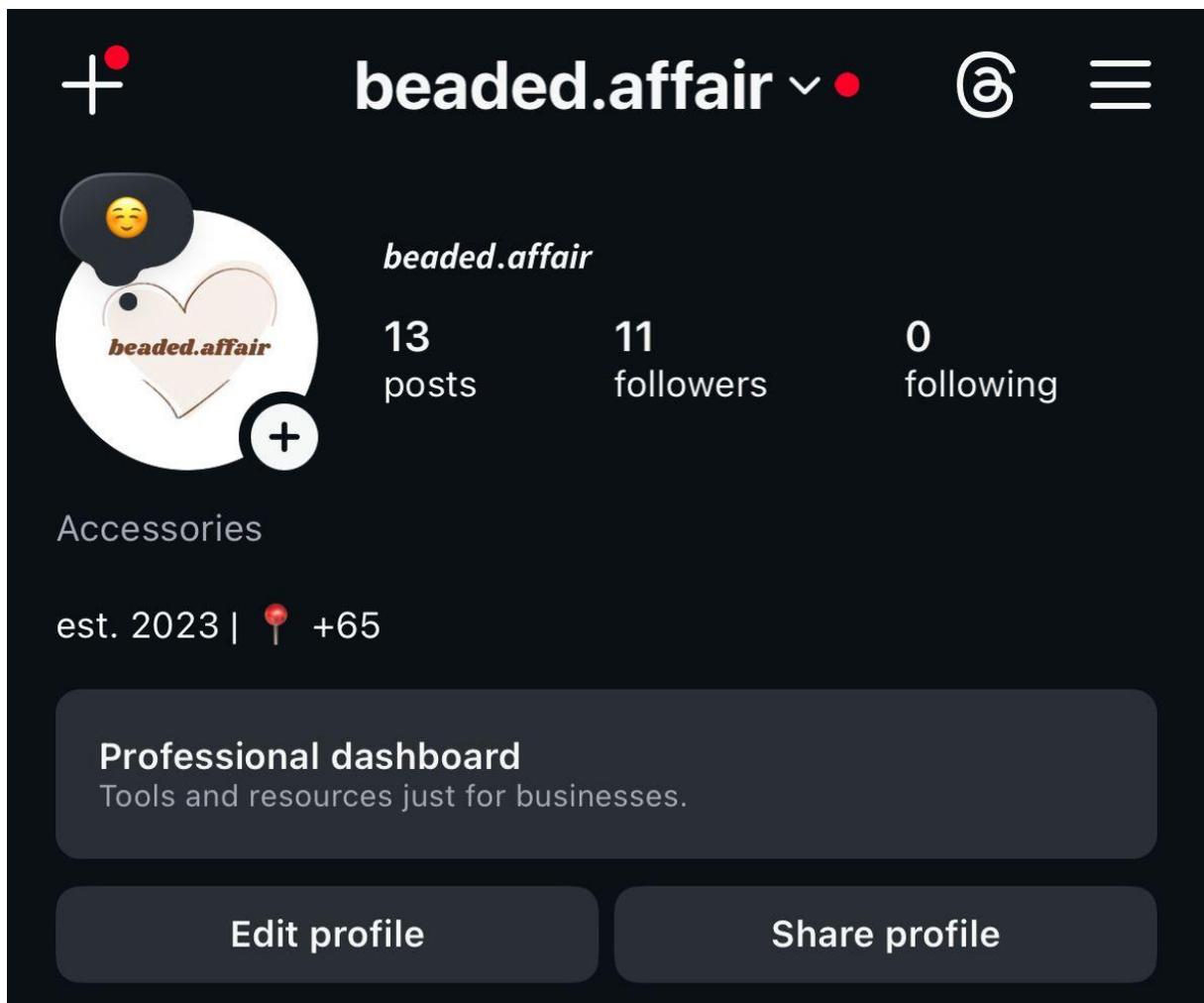


beaded.affair – A Design-Led Exploration of Customisation and User-Centred Product Design

Introduction

“beaded.affair” was a small independent accessories brand that I founded and solely managed in 2023 as a personal creative project. What began as an exploration of handmade jewellery gradually developed into a design-led venture focused on customisation, visual consistency, and customer experience. Through this project, I experimented with how product design, platform-based communication, and user choice could work together to create meaningful, personalised outcomes.



Concept and Design Intent

During 2023, many small handmade accessories businesses focused primarily on fixed designs with limited variations. I identified an opportunity to differentiate “beaded.affair” by offering fully customisable accessories across multiple formats – inclusive of bracelets, necklaces, keychains, and bag accessories. This approach placed greater emphasis on user participation in the design process rather than solely on the final product.

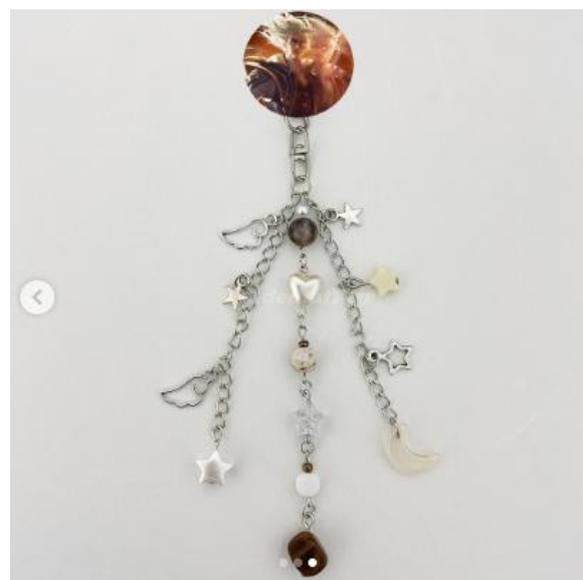
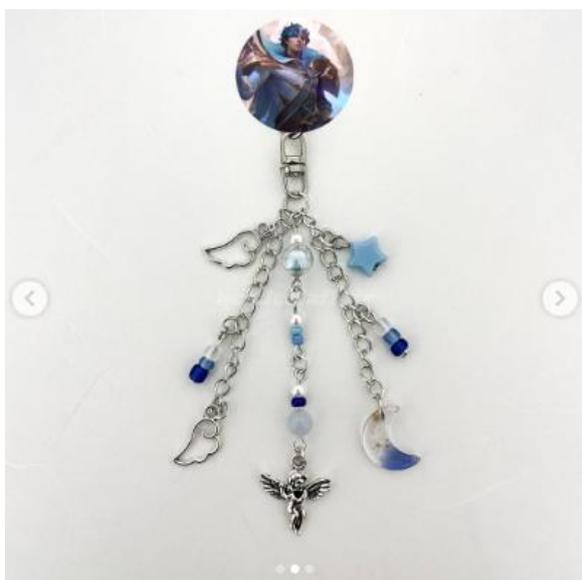
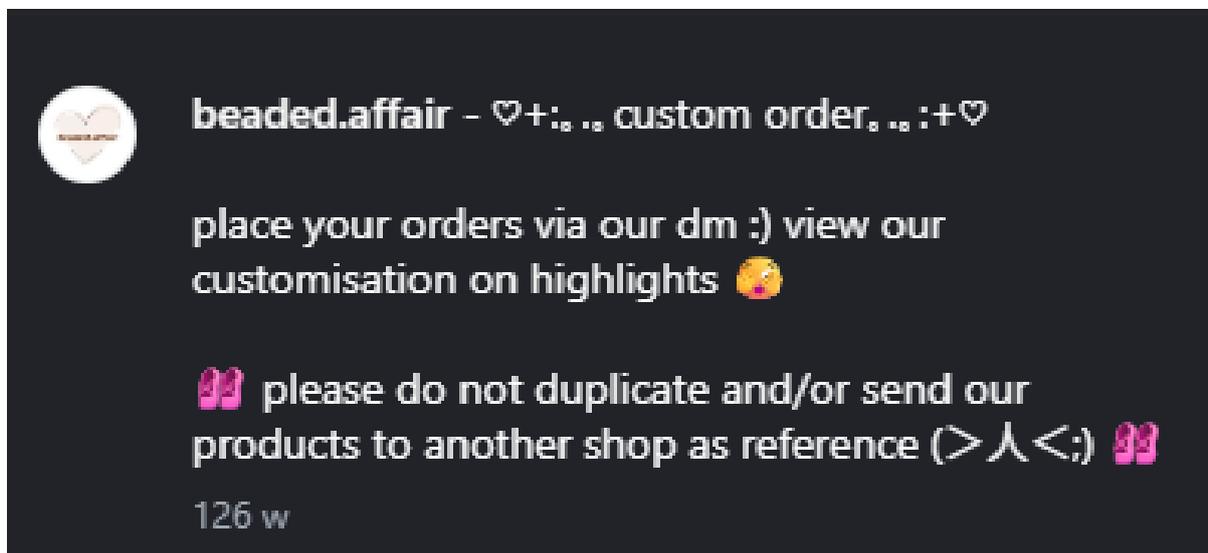
The design intent was to create accessories that reflected individual preferences, character inspirations, or colour palettes, allowing each piece to feel personal rather than mass-produced.



Product Design and Customisation System

Customisation was the core design strategy of “beaded.affair”. Clients were able to choose from a range of charms, beads, colours, and accessory formats, resulting in highly personalised outcomes. This required careful consideration of material compatibility, visual balance, and durability, ensuring that custom combinations still maintained a cohesive aesthetic.

A key principle of the customisation system was exclusivity. Each customised accessory was designed to be unique and was not reproduced for other clients. This decision was made to respect the individuality of each customer and to preserve the personal value of the design. By treating every customised piece as a one-off outcome rather than a repeatable product, the design process prioritised meaning, emotional connection, and authorship over scalability.



Visual Communication and Platform Strategy

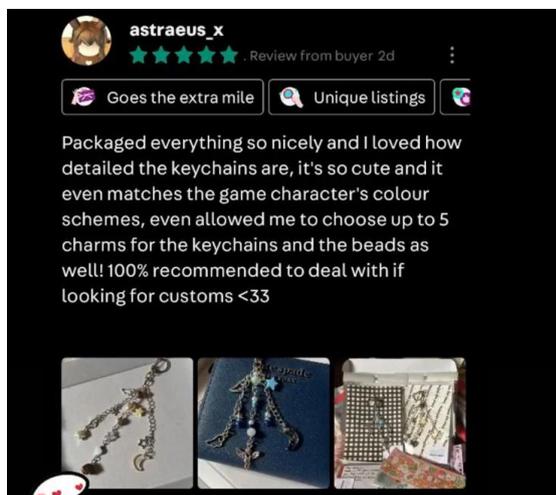
Prior to using Instagram as the main platform, “beaded.affair” was initially launched on Carousell. While the platform allowed for basic listings, it became evident that the audience was not well aligned with the nature of customised, design-led products. Interactions often focused on price negotiations rather than design value, which limited meaningful engagement with the customisation process.

As a result, the platform strategy was re-evaluated and the project transitioned to Instagram, where visual communication played a more central role and offered stronger visual affordances for communicating design value. By converting the account into a business profile, the platform provided greater audience reach. The Story Highlights feature was intentionally used to organise information related to custom orders, pricing, and reviews, allowing the platform to function as both a visual showcase and user-guided ordering system.



Customer Experience and Feedback

The emphasis on customisation contributed to a strong engagement and repeat interest from a core group of returning clients. Feedback often highlighted the level of detail, thoughtful packaging, and the ability to personalise designs according to specific themes or preferences. This reinforced the importance of designing with the user in mind, even within small-scale creative projects.



Reflection and Learning

Managing “beaded.affair” independently allowed me to experience the full design process from concept to execution. Beyond crafting accessories, the project strengthened my understanding of user-centred design, visual storytelling, and system-based thinking within platform constraints. Balancing creative work alongside academic and professional commitments eventually led me to pause the business, but the project remains a valuable learning experience.

Relevance to Current Practice

The principles developed through “beaded.affair” represent an early exploration of design thinking through a hands-on, self-initiated project. The skills developed, such as customisation systems, visual consistency, and user experience design, continue to influence my approach to branding, visual communication, and creative project development work today.