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BUYING HERITAGE BUT MISSING THE MAKER: CRAFTSMANSHIP, CULTURAL TOURISM, AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

This paper examines whether the cultural, professional and personal values that artisans attach to their craft are effectively conveyed to wider audiences, and how craftsmanship and cultural tourism are perceived as drivers of rural revitalisation. Drawing on qualitative interviews with practitioners and survey data collected from potential consumers across seven European countries participating in the EU-funded CULTURALITY project, the study contrasts artisans' understanding of craftsmanship as a living cultural practice, a profession and a way of life, with the more object and market-centred perceptions held by the public. While survey results show that consumers already associate handcrafted products with authenticity, heritage and local identity, the interviews reveal that the deeper professional and economic realities behind craft-based livelihoods remain only partially understood. The paper argues that experiential cultural tourism, when built on genuine interaction rather than simplified representation, offers one of the most promising ways to close this gap, with implications for rural development and tourism policy.

Keywords: traditional craftsmanship; cultural tourism; consumer perception; intangible cultural heritage; experiential tourism; rural development; knowledge transmission.

INTRODUCTION

Both academic literature and public discourse have often presented craftsmanship only through the understanding of its material outputs. Even when discussing traditional techniques or ancestral know-how, the tangible products associated with the local identities from which they emerged tend to be what transcends. However, craftsmanship is poorly understood when it reduced solely to manual skills.[1] Rather, its value lies not only in the finished object but in the creative process itself.[2] In this regard, UNESCO stresses that the distinctive value of artisanal products extends beyond their functional, artistic, creative, or

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aesthetic qualities to include the symbolic, cultural, social, and identity-related meanings they embody.

The 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage identifies traditional craftsmanship as one of the key domains through which intangible cultural heritage is manifested. Considering the importance of intangible cultural heritage as a "mainspring of cultural diversity and a guarantee of sustainable development",[3] the Convention is mainly concerned with the skills and knowledge involved in craftsmanship rather than the craft products themselves. Consequently, it emphasizes that safeguarding efforts should focus on supporting artisans[4] to continue to produce crafts and to transmit their skills and knowledge to others, particularly within their communities.

Moreover, communities can benefit from tourism activities linked to intangible cultural heritage, as tourism constitutes one of the main channels through which such heritage can be leveraged for local and regional development. The 2016 Operational Directives (Chapter VI)[5] explicitly address the bidirectional relationship between tourism and intangible cultural heritage. On the one hand, they recognize tourism's potential to generate income and support for communities that practice and preserve traditional forms of heritage, including craftsmanship, thereby contributing to their viability and intergenerational transmission. The diverse range of traditions -including local food, festive events, performing arts or craft-related skills- can serve as a powerful lever for attracting culturally motivated tourists, generating income and stimulating job creation while nourishing the sense of pride within host communities. Indeed, rural tourism has become a priority for many nations seeking to stimulate and revitalize tourism development.[6] On the other hand, the Operational Directives warn that tourism may also have adverse effects on intangible cultural heritage if communities lose control over their own heritage. Therefore, tourism activities must be carefully managed to ensure that they contribute to the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage while respecting the rights of the people and communities directly involved.

These dynamics have been further reinforced by the broader transformations that tourism has undergone since the COVID-19 pandemic. Mobility restrictions and health-related anxieties led many travellers to favour destinations closer to home, outdoor settings and lower population densities over crowded urban circuits, and several studies have documented a marked, and in some regions lasting, increase in domestic and proximity tourism directed towards rural areas. This renewed interest has been accompanied by a wider redistribution of population towards less densely populated territories, as growing numbers of urban residents relocated, temporarily or permanently, to rural settings during and after the pandemic.[7] Within this reoriented landscape, agritourism and other forms of travel rooted in local agricultural, artistic and craft traditions have been identified as particularly well placed to benefit from the post-pandemic search for authentic and less crowded destinations.[8] Likewise, intangible cultural heritage has been shown to generate renewed economic and social value for rural communities under these conditions, although realising that value still depends on the capacity of local communities to adapt collectively to the disruptions such shifts can bring.[9]

This growing interest in rural tourism can also be situated within the broader debate on the so-called "rural turn": a contemporary process of resignification of rurality that has gained particular momentum since the pandemic, as urban populations have turned their attention, and in some cases their place of residence, towards the countryside. In the Spanish context in particular, this trend has translated into a marked resurgence of cultural production engaging with rural life and landscapes, often read against the backdrop of the so-called "España vacía" (or "empty Spain") phenomenon and a broader search for more sustainable, place-based ways of living.[10] This shift in the rural imaginary does not imply that depopulation, insufficient services or territorial imbalances have disappeared—it contextualises the arrival of new residents and visitors, as well as the new cultural and economic practices emerging from within rural areas themselves, including those linked to craftsmanship and cultural tourism, whose real contribution to local economies has long been recognised in the literature.[11]

Building on information gathered within the EU-funded CULTURALITY project,[12] this paper examines the perceptions of both professional practitioners and potential consumers regarding the meaning and significance of traditional craftsmanship and artisanal practices. It further explores the role of experiential cultural tourism as a mechanism for transmitting the value of craft as well as a driver of sustainable rural development.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data collected within the framework of the aforementioned project. The research design seeks to contrast the perspectives of craft practitioners with those of potential consumers in order to examine whether the values that artisans associate with craftsmanship are effectively transmitted to wider audiences. To this end, the analysis draws on two complementary sources of empirical evidence: semi-structured interviews conducted with craft practitioners during the project's fieldwork activities, and a structured questionnaire administered across the participating countries.

The qualitative component is based on a series of semi-structured, audio-recorded interviews conducted with expert craft practitioners identified through the project's anthropological fieldwork. These interviews were designed to document traditional crafts and the cultural practices associated with them, while also exploring artisans' personal experiences, professional trajectories and perceptions of the challenges facing contemporary craftsmanship. Although a common interview guide ensured consistency across the different case studies, participants were encouraged to develop their responses freely, allowing themes considered particularly relevant by each practitioner to emerge naturally. Interviewees were also offered the possibility of anonymising their responses.

The interviews were carried out in the nine countries participating in the CULTURALITY project, resulting in a corpus of 83 interviews (at the time of writing the article) of approximately two to three hours each. For the purposes of this article, however, the qualitative analysis focuses exclusively on the interviews conducted in the case study regions examined here (Spain, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Sweden, Norway and Estonia) and, more specifically, on those sections

addressing artisans' understanding of craftsmanship, the values they seek to transmit to the public, and their reflections on the role of tourism and public engagement in communicating those values.

Particularly, the analysis focuses on responses to the interview questions "*Does the practitioner teach anyone the skills they possess? Who? How?*", "*Where does the practitioner get materials from?*", "*What kind of items does the practitioner produce?*", "*For what purposes does the practitioner produce them?*", "*Is the practitioner engaged in activities related to tourism?*", and "*What are the challenges the practitioner encounters?*", together with the accompanying quotations concerning tourism engagement and the challenges practitioners face.[13]



Fig. 1 A & B. Representatives of the research team from the University of Oviedo carrying out fieldwork and interviews in the workshops of artisans Marta Fernández (*Quesería Ca Sanchu*, Ambás, Asturias) and Juan Carlos Quintana (*Navallas de Taramundi,*[14] Asturias). Source: authors' own photographs.

In addition to the interviews, the fieldwork included the systematic audiovisual documentation of each practitioner and their working environment **(fig. 1 A & B)**. All interviews were audio-recorded and, whenever possible, also filmed. Photographic documentation was produced to record workshops, tools, production processes and representative examples of the crafts produced by each practitioner. This material forms part of the project's broader strategy to document and preserve traditional knowledge and cultural practices that are considered particularly significant within each region. Beyond describing their techniques, interviewees were encouraged to reflect on their professional trajectories, the social and cultural value of their craft, and the opportunities and challenges affecting its continuity. The interviews provide not only a record of artisanal practices but also valuable insights into how practitioners themselves perceive the

future of their professions and the conditions necessary for their long-term sustainability.

The qualitative evidence is complemented by survey data collected through a structured questionnaire within the same project. To ensure comparability, only survey responses collected in the same countries included in the interview sample were considered. Responses were collected both in person and through an online questionnaire, which was available in English and in the official language of each participating country. Paper-based questionnaires were collected during several craft workshops and cultural itineraries exploring rural territories involved in the project from historical and educational perspectives, while the online questionnaire was distributed via email and made accessible through QR codes placed in tourist offices, museums, workshops and rural events.

The questionnaire was designed to assess the value that individuals attach to traditions within their communities, with particular emphasis on craftsmanship, its contribution to improving living conditions in rural areas, and the importance of safeguarding traditional crafts. For the purposes of this article, we focus on four questions exploring: (1) the attributes or characteristics that most strongly shape consumer preferences for handcrafted products;[15] (2) the relative weight that respondents give to initiatives linked to cultural and artisanal heritage, compared to more conventional approaches based on services, infrastructure, and industry, aimed at improving living conditions in rural areas;[16] (3) the role and value of artisans in rural communities, including their economic, cultural, and educational contributions;[17] and (4) the relative importance respondents assign to cultural, economic, educational, and creative motivations for craft preservation.[18] Finally, socio-economic information was collected for all respondents.

Collected between January 2025 and April 2026, the final sample for these seven countries comprises 654 individuals, of whom more than two-thirds are potential consumers, while the remainder consists of academics, professionals and cultural managers working in the sector. Participants are on average 45.9 years old, with a somewhat higher percentage of women (63.7%). In terms of educational attainment, the sample is highly educated overall: 43.3% hold a master's degree, 28.8% have completed tertiary education, 18.0% have secondary education, and only 1.5% report primary education as their highest level. Regarding employment status, most respondents are employees (64.0%), while smaller shares are self-employed (4.3%), students (10.9%), retired (6.4%), unemployed (2.1%), or heads of household (0.5%).

Considering both cultural and historical factors, we grouped the participating countries into three regions: the Iberian Peninsula (Portugal and Spain, 40.4%), Central and Eastern Europe (Romania and Slovenia, 28.4%), and the Nordic and Baltic countries (Sweden, Norway, and Estonia, 31.2%). This classification reflects meaningful common characteristics likely to shape attitudes toward tourism, craftsmanship, and rural heritage.

BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN APPRECIATION AND RECOGNITION

Craftsmanship Beyond the Object: Heritage, Knowledge and a Way of Life

Interviews conducted with professional practitioners across the CULTURALITY case studies reveal a considerably broader comprehension of what craftmanship represents for them than what is typically reflected in academic or public discourse. As expressed by the artisans themselves, the mastering of a craft is not merely a productive activity, but a living cultural practice capable of acting as a vessel for knowledge, values, individualities and alternative ways of life to be continuously created, safeguarded and transmitted. The resulting objects are therefore only one visible expression of a much more complex social and cultural process.

Throughout these exchanges, practitioners consistently describe their craft as an activity deeply embedded within personal biographies, candid family anecdotes and the local communities they have come to belong to. Rather than establishing a clear separation between their profession and their personal lives, many interviewees refer to the two almost as inseparable entities. Their workshops are not simply places of mechanical production, but spaces where they are presented with the opportunity of refining, sharing, and building on their technical knowledge. There, they nurture and maintain their relationship with previous generations, and they reproduce cultural identities through everyday practice. Thus, they view craftsmanship less as an occupation than as a long-term commitment that entails continuous learning and a responsibility to both inherited traditions and future generations.[19] Instead of viewing their expertise as individual property, then, many describe it as knowledge received from previous generations and held in trust for those who will follow.

Knowledge transmission arises as one of the central pillars of this understanding. Traditional knowledge is no longer perceived as a static body of techniques to be preserved, intact and unchanged, for many more lineages to come. Many practitioners describe it as a living process that demands constant practice and teaching, but that always leaves the door open to modern reinterpretation when appropriate.[20] Several participants even actively organise participative workshops, demonstrations and other educational activities. Though beneficial, they do not primarily see these actions as commercial strategies, but as opportunities to guarantee that specialised skills like theirs remain alive and well beyond their own professional careers, outside of their studios. In this sense, it could be said that for artisans, transmitting knowledge is inherent to craftsmanship, rather than an additional task separate from it.

Equally important is the relationship between craftmanship and place. There is an intentional emphasis put on the impossibility of fully separating their work from the territories in which it is developed. Local raw materials, regional techniques, family traditions, and community identities are time and time again invoked as fundamental components of such practices. Craftsmanship then is both an economic activity and a form of cultural expression, while also contributing to the preservation and reimagination of local tangible and intangible heritage.[21] Artisans do not see themselves as simply replicators of inherited practices;

instead, they understand their role as active custodians of knowledge that must remain meaningful within contemporary society.

This stands in contrast to the widespread tendency to reduce craftmanship to the finished object alone. While consumers tend to encounter and interact with a handcrafted product though its aesthetic qualities, potential use or cultural symbolism,[22] practitioners remain consistent in their defence of the values of craftmanship as residing primarily in the processes that make such pieces possible. This is where the time invested in mastering techniques, years of practical experience, careful material selection, repeated experimentation and a process of continuous learning become integral components of the final product, as invisible as they may remain to those purchasing it. Often unbeknownst to the consumer, the object they will be taking back home represents only the visible outcome of a cultural and professional practice that runs much deeper. Even if consumers' appreciation for handmade production and cultural authenticity seems to be on the rise, artisans suggest that the deeper realities of their profession (such as the commitment and sacrifices required to sustain a craft-based livelihood) remain considerably less visible.

For many of them, therefore, the goal would be to communicate the broader cultural and personal significance of craftmanship itself. They aspire to be recognised for the dedication and way of life embodied within the pieces they create, and not just for the physical manifestation of them.[23] Grasping this distinction is crucial for interpreting the challenges discussed throughout the following sections, mainly those related to the economic sustainability of the crafts sector, its public perception, and the role of experiential tourism in facilitating a deeper appreciation of artisanal practices.

Before examining these challenges in greater depth, it is worth considering the extent to which the values articulated by artisans are already being recognised by wider audiences. While practitioners frequently express concern that craftsmanship continues to be reduced to its material outputs, the survey data suggest a more nuanced picture. Consumers across the CULTURALITY regions often associate handcrafted products with authenticity, cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and local identity. Exploring this apparent convergence, as well as its limitations, provides an important point of departure for understanding where artisan and consumer perceptions overlap and where significant gaps remain.

The Value of Craftsmanship in Consumers' Perceptions

The survey results partially support the practitioners' perspective. Respondents associate craftmanship with authenticity, traditional production techniques, local identity, and the preservation of cultural heritage, which suggests that some of the values artisans seek to communicate are indeed being recognised by the wider public. Specifically, when asked to identify the three characteristics they value most when purchasing a handcrafted item, on average, 54% of potential consumers in all regions select "made by local artisans using traditional techniques", closely followed by "reflects local culture and tradition" (44.5%) and "tells a story or has a special symbolism" (40.2%) from a list of 12 items. However, there are some notable regional differences. In particular, while nearly 70% of respondents from the Iberian Peninsula and East-Central Europe

select “made by local artisans using traditional techniques”, only 25.2% of potential consumers from Nordic-Baltic countries choose this option. Respondents in the latter region give relatively more weigh to “tells a story or has a special symbolism” (44.3%) and “practical use in addition to aesthetic value” (38.9%) and “produced with methods that respect the environment and local community” (38.2%). These findings suggest that, although cultural authenticity is widely appreciated across regions, consumers in the Nordic-Baltic countries tend to place greater value on symbolism, functionality and sustainability when evaluating handcrafted products (see Table 1).

Characteristic	Potential Consumer			
	All regions	Nordic-Baltic	Iberian Peninsula	Central-Eastern Europe
Made by local artisans using traditional techniques	53.9%	25.2%	67.2%	69.3%
Reflects local culture and traditions	44.5%	30.5%	49.5%	53.6%
Tells a story or has a special symbolism	40.2%	44.3%	31.4%	45.0%
Has a polished and appealing visual finish (e.g., colours, shapes)	23.0%	35.1%	23.0%	10.7%
Features patterns or styles unique to the region	19.5%	13.7%	17.6%	27.1%
The piece is part of a limited-edition series	5.9%	9.9%	1.5%	6.4%
Practical use in addition to aesthetic value	32.2%	38.9%	25.5%	32.1%
Produced with methods that respect the environment and local community	31.5%	38.2%	33.3%	22.9%
Adaptable to different decorative styles or uses	6.7%	0.8%	7.8%	11.4%
Comes with a certificate proving it is from the region	5.7%	3.1%	9.8%	4.3%
Represents innovation while maintaining tradition	17.1%	21.4%	9.8%	20.0%
Made with locally sourced raw materials	22.0%	13.7%	26.5%	25.7%
Number of observations	475	131	204	140

Table 1. The most valued characteristics of handicrafts.
Source: own elaboration from survey data.

Similarly, when asked to indicate their level of agreement with several statements concerning the role of crafts in rural communities on a five-point Likert scale (1 = "not at all agree" and 5 = "totally agree"), potential consumers show a high level of agreement with statements emphasizing the role of artisans in the transmission of knowledge and skills and the preservation of local identity. The average rating is 4.72, a value close to the maximum score of 5, indicating a very high level of agreement. Conversely, respondents tend to disagree with statements that limit the value of artisans primarily to economic terms. In particular, the statement attributing exclusively economics value and importance to artisans receives a very low mean rating (2.55). Furthermore, responses exhibit little variation across regions (see Table 2).

The artisans…	Potential Consumer			
	All regions	Nordic-Baltic	Iberian Peninsula	Central-Eastern Europe
… are essential for the progress of rural communities	4.18	4.08	4.04	4.41
… have an exclusively economic value and importance	2.55	2.67	2.18	2.80

… contribute to preserving history and reinforcing the identity of their area	4.72	4.63	4.73	4.79
… are essential to promote the training of new artisans	4.65	4.60	4.63	4.71
… make the transmission of knowledge and the learning of traditions possible	4.63	4.45	4.65	4.77
… must innovate in their pieces and adapt them to new times	3.22	3.00	3.12	3.53
Subsidies to crafts are unnecessary, there are other priorities	1.87	1.66	2.18	1.79

Table 2. The value of artisans' role.
Source: own elaboration from survey data.

In a related question, individuals are asked to assess the importance of several reasons for preserving traditional crafts using a five-point scale, where 1 indicates "not at all important" and 5 indicates "very important". Once again, the highest ratings were assigned to "preserving the community's cultural heritage and identity", which received an average score of 4.72, and "maintain and passing on traditional knowledge and skills", with a mean score of 4.66. These results reinforce the view that consumers perceive traditional crafts not only as economic or aesthetic products, but also as important vehicles for safeguarding cultural heritage and intangible knowledge (see Table 3).

Reasons	Potential Consumer			
	All regions	Nordic-Baltic	Iberian Peninsula	Central-Eastern Europe
Preserving the community's cultural heritage and identity	4.72	4.63	4.70	4.83
Making tourism more attractive	3.99	3.92	3.53	4.51
Maintain and passing on traditional knowledge and skills	4.66	4.65	4.54	4.81
Preserving traditional aesthetic values	4.41	4.42	4.22	4.60
Encouraging innovation through tradition	4.16	4.23	3.90	4.34
Supporting economic activity and jobs in rural areas	4.50	4.36	4.56	4.58

Table 3. Reason for preserving traditional crafts
Source: own elaboration from survey data

Taken together, these findings indicate that consumers do recognise many of the cultural values that artisans seek to communicate. Traditional knowledge, authenticity, local identity and heritage preservation all receive considerable appreciation across the surveyed regions. Yet the interviews suggest that practitioners remain only partially satisfied with this recognition. What appears to be missing is not necessarily an awareness of craftsmanship's cultural significance, but a fuller understanding of its realities as a profession and a livelihood. It is precisely this distinction between appreciating craft and recognising what it takes to sustain it that emerges as one of the most recurrent themes in the interviews.

Observing A Craft Versus Living from It: Grasping the Limits of Value Transmission

The survey results therefore reveal a more nuanced situation than practitioners themselves often perceive. Across the CULTURALITY regions, consumers demonstrate a considerable appreciation for many of the values

artisans associate with their work, including authenticity, traditional knowledge, local identity and cultural heritage. In this sense, the transmission of artisanal values cannot be considered unsuccessful. Yet the interviews suggest that artisans continue to identify an important gap between what consumers recognise and what they fully understand. While the cultural significance of craftsmanship appears to be widely acknowledged, its nature as a profession, a livelihood and a long-term commitment to the preservation and transmission of knowledge remains considerably less visible. It is precisely within this space, between cultural appreciation and professional recognition, that some of the most persistent tensions described by practitioners begin to emerge.

Alongside this concern for knowledge transmission, the interviews highlight another objective that has been receiving comparatively even less attention in public discussions surrounding this topic: the desire for professional recognition. Many practitioners quite openly express frustration at the persistent perception of craftmanship as a hobby, a supplementary "not that serious" occupation or lifestyle choice rather than a highly skilled profession demanding of years of specialised training and continuous investment.

This issue becomes impossible to ignore as the conversation shifts towards the monetary value of handcrafted products. Artisans explain that consumers frequently appreciate the aesthetic qualities or cultural significations of handmade objects while overlooking the technical knowledge, labour and accumulated experience they also carry. As a result, they often feel forced to focus their exchanges with visitors and potential customers on explaining production processes, demonstrating techniques, or discussing material selection and acquisition in an added effort to emphasise those elements that remain hidden once the piece is finished and gets displayed for sale. While justifying prices remains a principal purpose of such elucidations, they would also like to encourage a deeper acknowledgement of craftmanship as a profession whose core values cannot be measured solely through what the customer can see.

The experiences shared by the blacksmiths of Mazonovo (*ferreiros de Mazonovo*, located in Santa Eulalia de Oscos,[24] Asturias) illustrate this dynamic particularly well. As per their testimony, demonstrations and direct conversations with visitors tend to significantly improve public perception and appreciation of the skills, time and physical effort needed to shape the objects they produce at the forge. Provided with the opportunity to observe and interact with the production process, unfamiliarised visitors may reassess preconceived ideas regarding their craft and are more prone to recognising those dimensions of artisanal work that would otherwise remain unperceived. Comparable experiences are reported elsewhere in the CULTURALITY case studies. In Slovenia, one blacksmith regularly organises introductory forging workshops that allow participants to engage directly with the craft process, while textile practitioners —one based in Slovenia, another in Estonia— similarly describe participatory workshops as opportunities to reveal the knowledge, materials and labour behind handmade production. These encounters create a context in which visitors can begin to appreciate craft beyond the finished object itself. Even so, the artisans of Mazonovo also acknowledge that this greater awareness, though welcome, does not always translate into a full understanding of the profession. Even after witnessing first-hand the complexity of the manual labour involved in the creative

processes, some visitors continue to perceive handcrafted pieces as disproportionately expensive, suggesting that appreciating technical effort does not imply recognising craftsmanship as the viable, legitimate means of livelihood it should be. This distinction, repeatedly emphasised by practitioners across the interviews, remains crucial.

There is still a persistent gap between recognising the artistic and social value of craftsmanship and fully understanding what it means to sustain it as a profession. As they suggest, visitors may leave with a greater respect for the craft while still perceiving handcrafted objects as disproportionately overpriced. This perception is not unique to Asturias. A Slovenian felt-maker notes that customers often value handcrafted products while simultaneously considering them too expensive, whereas a Slovenian costume maker argues that people rarely recognise the amount of work embedded within handmade production. Similar concerns are voiced by a Swedish ceramicist, who highlights the difficulty of explaining why ceramics require the prices they do when consumers are unfamiliar with the time and expertise involved in their creation. In other words, the demonstration succeeds in increasing knowledge, but it does not entirely bridge the divide between observing a craft and living from it. What practitioners seek from these interactions does not end at a simple admiration for their skills; it also encompasses the recognition that craftsmanship constitutes a professional activity capable of sustaining not just individuals, but sometimes entire families and communities, and that this dimension of artisanal practice is still insufficiently understood.

Similar reflections can be found in the testimony of an Asturian woodcraft practitioner, who argues that the value of his work lies not simply in producing traditional wooden bowls but in communicating the cultural context from which they emerge. As he explains, visitors should not only learn the technique itself, since similar objects can be produced elsewhere, but also understand "the Cunqueira[25] culture embedded within that traditional craft." His account illustrates that artisans seek to communicate an entire cultural framework rather than a sequence of manual skills. A comparable perspective is articulated by a Portuguese flax-working practitioner, who describes the transmission of flax-working practices not merely as the teaching of technical procedures but also as the sharing of memories, stories and the collective experiences of rural women. Likewise, Romanian craftspeople portray craftsmanship as a form of cultural responsibility rooted in heritage, identity and continuity between generations. Across these cases, the object itself becomes only one entry point into a much broader social and cultural world. At the same time, the Asturian practitioner warns against romanticising traditional occupations without acknowledging their economic viability, insisting that craftsmanship cannot survive as museum heritage alone but must remain capable of supporting those who practise it. This concern also resonates with practitioners elsewhere in Europe, from Norwegian wool producers who question the future sustainability of traditional livelihoods to Slovenian artisans who repeatedly point to the difficulties of earning a living from highly skilled manual work. Ultimately, the preservation of traditional knowledge depends on the possibility of earning a living from it.

Numerous artisans have pointed out a direct correlation between this difficulty and broader transformations in contemporary patterns of consumption.

According to their accounts, modern consumers have grown accustomed to products that are fast, cheap and easily replaceable, which makes it increasingly difficult for them to appreciate the time-based and economic logic underlying artisanal production. Artisanal objects are typically designed to be invested in once and used for generations, yet contemporary consumption habits tend to favour immediate affordability over durability, repairability and long-term value. Within this context, craftsmanship follows principles that often run counter to prevailing consumer expectations.

The interviews indicate that contemporary artisans face a challenge that goes beyond visibility, it is fundamentally a matter of translation. Showing how an object is made is not enough, artisans also need to convey why that process carries social, cultural and economic weight. Consumers, for their part, tend to recognise authenticity, tradition and cultural heritage readily enough. What proves harder to communicate, according to the artisans themselves, is everything craftsmanship entails beyond the object itself—a profession, a livelihood, a long-term commitment to preserving knowledge. The transmission of artisanal values can therefore be considered successful, but only to a certain extent: consumers increasingly understand what artisans do, yet they do not always fully understand what it means to be an artisan.

The findings discussed above thus point to a challenge that goes beyond the preservation of traditional knowledge: artisans must also make the social, cultural and economic realities of craftsmanship intelligible to wider audiences. Consumers are increasingly attentive to the cultural significance of handmade production, yet the interviews suggest that much of what artisans themselves understand craftsmanship to be resists communication through the finished object alone. The transmission of artisanal values thus appears meaningful, but inherently partial.

This limitation raises an important question: under what conditions might these less visible dimensions of craftsmanship be communicated more effectively? Here, the interviews repeatedly point to situations in which consumers engage directly with artisans, their workshops and their creative processes. Visitors stop being passive observers or buyers and become active participants in the experience of craftsmanship itself, gaining a deeper understanding of the knowledge, commitment and lived realities that underpin artisanal practice. It is in this context that experiential tourism emerges as a particularly significant mechanism for strengthening the transmission of craft values.

EXPERIENTIAL CULTURAL TOURISM AS A VEHICLE FOR TRANSMITTING CRAFT VALUES

The workshop encounter and the making of cultural understanding

As previously stated, according to the interviews, direct interaction between practitioners and visitors offers one of the most effective ways to narrow the gap between how artisans understand their craft and how the public perceives it. Handcrafted objects convey a good deal about cultural identity and technical skill, but rarely capture the wider realities behind them. Many interviewees point out that when visitors are given the chance to step into a workshop, watch a piece being made or talk directly with the person making it, the less visible sides of the

craft (its knowledge systems, cultural weight and professional demands) come through far more clearly.[26]

Several practitioners describe these encounters as the moment when visitors start to grasp why an object is made in a certain way, not just how. Demonstrations let people witness what usually stays hidden behind the finished piece: choosing the right materials, repeating a technique until it is mastered, the physical toll of manual work, the sheer time each piece demands. Labels, exhibitions and sales transactions rarely convey any of this.[27] What changes, then, is how visitors come to see craftsmanship: less as a commodity and more as a process.

This comes through clearly in the accounts of practitioners who regularly welcome visitors into their workshops or take part in public demonstrations at local markets and cultural events. Few of them frame these activities as marketing. Most describe them instead as a chance to talk about the cultural, historical and technical sides of their profession. Several go as far as saying that the conversation with a visitor can matter as much as the sale itself, since it gives them room to correct misconceptions about traditional crafts and build a fuller appreciation of the knowledge behind each piece.[28]

According to some accounts, visitors who watch a demonstration come away with a much better sense of the craft's complexity than those who only see the finished pieces. Seeing the metal being shaped or the patterns being woven lets an audience appreciate the effort, skill and precision each object requires, things that stay largely out of sight in a normal shop or market stall. This deeper understanding does not always translate into a different view of what the objects should cost, as noted earlier, but it still marks a meaningful step towards a more informed appreciation of the work.

Many case studies in the project point to this pattern. Practitioners consistently note that letting visitors into the workshop changes the relationship between artisan and consumer. Visitors stop being mere buyers; they become observers and, in some cases, take part directly in the production process.[29] That shift alters the whole nature of the encounter. What visitors gain is no longer limited to the object they take home, it then also includes contact with the people, the knowledge and the cultural setting behind it.

Seen this way, experiential tourism supports rural development in more than a purely economic sense. Bringing in visitors clearly generates extra income for artisans and their communities, but the interviews point to something else as its real contribution: a stronger public understanding of what traditional craftsmanship involves. Direct contact opens up stories that would otherwise stay untold: family histories, local traditions, knowledge of the environment, the personal reasons that keep someone practising a craft today. Experiential tourism, then, works at once as an economic activity, an educational tool and a way of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage.[30]

The survey data back this up. Respondents consistently link traditional craftsmanship to cultural identity, heritage preservation and the appeal of rural destinations, which suggests that many visitors already recognise its cultural value in some form (see Table 3). Yet the interviews show that this recognition takes root more firmly when people experience craftsmanship first-hand instead of meeting it only through the finished product. Experiential tourism, in other

words, does more than raise the visibility of traditional crafts: it helps convey the meanings and values artisans want to pass on. The object is not replaced by the experience; it gains, through it, the interpretative context that gives it full cultural weight.

In the end, the interviews point to something beyond an extra income stream for rural artisans: experiential tourism works as a form of cultural mediation.[31] By putting practitioners and visitors in direct contact, these encounters help close, if only in part, the distance between watching a craft and grasping what it takes to live from it. They open the door to economic diversification in rural areas, certainly, but also to a fuller transmission of the knowledge, values and identities that traditional craftsmanship carries.

When Experience Becomes Performance: Craft Tourism and Its Limits

Experiential tourism clearly stands out as one of the most effective ways to communicate the cultural value of craftsmanship, yet the interviews also bring out a more cautious view. Many practitioners agree that opening their workshops to visitors, taking part in demonstrations or running hands-on activities creates real opportunities for education and public engagement. At the same time, they keep warning that these initiatives need careful handling, or they risk undermining the very values they are meant to protect (**fig. 2**).



Fig. 2. Blacksmith Friedrich "Fritz" Bramsteidl during a demonstration of how to make a frying pan. Source: authors' own photographs.

For many interviewees, the main worry is that craftsmanship could slowly turn into a form of entertainment instead of staying a meaningful cultural practice. As visitor experiences gain weight within rural tourism strategies, artisans feel growing pressure to adapt their work to what tourists expect: simplifying production, speeding up demonstrations, favouring what looks good over what actually reflects the profession. Several practitioners worry that, taken too far, this could reduce centuries of accumulated knowledge to a performance built for consumption.[32]

This particular concern is perhaps best illustrated by the reflections of an already deceased woodcraft practitioner, amongst the last ones of his kind, who argued that "the moment your craft becomes trendy, it means it is already dead." His statement does not reject public interest in traditional crafts; rather, it highlights the paradox that practices often attract widespread attention only once they have become exceptional or endangered. In his view, popularity should not be interpreted as evidence of vitality, but as a warning that the social and economic conditions necessary for the craft to survive have already begun to disappear. Tourism, therefore, should not merely celebrate endangered traditions, but contribute to creating the conditions under which they remain living professions rather than objects of nostalgic fascination.

This worry goes beyond public demonstrations and reaches the broader commercialisation of craft experiences. Some interviewees mention the growing popularity of short workshops, especially in textiles and ceramics, that promise participants they can become artisans after a single introductory session. The proliferation of these establishments as leisure and cultural options in urban environments may appear harmless, and indeed they often succeed in attracting new audiences to traditional crafts. Nevertheless, several practitioners suggest that their cumulative effect may be counterproductive. When craftsmanship is presented primarily as a short recreational activity, the distinction between introductory participation and professional expertise becomes increasingly blurred[33]. These activities certainly help raise public interest in traditional crafts, but several practitioners argue they can also give people a distorted sense of how complex artisanal knowledge really is. Presenting craftsmanship as something you can pick up quickly and reproduce with ease risks hiding the years of practice, technical refinement and ongoing learning that real craftsmanship demands.

Simplified experiences can end up working against the very appreciation they were meant to build. If visitors walk away thinking that making a handcrafted object takes only a few hours of instruction, a professionally made piece can start to look overpriced or needlessly exclusive.[34] Efforts to make craftsmanship more accessible can therefore backfire, reinforcing one of the misconceptions that came up most often in the interviews: underestimating the knowledge, labour and long-term commitment that goes into a handmade product.

Several practitioners argue, then, that experiential tourism should not try to reproduce the craft in a simplified form, but instead help visitors understand the processes, decisions and expertise behind professional practice. In their view, participation only has educational value when it lets visitors grasp how complex the craft is, rather than giving them the impression that mastery comes after a short recreational activity. Many artisans draw a clear line between experiencing

craftsmanship and simulating it,[35] and only the former, they suggest, does real work towards safeguarding traditional knowledge. The purpose of experiential tourism is therefore not to make craftsmanship easier to consume, but to encourage a more reflective encounter with it.

The interviews also point to a growing commercial pressure on artisans working in popular tourist destinations. Some practitioners admit that adjusting opening hours, production schedules or workshop activities to match visitor demand inevitably changes the rhythms traditionally tied to artisanal practice. These adjustments often help economically, but they can also cut into the time available for experimentation, reflection and technical development, pushing craftspeople to put visitor expectations ahead of what their work actually needs. Striking the right balance between cultural transmission and commercial viability stands out, then, as one of the main challenges facing craft tourism today.[36]

Together, these reflections suggest that experiential tourism is not automatically beneficial: its value depends on the conditions under which it takes place[37]. Experiences built around dialogue, observation and genuine interaction seem able to strengthen public understanding while respecting the integrity of artisanal practice. Experiences that favour entertainment, speed or commercial appeal over authenticity, on the other hand, risk feeding the very misunderstandings they claim to address. The interviews suggest, in short, that the long-term contribution of experiential tourism to rural development depends less on how many visitors it attracts than on whether the encounter between artisans and audiences stays true to the cultural values, knowledge systems and professional realities that traditional craftsmanship embodies.

The reflections examined so far come almost entirely from the artisans themselves, and they reveal a genuine tension between the educational value of experiential tourism and the pressure to turn craftsmanship into entertainment or a simplified commercial product. This tension raises a further question that the interviews alone cannot answer: to what extent does the wider public share this same concern, or does the relationship between tourism and craftsmanship appear to them mainly through a different lens? The following section addresses this question through survey data, shifting the focus from the perspective of practitioners to that of the audiences and visitors they engage with.

PERCEPTIONS ON CULTURAL TOURISM AND CRAFTSMANSHIP AS DRIVERS OF RURAL REVITALISATION

As previously mentioned, the UNESCO establish an explicit link between the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage, including traditional craftsmanship, and the objectives of sustainable development.[38] As Schnüttgen notes, this chapter provided, for the first time, concrete guidance on how to integrate living heritage into national development strategies and programmes. They recognise that tourism can generate income, employment, and support for communities practicing traditions such as craftsmanship, thereby contributing to their viability and transmission.[39] At the same time, the document also warns that tourism can negatively affect this heritage if not properly managed, through phenomena such as over-commercialization, decontextualization, misrepresentation, or the loss of community control. This tension is inherent to the experiential nature of intangible cultural heritage: while it supports tourists'

desire for authentic cultural experiences, the process of commodification can transform and overstage that heritage, leading to a loss of authenticity.[40] However, whether this tension between economic viability and cultural authenticity is actually reflected in how people perceive the relationship between tourism and craftsmanship remains an open empirical question.

In this regard, we aim to explore what social perceptions exist regarding the relationship between cultural tourism, craftsmanship, and the revitalization of rural areas. We begin by examining the role that people believe craftsmanship plays in tourism, using two complementary approaches: direct questions and a free word association exercise, which allows access to respondents' spontaneous perceptions and enables us to identify which dimensions dominate people's mental representation of this relationship. We then examine perceptions regarding the importance of cultural tourism for rural development.

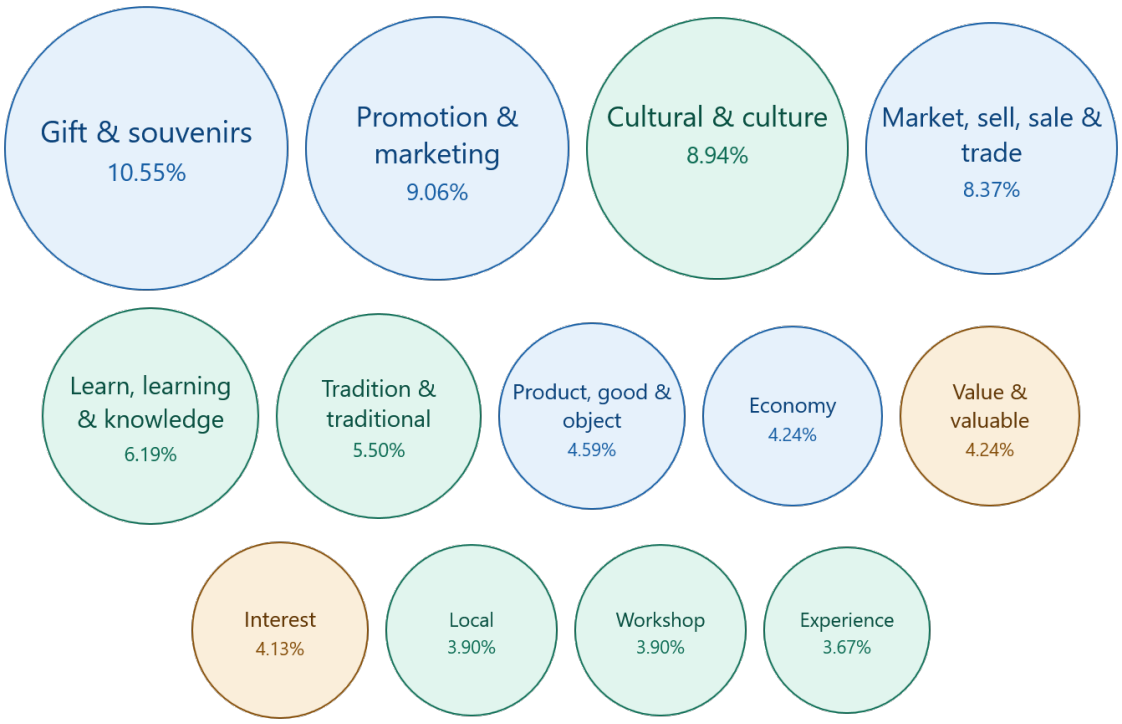


Fig. 3. Most frequent key words associated with 'The relationship between tourism and crafts".
Source: made by the authors.

Firstly, we asked respondents to provide the three words they most associated with "the relationship between tourism and crafts." Aside from terms directly repeating the question itself, such as "tourism and tourist" and "crafts and handicrafts," two distinct groups of associations clearly emerge. The first group of terms points to a strongly commercial framing of this relationship: "gift and souvenirs" (10.55%), "promotion and marketing" (9.06%), "market, sell, sale and trade" (8.37%), "product, good and object" (4.59%), and "economy" (4.24%). Together, these associations suggest that respondents predominantly conceive of crafts as tourist products embedded in market, promotional, and economic

processes. The second, smaller group reflects a more cultural and experiential understanding of the relationship: "cultural and culture" (8.94%), "learn, learning and knowledge" (6.19%), "tradition and traditional" (5.50%), "local" (3.90%), "workshop" (3.90%), and "experience" (3.67%). These terms point to craftsmanship as a vehicle for heritage transmission, local identity, and direct engagement with traditional practices. While both dimensions are clearly present in respondents' spontaneous associations, the higher weight of commercially oriented terms suggests that the economic and touristic function of crafts is more salient in public perception than its role in preserving and transmitting cultural knowledge.

In addition, to examining whether people identify cultural tourism as a general driver of rural development, we also look at the role played by craftsmanship. Table 3 shows several reasons for preserving traditional crafts rated in terms of importance. Supporting economic activity and jobs in rural areas" received a high average rating (4.47). Although "making tourism more attractive" received a lower average rating (3.87), it was still regarded as important or very important by 66.5% of participants, with notable regional variation: 90% of respondents in East-Central Europe considered it important or very important, compared to 70.2% in the Nordic-Baltic countries and just 54.7% in the Iberian Peninsula.

Finally, we asked participants to identify the five elements they considered most important for improving living conditions in rural areas and attracting new population to these areas, from a list of 11 options. Half of the participants selected "tourism based on local culture, natural beauty and artisanal products" as a key element, giving it the same level of importance as "affordable housing." Only access to basic services and provisions, specifically healthcare, public transportation, and internet and mobile coverage, ranked higher than these options, reflecting their notable importance among the items assessed. Beyond this overall pattern, however, there are some considerable regional differences regarding the perceived importance of tourism based on local culture and artisanal products as a driver for improving living conditions in rural areas. In East-Central Europe, 57.9% of potential consumers selected this option, compared to 50.4% in the Nordic-Baltic countries, while only 40.7% did so in the Iberian Peninsula.

These data show important differences across regions in social perceptions about the relationship between cultural tourism, craftsmanship, and rural development. Our interpretation of these variations is informed not only by the survey findings, but also by the broader collaborative and ethnographic dimensions of the project. Through sustained exchanges with partner institutions representing the participating regions, together with repeated encounters with local actors during research and coordination visits, we became increasingly aware of the markedly different ways in which tourism is experienced across Europe. In regions where tourism has long been established as a dominant economic activity, particularly in parts of Southern Europe, discussions frequently revolve around concerns regarding touristification, gentrification, pressure on local resources, rising housing costs, and the perceived deterioration of residents' quality of life.[41] In contrast, stakeholders from several Nordic and Baltic regions tend to frame tourism more positively, emphasising its potential to diversify rural economies, support local businesses, and create opportunities for cultural visibility. These differing narratives are also reflected in practitioners' testimonies. Although

artisans generally acknowledge tourism as a valuable mechanism for promoting craftsmanship and facilitating encounters with visitors, their attitudes towards its expansion vary considerably depending on local contexts and previous experiences with tourism development. As a result, perceptions of tourism appear to be shaped not only by its economic benefits, but also by the social and environmental consequences communities associate with it.

In summary, the results of this section suggest that while cultural tourism and craftsmanship are widely recognized as important levers for rural revitalization, their perceived value remains predominantly economic and touristic, with the cultural and educational dimensions of craft heritage occupying a comparatively secondary place in public perception.

CONCLUSIONS

Practitioners' testimonies portray craftsmanship as a living cultural practice, inseparable from personal biography, community identity and the transmission of knowledge across generations. From their perspective, craftsmanship is therefore far richer than the products they create and they express concern that the wider public often reduces it to the finished object alone. Artisans do not just want their work recognised as skilled or authentic. What comes through repeatedly in the interviews is a wish to be understood on different terms altogether: craftsmanship as a profession, a cultural responsibility, a way of life. Convincing consumers that a handmade object takes skill has never been the real difficulty. The harder task is getting people to grasp what it actually means to live from that skill, year after year, and to pass it on to someone else. In contrast to this concerns, survey evidence suggests that at least some of the values that artisans seek to communicate are recognized by the public. Potential consumers tend to associate handcrafted products with authenticity, local identity, traditional technique and heritage preservation, and they tend to disagree with the idea that artisans' value is purely economic. Yet the interviews reveal that this partial recognition is not enough from the artisans' point of view. What practitioners feel is still missing is the full understanding of craft as a profession and a livelihood, and a long-term commitment to the preservation and transmission of knowledge.

In this context, experiential tourism can serve as a valuable vehicle for transmitting craft values. Evidence from interviews with practitioners indicates that direct encounters with artisans, in their workshops, demonstrations and participatory activities, allow the public to engage with the creative process. A finished piece never shows the labour behind it, the expertise it demands, the time it takes, or the decisions made along the way. Visitors only get access to any of that by watching it unfold in front of them. And once they do, something shifts in how they relate to what they see. The object stops being simply something to admire and becomes a practice they start to really understand. At the same time, professionals warn that when experiences are simplified, accelerated, or reshaped to match visitors' expectations, tourism risks turning craftsmanship into a form of spectacle and entertainment, reinforcing misconceptions about the effort and expertise it requires. It is therefore important that the experience remains faithful to the realities of craftsmanship. What the interviews point to, then, is that experiential tourism works best when it invites reflection rather than imitation or

memorisation. Visitors are not there to learn how to reproduce a craft in an afternoon. They are there to comprehend something of the cultural, social and professional world that sustains it.

Finally, the survey responses suggest that the public tends to frame the relationship between tourism and craftsmanship primarily in commercial terms, while its cultural and educational dimensions occupy a secondary place. A large share of respondents considers that tourism based on local culture and craftsmanship would help improve living conditions in rural areas, and the preservation of craftsmanship is valued primarily for its contribution to cultural identity and the local economy.

Taken together, these findings point to a relationship between craftsmanship and cultural tourism that is promising but incomplete. The cultural dimension of traditional crafts (authenticity, heritage, identity and knowledge) is widely recognized by consumers, suggesting fertile ground for the development of rural revitalization strategies based on cultural tourism, in line with the recognition granted by the UNESCO Operational Directives. However, the evidence also confirms the concerns raised by artisans and by the Operational Directives. The public's understanding of craftsmanship as a skilled profession and a viable livelihood is only partially conveyed. In this context, experiential cultural tourism, carefully designed around genuine interaction rather than a simplified representation, emerges as one of the most promising mechanisms to bridge this gap, communicating not only the cultural significance of craftsmanship, but also the professional realities that sustain it. What really measures success, in the end, is not whether visitors can name craftsmanship "heritage". That recognition is easy to get. What matters is whether they come away understanding the human effort, the economic fragility and the cultural weight that keep a craft alive today, not just as something worth remembering.

These conclusions have practical implications for rural development and tourism policy. Strategies aimed at leveraging craftsmanship for rural revitalization should go beyond promoting artisanal products as tourist souvenirs and instead invest in experiential formats such as workshops, demonstrations, and direct dialogue with artisans, transmitting the knowledge, effort, and professional commitment embodied in the craft process. At the same time, these strategies must resist turning craftsmanship into just another experience on offer. Visibility alone will not save a tradition. What will, is whether tourism helps protect its authenticity, its professional dignity, and the communities' ability to go on living from it.

NOTES

[1] Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008).
[2] Peter Korn, *Why We Make Things and Why It Matters: The Education of a Craftsman* (New York: Random House, 2015).
[3] UNESCO, *Text of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (Paris: UNESCO, 2003), art. 2.
[4] Throughout this article, references to artisans, craft practitioners, craftspeople, craftsmen and craftswomen refer specifically to professional practitioners who have developed a high level of technical expertise in their respective craft, possess in-depth knowledge of the associated craft heritage and traditions, and are actively engaged in producing craft objects as part of their

professional practice and livelihood. This distinction is important because the economic, technical and cultural value of professional craft practice cannot be equated with recreational or introductory craft activities. These terms therefore do not include instructors or facilitators who offer recreational or short-format craft workshops, whose role and relationship to craft differ from those of professional craftspeople. The latter are discussed, albeit briefly, in the section "The workshop encounter and the making of cultural understanding".

[5] UNESCO, *Operational Directives for the Implementation of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*, chap. VI, "Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage and Sustainable Development at the National Level" (Paris: UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, 2016), https://ich.unesco.org/en/decisions/10.COM/14.A

[6] UNWTO, *Tourism and Rural Development: A Policy Perspective. UNWTO Member States Survey on Tourism for Rural Development* (Madrid: UNWTO, 2023), https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284424306

[7] Miguel González-Leonardo, Francisco Rowe, and Alberto Fresolone-Caparrós, "Rural Revival? The Rise in Internal Migration to Rural Areas during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Who Moved and Where?," *Journal of Rural Studies* 96 (2022): 332-342.

[8] Dickson Adom, Atabek Alimov, and V. Gouthami, "Agritourism as a Preferred Travelling Trend in Boosting Rural Economies in the Post-COVID-19 Period: Nexus between Agriculture, Tourism, Art and Culture," Journal of Migration, Culture and Society 1, no. 1 (2021): 7-19.

[9] Martina Shakya and Gianluca Vagnarelli, "Creating Value from Intangible Cultural Heritage—The Role of Innovation for Sustainable Tourism and Regional Rural Development," *European Journal of Cultural Management and Policy* 14 (2024): 12057.

[10] Helena Miguélez-Carballeira and Maite Usoz de la Fuente, "Cultural Engagements with the Rural in Contemporary Spain: Manifestations and Critical Tensions," *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* 25, no. 4 (2024): 465-475.

[11] Efraín Velasteguí López, "Handicrafts and Their Real Impact on Tourism," *ConcienciaDigital* 2, no. 2 (2019): 27-40.

[12] CULTURALITY (Cultural Heritage as a Driver of Sustainable Rural Development and Resilience) is a Horizon Europe project funded by the European Union that explores the potential of cultural heritage, particularly traditional crafts and local cultural practices, to contribute to the sustainable development and resilience of rural and remote areas. A central component of the project is its close and direct engagement with craftspeople and other local cultural practitioners, whose knowledge, experiences and working conditions are placed at the centre of the research. This approach allows the project to address first-hand many of the challenges affecting the continuity and sustainability of traditional crafts, including knowledge transmission, economic viability, access to markets and the sustainability of craft-based livelihoods. Alongside the study of these challenges, the project works towards identifying and developing new business models and opportunities that can be economically sustainable while providing tangible benefits for craftspeople and their communities. The empirical data analysed in this study were collected within this framework. Further information is available on the project's official website: https://culturalityproject.eu/

[13] All artisans participating in the CULTURALITY project signed an informed consent form authorising the use of the information they provided, including direct testimonies, for scientific and non-profit research purposes. However, given the practical difficulty of verifying and centralising signed consent documentation for every participant across all partner countries, testimonies from most of the artisans discussed in this article have been anonymised and are referred to only by profession and country of origin. Named references are used exclusively in those cases where the corresponding consent could be directly confirmed by the authors.

[14] Taramundi is a municipality in western Asturias particularly renowned for its long-standing tradition of handmade knife-making. The local production of traditional folding knives, commonly known as *navajas/navallas de Taramundi*, has become one of the best-known expressions of Asturian craft heritage and remains closely connected to local knowledge, materials and production practices.

[15] 3rd question of the survey asked respondents to select, from a list of twelve predefined options, the three characteristics they value most when purchasing a handcrafted piece. The list captured several distinct dimensions of perceived value in craft products: (i) made by local artisans using traditional techniques; (ii) reflects local culture and traditions; (iii) tells a story or has a special symbolism; (iv) has a polished and appealing visual finish; (v) features patterns or styles unique to the region; (vi) the piece is part of a limited edition series; (vii) practical use in addition to aesthetic value; (viii) produced with methods that respect the environment and local community; (ix) adaptable to different decorative styles or uses; (x) comes with a certificate proving it is from the region; (xi) represents innovation while maintaining tradition; and (xii) made with locally sourced raw materials.

[16] 2nd question of the survey asked respondents to select, from a list of eleven predefined options, the five elements they considered most important for improving living conditions in rural areas and attracting new population to these areas. The list encompassed a broad range of dimensions relevant to rural revitalization: (i) health services; (ii) good transportation to connect with cities; (iii) internet access and mobile coverage; (iv) tourism based on local culture, natural beauty and artisanal products; (v) sustainable agricultural development; (vi) building of factories and industries; (vii) affordable housing options; (viii) promotion/opportunity for second homes; (ix) training programs for local artisans and farmers; (x) quality labels for local food products and traditional crafts; and (xi) artisan and farmer cooperatives.

[17] 5th question of the survey asked respondents to indicate their level of agreement with seven statements, using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("not at all agree") to 5 ("totally agree"). The statements addressed multiple dimensions of artisans' role, as well as respondents' views on public support for the sector: (i) the artisans are essential for the progress of rural communities; (ii) the artisans have an exclusively economic value and importance; (iii) the artisans contribute to preserving history and reinforcing the identity of their area; (iv) the artisans are essential to promote the training of new artisans; (v) the artisans make the transmission of knowledge and the learning of traditions possible; (vi) the artisans must innovate in their pieces and adapt them to new times; and (vii) subsidies to crafts are unnecessary, as there are other priorities.

[18] 6th question of the survey asked respondents to rate the importance of six predefined reasons for preserving traditional crafts, using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("not at all important") to 5 ("very important"). The reasons offered cover multiple dimensions: (i) preserving the community's cultural heritage and identity; (ii) making tourism more attractive; (iii) maintaining and passing on traditional knowledge and skills; (iv) preserving traditional aesthetic values; (v) encouraging innovation through tradition; and (vi) supporting economic activity and jobs in rural areas.

[19] Sennett, *The Craftsman*.

[20] Tim Ingold, *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2013).

[21] UNESCO, *Text of the Convention*, art. 2.

[22] Kent Grayson and Radan Martinec, "Consumer Perceptions of Iconicity and Indexicality and Their Influence on Assessments of Authentic Market Offerings," *Journal of Consumer Research* 31, no. 2 (2004): 296–312.

[23] Richard E. Ocejo, *Masters of Craft: Old Jobs in the New Urban Economy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017).

[24] Santa Eulalia de Oscos is a small municipality in western Asturias, within the Oscos region, with a long-standing tradition of ironworking and metalworking. The area is particularly known for the preservation of traditional water-powered hammers (mazos hidráulicos), historically used in local ironworking and representing an important example of the region's technological and craft heritage. The continued preservation and interpretation of these installations illustrate the close relationship between local traditional craftsmanship and the area's natural resources.

[25] The *cunqueiros* are traditional woodturners from the Oscos region of western Asturias, historically dedicated to the production of wooden vessels and utensils for everyday use. Their craft developed in close connection with the local environment and rural way of life, using specialised turning techniques and tools to transform locally available wood into functional objects. The *cunqueira* tradition is particularly significant as an example of the specialised craft knowledge and

material culture historically associated with this remote rural area, much of which was transmitted within families and across generations.

[26] Dean MacCannell, "Staged Authenticity: Arrangements of Social Space in Tourist Settings," *American Journal of Sociology* 79, no. 3 (1973): 589 – 603.

[27] Freeman Tilden, *Interpreting Our Heritage* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1957).

[28] Erik Cohen, "Authenticity and Commoditization in Tourism," *Annals of Tourism Research* 15, no. 3 (1988): 371 – 386.

[29] Greg Richards and Crispin Raymond, "Creative Tourism," *ATLAS News* 23 (2000): 16 – 20.

[30] UNESCO, *Text of the Convention*, art. 2.

[31] MacCannell, "Staged Authenticity".

[32] Cohen, "Authenticity and Commoditization".

[33] Colin Campbell, "The Craft Consumer: Culture, Craft and Consumption in a Postmodern Society," *Journal of Consumer Culture* 5, no. 1 (2005): 23 – 42.

[34] Justin Kruger, Derrick Wirtz, Leaf Van Boven, and T. William Altermatt, "The Effort Heuristic," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 40, no. 1 (2004): 91 – 98.

[35] MacCannell, "Staged Authenticity".

[36] Marion C. Markwick, "Tourism and the Development of Handicraft Production in the Maltese Islands," *Tourism Geographies* 3, no. 1 (2001): 29 – 51.

[37] Cohen, "Authenticity and Commoditization".

[38] UNESCO, *Operational Directives for the Implementation of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*, chap. VI, "Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage and Sustainable Development at the National Level" (Paris: UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, 2016), https://ich.unesco.org/en/decisions/10.COM/14.A

[39] S. Schnüttgen, "Living Heritage—A Contribution from UNESCO," in *Handbook on Intangible Cultural Practices as Global Strategies for the Future*, ed. C. Wulf, *Heritage Studies* (Cham: Springer, 2025), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-72123-6_2

[40] S. Kim, *Intangible Cultural Heritage and Sustainable Tourism Resource Development* (PhD diss., Griffith University, 2018), Griffith Research Online, http://hdl.handle.net/10072/382686

[41] Kevin Fox Gotham, "Tourism Gentrification: The Case of New Orleans' Vieux Carre (French Quarter)," *Urban Studies* 42, no. 7 (2005): 1099–1121; Agustín Cocola-Gant, Ana Gago, and Jaime Jover, "Tourism, Gentrification and Neighbourhood Change: An Analytical Framework - Reflections from Southern European Cities," in *The Overtourism Debate: NIMBY, Nuisance, Commodification*, ed. Jeroen Oskam (Bingley: Emerald, 2020).

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