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Scenarios for design and craft

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Abstract: In this study, we have employed the prospective method as the basis upon which to design and develop innovative policies and strategies, which can lead to the fulfilment of the objectives which all-Spanish companies in the handicraft industry share. Therefore, we herein propose and develop a new model for the observation of the environment, in order to provide support to the small and micro-companies, which make up the industry, using a prospective approach. This essentially consists of visualising the future in a way, which is more than a simple prolongation of the past. This visualisation requires that we take into account the whole range of possible futures, each of which is represented by a particular scenario. Each scenario is a situation, which could occur in the future as a result of human action or through the development of current events.

Keywords: Design, Scenarios, Handicraft, Prospective, Maker Culture

1. Methodology

“That which is made up of the description of a future situation and of the course of events which enable one to move from the starting situation to the future situation” (Bluet & Zemor, 1970).

By gathering together the data from primary and secondary sources, we obtained the basis on which the scenarios method could be deployed [¹]. The scenarios are useful precisely for the systematisation of several hypotheses about the future, enabling these to be examined in more depth, making it possible for superior plans to be drawn up to establish what should be done over the following years and facilitating more effective decision-making.

¹ "Claves Estratégicas para la Promoción de la PYME Artesana" (2007), "El sector artesano español en las fuentes estadísticas y documentales" (2009), and more recently "La competitividad del sector artesano en España" (2011), published by the Dirección General de Política de la Pequeña y Mediana Empresa (Spain's Directorate General of Industry and Small and Medium Sized Enterprise)

After bringing together all of the key aspects of the primary and secondary sources, twenty-two scenarios were established: four were related to the concept of the company, six with product, four with distribution, a further four with marketing, two with new technologies and a further two with the consumer. A questionnaire was drawn up for all of these scenarios using the Delphi method. The hypotheses regarding the proposed future events are assessed based on the probabilities established by taking into account the criteria of importance, time of execution or appearance, and the feasibility of carrying these actions out in the future (Godet, 2011).

The Delphi method enables the most important possible transformations of the situation examined to be forecasted for the following years, through the identification of the convergence of opinions and the determination of any possible consensuses amongst the experts consulted. Having obtained these conclusions, we now possessed the information required in order to be able to detail and describe the resulting scenarios with the greatest impact. Once the scenarios had been constructed, these were presented in focus group format to a group of experts selected due to their direct involvement in the handicraft world: such involvement included activity at a handicraft workshop, the nomination for or the winning of handicraft prizes, having an entrepreneurial outlook, participation in dissemination activities, etc. The objective was to be able to draw on and contrast a range of opinions on the future situation in question. After examining all of the scenarios and collating conclusions and opinions, the following research was undertaken.

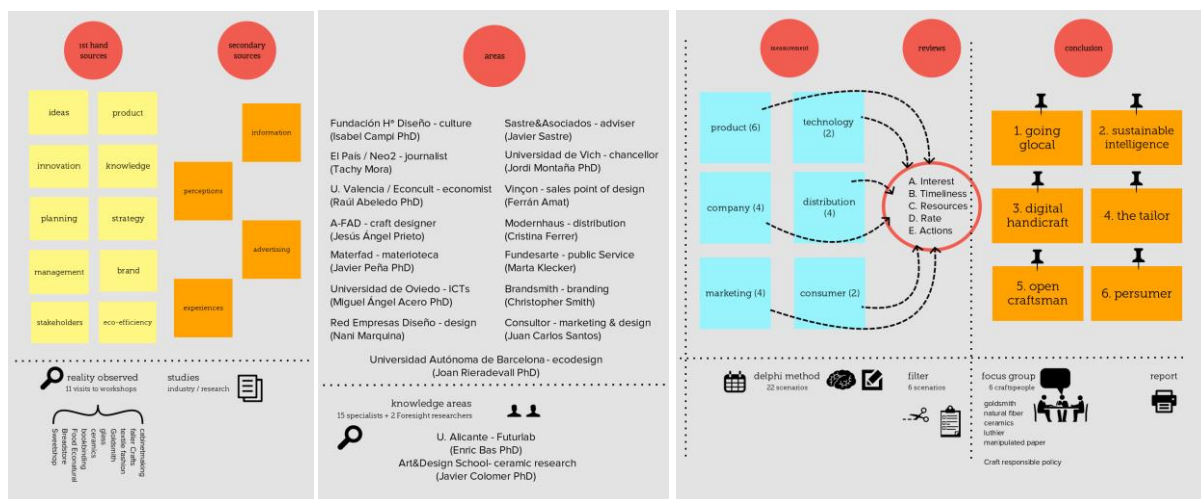


Figure 1. This method requires, on the one hand, a prior overall analysis of the industry, with which a representative sample can be taken of the different sectors which make up the industry in Spain; on the other hand, a study of the environment is essential in order to be able to understand and taken into account variables which have a direct or indirect influence on the system.

2. Going glocal [2]: being a micro-enterprise is of great value in the globalised world

In recent years, local communities have certainly showed a greater interest. Perhaps the reason is that this balanced system has formed around people who have a greater number of interlocking relationships: they share experiences or interests, they can interact with each other and they can concern themselves with their mutual and collective quality of life. Interpersonal relationships (community networks) in a local area enable resources to be shared between the people involved, and there is no reason why living in an urban environment should mean that people forego such

relationships. In these cases, companies must pay more attention to those who live nearby and increase the quality of life and satisfaction of their customers.

The ideas of a sustainable world, an ethical mankind and socially responsible companies are starting to become essential objectives when one looks at the level of support for them which we see in the workplace, the environment, in socialisation, etc. In this world, the handicraft company can play a fundamental role in people's quality of life and dignity and, as it can also have an impact on the stability and cohesion of society; it is therefore an indispensable part of the future. As is well known, there are those who believe that the work of an artisan is old-fashioned, because we live in a supposedly post-modern world, which is characterised by its global nature, the dematerialisation of processes, the mass low-cost market and, especially, the conviction that anything that can be bought can be easily and quickly replaced. However, this conception must be nuanced as it seems that, in contrast with this, globalisation is also causing new needs to be felt and a new type of consumer is emerging, precisely because ever more people are tiring of the standardisation imposed by globalisation. Artisans have just the skills needed to meet these demands.

In order to counteract the globalisation of culture and lifestyles, there are those who seek objects, which have real roots, are impregnated with history, have a real identity and demonstrate characteristics, which denote their place of origin, the artist who created them or the materials, used to make them. Alongside the production of anonymous, significant production of objects with their own identity is also occurring. In an era of the automation of production processes, there are those who place a premium on the skill of the artisan. They long for objects whose creation requires a combination of time, talent, knowledge, research and, of course, skill: these are the things which determine the value these people place on what is produced. Of course, value is not only viewed in financial terms here, but also from an ethical, cultural, and even political point of view.

The focus of consumer interest is moving away from the product to the producer and the ethical and social demands placed on companies are increasing, leading to the need to create a much more transparent environment which enables unfettered observation by citizen-consumers (Prahalad, 2003). The market, including the handicraft market, is ever more globalised. Therefore, it is essential to offer products which communicate a global message, but yet which have roots in a single place which they can be identified with, without forgetting that there are several levels of identity: local, regional, national, European, etc. Identity, which is in some respects an antidote to globalisation, brings to hand-crafted goods significant symbolic capital, affection, and a feeling of belonging. It is for this reason that the stories behind products must be told and communicated. Handicraft traditions are an expression of regional creativity. Their richness and uniqueness are expressed through the different techniques, materials and formal systems used. They are a treasure-chest of history and culture and they reflect positive features of the local area. In the interaction between the local and the global, previously unimaginable connections and possibilities appear. A "glocal" approach can be seen as a perspective, which champions the capacity of what is local or traditional to be competitive on a global scale. This viewpoint opens up a wide range of opportunities for traditional handicraft production. As well as undertaking novel campaigns to improve the image of culture and crafts, companies have launched strategies to demonstrate their skills, often taking advantage of the synergies resulting from collaboration with other partners or through co-branding. This idea of "here we are" serves to establish the belief that the things that we consume, use and share are a part of who we are as individuals. The food we eat says something about each of us, and this is also the case for the tools we use and the chairs we choose to sit on. The objects which surround us have stories to tell and not only about us.

3. Sustainable intelligence: materials, processes and uses

In some sectors of the handicraft industry, there are some who have certain fixed ideas about its nature, in which the notions of innovation and handicraft are seen as contradictory by definition. Determined as they are to defend a model of the industry in which traditions are “frozen” and seen as the basis for the industry’s survival and the manner in which their products can compete, they forget that the traditions which they seek to safeguard would never have arisen in the first place without innovation in techniques, materials and ways of doing things. That is how the things, which today define the handicraft industry, came to be and they have a direct relationship with the issue of sustainability.

A high value is placed on the sustainable and intelligent use of materials and processes as a factor in innovation (Etienne-Nugue, 2007). In recent years, there has been much discussion of trends in consumer preferences, with a desire for and identification with responsible, ecological, environmentally friendly, fair-trade and “slow” goods. These demands are difficult for big industry to satisfy, but people often fail to realise that this is the handicraft industry’s natural market. There is a strong demand for sustainability among young consumers, who are turning their back on disposable culture and are turning to those hand-crafted products which can be kept, which transmit emotional values and which they can grow old with (and which get better as they get older) (Rodríguez, 2010).

From this perspective, handicrafts can be seen as a driving force for innovation, given that innovation has an important role to play in achieving the objectives of sustainability (Nombela, 2010): therefore, the handicraft industry must play an active role in sustainable innovation. Through the emphasis on such values, the idea is also emerging that the making products by hand is not just a way of producing things, but is in fact also a way of thinking. This is the step forward that the artisan must capitalise on: it is not a lifestyle (a kind of post-hippy counter-culture) but rather a way of thinking or a form of social intelligence.

If handicrafts are in vogue (it has been said that they may save design), it is because they champion a passion for the materials (as opposed to the virtual, the culture of waste), because they conserve in order to innovate (memory and culture), because their products have real character (in contrast with impersonal mass-produced goods). It involves the study (or the love) of the past, the observation (and analysis) of the present and the investigation of the future. In this way, design must be seen by the handicraft industry as a strategy through which to question and modify the traditional model.

Instead of creative destruction (Schumpeter, 1942), let us think of “sustainable innovation” (Giddens et al., 1996) ^[2]: a responsible creativity which looks to post-industrial capitalism to transform itself into a human capitalism which respects needs and encourages dialogue, and whose ultimate aim is not profit but a fair society. It is also true that both industry and consumers are demanding more sustainable materials with characteristics, which enable new products with advanced features to be produced. The development of new materials entails the need to learn new extraction, processing and manufacturing techniques, along with new methods and technology to then assemble these materials

² The creative destruction concept is due to Schumpeter (1942), based on the innovation process takes place in a market economy where new products destroy old companies and business models.

4. Digital handicraft: manufacture, use, context

The attitude of the artisan will, then, be one of breaking through and/or eliminating the emotional and material barrier between handicraft and technology, by understanding that IT, the Internet and software is not the enemy, but in fact a great ally. The development of additive manufacturing technology and numerical control is very significantly increasing production flexibility, enabling the mass customisation of products. Although it was thought that this might be a further nail in the coffin of handcrafted production, in fact, further developments have shown the opposite to be the case. As the technology becomes progressively cheaper and work can be subcontracted to new auxiliary companies, a whole new world of opportunity is opening up for creative artisans, as more complex tasks can now be undertaken, or different types of materials used, in a quicker, simpler and cheaper fashion.

Since the 1980s, important advances have been made in virtual modelling systems, 3D and prototyping. There are now 3D printers, which can produce objects based on digital designs much more affordably than twenty years ago. At the same time, “fabbing” – the personal production of three-dimensional objects – is now a reality. The growth in popularity of this technology is revolutionising the manufacture and distribution of objects of all kinds.

It is in this context in which we now see the emergence of fablabs, makerspaces or hacklabs, laboratories which are open for use by creative people, enabling production costs to be reduced and making the new technology more widely available. One of the weak points of these systems is they will contribute to a reduction of creative input (minimising the use of physical resources and reducing development time) and to an increase in the quick design and manufacture of objects.

It is a simplification to associate the necessary change in model solely with technology, given that social, cultural, educational factor and the local developmental structure, etc., will also have a role to play. However, technological skills and the ability to establish appropriate strategies in these fields will form the essential framework with which to move into the future. With manufacturing being moved out to emerging economies as part of cost reduction strategies, it is impossible to compete on price, but it is possible to compete in terms of service and value for money, with the focus moving towards more technologically advanced products and services.

In those sectors, which have the greatest contact with the end user, it is important to encourage those activities that seek to inform and educate consumers about the technology used in the production process and the influence of technological development on their well-being and quality of life (in terms of health, the environment, demography, socio-economic issues, etc.). Therefore, these two factors together (visibility and productivity) mean that technology is of the very highest value, bringing you into the era of the company 2.0. (Gracht, 2008).

5. The tailor: personalised products and services

More and more, companies must aim to satisfy particular people or communities, who have their own tastes, consumption patterns and their own way of doing things. Information, advertising and communication will cease to be undertaken on a geographical basis and there will be a greater focus on providing information to particular segment, based on recent purchases or the major interests of each customer.

In the development and marketing of goods, the emergence of technologies enabling product customisation offers a real opportunity (Cornellá, 2002). This social phenomenon can be seen in industrialised countries where there is significant spending power and, through the development of

diverse configurations for products, it serves to protect industry from mass imports, constituting a means of obtaining customer loyalty and even of increasing the self-esteem of the customer.

This is what the one-to-one or personalised marketing model developed by Martha Rogers and Don Peppers is concerned with (Peppers, 1999). These authors identified four phases to the relationship with customers: identification, differentiating between them (classifying customers), interacting (in order to discover their needs, desires and behaviours) and personalisation. In order to achieve this, companies must cease to focus exclusively on the product and focus on the customer.

The handicraft industry must examine and design its distribution channels in order to broaden its business horizons (geographical separation, transport costs, stock and storage requirements, channel specialisation, how to reach today's consumer, etc.) and obtain a competitive advantage. IT resources, the choice of intermediary, coverage levels, monitoring and concomitant costs are the issues to focus on. The consumer must feel that they gain a benefit in terms of time and location and that must form the basis for the assessment of the changes or extensions that must be made to each strategy. Today's handicraft industry has much to contribute in the area of customised products, transmitting a feeling to customers that the item has been made especially for them (in the form of a unique, personalised product) and creating a strong link between the person and what he or she buys and comes to possess.

This outlook enables products of diverse configurations to be developed and for the range of products offered to now include services, with customers' needs being better understood. Strategies of this kind are also a sound way of achieving differentiation from mass-produced items which are either unconvincing or with which there is little point in competing. This also increases the loyalty and self-esteem of the customer, who feels much more, attached to, and satisfied with, the product or service.

Digital technology and associated cultural adjustments have led to a radical change in the current competitive scenario companies find themselves in, especially in knowledge-intensive sectors. Access to such technology reduces marketing costs and eliminates the need for certain types of intermediaries and this in turn leads to radical changes in the value chain. In this context, new business models are emerging, based to a large extent on taking advantage of the possibilities offered by the customisation of products and services (part of the phenomenon of the "long tail") and so-called "freeconomics".

6. The open craftsman: sharing experiences in an everyday setting

This vision enables the strengthening of local communities (artisans, local agents, suppliers and distributors), gives greater importance to space (both virtual and physical), facilitates the sharing of ideas and knowledge (online and in person), creates opportunities to work with other professionals (in a collaborative setting) and serves to eliminate technological barriers (with technology providing support). Optimal learning occurs when people have the opportunity to explore the world for themselves, but in a guided fashion. When people actively create things in the physical world, they are able to construct knowledge in their minds much more easily. This idea, which any artisan would agree with, was articulated by the US academic Roger Schank, one of the main current proponents of the "learning by doing" method (Schank, 2011). The psychologist and philosopher, John Dewey, creator of the "learning by doing" pragmatic pedagogical approach, maintained that the function of

education was to guide and organise the dialectical relationship between the individual and their environment.

This model does not require prior knowledge of the tools and instruments that handicraft work requires for interdisciplinary co-creation. Therefore, a reshaping of the uses of the artisan's workshop is needed, through "open workshop" approaches, which comprise two types of creative experience: one which is interdisciplinary, with professionals from different areas working together, and another which is customer-focused, enabling greater knowledge of customer expectations to be obtained. As well as breaking down barriers and increasing transparency ("this is how I do it!"), it facilitates the sharing of ideas and raises the profile of the brand and the business.

Thus, co-creation enables limitations to be overcome (such as egos, a lack of transparency, dialogue and access to information) and for improvements in the functioning of work teams to be achieved, whether these are made up of directors, employees, suppliers or customers, as the leadership of projects is shared (Andrews, 2003). It is a source of powerful ideas, which enables the future to be contemplated with greater confidence, and makes for surer decision-making.

It can be said that craft is "the ability to make good things". The words "craftsmanship" and "handicraft" may make people think of a way of life that became marginalised with the advent of the industrial society, but this is not quite true. The current handicraft industry is a simple reflection of an enduring and basic human drive to do a job well, an idea which can be said to form part of what is known as ecological intelligence (Goleman, 2009). According to this idea, the fact that the artisan takes advantage of the close links between his or her craft knowledge and thought will enable this way of working to be valued in terms of both price and impact it can make.

It is obvious that the future of the handicraft industry lies in aiming for excellence rather than banality. Simply saying "made by hand" is no longer enough (Frauenfelder, 2011). Action needs to be taken with regard to the intangible factors, which determine the quality of handcrafted goods (the artisan's own attitude, responsibility and the quality and technical skills of the artisan), as well as tangible factors (market strategies, certification systems and communication strategies and methods). Quality also depends on the knowing how to take advantage of opportunities (increasing the value placed in handcrafted goods, adapting to new consumer preferences for environmentally friendly products and the preference for products which have real character) and how to act against threats (legal obstacles, consumer ignorance and poor overall strategies).

Artisans must take advantage of any resource, which enables them to broaden their market horizons. If not, they may well be doomed to succumb to their competitors, possibly thousands of miles away, who have been wise enough to do so. Globalisation and technological advances have meant that the whole industry has to continually evolve and adapt creative and working methods; in other words, the business model has to be reinvented in collaboration with all of the stakeholders who wish to construct the future (Chesbrough, 2011)^[3].

7. The "persumer"

The economic downturn has left the consumers of the future in a stronger position. They have been cautious in their purchases and critical of brands. This is the definition of "persumers": customers who are aware of their power and their place in the brand-consumer relationship: they see themselves as being in charge (Kotler, 2006). In recent years, as the popular handicraft market has become vulgarised, there has also been increasing interest in the concept of handcrafted goods

³ Chesbrough is the author of Open Innovation (2003), also coining the term.

amongst new better-informed and more discerning groups of consumers, and this points the way to a new period of growth for the industry if it can react in the right way. We live in a society where image is everything, where design goes beyond functionality, where intangible aspects transmit values and messages and differentiate products, and, therefore, product reputation or image, the brand and the professional standing of the artisan's work are of great inherent value.

If "markets are conversations" (The Cluetrain Manifesto) (Levine, 2000), in the 2.0 era the recipient, as well as being the audience, the target and the consumer, has become the co-producer, distributor and consumer, all at the same time (a "crossuser") (GIL, 2008). Besides this figure of the consumer-producer, the fan of the brand (the "fansuser") has become a professional consumer (a "prosumer") (Tapscott, 2006), one who has a large amount of information at his or her disposal with which to make purchasing decisions. Rather than merely new consumers, these are emerging features, which characterise new generations of consumers and their relationships with brands, through technology.

The key elements of this new relationship are: quality of communication (discarding the superfluous), originality (solutions not brands are what are sought after), simplicity (communicating only what is essential in contrast with current excesses), flexibility (knowing how to continually adapt to the customer), transparency (clear and well-defined communication), courage (risking being different), sustainability (market balance), unpretentiousness (brands must show their human side), credibility (brands must be consistent in what they sell, say and do) and a clear commitment to society and the environment.

The critical spirit of persumer gives them the power to choose and they will always opt for those brands that they perceive to be coherent, clear and sincere ^[4]. Credibility increases in value in this scenario and brands must put their faith in being clearer and closer to their customers if they wish these to include the mature and demanding persusers. Consumers of this type demand that the brands that address them are aware of the situations they find themselves in and that they can anticipate their needs and desires. In this more direct and closer relationship, today's consumers want to see that the true quality and difference of the brand in the midst of this economic downturn. Thus, they will cease to be loyal to brands per se and become addicts of the experiences that brands provide them (an experience culture).

8. Conclusions

As we can see, purchasing habits are changing and the economic downturn has seen the emergence of new paradigms. The economy and the future of the next generations lies in employment, in creating a project for life, rather than depending on the latest smartphone or retro training shoes. Less sophisticated and more affordable products are required; where basic goods are in demand again – an idea that is at the heart of more companies. The back-to-basics concept incorporates (Casabayó, 2010), on the one hand, this adjustment of the purchasing and consumption model and, on the other, also a commitment to the environment. This new model can be summed up as advocating, "another world is here" (rather than "another world is possible").

⁴ "The Next Best Brand", a study undertaken using the Helmer Method by the Observatorio Permanente de Tendencias, FUTUR:E. (2010)

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