Review of Literature Related to the Marketing Strategies of Small Craft and Art-Related Businesses

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Due to the small amount of targeted research on the marketing strategies of artists, craft persons, and small craft or art-related businesses, research from related fields is useful in understanding the narrower topic. A review of research from the areas of fine art marketing and small business marketing, as well as general craft and art-related business strategy, uncovered three major themes that are relevant to the marketing of small craft and art-related businesses. The first theme is that craft and art-related businesses base their marketing strategies on different goals and definitions of success than traditional profit-centered businesses (Fillis, 2000, p. 131; Paige & Littrell, 2002). Secondly, creativity in marketing is important (Fillis, 2000; Paige & Littrell, 2002) and the Internet may be a significant new area where artists and related businesses can apply their creative marketing approaches (Clarke & Flaherty, 2002; Lovelace, 1998; Poon & Swatman, 1999; Torres, 2002, p. 236; Wilkinson, 1996). Finally, strategic alliance networks and general networking between artists and between small craft or art-related businesses can help all of the parties involved develop their general marketing practices as well as increase access to technologically-based marketing avenues (Clarke & Flaherty, 2002; Lovelace, 1998; Paige & Littrell, 2002; Torres, 2002).

People who run craft and art-related business often start their business for different reasons than other traditional profit-centered business owners. "Intrinsic factors such as personal satisfaction and the opportunity to elevate the craft tradition" are some of the criteria craft retailers use to define success (Paige & Littrell, 200, p. 1). Fillis (2000) found that "the typical arts and crafts microenterprise has been shown to take risks in terms of both the products itself and in the way in which the business is developed" (p. 131). The dedication to creativity and more personal business goals leads to the development of unique marketing strategies. Paige and Littrell's (2002) qualitative interviews of twelve craft

retailers in the southern highlands region of the U.S. found that the businesses commonly noted "educating their customers about crafts, the artisans who produced the crafts, and the culture of the region" (p. 318) as a main marketing strategy. Creative strategies like this example and others, such as targeting niche, arts-exclusive markets (Clarke & Flaherty, 2002), and pooling resources with other artists or small arts-related businesses (Torres, 2002), can help the business owners to achieve their unique personal and art-based business goals.

This creativity and originality in marketing is important to the success of small art and craft businesses. "To differentiate themselves from larger retailers who offer more standardized product assortments, smaller retailers perform better with more innovative, more unique, and higher quality product lines" (Paige & Littrell, 2002, p. 316). The Internet may be a beneficial avenue in which to pursue these innovative arts marketing strategies. Unfortunately, not much research has yet been done on Internet marketing because the technology is new and rapidly changing. Even the research that was done just five to ten years ago is dated. But despite these limitations, many researchers suggest the Internet as an area where small businesses and artists can gain exposure to a larger audience (Clarke & Flaherty, 2002, p.149; Lovelace, 1998, Paige & Littrell, 2002, p. 320; Poon & Swatman, 1999; Wilkinson, 1996). Poon and Swatman (1999) also found that even though small businesses may begin to use the internet because of the perceived benefits they only believe their businesses will gain, as opposed to actual direct quantitative benefits, the business owners reported that they did realize actual benefits in the form of new opportunities and the useful function of the Internet for communication.

Researchers have found that artists are sometimes "disconcerted about technology use" (Clarke & Flaherty, 2002, p. 146) and that small business owners lack the resources

and knowledge to launch an Internet arm of their operations (Poon & Swatman, 1999). These obstacles can be overcome by the innovative implementation of strategic network alliances between artists or small arts-related businesses (Torres, 2002). A case study of a network of ceramic artists in Ireland conducted by Torres (2002) found that by collaborating as a network and hiring a project manager, the group was able to book advertising space, send press releases, and create a website, all of which none of the artists could not have accomplished on their own. Paige and Littrell (2002) also found that collaborative strategies, like networking among family, friends, and business peers, as well as Internet marketing were strategies utilized by craft retailers. Lovelace (1998) presents the Internet as a place to find a community of artists or craft people with which to network. As the Internet continues to become a more major marketing and commercial arena, small businesses are going to feel pressure to engage in e-commerce. "If a small business has a high percentage of customers and competitors online, then not adopting Internet commerce will be a competitive disadvantage" (Poon & Swatman, 1999, p. 13). Online communities or group sites produced by a group of artists or business owners engaged in a strategic alliance or network could be a less overwhelming step into the online world.

Research on the marketing strategies used by both small businesses and art-related business has been conducted in many ways, including by interviews (Lovelace, 1998; Paige & Littrell, 2002; Wilkinson, 1996), surveys (Clarke & Laherty, 2002; Paige & Littrell, 2002), and case studies (Torres, 2002; Poon & Swatman, 1999). All of these methods pointed to three major themes that can help researchers to better understand the unique marketing challenges presented by small craft and art-related businesses: businesses centered around art or craft have different definitions of success and therefore need different marketing strategies; the Internet may help art-related businesses to implement

creative marketing strategies; and, networking or forming strategic alliances may help art and craft business to find greater success in general marketing and on the Internet. Greater research is needed in the narrow field of marketing by independent artists and craft persons, and also in the ever-evolving field of art and craft marketing on the Internet. An additional area of research might explore how the personal goals of artistic expression, creativity, work flexibility, and overall happiness affect the marketing strategies employed by artists and craft persons. Researchers also need to explore the utilization of the vast potential of the Internet for global exposure and creation of community between artists and craft persons.

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