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PROSPECTIVE STUDY OF TRENDS IN CRAFTSMANSHIP BASED ON CONTRIBUTIONS FROM THE CRAFT SCIENCES (2016–2024)

Manuel Martínez Torán*
Carla Alcalà Badias*
Carla Amado González*
Universitat Politècnica de València

Abstract

This article explores the possible futures of contemporary craftsmanship through a foresight exercise based on the Delphi method. Building on previous research into scenarios for craftsmanship and design in Spain published in 2017, ten emerging scenarios drawn from recent academic literature—particularly *The Journal of Modern Craft* and *Craft Research*—are identified and evaluated. Consultation with a panel of experts in the fields of design, material culture, and craft enabled the prioritisation of trends and an assessment of their potential impact on other sectors. The results highlight *sustainable neo-craft*, *biomaterials*, *craftivism* and *digital crafts* as central scenarios, alongside the figure of the *craft entrepreneur*, *collaborative design* and the *revaluation of trades* as complementary themes. The study emphasises the importance of sustainability, material innovation, the social dimension, and technological hybridisation in shaping the future of craftsmanship. It also compares these findings with the scenarios proposed in 2017, highlighting continuities, transformations and areas that remain largely unexplored, such as the role of the active consumer and the integration of biomaterials. The research concludes that craftsmanship is consolidating as a cultural and economic practice in transformation, with the capacity to generate alternative models in contrast to dominant paradigms.

Keywords: craft; foresight; trends; scenarios; design.

Introduction

Craft is today conceived as a living cultural practice that transcends the mere production of objects, becoming a means of sustaining identity and cultural diversity. As Singh and Gupta argue, craft techniques not only generate material goods but are also living expressions inherited from past generations and transmitted to future ones, providing a sense of belonging and historical

*E-mails: mmtoran@upv.es / caralba5@upvnet.upv.es / carlaamadoglez2@gmail.com

continuity.[1] This symbolic dimension has also been highlighted by Bhat and Mathews, who emphasise how craftsmanship acts as a repository of cultural memory, without conflicting with contemporary forms of expression, ranging from an artistic object to a purely functional product.[2]

In 2017, the study "Scenarios for Design and Craft" was published, presenting possible futures (scenarios) aimed at helping micro and small craft enterprises anticipate and adapt to change. It also sought, through a forward-looking approach, to design innovative policies and strategies that respond to the challenges facing the Spanish craft sector.[3] In the Spanish and European context, this debate has intensified in the wake of the economic crisis, technological acceleration and the growing focus on sustainability. That study proposed an initial systematic approach to possible futures for craft and design, focusing on micro and small enterprises that needed tools to anticipate structural changes. It identified scenarios such as *sustainable intelligence*, *glocality*, *digital craftsmanship*, *open craftsmanship* and the *persumer*, outlining an emerging landscape in which craftsmanship was beginning to reconfigure itself as a strategic practice within the creative economy.

However, the global landscape has changed significantly in less than a decade. The climate crisis has become an unavoidable framework for considering any form of material production; digitalisation has given rise to new platforms for marketing, dissemination, and learning; and social tensions have reignited forms of activism that find in craft—particularly in textile, ceramic or graphic making—a privileged medium for political and affective expression.[4] At the same time, the development of biomaterials and circular approaches has placed material experimentation at the centre of discussions on sustainability in both design and craft.[5]

In this context, craftsmanship is undergoing a profound transformation linked to social, economic and technological dynamics that are redefining its boundaries and meanings. As Greer argues, craftsmanship can serve as a space that challenges the cultural constructs of mainstream taste, inspiring craftspeople to create works with a positive social impact.[6] In this way, craftsmanship functions as a social practice, contributing to community cohesion and the articulation of shared values, particularly among groups that recognise these expressions as part of their intangible cultural heritage.[7]

Contemporary craftsmanship, therefore, cannot be understood merely as an isolated individual practice, but as a cultural and social phenomenon rooted in community life. Furthermore, as Luckman and Andrew point out, craftsmanship today operates within a market that demands innovation, positioning it as a sector undergoing technological adaptation, much like other domains within the contemporary creative economy.[8]

With the aim of observing what its immediate future might look like, we turn to primary sources, drawing on authors who approach craft as science,[9] and enable the identification and analysis of possible scenarios from multiple perspectives.[10] Publications such as *The Journal of Modern Craft* and *Craft Research*[11] conceptualise craft as an expanded field (extending across other disciplines and forms of expression), a hybrid field (blurring the boundaries

between craft, art and design) and one in a state of constant transformation (due to its innovative practices across different domains). In addition, this study incorporates perspectives from contemporary design research, where there is a growing tendency to reclaim craftsmanship as a means of rethinking production, collaboration, and the imagination of more sustainable, local, and affective futures.[12] In this sense, craftsmanship not only provides material know-how, but also offers an ethical and relational framework through which alternatives to dominant standardised and economic models can be considered.

Through this process, ten scenarios have been identified that encapsulate the most relevant debates on the future of craftsmanship: *sustainable neo-craft*, *biocraft materials*, *craftivism*, *digital crafts*, *artisan entrepreneurship*, *co-design craft*, *revaluation of trades*, *sense of belonging*, *craftourism* and *craftwashing*. On this basis, this information was shared with experts in the fields of design, craft, material culture and research, with the aim of validating, prioritising and refining these scenarios. The objective is twofold: to provide an up-to-date map of trends to serve as a guide for the professional sector, and to contribute to the development of craft sciences through forward-looking reflection grounded in a combination of empirical evidence and expert judgement.

Particular attention is also paid to craftourism, the scenario that most directly links craft practice with cultural tourism. The study examines why the experts consulted assess this scenario with caution and what this assessment implies for sustainable cultural tourism and for the safeguarding of traditional craft knowledge.

Scenario	The Journal of Modern Craft Craft Research	Other publications
Sustainable neo-craft	Walker et al. 2019	
Biocraft materials		Rognoli et al. 2022 Ferreira et al. 2023
Craftivism	Hemmings 2018	Vachhani et al. 2024 Ermer 2023
Digital craft	Woolley and Niedderer 2016 Loh et al. 2016	
Artisan entrepreneurship	Segares 2021	
Craft co-design	Wright & Fraser 2020	Hu et al. 2024
Revaluation of the trades	Eriksson et al. 2019	
Sense of belonging	Totten 2024	
Craftourism		Gil-Arroyo et al. 2021
Craftwashing		Howard 2018 Rivaroli et al. 2021

Table 1. List of articles related to scenarios, obtained mainly from the journals *The Journal of Modern Craft* and *Craft Research*, as well as from other publications discussing the revival and future of craftsmanship (all published between 2016 and 2024).
Source: Prepared by the authors.[13]

Theoretical Framework

The consolidation of a specific field of study centred on craftsmanship—which has come to be known *as craft* science—has, in recent years, enabled the development of a more robust theoretical framework for analysing the role of manual making in contemporary society. Authors such as Sirpa Kokko and Camilla Groth, together with their co-authors, argue that craftsmanship cannot be understood solely as a set of techniques aimed at producing objects, but rather as a situated mode of knowledge that integrates bodily, material, cultural and epistemological dimensions.[14] From this perspective, craft processes constitute both research and practice, and the workshop becomes a laboratory through which the relationships between humans, materials and environments can be explored.

In parallel, literature on material culture and design has highlighted the importance of craftsmanship as a repository of memory, as a form of resistance to standardisation, and as a vehicle for imagining alternative futures. Singh and Gupta, for example, show how traditional textile techniques can articulate narratives of identity and historical continuity,[15] while Bhat and Mathews analyse the role of craftsmanship in the transmission of socio-cultural experiences through objects imbued with meaning.[16] These contributions reinforce the idea that craftsmanship acts as a living archive of knowledge, where the inherited coexists with the experimental.

Within the field of sustainability, Walker, Evans and Mullagh introduce the concept of "meaningful practices" to refer to ways of working that integrate ethical, social and environmental values into their productive logic.[17] Craft thus emerges as a privileged space for building more responsible material futures, insofar as its temporalities, scales and modes of relationship allow for a critical engagement with the extractive and intensive logic of industrial production. The scenario of *sustainable neo-craft* identified in this study draws directly on these ideas, understanding that sustainability is not limited to the use of certain materials, but affects the entire value chain, from the extraction of resources to use and repair.

Another key area in recent literature concerns new materialities and biomaterials. Rognoli et al. explore how designers can work with bio-based or bio-manufactured materials to reconfigure fashion practices towards more sustainable horizons.[18] Similarly, Ferreira et al. present guidelines for the selection of textile biomaterials within circular design strategies.[19] In both cases, craftsmanship is implicitly present as a field of experimentation, since manual manipulation, iteration and sensitivity to the material's sensory characteristics are key aspects of the discovery process. In this context, this study proposes the concept of *biocraft materials*, understood as the intersection between traditional craftsmanship and bio-based material innovation.

The relationship between craftsmanship and digital technology constitutes another major theoretical axis. Woolley and Niedderer address the problem of authenticity in the digital age, questioning the simplistic opposition between manual and mechanised production.[20] For their part, Loh, Burry and Wagenfeld review Pye's theory on control and risk in craftmaking, applying it to digital craft practices where parametric design and computer-aided manufacturing coexist

with manual decisions and material contingencies.[21] This research shows that digital technologies do not eliminate the artisanal dimension but can instead foster new forms of authorship, expressiveness and dialogue with the material.

Finally, the political and social dimension of craftsmanship has gained increasing relevance under the umbrella of *craftivism*. Building on the pioneering work of Greer,[22] a growing body of literature has examined the intersection between manual making and activism, particularly in the textile field. Hemmings reflects on the "small" scale of many craftivist actions, emphasising their symbolic and affective power;[23] Ermer examines circles of critical female creation and their implications in terms of gender and community;[24] and Vachhani, Bell and Bristow delve into the affective micropolitics that emerge in these practices, where embroidery, weaving or sewing become gestures of resistance and care.[25]

Taken together, these contributions establish the theoretical framework from which the scenarios analysed in this research are developed. Craft is understood here as an expanded, hybrid and evolving field, where concerns regarding sustainability, material innovation, social justice, the political agenda and technological hybridisation converge. In this context, foresight methodologies provide a useful tool for anticipating possible trajectories and for guiding both research and professional practice.

Methodology

In order to validate and prioritise trend scenarios in the field of contemporary craftsmanship and their application to design, the Delphi method has been employed. This is a qualitative and prospective research technique that seeks to build consensus among a group of experts, classically through successive rounds of structured consultation.[26] In this study, a modified single-round version was applied: since the aim was to validate and prioritise scenarios previously derived from the literature review, rather than to generate them from scratch, a single structured consultation combining Likert-type ratings with open-ended comments was considered sufficient. This design also reduced the burden on participants and the risk of attrition between rounds, while the qualitative comments provided the nuance that successive rounds would otherwise have offered.

The application of the Delphi method is used to identify and evaluate trends based on the judgement of professionals with experience in the craft sector. The questionnaire was designed based on the analysis of emerging trends identified in the previous exploratory work, including a review of the scientific literature and the scenario study published in 2017.[27] Ten scenarios were defined (**Table 1**), each accompanied by a brief explanatory description, a verifiable real-world example to help contextualise their understanding, and four Likert-type rating items which participants were asked to score on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

The four evaluation criteria addressed: (1) whether the scenario represents a real and emerging trend in the field of contemporary craft; (2) whether it has a significant potential impact on other sectors (design, industry, sustainability, culture, etc.); (3) whether the trend could consolidate in the coming years and

generate new forms of production or consumption; and (4) whether it is considered relevant as a subject for further research and design exploration. This framework was validated through a pilot test involving three participants from academic and professional backgrounds, which enabled us to refine the language, eliminate ambiguities and ensure the neutrality of the statements.

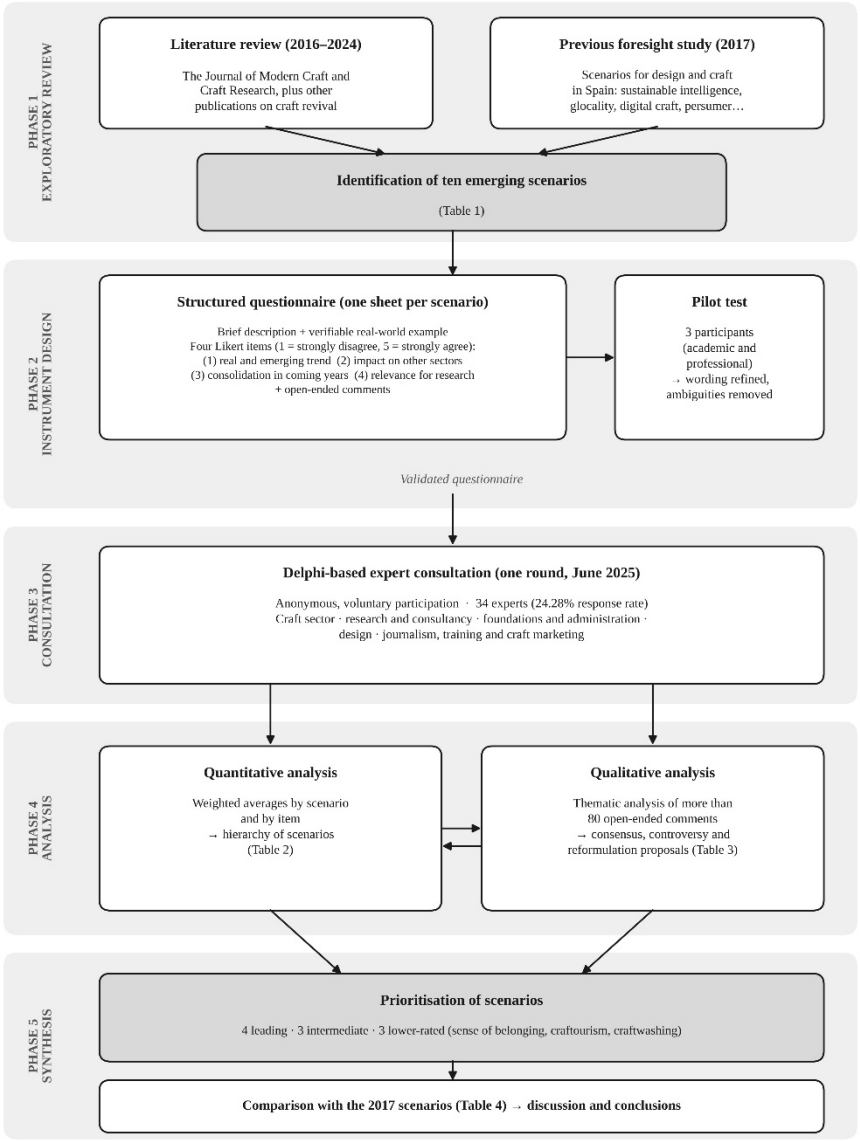


Fig. 1. Methodological workflow of the study, from the literature review (2016–2024) and the definition of the ten scenarios to the Delphi-based expert consultation, the quantitative and qualitative analysis and the comparison with the 2017 scenarios. Source: Prepared by the authors.

The sample obtained from the Delphi study comprises professionals from the fields of design, craftsmanship, research and material culture, selected for their knowledge of the sector or their direct links to contemporary craft practices. Participation was anonymous, voluntary and exclusively academic in nature, and was conducted during June 2025. The response rate, at 24.28% of the total number

of people contacted (34 professionals answered the questions posed),[28] can be considered adequate for this type of study and ensures a diversity of perspectives, although it does not claim to be representative of the entire craft ecosystem. The questions for each of the scenarios are as follows:

1. Do I consider that this scenario represents a real and emerging trend in the field of contemporary craft?
2. Do I believe this scenario has a significant potential impact on other sectors (design, industry, sustainability, culture, etc.)?
3. Do I think this trend could become established in the coming years and generate new forms of production or consumption?
4. Do I consider it important to explore this scenario further through research and design?

Data analysis was conducted on two complementary levels. First, weighted averages were calculated for each scenario and each of the items, which allowed us to establish hierarchies among the trends and identify those with the greatest internal consistency. Second, a thematic analysis was carried out on more than 80 qualitative comments provided in open-ended responses. These observations helped to add nuance to the numerical assessments, identify points of consensus and controversy, and gather proposals for reformulating or integrating scenarios. No fixed cut-off point was established: scenarios were grouped into three levels (leading, intermediate and lower-rated) by combining their relative position in the ranking with the weight they received in the qualitative analysis. The research process as a whole is summarised in a methodological workflow (**Fig. 1**).

Results

The quantitative analysis, based on weighted averages and expert consultation, identified a set of scenarios that were consistently rated highest (**Table 2**). Four scenarios emerge as the most strongly validated: *sustainable neo-craft*, which received the highest overall score—particularly in the dimensions of "real trend" and "opportunities"—followed by *biocraft materials*, *craftivism*, and *digital crafts*. These scenarios exhibit strong internal consistency and are widely perceived as robust, sustainable, and likely to shape future developments in the field.

Sustainable neo-craft achieves the highest overall average, with particular emphasis on its recognition as a real trend and its perceived opportunities. This scenario is associated with practices that integrate digital tools, sustainability strategies, a life-cycle approach and designs sensitive to the local context, without sacrificing the cultural and symbolic dimension of the crafts.

Biocraft materials rank second in the assessment hierarchy, with high and consistent scores across the four dimensions analysed. Experts recognise in this scenario a future direction with great potential, in which craftsmanship is linked to research into biomaterials for the creation of products with low environmental impact. The role of craft workshops as spaces for experimentation—where new materials are tested, adapted, and contextualised—is considered crucial.

Craftivism emerges as the third most highly rated scenario, particularly in the "structural change" dimension. Participants highlight its capacity to generate cultural and social impact, articulating critical discourses around issues such as gender, job insecurity, migration or the climate crisis. Craft is understood here as a form of everyday activism that combines visual expression, material engagement, and the construction of communities of care.

Digital crafts complete the group of leading scenarios. Experts recognise that the integration of digital tools—such as 3D printing, laser cutting, parametric manufacturing or even artificial intelligence—offers new opportunities to expand formal possibilities, optimise processes and democratise certain aspects of production without losing the artisanal dimension. However, some experts emphasise the need to maintain a critical reflection on technological dependence and on the environmental implications of these tools.

Alongside these leading scenarios, three additional scenarios occupy an intermediate position: *artisan entrepreneurship*, which scores highly in terms of opportunities; *craft co-design*, which receives a solid evaluation linked to the growing importance of collaboration; and *revaluation of trades*, which, despite lower scores in the "opportunities" dimension, is strongly valued in the qualitative analysis.

Artisan entrepreneurship stands out for its high score in the "opportunities" dimension, indicating that participants perceive this model as a significant economic driver for the sector. The need for artisans to develop skills in management, communication and digital marketing is emphasised, as well as in the use of e-commerce platforms and social media to position their products and build brand narratives consistent with their values.

Craft co-design receives a solid, albeit more moderate, evaluation. Experts underline the importance of co-creation processes between designers, craftspeople, and local communities, which enable the creation of products and services better suited to users' real needs while revaluing traditional knowledge. At the same time, challenges such as communication barriers, power imbalances, and differences in working rhythms are identified.

The *revaluation of trades* scores slightly lower on average in terms of opportunities but receives significant attention in the qualitative observations. Many experts stress the urgency of preserving endangered techniques, not only as cultural heritage but as a foundation for future innovation. Proposed strategies include integrating craft training into formal and informal education, promoting intergenerational exchange, and developing public policies that recognise the economic and symbolic value of these practices.

Finally, three scenarios obtain the lowest averages: *sense of belonging* (3.72), *craftourism* (3.68) and *craftwashing* (3.58). It should be noted that all ten scenarios score above the midpoint of the scale and fall within a relatively narrow range (3.58–4.21); these scenarios are therefore not rejected by the experts but validated with less intensity than the others. The boundary with the intermediate group is also narrow, particularly in the case of *sense of belonging*, which is only 0.01 points below the revaluation of trades. The distinction between groups is thus based not only on the averages, but also on how the experts interpret these scenarios in their

comments: sense of belonging is often understood as a cross-cutting outcome of craft practices rather than a distinct trend; *craftourism* is recognised for its economic potential, although its consolidation is seen as conditional on how it is implemented; and *craftwashing*, although conceptually significant, is perceived as a risk to be monitored rather than a trend to be promoted.

Craftourism is perceived as a field with economic potential for local development, but there are warnings about the risk of folklorisation and trivialisation of practices if the processes are not designed with the genuine participation of craft communities. Craftwashing, for its part, receives the lowest scores across all areas, although its importance as a phenomenon to monitor is recognised: there are warnings about the superficial use of craft-related language as a marketing strategy, disconnected from actual production conditions and the values that craftsmanship is supposed to embody.

Scenario	Overall average	Highlights
Sustainable neo-craft	**4.21**	Actual trend (**4.42**), opportunities (**4.19**)
Biocraft materials	**4.12**	Consistent in all dimensions
Craftivism	**4.07**	High in structural change (**4.13**)
Digital crafts	**4.02**	Strong in all areas
Entrepreneurial artisan	**3.96**	Very high in opportunities (**4.19**)
Co-design craft	**3.85**	Solid value, but more conservative
Revaluation of trades	**3.73**	Fewer opportunities (**3.52**)
Sense of belonging	**3.72**	Seen as a cross-cutting outcome
Craftourism	**3.68**	Possibly seen as a risk
Craftwashing	**3.58**	The lowest-rated in all areas

Table 2. Weighted average results by scenario, obtained after tabulating the data, including some notable scores regarding certain questions raised in the consultation. Source: Prepared by the authors.

In addition to the quantitative assessment, the questionnaire included open-ended sections designed to gather additional feedback from participants. These qualitative contributions have helped to complement the numerical findings with interpretative nuances and arguments grounded in professional experience.

Qualitative analysis reinforces the prominence of *sustainable neo-craft* and *biocraft materials*, with experts emphasising the need to further explore their economic implications and the working conditions associated with these practices. In the case of *craftivism*, its ability to engage younger generations through visual activism and social media is highlighted. For *digital crafts*, debates focus on the definition of craftsmanship itself and the tension between algorithmic control and manual agency.

As mentioned, a total of over 80 written observations have been compiled, revealing not only the degree of agreement or disagreement regarding the scenarios presented, but also critical perceptions, suggestions for improvement,

and contextualised reflections. The thematic analysis of these comments has enabled the identification of recurring patterns and areas of consensus or controversy among the experts, offering a richer and more complex interpretation of the results.

In the open-ended comments on the form, a general consensus is observed regarding the importance of preserving traditional crafts and fostering their connection with contemporary practices. Some responses highlight the need to institutionalise certain processes to ensure their transmission, whilst others focus on the dangers of *craftwashing* or the loss of authenticity in the commercialisation of craft products.

Scenario	Key theme	Recurring comments from experts
Sustainable neo-craft	Shift in the production paradigm	It is considered one of the most robust and necessary trends, particularly due to its alignment with the ecological agenda and its potential to revitalise local production.
Biocraft materials	Ecological and material innovation	This is highlighted as a promising area for the future. Research into biomaterials is seen as key to the future of craftsmanship and design.
Craftivism	Aesthetic and social activism	It is recognised as a powerful tool for social change. Some experts highlight its ability to connect with new generations through visual activism.
Digital crafts	Technical hybridisation and new visual languages	The incorporation of digital tools is seen as an opportunity to expand formal possibilities and democratise certain processes without losing the artisanal element.
Entrepreneurial artisan	Professionalisation and brand identity	The figure of the artisan-entrepreneur is viewed positively as an economic driver. Several experts highlight the need to improve digital and business skills.
Craft co-design	Horizontal collaboration and co-creation	Experts highlight the value of participatory processes. The relationship between designer and artisan, based on reciprocity and mutual respect, is seen as key.
Revaluation of trades	Integration of sustainability and traditional knowledge Transmission and education	The preservation of endangered techniques involves their recontextualization within current markets and their inclusion in educational or apprenticeship schemes.
Sense of belonging	Community and cultural resilience	This relates to the capacity of craftsmanship to foster connections, self-esteem and support networks. It is particularly relevant in vulnerable contexts or situations of forced migration.
Craftourism	Cultural tourism and risks of trivialisation	Its potential to boost local economies is valued, but there are warnings about the risk of folklorisation or loss of authenticity if there is no genuine community involvement.
Craftwashing	Ethics and transparency	Experts warn against the superficial use of craft-related language as a marketing strategy. It is proposed to promote certification or labelling schemes to guarantee authenticity.

Table 3. Qualitative data obtained from the sample, based on comments made by the experts. Source: Prepared by the authors.

Among the most frequently discussed scenarios are (**Table 3**):

- *Sustainable Neo-Craft* and *Biocraft Materials*: These two scenarios are considered central to a transition towards circular and environmentally responsible production models.
- *Craftivism*: This receives numerous favourable mentions for its capacity to generate cultural and social impact, ranging from those addressing aesthetic issues to the possibilities offered by manual (analogue) manipulation in an excessively digitalised society.
- *Craftourism*: Its potential for local development is viewed positively, although there are warnings about the risk of "folklorisation" if craftspeople are not actively involved, together with tourism promoters, in designing and managing the visitor experience, rather than merely supplying products for it or acting as its backdrop.

Furthermore, some experts suggest refining certain scenarios, integrating them with one another, or considering their long-term evolution. Particular attention is also given to training within the craft sector as a cross-cutting factor to ensure the consolidation of these trends.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that contemporary craftsmanship is situated within a transitional stage, where efforts to preserve traditional knowledge coexist with others that embrace radical experimentation with materials, technologies, and business models. *Sustainable neo-craft* and *biocraft materials* reflect a clear desire to align craft practice with the principles of sustainability and circularity, whilst *craftivism* and *digital crafts* highlight the potential of craft to engage with broader political, economic and technological debates.

From a comparative perspective, the relationship with the 2017 scenario study is particularly revealing. At that time, concepts such as *sustainable intelligence*, *glocality* and *digital craftsmanship* were already anticipating some of today's concerns, but the vocabulary and practices associated with biomaterials and craft activism had not yet fully emerged. The original study shows how some of those scenarios are now finding continuity and development in the identified trends (**Table 4**): *sustainable intelligence* is in tune with *sustainable neo-craft* and *biocraft materials*; *glocality* is linked to a *sense of belonging* and local production strategies; *digital craftsmanship* is expanding into *digital crafts*; *open craftsmanship* relates to the *revaluation of trades*; and the figure of the *persumer* is evolving towards more complex models of co-design and active user participation.

Despite these advances, several gaps remain. One of these is the full integration of biomaterials into specific craft contexts, beyond pilot schemes or experimental projects. Another is the relationship between craftsmanship and global digital commerce platforms, where a significant imbalance still exists between large commercial platforms and small workshops. Furthermore, the relationship between craftsmanship and public policy still requires greater

attention, particularly with regard to regulatory frameworks, certification systems and support for training.

Scenarios 2017 (Design Journal)	Scenarios 2025 (JMC & CR)	Coincidences / Advances	Gaps / Areas for Further Exploration	Reference articles
Sustainable intelligence	**Sustainable Neo-Craft** **Biocraft materials**	Interest in sustainability, materials and processes is growing	Little development in specific biomaterials or advanced recycling	Walker, Evans & Mullagh (2019)
Glocal	**Sense of belonging**	Digitalisation reinforces the value of 'handmade'	Lack of full integration with global e-commerce	Totten (2024)
Digital craftsmanship Personalisation	**Digital Crafts**	New tools and techniques are being adopted in workshops	Little mention of applied AI	Loh, Burry & Wagenfeld (2016)
Open craftsmanship	**Revaluation of trades**	Growing interest in learning experiences and performativity	Limited in terms of global commercial or educational strategies	Eriksson et al., 2019
The persumer	**Codesign craft**	The consumer as an integral part of the creative act, not a passive recipient	Analysing the active observer, the reflective participant	Wright & Fraser (2020)

Table 4. Comparison of results obtained in the 2017 scenario study and this paper. Source: Prepared by the authors.[29]

Geographically, the fact that all participants in the Delphi study are European, and largely Spanish, invites reflection on the transferability of the results to other contexts. Whilst the trends identified appear to respond to global dynamics—the climate crisis, digitalisation, cultural precariousness—their specific manifestation may vary considerably depending on factors such as the degree of institutionalisation of craft, the structure of local markets, working conditions or the relationship with tourism. It would be particularly relevant to compare these results with studies carried out in Latin America, Africa or Asia, where craft retains an even more pronounced economic and symbolic centrality and where the tensions between the global market and community practices take on specific forms.

Another critical tension lies between craft as a strategy for differentiation in consumer markets and craft as a situated practice, rooted in communities and territories. The phenomenon of *craftwashing* highlights the risks of instrumentalising the language and aesthetics of craftsmanship to legitimise products whose production is far removed from the values traditionally associated with manual work. In response, research and professional practice can contribute to developing tools for transparency, labelling and certification that enable

consumers to distinguish between genuine offerings and purely commercial uses of the term "artisanal".

The position of craftourism deserves particular attention, given the growing interest in cultural tourism as a vehicle for sustainable local development. With an overall average of 3.68, it ranks ninth of the ten scenarios, only marginally below the revaluation of trades (3.73) and sense of belonging (3.72) (**Table 2**). This narrow margin suggests that the experts do not reject craft tourism outright; rather, they regard it as a less consolidated trend whose value depends largely on how it is implemented. The qualitative data support this reading: craftourism is among the most frequently discussed scenarios, and experts acknowledge its potential to diversify the income of workshops and to energise local economies, while warning of the risk of "folklorisation" and of a loss of authenticity when craft communities are not genuinely involved (**Table 3**). The contrast between a low quantitative score and high qualitative salience can therefore be read as ambivalence rather than indifference.

Several factors may explain why cultural tourism emerges as a less consolidated trend. First, the panel consisted mainly of professionals from craft, research, design and craft-related administration, and none of the participant profiles corresponded specifically to tourism management; the scenario was therefore assessed from the perspective of craft production rather than from that of the visitor economy. Second, the academic literature on which the scenarios were built offers comparatively little support for this trend: in the journals reviewed, craft tourism appears only indirectly, and the main reference identified addresses craft beverage tourism rather than the handmade object.[30] Third, tourism has long been associated with the commoditisation of culture and the staging of traditions for external consumption,[31] so experts may perceive it less as an emerging practice than as a pre-existing market logic that craft must negotiate. Finally, the economic benefits of craft tourism tend to be seasonal and unevenly distributed among workshops, which may help to explain the cautious overall assessment.

These results have significant implications for sustainable cultural tourism and for the safeguarding of traditional craft knowledge. Recent research shows that tourist demand can keep pottery workshops economically viable and renew interest in tradition, while at the same time pushing makers towards standardised output and encouraging the sale of imported wares that residents perceive as eroding local authenticity.[32] Authenticity, in this sense, is not a fixed attribute of objects but a negotiated quality that emerges from the relationships between people, places and practices, and that can be co-created with visitors.[33] Craftourism is therefore more likely to consolidate if it moves beyond the display and sale of finished products towards experiences in which visitors take part in processes of making, learning and exchange, in line with creative tourism models rooted in local context.[34] This requires craftspeople to act not as a picturesque backdrop but as co-designers of the tourist experience alongside tourism promoters, retaining control over what is shown, how it is interpreted and how the benefits are shared. Such an approach is consistent with the 2003 UNESCO Convention, which recognises traditional craftsmanship as a domain of intangible cultural heritage and places the communities that practise it at the centre of

safeguarding,[35] and with recent reviews that identify tourism as one of the channels through which traditional handicrafts are preserved, while warning of ageing skill holders and declining interest among young people.[36] From this perspective, craftourism connects directly with other scenarios identified in this study, namely the revaluation of trades, craft co-design and sense of belonging, and could act as a bridge between the preservation of endangered techniques and their economic sustainability. Future rounds of consultation should therefore include tourism stakeholders and visitor perspectives, which were absent from the present panel.

Finally, from the perspective of craft sciences, this study confirms the importance of continuing to develop methodologies that integrate the voices of the key players—craftspeople, designers, communities—in the construction of future scenarios. While the combination of literature review, foresight analysis, and expert consultation provides a robust foundation, further qualitative research is needed to examine everyday practices of making, learning, and collaboration in greater depth. Furthermore, future research would allow us to observe how these scenarios evolve over time and which factors favour or hinder their consolidation.

Conclusions

The research presented has enabled us to update and expand the future scenarios for craft and design initially formulated in 2017, incorporating relevant contributions from the scientific literature published between 2016 and 2024 and subjecting these trends to validation by a panel of experts. Seven key scenarios have emerged from this process which, according to quantitative and qualitative assessments, should be considered priorities in the coming years: *sustainable neo-craft*, *biocraft materials*, *craftivism*, *digital crafts*, *artisan entrepreneurship*, *codesign craft* and the *revaluation of trades*. The remaining three scenarios—*sense of belonging*, *craftourism* and *craftwashing*—are not discarded: they received positive, albeit lower, assessments and are better understood as a cross-cutting dimension, a conditional opportunity and a risk to be monitored, respectively, all of which deserve attention in future research.

According to the weighted averages, the most strongly validated scenarios are *sustainable neo-craft*, *biocraft materials*, *craftivism* and *digital crafts*. However, the qualitative analysis placed particular emphasis on *artisan entrepreneurship*, *codesign craft* and the *revaluation of trades*, as the experts' comments highlighted the significant importance of these latter trends.

Based on the results obtained, the analysis suggests that future developments in craftsmanship may be structured around several key trajectories:

(1) Neo-craft as a model of sustainability. This scenario relates to the emergence of craft practices that integrate digital tools, sustainability strategies, and contemporary design approaches. This neo-craft does not replace tradition, but rather reinterprets it, opening up new possibilities for manual craftsmanship in the 21st century.

(2) Handcrafted biomaterials represent a key innovation in contemporary sustainable craftsmanship. This material-based scenario includes mycelium, seaweed, recycled fibres, organic waste, and bioplastics, selected not only for their

low environmental impact but also for their ability to regenerate natural environments.

(3) Craft as a form of activism, promoting symbolic and visual resistance to various social issues. This approach moves away from strident rhetoric and adopts an affective and relational tone, positioning the handcrafted object as a vehicle for social transformation and craft processes as a cultural and economic benchmark in the face of industrial degradation.

(4) The fusion of craftsmanship and technology has given rise to what is known as digital craftsmanship. This encompasses practices that combine manual expertise with digital tools such as digital manufacturing, artificial intelligence, and the metaverse. This convergence allows the material and formal boundaries of craftsmanship to expand, while maintaining its expressive and personalised nature.

(5) The figure of the artisan entrepreneur combines the skills of the manual producer with those of the creative entrepreneur. In this context, these practitioners draw on their cultural heritage, technical skills, and contemporary vision to create unique, sustainable, and viable offerings for the global market. This profile embraces digital tools, online distribution channels, and ethical marketing to reach specific audiences without compromising authenticity.

(6) Collaborative design refers to co-creation processes between designers, craftspeople, and, on occasion, local communities. This practice promotes a horizontal exchange of knowledge and highlights the cultural, emotional, and symbolic dimensions of craft production. In contrast to models that prioritise individual authorship, this scenario establishes relationships of mutual respect and recognition between disciplines.

(7) Growing automation, globalisation, and offshoring, coupled with the declining value placed on craftsmanship by consumers, have led to the disappearance of numerous trades, often considered unprofitable or outdated. In this context, and following the resurgence observed in recent decades, craftsmanship is being revalued—not as a passing trend, but as a meaningful response to these dynamics, in which circularity, design, excellence, and personalisation become its key strengths.

Finally, although craftourism did not reach the level of the priority scenarios, the results suggest that cultural tourism may become a meaningful opportunity for the sector if it is designed with the active participation of craft communities. Rather than a separate trend, it can be understood as a space in which several of the scenarios identified converge, such as the revaluation of trades, co-design and sense of belonging, and in which the preservation of traditional craft knowledge and sustainable local development can reinforce each other, provided that the risks of folklorisation and trivialisation are addressed.

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the 34 people who have contributed their time and knowledge to participate in this study.

NOTES

[1] Neetu Singh and Vanshika Gupta, "Mata Ni Pachedi: Tales of the Goddess on Textiles from Gujarat, India," *Craft Research* 15, no. 1 (2024): 109–26, https://doi.org/10.1386/crre_00121_1.
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[3] Manuel Martínez Torán, Chele Esteve Sendra, and Ricardo Moreno Cuesta, "Scenarios for Design and Craft," *The Design Journal* 20, suppl. 1 (2017): S2778–S2788, https://doi.org/10.1080/14606925.2017.1352789.
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[9] The concept of craft science or craft sciences is a relatively recent one. Kokko and colleagues demonstrate how *craft sciences* have taken root as a transdisciplinary field in the Nordic countries. Meanwhile, Molander argues that craft theory and practice are not mutually exclusive, and that craft science thrives in communities of mutual learning. In 2021, the *1st Biennial International Conference for the Craft Sciences* (BICCS) was held, where Groth and his team reflected on the fact that craftsmanship is more than just a practice: it is a way of life and a bridge between disciplines. See Sirpa Kokko et al., "Mapping the Methodologies of the Craft Sciences in Finland, Sweden and Norway," *Craft Research* 11, no. 2 (2020): 177–209, https://doi.org/10.1386/crre_00025_1; Bengt Molander, "Ways We Are Connected to the World: Craft and/or Science?," *Craft Research* 13, no. 2 (2022): 221–36, https://doi.org/10.1386/crre_00077_1; Camilla Groth et al., "Craft Is Ubiquitous," *Craft Research* 13, no. 2 (2022): 211–20, https://doi.org/10.1386/crre_00076_2.
[10] Kokko et al., "Mapping the Methodologies"; Groth et al., "Craft Is Ubiquitous"; Molander, "Ways We Are Connected."
[11] At the time of writing, Craft Research has a higher profile in terms of metrics, with greater visibility (h-index 10, Q1 quartile). The Journal of Modern Craft has more modest metrics in terms of citations and ranking, with an h-index of 8 and a position in the Q4 quartile.
[12] Luckman and Andrew, "Establishing the Crafting Self."
[13] Works listed in table 1: Stuart Walker, Martyn Evans, and Louise Mullagh, "Meaningful Practices: The Contemporary Relevance of Traditional Making for Sustainable Material Futures,"

Craft Research 10, no. 2 (2019): 183–210, https://doi.org/10.1386/crre_00002_1; Rognoli et al., "Materials Biography"; Ferreira, Apolinário, and Forman, "Optimising Textile Biomaterial Selection"; Hemmings, "Acknowledging the Smallness"; Sheena J. Vachhani, Emma Bell, and Alexandra Bristow, "The Affective Micropolitics of Craftivism: Organizing Social Change through the Minor Gesture," *Organization Studies* 46, no. 4 (2025): 525–47, https://doi.org/10.1177/01708406241305752; Ermer, "Craftivism"; Martin Woolley and Kristina Niedderer, "Real or Unreal? – Crafting Authenticity in the Digital Age," *Craft Research* 7, no. 2 (2016): 159–64, https://doi.org/10.1386/crre.7.2.159_2; Paul Loh, Jane Burry, and Malte Wagenfeld, "Reconsidering Pye's Theory of Making through Digital Craft Practice: A Theoretical Framework towards Continuous Designing," *Craft Research* 7, no. 2 (2016): 187–206, https://doi.org/10.1386/crre.7.2.187_1; Marie Segares, "Crochet Microentrepreneurs and Technology: A Collective Case Study," *Craft Research* 12, no. 2 (2021): 275–93, https://doi.org/10.1386/crre_00053_1; Elizabeth Wright and Simon Fraser, "Safi Ceramics: Designing Future Heritage," *The Journal of Modern Craft* 13, no. 1 (2020): 83–88, https://doi.org/10.1080/17496772.2020.1735133; Jianan Hu, Eunsuk Hur, and B. Thomas, "Value-Creating Practices and Barriers for Collaboration between Designers and Artisans: A Systematic Literature Review," *International Journal of Fashion Design, Technology and Education* 17, no. 1 (2024): 25–36, https://doi.org/10.1080/17543266.2023.2228337; Lars Eriksson et al., "The Time-Space of Craftsmanship," *Craft Research* 10, no. 1 (2019): 17–39, https://doi.org/10.1386/crre.10.1.17_1; Kelley Totten, "Craft Knowledge and Performance through Fiber Arts at the John C. Campbell Folk School," *The Journal of Modern Craft* 17, no. 2 (2024): 125–37, https://doi.org/10.1080/17496772.2024.2345536; Claudia Gil Arroyo, Whitney Knollenberg, and Carla Barbieri, "Inputs and Outputs of Craft Beverage Tourism: The Destination Resources Acceleration Framework," *Annals of Tourism Research* 86 (2021): 103102, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2020.103102; Philip H. Howard, "Craftwashing in the U.S. Beer Industry," *Beverages* 4, no. 1 (2018): 1, https://doi.org/10.3390/beverages4010001; Sergio Rivaroli, Cristina Calvo-Porral, and Roberta Spadoni, "Using Food Choice Questionnaire to Explain Millennials' Attitudes towards Craft Beer," *Food Quality and Preference* 96 (2022): 104408, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodqual.2021.104408.

[14] Kokko et al., "Mapping the Methodologies"; Groth et al., "Craft Is Ubiquitous."

[15] Singh and Gupta, "Mata Ni Pachedi."

[16] Bhat and Mathews, "Cultural Artefacts."

[17] Walker, Evans, and Mullagh, "Meaningful Practices."

[18] Rognoli et al., "Materials Biography."

[19] Ferreira, Apolinário, and Forman, "Optimising Textile Biomaterial Selection."

[20] Woolley and Niedderer, "Real or Unreal?"

[21] Loh, Burry, and Wagenfeld, "Reconsidering Pye's Theory."

[22] Greer, *Craftivism*.

[23] Hemmings, "Acknowledging the Smallness."

[24] Ermer, "Craftivism."

[25] Vachhani, Bell, and Bristow, "Affective Micropolitics of Craftivism."

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[27] Martínez Torán, Esteve Sendra, and Moreno Cuesta, "Scenarios for Design and Craft."

[28] Of the professionals who participated, 26.4% come from the craft sector, either participating in a personal capacity or as members of an association. A further 26.8% come from the field of research or consultancy, specialising in the craft sector. Among other representative groups, 20% work in foundations or administration related to craft, 10% are involved in design, and the remainder come from journalism, specialist training or craft marketing (in the latter case, a single person). 100% are European professionals, the majority of whom are Spanish or based in Spain (82.4%).

[29] Reference articles in table 4: Martínez Torán, Esteve Sendra, and Moreno Cuesta, "Scenarios for Design and Craft"; Walker, Evans, and Mullagh, "Meaningful Practices"; Totten, "Craft Knowledge and Performance"; Loh, Burry, and Wagenfeld, "Reconsidering Pye's Theory"; Eriksson et al., "Time-Space of Craftsmanship"; Wright and Fraser, "Safi Ceramics."
[30] Gil Arroyo, Knollenberg, and Barbieri, "Craft Beverage Tourism."
[31] Erik Cohen, "Authenticity and Commoditization in Tourism," *Annals of Tourism Research* 15, no. 3 (1988): 371–86, https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383(88)90028-X.
[32] Eleanor White and Emmanuel Akwasi Adu-Ampong, "In the Potter's Hand: Tourism and the Everyday Practices of Authentic Intangible Cultural Heritage in a Pottery Village," *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, published online July 10, 2024, https://doi.org/10.1080/1743873X.2024.2370830.
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