The Impact of Years of Buying Experience on Information Sources used by Craft Retailers in South Africa

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Abstract

The SA government has identified the craft industry as a key focus area contributing to sustainable development, economic growth and employment opportunities. However the industry faces many challenges such as global competition and lack of resources. More importantly, craft producers in SA cannot access the craft retailer market successfully which limit their financial success. The purpose of this study is to investigate the sources of information used by craft retailers in South Africa. Another purpose was to ascertain if sources of information used by craft retailers differ for retailers with different years of buying experience. A self-administered survey was conducted among craft retailers and a sample of 233 were realised. The descriptive statistics are reported as well as factor analysis, ANOVA and MANOVA results. The results indicated that craft retailers consult certain information sources more often than others. Information sources were grouped into three factors after the factor analysis: internal and personal information, promotional information and print advertising. There were no statistical significant differences found between the different types of craft retailers and years of buying experience.

Keywords: *Craft retailers, information sources, years of buying experience, craft industry, craft producers*

1. Introduction

The development of the craft industry is a key strategy of the South African (SA) government for sustainable development and the creation of employment opportunities (Department of Labour, 2011:7). The industry also contributes to economic growth and environmental stewardship (United Nations (UN), 2010; UN, 2008). There is an increasing demand for craft products globally, especially for home accessories and décor, gifts and products for garden and outdoor living which are simultaneously used for decorative and functional purposes (USAID, 2006). The rise in consumers' disposable incomes and the tendency to accessorise and re-style homes with unique articles are the major driving factors of the surge in demand for crafts and decorative products (Frost & Sullivan, 2005). 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 Woolworths Artistic Collection department, which operate from inside the Woolworths branches. All these retailers sell handcrafted products, which create opportunities for craft producers targeting craft retailers.

However, craft producers face numerous marketing-related challenges in SA. They lack understanding of what the market needs, which leads to an inability to formulate appropriate and competitive product and marketing strategies (Grobler, 2005). Craft producers often sell similar products that do not address market demands and they have difficulty in accessing the markets (Makhitha & Bresler, 2011; Hay, 2008; Department of Sports, Arts, Recreation & Culture, 2007). Craft producers also lack skills in product design, distribution and organisation management (DTI, 2005) and possess limited knowledge of the lifestyles and product preferences of their potential customers and the promotional strategies needed to target them (Littrell & Miller, 2001). As stated in Urban-Econ Tourism (2010), craft producers copy each other's product designs and products which lack innovativeness and uniqueness. Because they are not informed about the market and are unable to produce the quality and quantity it demands, they cannot access the retail market. An understanding of retailers' sources of information when searching for suppliers and their products would assist craft producers to increase the visibility of their products (Skallerud & Gronhaug, 2010). The years of buying experience influence the extent to which organisations use certain sources of information. As with different types of craft retailers, it is important for craft producers to understand how often craft retailers with different years of buying experience utilise information sources. It is therefore the purpose of this study to investigate information sources used by craft retailers. The study will also determine if information sources used by craft retailers differ for craft retailers with different years of buying experience.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Craft industry in SA

The craft industry contributes R2 billion rand to the gross domestic product (GDP) in the craft industry value chain (Kaiser & Associates, 2005) and consists of over 7 000 craft producer organisations (DTI, 2005). The industry employs 40 000 people (DED & SEDA, 2007 in McCarthy & Mavundla, 2009). The local market has shown a strong growth of between 3-4 % annually and the sector contributes 0.14 % of the GDP, of which R150 million is from the export sales. The number of craft producer organisations has also increased by 40 % with an average growth of 8 % per year, double the national average (Department of Labour, 2008). The SA government spent R97 million on the establishment and growth of the craft industry in SA between 2001 and 2003 (Create SA, 2004 in Grobler, 2005), making this an important sector.

Craft products include a wide range of products such as home furnishings, jewellery, fashion and fashion accessories, novelties and gifts, including corporate gifts, garden and outdoor products, curios and collectibles, one-of-a-kind high-value individually made products, and indigenous artefacts, which are culturally derived products (Department of Labour, 2011; DTI, 2005A craft product is defined as “the creation and production of a broad range of utilitarian and decorative items produced on a small scale, with hand processes being the significant part of the value-added content” (Department of Arts, Culture, Science & Technology 1998). A craft product must be 80% handmade from different materials, which may include clay, natural fibres, beads, recyclable materials and textiles, to qualify as craft products be (Rogerson, 2010).

The informal craft producer often operates from their homes which allow them the flexibility to engage in a number of livelihood activities while formal craft producers usually operate from their studios or workshops. The formal craft producers either sell their craft products from their studio, workshop, formal craft markets or formal craft retailers such as craft shops and national retailers such as Mr Price Home, museums and galleries while the informal producers sell their products through the informal channels such as roadside markets or around major shopping centres (Urban-Econ, 2010; Department of Arts, Culture, Science & Technology 1998). Formal craft retail activities have seen an increase of formal craft retail outlets that now represent 750 outlets consisting of craft markets, galleries, small retailers and national chains. Craft retail is often more represented in areas with greater urban based population and tourism economies (Human Sciences Research Council (Department of Labour, 2008).

Informal craft producers lack the skills and expertise necessary to access the formal markets such that it becomes risky and costly for formal retailers to work with the craft producers (Phillip, 2006). They are unable to manage complex communications and networking necessary to sell products to the formal economy (Broembsen, 2011). Craft producers therefore need support such a financial access and financial management, business management, marketing, supply chain management, technical training and managerial training (Yeboah, 1998) in order to access the sophisticated and formal retail market.

2.2 Information sources used by craft retailers

To make effective and efficient buying decisions, buyers consult different sources of information available including external and internal sources of information. The external sources of information are sources found outside the organisation, such as resident buying offices, periodicals, trade associations, marketing research organisations and reporting services, magazines read by customers, the Internet, reporting services and buying offices (Clodfelter, 2008). while internal sources of information are information sources available within the organisation such as past sales and recording systems such as recording and computerisation. Recording is used mainly by small retailers and involves ticketing each piece of merchandise with such information as style number, size, price and colour (Diamond & Pintel, 2008). It important for suppliers to ensure that information about their products is available in the sources retailers consult, and this study aims to determine how often selected information sources are consulted.

Jackson, Keith and Burdick (1987) investigated the relative importance of various promotional elements in different purchase situations as perceived by industrial buyers. The study was unable to conclude that the relative importance of promotional elements varies with buy class. It found that the relative importance of promotional elements varies by product type. Salespeople were identified as the most important source of information used by industrial buyers, followed by trade advertising. Kline and Wagner (1994) also determined the relative importance of information sources used by retail buyers. They revealed that buyers used their own knowledge as their most important source of information, followed by customer requests, magazines read by customers, selling records and buyers from similar stores. Another study conducted by Brossard (1998) identified site visits as the most important source of information during a complex decision-making process, followed by in-house networks.

Retailers use more information sources when buying new products than when buying replenishing stocks, since buying a new product becomes a strategic decision. This is especially true when buying from a new supplier, which affects the product assortment carried by the store (Johansson, 2002). Some buyers use certain information more often than others (Brossard, 1998); and some sources of information that are used by retailers also differ for different types of retailers and products (Dempsey, 1978).

Some retail buyers rely on their own personal experience instead of external commercial sources (Deeter-Schmelz & Kennedy, 2002), which is the case mainly with experienced buyers. Inexperienced buyers who have no prior knowledge and experience of buying a particular product rely on external sources. Buyers possess two types of experience: the product-specific experience, which is an experience of buying a particular product category, and generalised experience, which is an experience of buying a variety of product categories. Buyers with product-specific information will seek less information about the product than those who do not. They also consult their own experiences when they seek out sources of information (Kline & Wagner, 1994).

According to Clodfetler (2008), suppliers or salespeople supply useful information on the product acceptance in the market by also stating what is being ordered by other retailers and are therefore the most important source of information. Other information sources used by suppliers to convey information about their products and organisations are product demonstrations, factory tours, and visits to existing customers (Mawson & Fearne, 1997). Retail buyers also consider information technology (IT), while market research agencies are considered an important source of information for specific product categories. The advantages of IT are that it provides reliable, quick and detailed information (Johansson, 2002).

Written materials such as pamphlets, letters, advertisements, new items forms (forms drafted by the selling company and completed by the salesperson) are also useful sources of information (Sternquist & Chen, 2006). It is important for the craft producers to understand the specific information craft retailers look for when souring information. For example, fashion retailers look for information on product quality, types of merchandise carried, product or merchandise styles, colour, fabrics and fibre, care, service and warranties and guarantees (Clodfelter, 2008).

Brossard (1998) identified site visits, whereby buyers visits the supplier organisation, as the most important source of information consulted during a complex decision-making process, followed by in-house networks. Other marketing information sources used by suppliers are: product demonstrations, factory tours, and visits to existing customers (Mawson & Fearne, 1997). 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).

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

The utilisation of the Internet by craft producers is very low and the opportunities associated with the Internet have not been fully exploited by craft producers in SA (Department of Sports, Arts, Culture and Recreation, 2007). The Internet is used for many purposes, including email, accessing product and component information, searching for new suppliers, gathering information about current suppliers, providing information to suppliers, gathering competitive information, online ordering and so forth (Deeter-Schmelz & Kennedy, 2002; Osmonbekov, Bello, & Gillilland, 2002). Although the Internet is widely accepted as an information tool, it cannot be used to replace a salesperson as a source of information since some buyers prefer to deal with a salesperson than to transact via the Internet (Deeter-Schmelz & Kennedy, 2004). The Internet was found to be moderately important for buyers, when initially selecting their major suppliers (Bruce & Daly, 2006). Unfortunately, many organisations know that the adoption of the Internet by craft producers is 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).

When buying craft products, craft retailers use various sources of information, 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). To succeed in a highly competitive craft industry, craft product suppliers need to provide information about their organisations and products to retailers, and to ensure that they have continuous contact with them (Nagori & Saxena, 2012). They also need to ensure the visibility of their products, and to employ new and creative methods of marketing communication (Luutonen, 2009).

2.3 Information sources and years of buying experience

Fairhurst and Fiorito (2001) reported that the years of buying experience affect the nature of the information that retailers use and that in a modified rebuy situation, buyers seek more information than in a straight rebuy situation. This implies that information sources used will differ for a new buy situation in comparison with modified and straight rebuy situations. Ettenson and Wagner (1986) also reported that buyers with different buying experience differ in the type of information used and that with certain sources of information, buyers with different years of buying experience use similar sources of information. However, Deeter-Schmelz and Kennedy (2002) posited that the number of years of buying experience has no impact on the type and number of information sources buyers use when involved in the buying process. This claim contradicts the findings of Kline and Wagner (1994), in that product-specific buying experience affects the mix of information sources a retailer consults and that some sources of information are considered more important than others. This implies that a buyer who is experienced in buying a particular product will use a combination of information sources that differs from that used by one who is not.

Rowland, Moriarity and Spekman (1984) found that experienced buyers develop greater knowledge of products and suppliers and feel more comfortable evaluating competing products and suppliers without assistance from other people. It was therefore hypothesised that:

H_0 There is no significant difference between craft retailers' years of buying experience and how often they utilise information sources.

H_1There is a significant difference between craft retailers' years of buying experience and how often they utilise information sources.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Participants

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

According to Cooper and Schindler (2006), 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.

3.2 Data collection and measuring instrument

The data were collected during November 2012 and March 2013. They were collected electronically through email, as well as personally 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 SA, the data were only gathered from the craft retailers operating in six provinces, including: Gauteng, the Western Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga, North West, and the Eastern Cape due to the low response rate and non-probability sampling. The majority of responses came from Gauteng and the Western Cape, since they house most of the major retailers' head offices, as well as the fact that craft retailing is more active in these areas.

The questionnaire was designed, using information collected from the literature and qualitative interviews, which were conducted among five formal craft retailers. Some of the sources identified from the interviews were similar to those identified from the literature; but four additional sources 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 information sources 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) deemed 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, using the participant pre-test method, with 12 craft retailers; and 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; and the results are reported and discussed in the next section.

4. Findings and Discussions

4.1 Sample composition

The sample consisted of various types of craft retailers and for the purpose of statistical analysis the retailers were collapsed into five groups. These five groups were as follow: craft stores (44%), small interior/gift store (13%), large retailers such as clothing and décor stores (14%), speciality stores such as galleries, museums and jewellery shop (13%) and destination retailers (16%).

The respondents consisted of buyers, managers, owner-managers, manager-buyers and executives responsible for buying. The owner-managers were the largest group, comprising 44% (n=101) of the population. Managers were the second largest group of respondents, comprising over 18% (n= 42) of the population. This was followed by manager-buyers, with about 14 per cent of the population (n=31). Buyers made up over 12% of the population (n=28). The last group of respondents were the executives, who represented about 12 per cent of the population, consisting of 27 respondents. The majority of respondents (65%) had five or more years of buying experience.

The information sources used by craft retailers are shown in Table 1 below as well as the percentages of information usage, number of respondents, mean score and the standard deviation.

Table 1: Information sources used by craft retailers

Information sources	Percentages of respondents in each cell				Number of respondents (N)	Mean (M)	Standard deviation (SD)
	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always			
Visit to the trade show/exhibition	13.42	41.99	25.97	18.61	231	2.50	0.94
Visit to the craft producer workshop/studio	16.09	31.74	31.74	20.43	230	2.56	0.98
Visit to craft wholesalers	13.54	34.93	29.69	21.83	229	2.59	0.96
Ask existing suppliers to find us what we need	14.91	24.12	30.26	30.70	228	2.77	1.04
Search the Internet	23.14	25.33	24.02	27.51	229	2.57	1.11
Salespeople from the craft producer provide information	12.66	34.06	28.38	24.89	229	2.65	0.98
Craft producer visits us with product samples	7.86	32.75	31.00	28.38	229	2.80	0.93
News stories in trade publications	26.67	44.89	20.89	7.56	225	2.09	0.86
Trade/industry association information/data	31.28	35.68	20.26	12.78	227	2.14	0.99
Advertisement in trade news	34.78	34.35	17.83	13.04	230	2.09	1.01
Advertisement in consumer magazines	33.62	36.68	18.78	10.92	229	2.06	0.97
Networking with buyers from similar craft stores	22.71	30.13	30.13	17.03	229	2.41	1.01
Users/end consumers of craft product i.e. through suggestions and queries	16.96	34.38	33.04	15.63	224	2.45	0.94
Supplier catalogues	22.37	26.75	27.19	23.68	228	2.52	1.07
Sales promotion materials from suppliers i.e. brochures and pamphlets	26.32	33.33	26.75	13.60	228	2.27	0.99
Visit to competitor organisation/s	19.82	32.60	26.87	20.70	227	2.47	1.02
Buyers experience i.e. gained from buying craft products	3.49	20.09	41.92	34.50	229	3.07	0.82
Existing sales records	8.77	17.54	29.82	43.86	228	3.08	0.97
Information about suppliers from colleagues	13.60	36.40	27.19	22.81	228	2.59	0.98
Research done by marketing research agencies on our behalf	49.34	26.20	10.92	13.54	229	1.88	1.06

It can be deduced from the above table that craft retailers relied 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 the products and suppliers than they did on other sources of information. Sales records and buyer's experience also had a low standard deviation of 0.98 and 0.82 respectively, showing relative agreement among the craft retailers. The research conducted by marketing research agencies on behalf of retailers had a very low mean score of 1.88 and a standard deviation of 1.06, showing the heterogeneity of craft retailers' responses on this variable. Furthermore, Internet has not been fully adopted as evidenced by the 52% who often use Internet as a source of information. The standard deviation for this source was also high at 1.12, indicating more variance among responses. This is despite the fact that Internet adoption has grown in importance globally. Advertisements in trade news and trade/industry association information/data were also rated by 69% and 67% of craft retailers respectively as not a very useful source of information. This shows that the majority of craft retailers do not often use advertisements in trade news and trade/industry association information/data.

4.2 Factor analysis

Factor analysis was conducted to ascertain whether the variables developed from a review of the literature and from the preliminary qualitative research could, in fact, be grouped into meaningful dimensions to describe the sources of information. Prior to performing the factor analysis, the suitability of the data for factor analysis was assessed. Pallant (2013) 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 ($p<0.0005$); and 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.

Items with factor loadings of 0.3 were considered part of the group variables and those of less than 0.30 were omitted. Hair *et al*. (2010) consider factor loadings of 0.30 acceptable. The principal component factor analysis – with oblique rotation – was computed for the information sources; and three factors were identified. Each factor had a satisfactory Cronbach alpha of more than 0.70, with these 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; and they ranged between 1.358 and 4.90. These factors were labelled internal and personal sources (Factor 1), promotional sources (Factor 2), and print-advertising sources (Factor 3). The naming of the factors required the judgement of the researcher (Hair et al., 2010); 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 information sources

Sources of information	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, due to low loadings of lower than 0.30

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

4.3 Hypothesis testing

ANOVA was conducted to determine the sources of information most often used by craft retailers. ANOVA is a statistical analysis used to test the differences between two means (Sudman & Blair, 1988) and helps estimate group differences on their means among the groups. Where the estimates of scores and means do not differ, it is assumed that all the group means originate from the same sampling distribution of means. Where the group means differ more than expected, it can be concluded that the group means were drawn from the different sampling distribution of means, and the null hypothesis that the means are the same is rejected (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). As ANOVA indicates differences only, the Duncan's multiple range test, a post-hoc test which makes comparisons among groups to determine if significant differences exist (Hair *et al.*, 2010), was used to identify where these differences between groups were.

Since factor analysis identified three factors namely internal and personal information, promotional information and print advertisement, the following three sub-hypotheses flowed from the above hypothesis:

H_0a There are no significant differences between craft retailers' years of buying experience and how often they utilise internal/personal information sources

H_1a There are significant differences between craft retailers' years of buying experience and how often they utilise internal/personal information sources

The above hypotheses test whether craft retailers with different numbers of years of buying experience differ in terms of how often they utilise information sources. As illustrated in Table 2, there is no significant difference between years of buying experience and how often different types of craft retailers use internal/personal information sources. Therefore, the null hypothesis H_0a was supported (p=0.2977, greater than p<0.05).

Table 2: Mean values and ANOVA results for years of buying experience and internal and personal sources of information

Years of buying experience	N	M	SD	DF	F value	P value	Semipartial Eta-square
0-5	73	2.65	0.51	2	1.22	0.2977	0.0117
>5-10	69	2.72	0.48				
10+	64	2.55	0.54				

Craft retailers with different numbers of years of buying experience did not differ in how often they used internal and personal sources.

H_0b There are no significant differences between craft retailers' years of buying experience and how often they utilise promotional information

H_1b There are significant differences between craft retailers' years of buying experience and how often they utilise promotional information

To determine how often craft retailers with different years of buying experience utilise promotional information, ANOVA test was conducted. As can be seen in Table 3 below, there were no significant differences between years of buying experience and how often craft retailers used promotional information. Therefore, the null hypothesis H_0b was accepted (p-value=0.8904, greater than p-value=0.05).

Table 3: Mean values and ANOVA results for years of buying experience and promotional information

Years of buying experience	N	M	SD	DF	F value	P value	Semipartial Eta-square
0-5	73	2.65	0.51	2	0.12	0.8904	0.0011
>5-10	69	2.72	0.48				
10+	64	2.55	0.54				

From the findings it is evident that the number of years of buying experience does not play a role in how often retailers utilise promotional information.

H_0c There are no significant differences between craft retailers' years of buying experience and how often they utilise print advertising

H_2c There are significant differences between craft retailers' years of buying experience and how often they utilise print advertising

To determine whether there were significant differences between craft retailers' years of buying experience and how often they utilised print advertising, an ANOVA test was conducted, with results depicted in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Mean values and ANOVA results for years of buying experience and print advertising

Years of buying experience	N	M	SD	DF	F value	P value	Semipartial Eta-square
0-5	73	2.65	0.51	2	0.10	0.9016	0.0010
>5-10	69	2.72	0.48				
10+	64	2.55	0.54				

Form the above table, it can be seen that there were no significant differences between number of years of buying experience and how often craft retailers used print advertising. Therefore, with p-value=0.9016, the null hypothesis H_0c was accepted.

As regards the extent to which craft retailers use different sources of information, it seems that internal sources of information were used more often than external sources. It is also evident that the number of years of buying experience of craft retailers does not play a role in the extent to which they make use of different information sources. However, significant differences were found between different types of retailers and the use of promotional information.

5. Discussion

The five most used sources of information are sales records, buying experience, craft producers visiting with product samples, retailers asking existing suppliers to find what they need and salespeople from craft producers providing information. Craft retailers also visit wholesalers and use information about suppliers from colleagues as a source of information. Visiting craft retailers with product samples provides an opportunity for craft producers to market their products easily and effectively since they can combine the motive of supplying information about their products with discussing retailer's needs; they are also able to determine whether their products satisfy the needs of the craft retailer. The fact that some craft retailers ask existing suppliers to find craft products on their behalf implies that craft retailers are involved in a working relationship with certain craft producers. It also implies that there is a benefit for craft producers in developing working relationships with other craft producers so that they can be referred to craft retailers whenever they are looking for suppliers. Since craft retailers visit wholesalers to source information, craft producers could make use of wholesalers to sell or simply supply information about their products.

The five sources of information used least often are research done by marketing research agencies for the retailers, advertising in consumer magazines and trade news, news/stories in trade publications, and association/industry trade information data. The fact that craft retailers make little use of advertising or of association/industry trade information data is actually to the benefit of craft producers, since they are mostly small or possibly start-up organisations that lack financial resources, because financial resources are needed for membership of the associations or industry bodies

Promotional information is moderately used by craft retailers in comparison with internal and personal information. However, some craft retailers use it more often than others do. For example, the small interior/gift stores use such information more often than speciality stores, large stores and destination retailers do. This implies that craft producers could use promotional information, which includes visits to exhibitions, use of the Internet, supplier catalogues and promotional materials, when targeting these retailers. It is also worth noting that promotional information sources such as Internet searches, supplier catalogues and exhibitions were rated the 9^{th}, 10^{th} and 11^{th} most often used sources of information, indicating that they are used moderately in comparison with other sources of information.

Craft retailers who differ in years of buying experience do not differ in their use of certain information sources, meaning that they all use similar sources of information. This allows craft producers to make use of similar sources of marketing information when targeting craft retailers of varying levels of experience in the buying of crafts.

6. Conclusion

Information about craft producers and their products is important to craft retailers, who often need to find new craft producers. Craft producers should therefore make information easily accessible to craft retailers. This requires that craft producers be aware of the sources of information most often used by craft retailers in searching for suppliers and products, and formulate a marketing communication strategy using the most appropriate sources to convey information to craft retailers about new and existing products and any other information craft retailers might need.

The five most used sources of information are sales records, buying experience, craft producers visiting with product samples, retailers asking existing suppliers to find what they need and salespeople from craft producers providing information. The five sources of information used least often are research done by marketing research agencies for the retailers, advertising in consumer magazines and trade news, news/stories in trade publications, and association/industry trade information data. It is worth noting that information sources did not differ for craft retailers with different years of buying experience

Owing to the nature of non-probability sampling, the respondents used in the study are not representative of the broader SA craft retail population. Therefore, the results cannot be generalised.

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