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Informing craft producers in South Africa: Improving visibility and product availability through market communication

ABSTRACT

Craft producers struggle to access the retail market because of their inability to communicate effectively. Understanding craft retailers' buying behaviour, particularly with regard to the communication channels used, could potentially assist craft producers to create better awareness of their crafts. The purpose of this article is to investigate the communication channels used by formal craft retailers when searching for craft suppliers and craft products.

A survey of formal craft retailers resulted in a total of 233 useable questionnaires. Principal-component factor analysis was used to identify the various types of communication channels while ANOVA analysis was applied to test the hypothesis.

The results indicated that craft retailers differ in their use of certain communication channels and that they tend to use particular channels more often than others. The factor analysis identified three types of communication channels: internal and personal, promotional, and print advertising. The results further indicated that craft retailers consult internal and personal channels more frequently than promotional channels and print advertising. The results also revealed that different types of craft retailers differ in their preference of promotional channels, whereas no such differences could be found in the way these craft retailers used internal and personal channels or print advertising.

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The results presented in this article provide useful insights – especially to informal craft producers – on how to improve their visibility and product availability by communicating more effectively with formal craft retailers.

INTRODUCTION

The development of the craft industry is a key focus area of the South African Government for sustainable development and the creation of employment opportunities (Department of Labour, 2011:7). A number of initiatives have illustrated the growth in the importance of the craft industry in South Africa (SA), as seen by the formation of the Cape Craft and Design Institute (CCDI) in the Western Province, the Gauteng Craft and Design Centre in the Gauteng province, and the North-West Craft Design Centre.

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) has also launched the Craft Enterprise Support Fund, with the aim of assisting craft organisations to overcome their lack of access to raw materials (Department of Trade & Industry, 2010:160).

In SA, recent decades have seen the opening of many homeware stores, such as PepHome, @ Home, @Home Living Space, and Mr Price Home, as well as the Woolworths Artistic Collection department, which operates in branches of Woolworths. All these retailers sell handcrafted products, providing craft producers with an opportunity to target craft retailers. However, at the moment craft producers are facing difficulties in selling their products to retailers because of their lack of visibility.

The craft producers lack the ability to engage with the formal retail sector and consequently they resort to targeting occasional buyers, tourist and craft markets, which are a less stable market (Department of Sports, Arts, Recreation & Culture, 2007:10, 138). Therefore, the focus of this article is on the role of formal craft retailers.

Craft producers in South Africa face numerous marketing-related challenges. They lack understanding of what the market needs, which leads to an inability to formulate appropriate and competitive marketing communication strategies (Grobler, 2005:43, 67). As a result, craft producers have difficulty in accessing formal retail markets (Makhitha & Bresler, 2011:250; Hay, 2008:13; Department of Sports, Arts, Recreation & Culture, 2007:10).

When searching for suppliers and their products, an understanding of retailers' marketing communication requirements would assist craft producers to increase the visibility of their own products (Skallerud & Gronhaug, 2010:197), enabling them to use more effective marketing communication channels.

Craft products are sold through formal and informal retail channels. Formal retail channels consist of various retail outlets, ranging from boutique shops and gift shops to large outlets in airports, including national retailers such as Mr Price Home, Pep Home and Woolworths (Department of

Sports, Arts, Recreation & Culture, 2007:8, 30, 37). Craft producers selling their products directly to consumers or street hawkers constitute an informal retail channel.

The craft trade, and particularly the trade in traditional crafts, is a major source of income for disadvantaged members of society, rural women in particular (Perreira, Schackleton & Schackelton, 2006:478). There are low entry barriers, making it possible for crafters to enter an industry that requires minimal capital. However, the market is also saturated with unscrupulous agents and importers (Department of Economic Development, 2009:6).

Although organisations have been established to assist craft producers and some of the more formal craft producers have managed to gain access to the formal retail market, a large number of the informal craft producers are still struggling to access the retail market. The problem is that informal craft producers do not understand or know how to increase their visibility and product availability, which severely limits their access to the formal craft retailers. This creates an over-dependence on the middleman, thereby leading to the exploitation of craft producers (Shackleton, Shackleton, Buiten & Bird, 2007:705). The purpose of this article is to investigate the marketing communication channels used by formal craft retailers when searching for craft suppliers and craft products. An understanding of the communication channels used could assist informal craft producers in particular to increase their visibility and product availability.

The article starts with a discussion on the SA craft industry, followed by an analysis of the various marketing communication channels currently used by retailers. The article further addresses the methodology and the results, presents a discussion and outlines the limitations and managerial implications of the research.

1. THE CRAFT INDUSTRY IN SA

The term 'craft product' can be used to describe a wide range of products, such as home furnishings; jewellery; fashion and fashion accessories; novelties and gifts, including corporate gifts; garden and outdoor curios. Collectables – one-of-a-kind, high-value individually made products – and indigenous artefacts, specifically culturally-derived objects – can also be classified as craft products. (Department of Labour, 2011:7; Department of Trade & Industry, 2005:11).

Rogerson (2010:117) posits that craft products must be 80 per cent handmade from different materials, which may include clay, natural fibres, beads, recyclable materials and textiles. Kaiser and Associates grouped craft products into eight categories: traditional art, designer goods, craft art, functional wares, souvenirs, fashion-led items, gift and novelty items, corporate gifts, cultural artefacts, and socially responsible products.

While products in the traditional art and craft art category are unique pieces sold to high-end customers and collectors, the other products are sold to various retail stores, including museums, galleries, speciality retailers, homeware stores, clothing stores, jewellery shops and department stores.

The craft industry is dominated by small and medium organisations (Hay, 2008:2). Its management is crippled by the lack of reliable and accessible research data (Department of Economic Development, 2009:3). The industry's development and competitiveness is impeded by this deficiency. In addition, marketing and branding are major challenges faced by the craft producers in South Africa (Department of Sports, Arts, Recreation & Culture, 2007:35, 67).

To exacerbate the situation, craft producers also face competition from foreign craft producers, who generally are far more advanced.

Craft producers pursue their trade for various reasons, such as earning a living, providing a means for others to survive, creating self-employment, uplifting communities, creating employment, as a hobby, to sell work to other crafters, to promote craft, for the love of art, for personal fulfilment. Cultural reasons, like heritage and the revival of traditions, also come into play (Department of Sports, Arts, Recreation & Culture, 2007:98-9).

According to Ekeanyanwu (2009:133), trade creates wealth and wealth frees the world's poorest people from the daily struggle for survival, allowing them to embrace and share art, music and crafts. Whatever their reasons for starting a craft-producing organisation, crafters need the right skills, and also knowledge of how to market their products and access the craft retail market in order to succeed.

The craft industry is important because of the employment it creates. It incorporates both informal craft producers selling on the roadside and formal craft producers who sell their products locally and internationally (Elk, 2004:1). The industry provides craft producers with an opportunity for creative expression in ideas as well as products. In turn, this enables people to move from a subsistence level to a more substantive economic level.

As stated in the introduction, formal craft producers either sell their craft products from their studio, workshop, craft markets, or via formal craft retailers, such as craft shops and national retailers like Mr Price Home, museums and galleries. The informal producers sell their products through the informal channels, such as roadside markets, or around major shopping centres (Urban-Econ, 2010:30, 33; Department of Arts, Culture, Science & Technology 1998:25).

However, the greatest concentration of craft producers is found in the informal/sole trader sector. Also represented here are co-operatives, project-based and small-batch manufacturers. The informal craft producers comprise mainly women, some of them operating from the rural areas where there is no formal employment (Hay, 2008:2). For these women crafting is a way of life as well as a way to provide for their families (McCarthy & Mavundla, 2009:34).

The informal craft producers often operate from their homes, which allows them the flexibility to engage in a number of livelihood activities, while formal craft producers usually operate from their studios or workshops.

As stated before, informal craft producers lack the skills and expertise necessary to ensure the visibility of their craft products and consequently they struggle to access the formal markets (Phillip, 2006:213). They are unable to utilise complex communication channels and the networking necessary to sell products to the formal economy (Broembsen, 2011:1). Craft producers, therefore, need support in order to access the sophisticated and formal retail market (Yeboah, 1998:7).

The majority of informal crafters have only a primary school education, with crafting being the main source of income. According to Perreira, Schackleton and Schackleton, some of these craft producers make crafts out of desperation (2006:483). This lack of knowledge and expertise widens the communication gap between craft producers and craft retailers.

Understanding the marketing communication channels used by formal craft retailers could assist informal craft producers to increase their visibility, by making information on their crafts available through the correct channels.

1.1 Marketing communication channels used by craft retailers

According to Keller (2009:141), marketing communication is a means by which an organisation attempts to inform, persuade and remind consumers, directly or indirectly, about the products and brands that they sell. Marketing communication becomes the 'voice' of the organisation and its brands; and this is also a channel whereby it can establish a dialogue and build relationships with its customers. Organisations can use various channels of marketing communication to achieve their communication goals. These communication channels have been termed the 'marketing communication mix' and they comprise advertising, sales promotion, public relations, personal selling, exhibitions, telemarketing, and direct marketing tools (Dwyer & Tanner, 2009:296, 316-317).

Each of the channels employs a specific technique to communicate with consumers. For example, advertising uses various media, such as the print media, broadcasting and the Internet, while sales promotion uses tools like discounts, coupons, displays and demonstrations in order to reach its customers (Cassim, 2013:421).

Due to changes in consumer needs and technology, marketing communication channels must be planned and blended in order to achieve an effective and efficiently integrated marketing communication strategy that is customer-focused (Cassim, 2013:424). O'Guinn, Allen and Semenik (2013:7), define Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) as the use of a wide range of promotional techniques working together to create widespread brand exposure.

It is important to understand the role that each communication channel plays in the marketing mix (Lamb, Hair, Mc Daniel, Boshoff, Terblanche, Elliot & Klopper, 2010:350). By carefully blending its marketing communication channels, an organisation is not only able to differentiate its offerings from those of its competitors, but also to build a relationship

with them. The purpose is to maximise the effectiveness of the organisation's marketing communication by exploiting synergetic effects, and ultimately to add value to the brand (Reinold & Tropp, 2012:118).

Marketing communication fulfils four important roles: to differentiate itself, its products and services from competitors; to reinforce awareness by reminding and reassuring customers; to inform and educate all the relevant stakeholders about its offerings and to persuade the target market to act in a particular way (Fill & Fill, 2005:270).

Craft retailers consult different marketing communication channels when searching for suppliers. Resident-buying offices, periodicals, trade associations, marketing-research organisations and reporting services constitute external communication channels, while internal channels of communication can be described as information available within the business, such as past sales and recording systems (Clodfelter, 2008:103-9).

Retailers consult more communication channels when buying new products than when buying to replenish stock, since buying a new product is a strategic decision. This is especially true when buying from a new supplier, which also affects the product assortment carried by the store (Johansson, 2002:578,581). Some buyers use certain information channels more often than others (Brossard, 1998:45). Retailers often use different marketing channels to glean information on different types of retailers and products (Dempsey, 1978:263).

Jackson, Keith and Burdick (1987:31) investigated the relative importance of various communication channels in different purchase situations, as perceived by industrial buyers. They found that the relative importance of marketing communication channels varies according to product type. Salespeople were identified by many researchers as the most important channel of marketing communication used by industrial buyers and retailers (Deeter-Schmelz & Kennedy, 2004:192; Julien & Ramangalahy, 2003:237; Jackson, Keith & Burdick, 1987:31).

According to Clodfelter (2008:106), suppliers or salespeople supply useful information on the product acceptance in the market; and they are, therefore, the most important channel of communication.

Kline and Wagner (1994:82) found that retailers use their own knowledge as their most important channel of communication, followed by customer requests, magazines read by customers, sales records, and buyers from similar stores. Buyers within a buying function also share information with one another (Bruce & Daly, 2006:336). Deeter-Schmelz and Kennedy (2002:148) also identified own personal experience, instead of external commercial communication channels, as the main technique of marketing communication by retailers (Deeter-Schmelz & Kennedy, 2002:148).

However, according to Kline and Wagner (1994:78), own knowledge is important for experienced retailers; since inexperienced buyers have no prior knowledge and experience

of buying a particular product, they cannot rely on own knowledge, but must rely on external sources instead.

Brossard (1998:45) identified site visits, whereby buyers visit the supplier organisation, as the most important marketing communication technique consulted during a complex decision-making process, followed by in-house networks. Other marketing communication channels used by suppliers are product demonstrations, factory tours, and visits to existing customers (Mawson & Fearne, 1997:242). Written materials, such as pamphlets, letters, advertisements, and new-items forms (forms drafted by the selling company and completed by the salesperson) are also useful tools for communicating with retailers (Sternquist & Chen, 2006:259).

Lindbon (2008:13) found that publications, electronic information services and customers were important channels of marketing communication about suppliers for apparel buyers, while advertising was considered important for appliance-retail buyers.

The Internet was found to be moderately important for buyers, when initially selecting their major suppliers (Bruce & Daly, 2006:336). Many organisations know that the adoption of the Internet by craft producers is unfortunately very low, and the opportunities associated with the Internet have not been fully exploited by craft producers in SA (Department of Sports, Arts, Recreation & Culture, 2007:111).

The development in information technology has brought opportunities for organisations to reach their supply chain partners, while staying at arm's length. The introduction of the Internet, as an e-commerce technology, has changed the way organisations communicate with each other. The Internet can also be used in conjunction with more traditional channels of communication. For example, Wiese, Jordaan and Van Heerden (2009:82), proposed that, since a website is an extension of an organisation's brand, institutions must ensure that their website address is visible on all communication material – from brochures to letterheads. Although the Internet is widely accepted as an information technique, it cannot be used to replace a salesperson as a channel of communication, since many buyers prefer to deal with a salesperson rather than to transact via the Internet (Deeter-Schmelz & Kennedy, 2004:194). When buying craft products in South Arica, craft retailers use various communication channels, such as word-of-mouth, exhibitions, networks with other crafters, agents, magazines read by customers, and promotional materials such as pamphlets (Department of Sports, Arts, Culture & Recreation, 2007:131). To succeed in a highly competitive craft industry, craft producers need to provide information about their organisations and products to retailers, and to ensure that they have continuous contact with them (Nagori & Saxena, 2012:55).

They also need to ensure the visibility of their products, and to employ new and creative methods of marketing communication (Luutonen, 2009:126). From a supplier's point-of-view, it is essential to ensure that information about their products is available in the marketing communication channels that retailers consult.

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Craft retailers make use of various marketing communication channels when searching for new craft producers to buy from. Understanding the various communication channels consulted by craft retailers could assist craft producers in using more appropriate marketing communication channels, in order to increase their visibility and product availability. The following objectives were formulated:

- To determine whether different types of communication channels could be identified.
- To determine how often craft retailers use different channels of communication.
- To determine whether differences exist between various types of craft retailers, and the frequency with which they make use of various communication channels.

To address the above objectives, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H_0 There are no significant differences between different types of craft retailers and how often they utilise various marketing communication channels.

H_1 There are significant differences between different types of craft retailers and how often they utilise various marketing communication channels.

3. METHOD

A survey method was used, which targeted formal craft retailers in South Africa. This included craft retailers of different types and sizes, such as craft shops, small interior and gift stores, interior and decor shops, discount retailers, clothing shops, furniture shops, museums, galleries, jewellery shops and destination retailers. A non-probability convenience sampling method was adopted, because of the difficulties to identify craft retailers and the fact that there is no reliable and easily accessible database of craft retailers.

According to Cooper and Schindler (2006:245, 247), convenience sampling is suitable when there are time constraints, and lists of available units are either incomplete or not up to date, as is the case with SA craft retailers.

The data were collected during November 2012 and March 2013. The data were collected electronically through e-mail, as well as hand-delivered questionnaires to craft retailers for self-completion. Of the 681 questionnaires, 273 were completed and returned. However, only 233 of the 273 completed questionnaires were useable, giving a response rate of 34 per cent. The remaining 40 questionnaires were incomplete, with some questionnaires only half done, or missing multiple responses. These were, therefore, disregarded and not included in the analysis.

Although the purpose of the article was to gather data from formal craft retailers in all provinces in South Africa, the data were only gathered from the craft retailers operating in six provinces, namely Gauteng, the Western Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga, North West, and the Eastern Cape as a result of the low response rate and non-probability sampling. The majority of responses

came from Gauteng and the Western Cape, since they house the head offices of most of the major retailers; in addition, craft retailing is more active in these areas.

The questionnaire was designed using information collected from the literature and qualitative interviews conducted among five formal craft retailers. Sixteen marketing communication channels were identified from the literature, such as salespeople, advertisements in trade news, exhibitions, past sales records, magazines read by end-consumers, the Internet and visits to workshops.

Some of the channels identified from the interviews were similar to those identified from the literature, but four additional channels emerged, namely: visits to craft wholesalers, news stories in trade publications, trade association information, and suppliers' catalogues.

The respondents were requested to indicate how frequently they utilised the various communication channels identified on a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from (1) never, to (4) always. The Cronbach's alpha for the scale was 0.83, indicating satisfactory internal consistency reliability. Malhotra (2010:319) deems a Cronbach's alpha of 0.70 to be an indication of satisfactory internal consistency reliability.

Information pertaining to the type of retailer, the retail buyers' position within the retailer network and years of buying experience were also included.

The questionnaire was pre-tested with 12 craft retailers, using the participant pre-test method. The wording of some questions was slightly altered to ensure clarity. Furthermore, the individual craft retailers did not receive any incentives and participation was at all times voluntary.

The data were analysed, using SAS software. Descriptive statistics, factor analysis and ANOVA tests were conducted; the results are reported and discussed in the next section.

4. THE RESULTS

4.1 Descriptive statistics

The sample consisted of various types of retailers. Of the 233 respondents, 94 were craft stores, representing 44 per cent of the total population. Destination retailers were the second largest group, representing about 16 per cent (n=35) of the population, followed by the small interior/gift stores with about 12 per cent (n=27) of the population. The rest of the respondents comprised clothing stores, discount stores, furniture stores, galleries, museums, jewellery shops and destination retailers, but these had a very small representation.

Table 1: Types of craft retailers

Types of craft retailers (V81)	Frequency	Percentage
Craft store	94	44
Small interior/gift store	27	13
Interior decor/homeware store, such as Mr Price Home	13	6
Clothing stores, such as Woolworths or Truworths	7	3
Discount stores, such as Makro or Game	2	1
Furniture stores	8	4
Galleries	7	3
Museums	5	2
Jewellery shops	16	7
Destination retailers	35	16
Other (please specify)	6	3
TOTAL	**220**	**100**

n= 220 Missing responses = 13

For the purpose of statistical analysis, craft retailers were collapsed into five groups: the craft stores; small interior/gift stores; large retailers, such as interior décor/homeware stores, clothing stores, discount stores and furniture stores; speciality stores, such as galleries, museums and jewellery shops and destination retailers.

The representation of the five groups was as follows: craft stores (44%), small interior/gift stores (12%), large retailers like clothing and décor stores (15%), speciality stores such as galleries, museums and jewellery shops (12%), and destination retailers (17%).

The respondents consisted of buyers, managers, owner-managers, manager-buyers, and executives responsible for buying. The owner-managers were the largest group, comprising 44 per cent (n=101) of the population. Managers were the second-largest group of respondents, comprising over 18 per cent (n= 42) of the population. This was followed by manager-buyers, accounting for about 14 per cent of the population (n=31). Buyers made up over 12 per cent of the population (n=28). The last group of respondents comprised the executives, who represented about 12 per cent of the population, consisting of 27 respondents.

Table 2 below depicts how often craft retailers utilise the various communication channels, and the percentages, the number of respondents, the mean score, and the standard deviation. These are indicated in the order of the most used to the least used.

Table 2: Communication channels most often used by craft retailers

	Communication channels	Percentages of respondents in each cell				Number of respondents (N)	Mean (M)	Standard deviation (SD)
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Always			
1	Existing sales records	8.77	17.54	29.82	43.86	228	3.08	0.97
2	Buyers experience i.e. gained from buying craft products	3.49	20.09	41.92	34.50	229	3.07	0.82
3	Craft producer visits us with product samples	7.86	32.75	31.00	28.38	229	2.80	0.93
4	Ask existing suppliers to find us what we need	14.91	24.12	30.26	30.70	228	2.77	1.04
5	Sales people from the craft producer provides information	12.66	34.06	28.38	24.89	229	2.65	0.98
6	Visit to craft wholesalers	13.54	34.93	29.69	21.83	229	2.59	0.96
7	Information about suppliers from colleagues	13.60	36.40	27.19	22.81	228	2.59	0.98
8	Search the internet	23.14	25.33	24.02	20.43	229	2.57	1.12
9	Visit to the craft producer workshop/studio	16.09	31.74	31.74	20.43	230	2.56	0.98
10	Supplier catalogues	22.37	26.75	27.19	23.68	228	2.52	1.07
11	Visit to the trade show/exhibition	13.42	41.99	25.97	18.61	231	2.50	0.94
12	Visit to competitor business/es	19.82	32.60	26.87	20.70	227	2.47	1.02
13	Users/consumers of craft product	16.96	34.38	33.04	15.63	224	2.45	0.94
14	Networking with buyers from similar craft stores	22.71	30.13	30.13	17.03	229	2.41	1.01
15	Sales promotion material (brochures & pamphlets)	26.32	33.33	26.75	13.60	228	2.27	0.99
16	Trade/industry association information/data	31.28	35.68	20.26	12.78	227	2.14	0.99
17	News stories in trade publications	26.67	44.89	20.89	7.56	225	2.09	0.86
18	Advertisement in trade news	34.78	34.35	17.83	13.04	230	2.09	1.01

	Communication channels	Percentages of respondents in each cell				Number of respondents (N)	Mean (M)	Standard deviation (SD)
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Always			
19	Advertisement in consumer magazines	33.62	36.68	18.78	10.92	229	2.06	0.97
20	Research done by marketing research agencies	49.34	26.20	10.92	13.54	229	1.88	1.06

From the above findings, it is clear that retailers use certain communication channels more often than others. Craft retailers indicated that they rely more often on existing sales records (M=3.08, SD=0.98) and the buyer's experience (M=3.07, SD=0.82) for information on craft products and suppliers, than they do on other channels of communication. Only 8.79% and 3.49%, respectively, indicated that they never make use of these two sources.

Sales records and buyer's experience also had a low standard deviation, showing agreement among the craft retailers.

The five most-often used channels of communication were sales records, buyer's experience (M= 3.07, SD=0.82), 'craft producer visits us with product samples' (M= 2.7, SD=104), 'asking existing suppliers to find us what we need' (M= 2.76, SD=1.04), and 'salespeople from the craft producers provide us with information' (M= 2.65, SD= 0.99). Interestingly, the top five channels are all internal or personal communication channels.

While Internet adoption has grown in importance globally, these craft retailers indicated that they had not fully adopted the use of such services. Retailers who frequently use the Internet as a channel of communication ranked only 8th, and was evidenced by only 44 per cent. The standard deviation for this source was also high, at 1.12, indicating a low level of agreement among the craft retailers. The use of catalogues was the 10th most frequently used channel of communication.

This correlates highly with the fact that craft producers buy crafts that are distinctive and unique. It also limits the use of catalogues, since catalogues are suitable mainly for standardised products. One interesting point is the fact that exhibitions were found to be the 11th most frequently used channel of communication. Government sets aside a budget to finance craft producers who exhibit their products locally and internationally; yet, craft retailers seldom use exhibitions as a source of information.

The channels of communication used least often were found to be: 'research done by marketing research agencies on our behalf', 'advertising in consumer magazines', 'advertising in trade

news', 'news/stories in trade publications' and 'association/industry trade information data'. Research conducted by marketing research agencies on behalf of retailers is not often used, as was indicated by a very low mean score of 1.88 with almost 50% of retailers indicating that they never make use of marketing research agencies.

Other sources not often consulted were advertisements in trade news and also trade/industry association information/data, indicated by 69 per cent and 67 per cent of craft retailers respectively. It appears that craft retailers do not often use channels of communication such as advertisements that are available through the mass-communication channels.

From the results reflected in Table 2, it is evident that craft retailers rely on a variety of sources. This underlines the suggestion by Malan and Grossberg (1988:160), that, generally, multi-directional and multi-voiced communication is the best method to ensure a flow of information. The authors further state that craft and community projects should use a range of media, such as newspapers, newsletters, directories, programme reports, radio reports, calendars and videos.

According to the Urban-Econ Tourism (2010:44) article, craft retailers make use of the Internet, local and trade magazines and brochures, and make purchases at exhibitions and during visits to craft producers. Another article found that retailers use exhibitions, catalogues, trade magazines and suppliers as the most important channels of communication (Esbjerg & Skytte, 1999:17). These findings, however, differ from the findings of this article, which shows that craft retailers rely heavily on sales records and buying experience. The findings are also in contrast with those of Johansson (2002:578), who noted that retailers involved in buying new products search extensively for suppliers, and rely on external sources instead of internal sources.

Johansson (2002:581) also found that retailers relied on marketing research and the supplier as important channels of communication. This is only partially supported by the findings reflected in Table 2, since 'visits from suppliers' was ranked third; but marketing research, which is seldom used, was ranked last. Salespeople comprised the fifth most-used channel; this is in line with other research findings, identifying salespeople as an important channel of communication used by retailers (Deeter-Schmelz and Kennedy, 2004:192; Julien & Ramangalahy, 2003:237; Jackson, Keith and Burdick, 1987:31; Francis & Brown, 1985-86:6).

The findings of Kline and Wagner (1994:82) revealed that buyers used their own knowledge as their most important channel of communication. This has also been confirmed by this research project.

4.2 Factor analysis

Prior to performing the factor analysis, the suitability of the data for factor analysis was assessed. Pallant (2013:190) states that, ideally, the overall sample size should be over 150

for factor analysis; therefore, the sample size for this article of 233 was deemed sufficient. The Bartlett test of sphericity reached statistical significance ($p<0.0005$); the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy value was 0.815, indicating that the data were suitable for factor analysis, as the measure exceeded the recommended value of 0.60.

According to Hair, Black, Babin and Anderson, (2010:116-7), factor loadings of between 0.3 and 0.4 were considered to meet the minimum level for the interpretation of the structure.

The principal component factor analysis – with oblique rotation – was computed for the communication channels and three factors were identified. Each factor had a satisfactory Cronbach alpha of more than 0.70, with the three individual factors having the Cronbach alpha values of 0.73, 0.72 and 0.84 respectively. The three factors explained 27.24 per cent (Factor 1), 9.17 per cent (Factor 2), and 7.5 per cent (Factor 3) of the variance, and a total variance of 43.96%.

All three factors had *eigenvalues* higher than 1, ranging between 1.358 and 4.90. These factors were labelled internal and personal channels (Factor 1), promotional channels (Factor 2), and print-advertising channels (Factor 3). The naming of the factors required the judgement of the researcher (Hair et al., 2010:112) and it was done in such a way as to ensure that the naming closely resembled the variables making up the factors. Factor 1 included 12 items; factor 2 included 4 items and factor 3 consisted of two variables, as is evident in Table 3.

Table 3: Factor analysis for communication channels

Channels of communication	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Visit to the craft producer's workshop/studio	0.490		
Visit to craft wholesalers	0.643		
Ask existing suppliers to find us what we need	0.435		
Salespeople from the craft producer provide information	0.391		
Craft producer visits us with product samples	0.402		
Networking with buyers from similar craft stores	0.355		
Users/consumers of craft product i.e. through suggestions and queries	0.303		
Visit to competitor business/es	0.389		
Research done by marketing research agencies on our behalf	0.367		
Buyer's experience i.e. gained from buying craft products	0.468		
Information about suppliers from colleagues	0.481		
Existing sales records	0.341		

Supplier catalogues		0.772	
Search the Internet		0.414	
Sales promotion materials from suppliers		0.728	
Visit to the trade show/exhibition		0.368	
Advertisement in trade news			0.747
Advertisement in consumer magazines			0.749
M	2.61	2.46	2.08
SD	0.51	0.76	0.92
% of variance explained	27.24	9.17	7.54
Component reliability	0.73	0.72	0.84
Eigenvalues	4.904	1.651	1.358

1. Loadings smaller than 0.30 are not shown
2. Variables 64 and 65 were excluded, because of loadings lower than 0.30

Based on the mean values of the three factors it seems as if craft retailers more often make use of personal and internal channels (M=2.61) than of promotional communication channels (M=2.46) or print-advertising channels (M=2.08).

4.3 Hypothesis testing

Three types of communication channels were identified after the factor analysis, namely internal and personal channels, promotional channels, and print-advertisement channels. Based on these groups, three sub-hypotheses, H_{1a}, H_{1b} and H_{1c}, were formulated. The Levene's tests for the equality of variance were not significant. As only slight deviations of normality were found – and because violations of these assumptions have little impact on larger sample sizes (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001:329; Hair et al., 1998:349), as was the case in the research presented in this article – it was decided to continue with the ANOVA testing. All the hypotheses were tested at a 5% level of significance (i.e., α = 0.05); the results of each hypothesis will now be discussed.

H_0 There are no significant differences between different types of craft retailers, and how often they utilise internal and personal communication channels.

H_{1a} There are significant differences between different types of craft retailers, and how often they utilise internal and personal communication channels.

Table 4 depicts the results.

Table 4: Mean values and ANOVA results for H$_{1a}$

Types of craft retailers	N	M	SD	DF	F value	P value	Semi partial Eta square
Craft stores	90	2.69	0.52				
Small interior/ gift stores	26	2.46	0.50				
Large retailers	28	2.52	0.49	4	1.46	0.2167	0.0280
Specialty stores	27	2.75	0.52				
Destination retailers	35	2.66	0.45				

As is evident from Table 4, no significant difference was found between the types of craft retailers and the use of internal and personal channels of communication. The p-value of 0.216 is larger than p<0.05, indicating that there are no significant differences. Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted, meaning that H$_1$ was not supported. It is thus evident that the type of craft retailer does not play a role in the extent to which certain internal/personal channels of communication are used.

H$_0$ There are no significant differences between different types of craft retailers and how often they utilise promotional communication channels.

H$_{1b}$ There are significant differences between different types of craft retailers and how often they utilise promotional communication channels.

Table 5 reports the results of the ANOVA tests for promotional channels.

Table 5: Mean values and ANOVA results for H$_{1b}$

Types of craft retailers	N	M	SD	DF	F value	P value	Semi partial Eta-square
Craft stores	90	2.69	0.52				
Small interior/ gift stores	26	2.46	0.50				
Large retailers	28	2.52	0.49	4	2.49	0.0446	0.0476
Specialty stores	27	2.75	0.52				
Destination retailers	35	2.66	0.45				

The results indicate that there was a significant difference (p < 0.05) and in the mean score of the five types of craft retailers: $F_{(4, 206)} = 2.49$; p = 0.045, in the different types of craft retailers and how often they utilise promotional information. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and H$_{1b}$ was supported.

Due to the significant differences among the types of craft retailers with regard to how often they utilise promotional-communication channels, Duncan's *post-hoc* test was conducted to determine where these differences were among the five types of craft retailers.

Table 6: Duncan's multiple-range test results for promotional channels

Names of craft retailers	Subsets (Groups in the same subset (A or B) do not differ significantly)	
	A*	B*
Craft stores	2.46	2.46
Small interior/gift stores	2.65	
Large retailers	2.58	
Specialty stores	2.61	
Destination retailers		2.14

From Table 6, it is evident that destination retailers made significantly less use (M=2.14) of promotional-communication channels than did small interior/gift stores (M=2.65), speciality stores (M=2.61), and large retailers (M=2.58).

H_0 There are significant differences between the different types of craft retailers and how often they utilise print advertisements.

H_{1c} There are significant differences between the different types of craft retailers and how often they utilise print advertisements.

Table 7 reports the results of the ANOVA tests for print advertising.

Table 7: Mean values and ANOVA results for H_{1c}

Types of craft retailers	N	M	SD	DF	F value	P value	Semi partial Eta square
Craft stores	90	2.01	0.98	4	1.29	0.2767	0.0251
Small interior/ gift stores	26	2.26	0.94				
Large retailers	28	2.32	1.00				
Specialty stores	27	2.12	1.00				
Destination retailers	35	1.84	0.72				

The results indicate a p-value = 0.277 and there was no significant difference between the mean scores of types of craft retailers and how often they use print advertising. Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted and H1c was not supported. This implies that different types of craft retailers use print advertising with the same frequency.

From the above discussions, the conclusion can be drawn that craft retailers differ in how often they utilise promotional-communication channels, but they do not differ in their use of internal and personal channels, or their use of print advertisements.

5. DISCUSSION

The five most-used channels of communication are sales records, buying experience, craft producers visiting with product samples, retailers asking existing suppliers to find what they need and salespeople from the craft producers providing information. Craft retailers also visit wholesalers and use information about suppliers from colleagues as a channel of communication. The craft producer visiting craft retailers with product samples, provides with an opportunity to market their products easily and effectively. This is due to the fact that they can combine the motive to supply information about their products with discussing the needs of retailers; in addition, they can also determine whether their products do satisfy the needs of craft retailers.

The fact that some craft retailers ask existing suppliers to find them what they want, implies that craft retailers have a working relationship with some craft producers. It also implies that craft producers should develop a working relationship with other craft producers, so as to be referred to craft retailers whenever they are looking for suppliers. The fact that craft retailers visit wholesalers to source information could mean that craft producers can either sell their products through the wholesalers, or supply information about the products through the wholesalers.

The five least-often used channels of communication are research done by marketing research agencies, advertising in consumer magazines, advertising in trade news, news/stories in trade publications and association/industry trade information data. The limited use of association/ industry trade information data and advertising is beneficial for craft producers; since the majority of craft producers are small organisations that lack financial resources. They would need to join membership of the associations or industry bodies, or to advertise.

6. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Marketing communication is an important element of a marketing strategy. Craft retailers search for suppliers during the buying process. To achieve this goal of identifying potential craft suppliers, craft retailers use various channels of communication. Craft producers should make use of these channels in order to convey information to craft retailers about their crafts. From the research results, the following insights could be valuable for craft producers.

Craft producers could combine sources, such as a visit to a craft retailer with samples, the use of salespeople where possible to visit craft retailers, as well as promoting their products through wholesalers. They could also supply information to the buyer's colleagues in a craft-retailer organisation, and encourage craft retailers to visit their studios by sending out invitations or hosting open days. Craft producers might not be able to convey information by using sales records and buying experience, but they could make sure that their products meet the most

important supplier-selection criteria for their products to sell, creating a positive lasting buying experience for craft retailers, building good relationships and establishing a good track record in the process.

Craft producers should also ensure that product samples and price lists are readily available at all times, upon the buyer's request. Additional information on financial stability, consistency of supply and the ability to meet specific and varied delivery requirements should be at hand. Furthermore, product lists, product illustrations and samples could also be provided. When selling new products to retailers, craft producers are expected to supply information on the product and its composition, where the material is sourced, and its development history. Information on other stockists and retail prices asked for by competitors should also be readily available.

To market their products successfully to craft retailers, craft producers could visit craft retailers with product samples. This would enable craft retailers to see the products; and they might also negotiate product design and styles with the craft producers. Craft producers could also use this as an opportunity to collect information about their products, which might be useful for product improvement. They could also use the visit to discuss other product ideas with craft retailers.

It is important that craft producers co-operate with other craft producers, since craft retailers use them as channels of communication. This would also be advantageous when executing large orders – craft producers could join hands, so that the order could be completed. Since the majority of craft producers are small entities, and might not have salespeople, a visit to craft retailers by the craft producers could also be used to complement a salesperson's salary.

Promotional channels like the internet, catalogues and trade exhibitions, offer craft producers more marketing opportunities. Craft producers could make use of this channel of communication to reach retailers like the small interior/gift stores and specialty stores, since they employ this source more often than the larger retailers and the destination retailers. However, the large retailers and the destination retailers can, to a limited extent, also be targeted through promotional channels.

The Internet, while moderately used by craft retailers, can also be used as a good channel of communication for conveying information to craft retailers. Craft producers must improve their use of the Internet to increase the publicity of their business and products, and also to encourage retailers to adopt the use of the Internet. The use of the Internet by craft producers could be done by either developing their own website, which might be expensive for them, or by using craft-related public websites, such as those mentioned in the paragraph below.

There are many websites, such as Buy Africa, Arts Link, and SA Arts that craft producers could use to market their products. SA Handmade and CCDI also publicise craft producers on their websites, a service that craft producers could take advantage of.

Although retailers do not always make use of exhibitions to source producers, craft producers could still make use of exhibitions by targeting exhibitions, such as the SARCDA that caters

for specific craft retailers to increase their business exposure. Other exhibitions could also be targeted, depending on the market these exhibitions focus on. For example, Decorex targets both consumers and craft retailers – and it could also be targeted by craft producers.

The destination retailers use catalogues less frequently, compared with other craft retailers. This could mean that these retailers buy less standardised products. Therefore, craft producers could develop catalogues for certain products targeted at destination stores, and all other retailers that use catalogues. Craft producers could use catalogues with different product designs and styles, and then distribute them to retailers – where the retailers could select what they want.

Catalogues could be useful for craft producers if they could form a collective effort, in order to gain an economy-of-scale, and the sharing of costs. The CCDI also have product catalogues on their websites, which craft producers in the region could use. Craft producers, as a co-operative, could also approach government or its agencies for the funding required to develop craft catalogues.

Craft producers could also work closely with associations, government agencies, and departments that offer support services to craft producers in the form of producing craft catalogues, such as SA Handmade and the DTI.

The print-advertising way is the least-used channel of communication for craft retailers. Craft producers should rather not make use of this channel of communication, but they could focus on those sources that are more frequently used by craft retailers instead. Organisations, such as the CCDI and other craft organisations could be used by craft producers to list their products, or for promoting their organisations through these bodies. Some of these organisations publicise products on their Internet, which craft producers can take advantage of. However, this should be combined with other forms of marketing communication that craft producers can better afford.

7.   LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Due to the nature of non-probability sampling, the respondents referred to in the article are not representative of the broader SA craft retail population. The results can therefore not be generalised. Furthermore, only a new-buy situation was investigated, as well as a limited number of communication channels.

The type of information required by retailers is yet another area that needs further exploration. This article might also not apply to international retailers; therefore, future studies could investigate the marketing communication channels of international craft retailers, and compare their findings with the local ones. This article has focused on the source used by craft retailers, but investigating the source used by craft producers could provide an even more comprehensive picture.

8. CONCLUSION

Formal craft retailers in SA use a variety of communication channels and they rely more on internal and personal channels than on others. They also rely on buying experience and sales records – despite the fact that they frequently look for new suppliers and products. Craft producers should thus understand the use of various communication channels by craft retailers to ensure that they make information available about their craft products via these sources. This article is useful for craft producers in SA, who must formulate an appropriate marketing communication strategy in order to close the market access gap between them, as craft producers, and the craft retailers.

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