The Impact of Aesthetics on the Celtic Craft Market

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Abstract:

Drawing on data from the Celtic craft sector, this paper uses aesthetics as a critical lens in explaining how small firms develop particular styles of marketing in order to survive and grow. This approach has not previously been adopted in explaining small business marketing behaviour, although there is a growing history of its use in the wider management and organisation arena. Interpretation of qualitative data from the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland has enabled the construction of a typology of different styles of marketing by craft firm owner/managers which also confirms the heterogeneous nature of the small business sector. Aesthetic profiling helps explain why some craft firms follow market demand, while others pursue market creation activities. A key outcome is the need to acknowledge the impact of aesthetic processes on small business marketing decision making. Investigation of the Celtic aesthetic informs how these processes are shaped through the development of a particular type of marketing grounded in creativity, intuition and opportunity recognition. Wider consumption, markets and cultural implications are also evaluated in terms of decision and meaning making in the cultural production process; the connections between critical marketing and aesthetics as ways of challenging marketing concepts and practices; how aesthetics contributes to entrepreneurial marketing; and finally how craft and the Celtic lens uncover wider connections with cultural production.

Keywords: aesthetics, creativity, marketing, entrepreneurship, crafts, consumption

Introduction:

This paper makes a number of contributions to understanding the relationship between aesthetics, marketing, craft and wider cultural production. It evaluates how a critical approach to marketing, helped by an aesthetic lens, can result in fresh insight into small business and entrepreneurial marketing. Craft and Celtic marketing are used to evaluate a range of related issues within cultural production more generally. It assesses how craft as an aesthetic product is imbued with meanings relating to its history and culture, and in terms of the processes and individuals involved in its production. Interactions between craft, the market and everyday life are assessed and

a range of orientations are evaluated which have implications for viewing craft as art, design or a product within the cultural production process where impacting factors include lifestyle and entrepreneurial influences. Although the paper focuses mainly on issues relating to cultural production, a number of implications for consumption are also discussed. Although many factors have influence, there is considerable evidence that intuition, sensing, feeling, creativity, judgement, imagination and vision have key roles to play. Craft is used as the route into uncovering and understanding these issues.

Craft is defined as an object with a high degree of manual input, but not necessarily produced or designed using traditional materials. It should be made as a one-off or in small batches, the design of which may or may not be culturally embedded in the country of production, and which is sold for profit. The craft object may have a functional and/or aesthetic purpose. Examples of craft objects include ceramics, jewellery, glassware, ironwork, textiles, furniture and metalwork. The marketing practiced by craft firm owner/managers has been shaped by historical and cultural influences, as well as the personality and competencies of the owner/manager. Figure 1 details the integrative framework of the contributing factors in the aesthetic analysis carried out in the paper.

[Take in Figure 1]

An initial critical marketing perspective is utilised as the overarching philosophy in positioning the contribution of the paper. Aesthetics are used to assist in the interpretation of the different styles of marketing craft, before considering its influences on the maker. A central issue impacting on both the marketing and making of craft are attitudes towards market orientation and an analysis of this is carried out.

The marketing and entrepreneurship interface is then utilised in the interpretation of how Celtic craft owner/managers exploit their competencies in marketing their businesses. The Celtic angle serves as both a supporting backdrop and as a mechanism for framing the contributing dimensions related to craft and wider cultural production.

Critical insight into aesthetics and the marketing of craft:

Thinking critically in marketing is a reaction against mainstream scholarship and challenges the status quo by drawing on domains such as aesthetics, art and metaphor (Brown and Patterson 2000; Tadajewski 2010). It is a rethinking of marketing epistemology achieved through the evaluation of impacting social, environmental and political factors and the reconsideration of marketing discourse (Tadajewski and Brownlie 2008). It involves seeing things differently and asking questions which are not normally asked (Shankar 2009) and is interpretive and critical of more mainstream methods of studying markets and marketing by breaking down, uncovering and analysing traditional thinking, authority and objectivity (Scott 2007). The use of aesthetics is supported by the call for reflexivity and qualitative imagination in the research process (Gummesson 2001). Aesthetics is a form of knowledge and language which can use non rational methods to uncover truths about context specific issues. The aesthetic lens also sheds light on intuition, judgement, vision and instinct. Creativity is a facilitator of these dimensions and concerns the use of imagination and original thought in challenging the rules in non-routine ways to achieve profitable outcomes (Fillis and Rentschler 2006).

Celticism:

Several special journal issues have explored the essence of Celtic marketing (Brown 2006; Brown 2007). The dichotomy between Celtic (intuitive) and Saxon (rational) approaches to marketing has also been explored (O'Loughlin and Szmigin 2007). The Celtic term has origins in the Indo-European family of languages still spoken in parts of Scotland, Ireland, Wales and Brittany and relates to a collection of Iron Age tribes in prehistoric Europe (Cunliffe 2003). Celtic people have been viewed as explorers, warriors, artisans, heroes and traders (Scott 2001), equated with magic, mystery and imagination and described as poetic, carefree, rural and expressive (Aherne 2000). Celtic design has historical connections to nature, religion, spirituality and femininity (Hutton 1991) but it also has contemporary impact. It has even been viewed as an invented tradition of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with links to a more recent socially constructed, commoditised culture (Patterson and Brown 2007).

Cultural mythology imbues these products with heroic properties which communicate with consumers in a powerful, persuasive, unconscious way (Hirschman 2000). The meanings contained within are transferred and shared between producers and consumers (McCracken 1988). Their mythology contributes to the construction of iconic brands within myth markets which influence consumer narratives and experiences (Holt 2004; Thompson 2004). Schroeder and Salzer-Morling (2006) explain how cultural processes impact on brands, including the constraints of cultural codes on producing meanings. By reconceptualising their role in the consumer/brand/producer relationship, consumers perform new roles within and with brand culture. The historical context discussed here and the later consumer connections make further contributions to this stance. The "cultural process, performed in an interplay between art and business, production and consumption,

images and stories, design and communication" (Schroeder and Salzer-Morling (2006:3) are also evident in this research. Specific cultural and historical context provides a balance to existing managerial interpretations of brand/consumer interactions (Holt 2004). Rather than uni-directional brand manager effort, what actually occurs is a negotiation between the marketing, cultural and social environments. All these factors have been found to influence the Celtic maker of craft in a number of ways, from the design and construction of the craft object to how marketing decisions are made.

Development of the creative industries market:

Craft lies within the cultural and creative economies where symbolic and aesthetic dimensions create value in terms of the sign-value of ideas, images, emotions and experiences embedded in its design and branding (Baudrillard 1993; Hartley 2005). The creative industries are shaped by individual creativity, skill and talent, and have the potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property (DCMS 2007). Globally, the creative industries account for more than seven per cent of gross domestic product (World Bank 2003). In 2006 they contributed £57.3 billion to the UK balance of trade (Powell and Dodd 2007). The Creative Economy Report 2010 noted that world trade of creative goods and services had reached $529billion (www.unctad.org). The Labour Force Survey of 2010 (www.esds.ac.uk/government/lfs) identified 111,400 people employed in craft. Ignoring mass producers which are not strictly craft based, the vast majority of craft businesses are microenterprises employing less than ten people (Storey 1994). Craft firms form part of the small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) sector which accounts for 99.9 per cent of all enterprises in the UK (www.bis.gov.uk), with a

similar situation in Ireland. Estimated sector turnover in Scotland is £151m (McAuley and Fillis 2002) and in England and Wales it is £826m (McAuley and Fillis 2004). In Northern Ireland sectoral turnover of around £26m is possible (McAuley and Fillis 2006). In 2010, collective craft sales in Ireland reached Euro 373.5m, with 6,000 people employed in the sector (Harmelin 2011).

Aesthetics:

Aesthetics relates to the knowledge generated by the sensory organs through the capacity to feel (Barilli 1995). Creative individuals and organisations have a heightened creative aesthetic ability. Having aesthetic knowledge can result in fresh insight and awareness while aesthetic principles can inform management criticism, helped by their long established roles in art criticism (Benghozi 1987). This introduces an interdisciplinary perspective to knowledge generation (Repko 2008). Moving beyond the philosophical dimension of beauty, aesthetics also refers to the sensing nature of decision making where intuition is equally as relevant as rational thinking (Strati 1999). Intuition is a nonconscious, holistic process where judgements are made without awareness of particular rules (Shapiro and Spence 1997). Aesthetic experience is a form of tacit, unconscious sensory knowledge, while its expression is shaped by impulse and feeling (Gagliardi 1996).

Aesthetics helps identify intangible factors which would otherwise remain hidden. It suggests a range of potential outcomes rather than one best way to understand phenomena, such as the aesthetic styles of marketing and making craft expressed by Celtic craft firm owner/managers discussed in this paper. The aesthetic dimension consists of cognitive, intuitive and emotional elements (Lyotard 1994). Rather than

viewing managerial thinking as involving rational or emotional content, emotion may be embedded in all managerial thought processes (Cassell 1999). Viewing aesthetics cognitively can result in the stimulation of sensing activity which reveals certain truths about the world. It also introduces an element of pleasure seeking which helps in our understanding of what it means to be creative. Emotion relates to aesthetic experience, understanding and uncertainty and is the tacit aspect of our knowledge which stimulates creativity and shapes aesthetic responses. While uncertainty refers to a lack of information, ambiguity refers to the existence of multiple and conflicting interpretations (Kijkuit and van den Ende 2007). These aesthetic dimensions are also located in the entrepreneurial forms of marketing practiced by owner/managers in the craft sector. Individuals do not make decisions on a rational basis alone but in a similar way to how we evaluate a piece of art through judgement and individual taste (Lyotard 1994). A particular kind of human rationality is associated with aesthetics and we cannot fully understand marketing without being aware of it (Guillet de Monthoux and Sjostrand 2003).

The aesthetic history of craft:

Craft origins can be found from the Medieval period through to the present day. (Heslop 1997). Its nature and meaning has altered, from an early vernacular status to its more recent aesthetic appreciation (Risatti 2007). Vernacular crafts are embedded within the culture in which they originate. In the eighteenth century craft was positioned aesthetically, with associations made with taste, originality and creative imagination (Kristeller 1951). Craft must have a high degree of manual input, although not necessarily solely produced using traditional materials (Metcalf 1997). Objects made by hand are perceived to be more beautiful, or aesthetic, than those

made by machine (McMahon 2005). The nature of markets is changing, with product overload and increasing consumer alienation and discontent (Bjorkman 2002). A potential response is to introduce products which convey feelings. Makers of Celtic craft are in a prime position to do this by exploiting their strong brand recognition and identity. The brand is not just a provider of product information but is now part of the product (Salzer-Morling and Strannegard 2004), no longer merely relating a story about product values and benefits but also an image of aesthetic expression (Schroeder 2002). Celtic craft owner/managers have the potential to utilise iconic branding through the impact of design (Holt 2003). Celtic imagery is associated with myth. Brand icons help to communicate these myths in tangible form. Craft tangibilises the Celtic myth through making and marketing processes. Aesthetics enables us to relate to the sensual, experiential understanding of the Celtic brand.

Celtic crafts are deemed cultural products since their design, reputation, image and identity are culturally and historically embedded. Craft value is initially determined by the producer as they endeavour to imbue meaning on their products. This conflicts with anthropological studies of craft where the focus is on the consumer instead of the producer (Triadin 1997). Rather than treating craft producers homogenously, it is more valuable to adopt multiple perspectives. Producers are active creators of style who seek to accentuate the aesthetic interest of what they make. Celtic imagery impacts on the creation and translation of symbolic representations within a network of dominant meanings (Stern et al. 2001). The craft object conveys an aesthetic experience comprising manifest and latent content, in addition to the cultural context in which the object was created. They often have an aura or particular quality which relates to this cultural content and the design competencies of the maker. The aura

tangibilises product values through aesthetic sensing, relating to feelings of beauty and exclusiveness (Bjorkman 2002). The aura may also reflect the history, culture and authenticity of the craft object.

Authenticity relates to the genuine, original nature of a handmade rather than mechanically produced object, resulting in a marketable sign of value (Graham 2001). The search for authenticity is core to Western philosophical and humanistic traditions (Golomb 1995). Sources of authenticity can be leveraged in order to secure competitive advantage and brand value which are then raised by embedding brand histories and historical and cultural connections in product narratives (Brown et al. 2003). Artisanal goods are authentic since they are untainted by commercial ideology (Holt 1998). To be effective, the product and its associated experience must conform to the customer's mental frame of authenticity. Hirschman (2010) provides insight into craft authenticity through its sense of place in physical and emotional terms, describing how the Appalachian Quilt Trail conveys a sense of family, heritage and community. Craft authenticity depends on uniqueness, quality, originality, colour, design and being hand made (Littrell et al. 1993). Consumers seek authentic products in their quest for escape from modern life (MacCannell 1976). Authenticity relates to good taste, expert knowledge and truth (Appadurai 1986) and is heightened when there is also occurrence of inauthenticity so that comparisons can be made.

Aesthetic styles in the Celtic craft market:

The paper evaluates subjectivist types or styles of marketing and making shaped by the Celtic aesthetic (Ardley 2006). The Celtic aesthetic lens enables understanding of how practitioners develop their own form of marketing grounded in entrepreneurship,

creativity, opportunity recognition and networking. Although these factors are also found in the wider small business community, it is the extent to which they are utilised here which is distinctive. Many Celtic craft owner/managers have a high predisposition towards risk taking due to geographical isolation and the search for opportunities. Instead of one marketing solution, the Celtic aesthetic enables many solutions. Competitive advantage is achieved through their creative marketing competencies. Fillis (2007) describes Celtic marketing as avant garde and the textbook version as mainstream, establishment or Saxon. The styles of marketing practices found in Celtic craft are shaped by external uncertainty and ambiguity, and core competencies such as intuition and judgement (Brownlie and Spender 1995). Small and medium sized enterprise (SME) practitioners research and develop their markets in individualised ways (Carson and Coviello 1996). Actions are expressed aesthetically through form and style via a series of events and instincts (Thiele 1990).

The maker of craft is both an artist and manager within an aesthetic network (Guillet de Monthoux 2004). They can also be viewed as a producer/consumer where the art created is influenced by life experience (Meamber 2000). The craft data evaluated in this paper gives meaning to the aesthetic nature of the product, while also impacting on the lives of the makers as creators, marketers and individuals in a wider social world. As can be seen in the aesthetic styles of owner/manager (Table 2), many not only reflect reality through their craft, designs, symbols and meanings, but describe what they do as part of their everyday existence or lifestyle. Technical and aesthetic skills are needed in order to deal with rational and non rational sides of decision making. Craft practitioners exhibit a range of attitudes towards marketing and market orientation which subsequently determine their future. They may either produce what

they want by following their artistic ideals or respond to market demand (Berthon et al. 2004). These actions involve an interplay between art for art's sake and art for business sake positions (Fillis 2006). Celtic craft makers exist in a world shaped by their own attitudes towards craft and by market forces. Many survive and grow under the latter while others create a market for their work through entrepreneurial effort (Fillis 2010). The aesthetic form of marketing practiced and the aesthetic craft form itself are often affected by lifestyle wishes and art for art's sake practices in addition to consumer influences. This suggests the emergence of a different form of marketing aesthetic. Those working in small businesses are not always motivated by profit, with job satisfaction, lifestyle quality, location and work/life balance also important (Walker et al. 2008). Lifestyle and art for art's sake philosophy are particularly relevant in the craft sector and often outweigh the desire for financial gain, resulting in a conflict between market and product orientations (Tregaer 2003).

Although research has examined market orientation and performance in the arts and creative industries, there is little focus on the impact of product orientation and even less discussion of artist-led creativity (Camarero and Garrido 2008). Product orientation uses creativity in order to develop new products which invigorate consumer markets. Hirschman (1983) suggests that the marketing concept does not match the behaviour and philosophy of creative producers because of the personal values and social norms impacting on the artistic production process. They create mainly to express their subjective beliefs and feelings of beauty or other aesthetic ideal. Hirschman distinguishes between artistic and commercial creativity in a similar way to differences in 'art for art's sake' versus' art for business sake' philosophies. Both production and consumption effects impact on the types of marketing practiced

in the craft sector where aesthetic symbols and meanings are key influences (McCracken 1988). So there is merit in investigating the contribution from the arts where practitioners have long been utilising their own versions of marketing (Fillis 2009). The cultural meanings associated with craft have a mobile quality within a culturally constructed world.

The aesthetic approach of entrepreneurial marketing:

Celtic craft firm owner/managers exhibit a variety of attitudes towards marketing, including entrepreneurial influences. Entrepreneurial marketing can be evaluated in terms of owner/manager experience, knowledge, communication and judgement as part of a competency spectrum (Carson et al. 1995). Entrepreneurial marketing is shaped by the adoption of informal, creative ways of entering, surviving and growing in the marketplace (Martin 2009). Driven by sometimes severe resource limitations, the entrepreneurial marketer develops lower cost solutions to problem solving. This form of marketing has evolved as a response to contemporary market conditions where non standard solutions are now required in order to address the chaotic, fragmented nature of the environment. Contributing competencies include self belief, innovative thinking, imagination, vision, strategic creativity, ambition, intuition, flexibility and non standard solution finding. There is often a focus on the use of networking using personal and business contacts (O'Donnell et al. 2001). The qualitative investigation of Celtic craft discussed in the next section of the paper unveils the emergence of a form of marketing grounded in a range of aesthetic competencies, including that influenced by entrepreneurial marketing.

A qualitative investigation of the impact of aesthetics on Celtic craft:

Sources used in the selection of respondents included Scottish Arts Council, Crafts Council UK and Irish Crafts Council databases, the Highland Trade Fair Directory and lists of makers in Northern Ireland. The UK Crafts Council is a national development agency for contemporary craft. It promotes of high quality contemporary craft practice nationally and internationally, drawing on traditional and modern production methods. This means that some of the Celtic craft evaluated in this paper will be included in its remit, while other, more vernacular forms may not be. This why other databases were interrogated in order to construct a more representative sample. Bodies such as the Crafts Council can be viewed as cultural intermediaries (Cronin 2004) where mediation occurs not just between producer and consumer but also through multiple regimes involving circulation and exchange of expertise (Appadurai 1986). The Celtic nature of the products discussed in this paper are not specifically promoted by the respective Craft Councils. Some of the businesses surveyed are members, but others are not. Therefore the Councils cannot be deemed to directly influence supply of Celtic products. Since the remit of the Craft Council (UK) is to make the country the best place to make, see, collect and learn about contemporary craft, traditional, Celtic influenced craft is not necessarily part of its focus. However Celtic craft is affected by international demand. The Crafts Council of Ireland is concerned with promoting the growth and commercial strength of craft and communicating its unique identity, design, innovation and competitiveness. Therefore Celtic craft would clearly fall within its remit and ethos, especially with respect to identity.

Open-ended in-depth interviews with thirty craft firm owner/managers were carried out in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland and England. Craft

products included wood turned bowls, hand thrown ceramics, wood carved furniture, bodhrans and other musical instruments, stained glass windows, glass engraving, decorative mirrors, jewellery, trinket boxes, embroidered garments, decorative ironwork and knitwear. Table 1 provides background information on the respondents, their location, craft characteristics and aesthetic styles of making and marketing. The five respondents not identified in the table wished to remain anonymous but it can be confirmed that they also fitted the typology described in Table 2:

[Take in Table 1]

The integrative framework (Figure 1) informs how the data is analysed by comparing and contrasting findings with the impacting themes from the literature review. Thematic analysis was used in the search for insight, rather than the adoption of methods such as grounded theory, and involved encoding qualitative data themes at explicit and implicit levels (Boyatzis 1998). Prima facia aesthetic evidence emerged while other forms were uncovered and linked to theory. The data shows that the Celtic aesthetic impacts from the macro-level external environment through to influencing marketing and design decision making. Discussion of the aesthetic styles of craft practice is followed by an evaluation of the role of market orientation. The impact of aesthetics on the design and marketing of Celtic craft is considered. The aesthetic effect of entrepreneurial marketing competencies on shaping both craft and marketing practice are then discussed.

Aesthetic styles of craft firm owner/managers:

The Celtic identity of the craft firm owner/managers was confirmed using insight gained from the discussion on the meaning of Celticism and from the Celtic narratives contained in the qualitative data. Many owner/managers deliberately exploit their

Celtic connections, others choose not to, while some who cannot claim to have direct Celtic heritage, embrace it within their craft narratives and marketing activities. Four different Celtic craft owner/manager styles can be identified, relating to a specific attitude towards the value of marketing and market orientation. Previous profiling attempts in other industry sectors have tended to result only in dichotomous outcomes (Runyan et al. 2008). Some have chosen to work in the industry because of the importance of lifestyle quality and are unwilling to sacrifice this in order to expand their business *(Lifestyler).* Growing beyond a certain level can result in unwanted additional commitments:

> If we were to move on, it would be by substantially changing the products, but adhering to the same sort of market and at the same sort of level. And the possibility if we bumped into the right sort of person, employing somebody who fitted in precisely with what we did. Then we could clearly double our throughput possibly, which would be a big boost to the business…We tend not to look upon it as a business - it's a way of life and it is a business because that's the best way to fit in with income tax and all the rest *(Alan, Cookstown, Northern Ireland).*

> I'd just like to continue and be confident in what I do. I don't really want to get into a big, sprawling industry. I'd like to keep it small and comfortable. I don't want to kill myself *(Marina, Co Cavan).*

> You have to go to trade fairs and I stopped doing that some years ago. Instead of just having employees like I used to have, I've shrunk down to just doing the work myself… I'm quite optimistic in what I'm doing now because I get a small amount of business which I can handle and I don't want to be a big business. *(Anne, Carmarthenshire).*

Another style is the business-oriented entrepreneur who is willing to take risks and recognises the importance of developing a customer base *(Entrepreneur).* Networking and relationship building are very important for business growth. Here, a mixed aesthetic approach of marketing and craft priorities is evident, with the craft being viewed as a commercial product. Although formal marketing techniques can be viewed negatively, a creative form of entrepreneurial marketing is embraced:

> I'd like very much to go abroad. Marketing you're stuck with. I don't like anything to do with marketing - it's an absolute pain but it is unavoidable and it does have to be addressed…I specifically got involved with other people in order that I didn't have to do it myself, because I don't like it, I'm not good at it. I'm very cynical about it. What we do is craft in that it contains that ethos but it's not craft like what most people regard craft as - we make practical things for private people…The reference points are very, very close to craft but in many respects it's a product *(David, Salisbury).*
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> I have no formal business qualifications but I picked up skills on the way. If you don't do this, you don't survive. I have made mistakes and admit to learning the hard way. Artistic/creative skills and business skills should be of equal importance…Many craftspeople have good products and have excellent design skills but cannot sell their work because of poor business sense *(Alison, Stirling).*
>
> …I've probably done half a dozen courses. It's probably been of more benefit now…as business develops. Initially…they helped give a bit of a grounding…I think when you start up the business, you're getting all this information thrown at you. You probably don't feel it's as relevant then. It's relevant but you don't understand it. Craftspeople tend to be afraid of that sort of thing *(Tim, Belfast).*

The third style is practiced by the artist/designer who views craft as an artistic object *(Idealist).* They tend not to respond to customer demand and make craft which they feel has artistic integrity, embracing an art for art's sake rather than art for business sake philosophy (Harrison et al. 1998). They take creative risks in order to move their craft practice forward. By following their own creative instincts they have confidence that they will not lose touch with their artistic ideals through the refusal to compromise their aesthetic position (Berthon et al. 2004):

> Convincing people of the worth of it, the value of it is the main issue, because it falls between the arts and a craft. I started off as a craftsperson, making quilts. As I became more involved in my work the quilters wouldn't accept them. Because I went beyond the boundaries of what was acceptable within the craft. So I only exhibit now in art galleries and do commissions as works of art. I don't do any utilitarian things now *(Patricia, Dublin).*
>
> I don't make a conscious decision about where to sell my work. I wait until I'm asked…As far as the selling of work is concerned, I suppose I don't care too much. That's been the problem, I suppose. I haven't gone in for strong marketing *(Anne, Stockport).*

> Now…it's almost entirely commission - sale or return sales which I've only got into in a big way this year. I've got contacts with galleries. I used to sell through craft fairs but I've almost entirely switched over. *(Judith, Ceredigion).*

There is a fourth style practiced by those entering the industry much later, gaining previous work experience in unrelated areas and then deciding to make a career change *(Late Developer).* Depending on their background, a number of key skills can be brought into their new venture:

> I was in the building and civil engineering business…which sort of took a downturn. So I thankfully looked at something else...I basically got into the car and went over to the areas that I could cover, which was Scotland.…I spent a long time in technical sales before that, in commercial building products. I've done a lot of direct selling…I think the only way you'll do it is to actually go out on the road and partake of it. I have done sales courses and marketing courses…They're great, but not to get overly side-tracked by them *(Hans, Co Kildare).*

> I used to live in Oban as a social worker and met an occupational therapist who had a craft shop. I moved to Shrewsbury and then back to Scotland in the last year. My husband designs and I do the stitching. I started off by doing a couple of hand stitched maps of Scottish Islands, sold in kit form…I left social work and moved in to the council owned premises last year. The main business would be trade. The lease allows the sale of associated work for retail *(Ann, Kirriemuir).*

> I came across a book in the library, a craft book with a geodesic dome in it…I had recently been made redundant, had time on my hands and just fancied having a go at making one, you know. It kind of developed from there. I don't sell abroad… I come originally, I suppose, from a sales, kind of marketing background…if you're canvassing for business, selling stuff, you're not going to get everybody. You don't get despondent. If one chap says no you just go with a positive attitude to the next person, and keep going. I've done some reasonably original stuff *(Patrick, County Dublin).*

Several characteristics can be found in more than one group: for instance, both the entrepreneur and the idealist are prepared to take risks. However, it is the nature of the risk that is different. The former takes risks at the business and product level, while the latter is really only concerned with artistic and creative risk. Table 2 summarises the aesthetic styles of marketing and making craft. The table was constructed

following the analysis of the qualitative data and the analysis of previous research on craft and small business marketing.

[Take in Table 2]

It is possible that the aesthetic styles found in Table 2 and the aesthetic analysis of Figure 1 could contribute to the analysis of other cultural products and producers. Although the ethos contained in these frameworks could potentially apply to all small businesses, those associated with the particular styles identified in Celtic craft could benefit from this perspective. However, art for art's sake, lifestyle orientation and entrepreneurial inclination are key factors across the cultural and creative industries. The typology categories are intended to be fluid and dynamic, rather than static. This can be viewed in several ways: firstly in terms of being able to move around within the categories and, secondly, in terms of potentially evolving into further categories over time. Location within the typology may also depend on the life stage of the business, the wishes of the owner/manager and the particular stage of the product life cycle of the craft.

The lifestyler may be influenced by the Celtic aesthetic in the design of the craft but has little desire to grow the business by exploiting Celtic connections in other markets. The entrepreneur exploits both the Celtic connection in the marketing of craft through the development of domestic and overseas market opportunities, as well as in the making of the craft. The idealist is less likely to make use of the Celtic aesthetic due to the dominance of the art for art's sake philosophy which drives the making and marketing processes. The late developer may make use of the Celtic aesthetic in the development of the craft business. This likelihood is increased if the

maker has a background in marketing and sales. However, lifestyle dimensions can also be important here.

Craft and market orientation:

Earlier discussion examined the potential range of attitudes towards marketing and market orientation. The styles of marketing and making which result from these aesthetic perspectives are illustrated here. The adoption of an art centred approach to craft relates to the value placed on the work by the owner/manager who has not followed consumer demand. Some are prepared to take risks with the product, while others combine product and market risks.

> I wouldn't really call it a product because people usually associate that with a function. It would be one-off pieces…I wouldn't go into a production idea with it at all. I think you've got to take risks. I can't compromise the creative/artistic position with what the public wants. *(Patricia, Dublin).*

> If your work is of any value at all, it is unlikely to be driven by the market. But having said that there are a huge number of things around which aren't driven by the market and aren't worth doing. The risk you've got to take is that your work is worth doing. That's the voyage, really (*David, Salisbury).*

> I'd like to do really loads of zany stuff with no one behind me telling me what to do. And everyone buying like mad *(Luc, Cork*).

Those with negative attitudes towards marketing construct barriers against attempts to move towards customer orientation:

> I don't really like selling, basically. I can't stand standing on a trade stand and selling to people (*Anne, Carmarthenshire).*

> I've no formal business qualifications. I think that experience is perhaps more relevant than a qualification and at this level - it's more of a one man band level. I haven't done any courses and don't intend to do any at the moment *(Judith, Ceredigion).*

> It's really hard to be a good designer/maker and also be a good business person and people expect you to be both all the time. But it's a quite hard thing to do because you obviously have to be professional. I think a lot of craftspeople aren't naturally sort of business people. At college we had a business practice

> thing…I never found any of that very relevant, actually. I thought the most useful thing was going to do other work experience *(Teresa, Bristol*).

> The marketing is the difficult bit. There are two ways of approaching this sort of thing - the first is to produce what the market wants, the other is to produce what you want to do. In many respects the doing what you want to do is the prima donna approach, but in many respects that's the gamble you've got to take (*David, Salisbury).*

If the aesthetic competencies of the maker are strong enough, then it may be possible to dismiss market based consumer demand and produce what the maker wants through entrepreneurial creation of demand (Butler 2000). This conflicts with the conventional notion of responding to consumer wishes but can often pay dividends through the maker having more control over the creative process.

Impact of aesthetics on the design and marketing of Celtic craft:

Some owner/managers feel that having a Celtic ethos can impede development of their work while others openly exploit the connection, using its symbolism to sell the product to culturally close markets:

> We use Celtic design in the work. It does sell a lot of things – a wee individual style of it. You can sort of look around and say "That's one of Kevin's" *(Kevin, Lurgan, Northern Ireland).*

> Selling something to the Americans, if you put a shamrock on it or a Celtic pattern they think it's great. And it doesn't matter if it's from Ireland, England, Scotland or Wales, they love it *(Phillip, Dublin).*

Others refuse to capitalise on this, preferring instead to draw on other design influences:

> I quite like those kind of games if you like, where you can hide your ethnic background. But I would be hiding it rather than exploiting it up front. I don't find that up front business very interesting. I think it leads to divide rather than harmony *(Anne, Stockport, England)*

> I don't like to get bogged down in that avenue because that can be restricting. That holds down the talent, the potential for ideas coming from within the person. A lot of people would say that's a load of rubbish – do the Celtic thing

> and make millions…I don't know if they do or not *(Tim, Holywood, Northern Ireland).*

There are differences in the way in which Celtic craft owner/managers are received in each other's countries:

> I'm actually originally Dutch, but having said that, I've always found that coming from Ireland, people are always quite well disposed towards you in Scotland…I've gone to Wales and I found that totally different. It's not half as vibrant a market as Scotland. And I've looked at the north of France as well. There's a couple of shops that we've supplied there but it just hasn't seemed to have taken off as well. And the other one we have supplied a small amount to is some people down in Devon and Cornwall *(Hans, Co Kildare).*

> All my yarns are Scottish and they do look quite Scottish. I do quite well in Scotland - do you know Simply Scotland in Edinburgh? It's a craft shop in Edinburgh and also in St Andrews. They almost like people to think that I'm Scottish *(Theresa, Bristol).*

> It helps being in Wales, perhaps not in England. We have put on our brochures before - Cloth and Co, High Street, Fishguard, Pembrokeshire and now it's Fishguard, Wales and this is a good selling point when we are dealing with countries like the Republic of Ireland. There's a Celtic connection and we've been playing on that - that's what we've been told to do. We've got links with Waterford via a European programme, That's the feedback we've got because people wouldn't know where Pembrokeshire was but with Wales they would. We're trying to exploit this common factor *(Alison, Fishguard).*

There is evidence of a common language of craft, suggesting an aesthetically based cross-cultural creative connection. This would mean that craft creativity is not solely a learned skill but is part of a set of inherent aesthetic characteristics found in all makers.

The aesthetic effect of entrepreneurial marketing competencies:

Effective Celtic craft practice can be achieved by utilising entrepreneurial marketing competencies such as opportunity recognition, networking, word of mouth marketing, and building relationships (Hansen and Hills 2004):

> Contact with other craftspeople opens up all sorts of opportunities. I'd gain access to other information that I wouldn't be able do myself *(Judith, Ceredigion).*

> And also you do hear about marketing opportunities occasionally. And it does give you fresh ideas seeing other people's work - not necessarily ceramics. Just other kinds of work. Crafts people can be very isolated because they soon put their heads down and work and work and they don't get out much. You need to talk to other people, just for your own self confidence *(Twy, Belfast).*

Many Celtic craft businesses tend to adopt a combination of low cost approaches such as word of mouth marketing and trade show attendance:

> The main method of selling is through word of mouth or people seeing it at the exhibitions. Exhibitions are very important. Advertising is extremely costly and you've to keep up the momentum with that. I think exhibitions are the best... And it's really just building up the value of your name. Sometimes it's not just a piece of work they buy, it's because it's by so and so *(Patricia, Dublin).*

> Word of mouth. I did four years at the Chelsea Craft Fair and people are still passing my name on *(Janet, Bristol).*

> Colour brochure, trade shows and word of mouth. We do all the production of the brochure ourselves. We have desk top publishing, we do our own photography, set up our own models and then get it printed at a local firm. By doing this we are cutting costs and keeping them internal *(Diana, Leeds).*

The trade fair is used by both by those embarking on a career in craft and by those experienced makers. Benefits include the ability to make contact with other Celtic craft owner/managers as well as local and international buyers:

> the formation of relationships and networking...you meet a lot of people at craft fairs who turn in to good friends or good contacts *(Teresa, Bristol)*

> I just learnt how to network really. And particularly in Ireland that's how things happen. One contact leads to the next. And you actually make that phone call *(Patricia, Dublin).*

> We've become very friendly with a lot of the other designers…we get on very well when we see them at international trade shows. I wouldn't say that we exchange design ideas at all - we basically gossip about customers. I talk to other small business people *(Diana, Leeds).*

Networking can be useful in the early stages of development in accessing relevant information on selling in the domestic market and also with gaining access to export markets with demand for Celtic products:

> I did Chelsea for the first time and this American buyer came along and ordered quite a lot of work from me. And it's just built up from there…Once I got into Chelsea, that's when all the offers came up for me to go to San Francisco and New York (*Teresa, Bristol)*

> We are exporting more and more to America because we do a lot of Celtic designs and a lot of Charles Rennie Macintosh related designs. It's a growth area *(Kit, Devon).*

Other contributing factors include the reputation of the craft firm owner/manager in terms of creative design ability and success achieved through marketing activities:

> …And it's really just building up the value of your name. Sometimes it's not just a piece of work they buy, it's because it's by so and so (*Patricia, Dublin)*

> A lot of this business is actually based on reputation. No matter how fancy an instrument is, unless people know of your reputation…Whereas, if you want to get your house repainted you just look up the yellow pages and find the guy that's closest. So it's a very personal type business and referral type business *(Phillip, Dublin).*

The qualitative findings have uncovered a range of aesthetically influenced dimensions which impact on the practice of both making and marketing craft. Four different styles have been uncovered which have a variety of impacts on the adoption of market orientation. This challenges the notion that all Celtic craft firms should align to this mode of behaviour. Artistic ideology, entrepreneurial marketing and the Celtic ethos combine to offer alternative directions. The findings also have implications for understanding other cultural producers where lifestyle and the value of artistic philosophy are central to their value systems.

Conclusions:

The outcomes from this research have implications for craft, the small business and the consumption, markets and culture domain. Aesthetics impacts on how marketing is carried out by the Celtic owner/manager through the adoption of a form of entrepreneurial marketing based on creativity, intuition and opportunity recognition. Intangible aesthetic processes influence how ideas are derived which contribute to the design and construction of craft, while also influencing marketing practice. This critical mode of thinking and behaving offers the opportunity to generate improved insight into marketing decision making processes in the smaller firm where a variety of potential outcomes challenge the dominant logic in marketing (Vargo and Lusch 2004). This paper has also demonstrated the merits of pursuing interdisciplinary perspectives in generating knowledge. Central to the aesthetic mode of understanding within small business marketing are factors such as uncertainty, intuition and tacit knowledge. The aesthetic lens provides additional interpretation and meaning to the marketing styles found in small businesses, from the entrepreneurial to the artistic and where market creation is just as relevant as responding to customer demand.

The aesthetic analysis also contributes to understanding cultural production and consumption (Venkatesh and Meamber 2006; 2008). This is the process where cultural products are created, transformed and diffused within the composition of consumer culture (Lash and Urry 2002). The expressive individualism and aesthetic reflexivity located in cultural production is also confirmed by this study. Aesthetic meanings and symbols are created by both producers and consumers of craft (Kozinets 2002) which also forms part of the visual consumption process (Schroeder 2002). Marketing contributes to all phases of the cultural production process (Venkatesh and Meamber 2006) and this paper extends this further by demonstrating

how particular aesthetic forms of marketing are utilised. This research, although acknowledging their four approaches to marketing (managerial, consumption, everyday life and the contents of cultural products), adheres to and develops the last category where meaning is constructed from cultural product content. It also moves theory forward by developing an aesthetic based interpretation of entrepreneurial marketing.

The findings have implications for the wider interrelated nature of aesthetic products and aesthetic consumption; in particular, the relationships between the aesthetics styles of the producers, including their attitude and orientation towards the marketing concept versus the product concept, and the cultural/aesthetic product that is created and marketed within the market. Venkatesh and Meamber (2008) consider aesthetic consumption from four perspectives: the traditional approach relates to the intrinsic value of the object; the critical approach concerns the notion that producers and consumers utilise artistic processes because of their sense of liberation and fulfilment; the minimalist view focuses on aesthetic experience; and the pragmatic view makes no distinction between aesthetic and non-aesthetic experiences. This paper encourages a critical perspective, not just because of a wish to understand the sense of liberation and fulfilment, but rather to understand weaknesses in existing frameworks and also to offer an alternative lens of understanding. Venkatesh and Meamber (2006) ask whether it is possible to think of marketing as being able to provide context and an institutional framework for today's cultural production system. This research certainly addresses these concerns, while also moving thinking forward; for example Figure 1 can be viewed both as framework for assessing the impact of aesthetic factors on craft but also as an analytical tool for adoption in other sectors. Charters (2006)

distinguishes between aesthetic products and aesthetic consumption but, as this paper has shown, the two are inextricably linked. Charters states that very little work has been carried out in marketing on the aesthetic dimension of the product. This paper therefore adds to this research which has mainly focuses on visual aesthetics (e.g. Schroeder 2000). Figure 1 and Table 2 extend aesthetic analysis beyond the linear continuum developed by Charters and offers deeper understanding of the levels of aesthetic impact. Charters also states that in the past there was no theoretical framework for consumer researchers to utilise in their analysis of aesthetic consumption. This paper now provides a framework for future critical aesthetic analysis of both consumer and producer.

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Table 1: Typical respondent characteristics

Respondent	Location	General characteristics of the work	Aesthetic style of making and managing
Alison	Stirling	ceramics, pottery	Entrepreneur – mixed aesthetics of business and artistic priorities
Janet	Bristol	freelance designer-maker of hand stitched fabric, metal, porcelain and paper porcelain.	Idealist – focuses on her work and pays others to market for her
Jo	Clywd	hand spun garments	Lifestyler – sells through commissions but also exhibits
Teresa	Bristol	knitwear	Entrepreneur – mixture of craft skills and networking ability
Diana	Leeds	traditional knitwear	Entrepreneur – mix of craft and marketing skills
Alison	Fishguard	quilted cushions, children's clothing, appliqué jackets, corduroy and cotton summer and winter weight, trousers	Lifestyler at present but with ambitions to acquire entrepreneurial competencies
Tim	Holywood, Northern Ireland	textiles	Entrepreneur
Patrick	Skerries, Co. Dublin	lamps, stained glass	Late developer – from marketing background
Anne	Carmarthenshire	knitwear	Lifestyler
Con	Co. Wicklow	wood turner	Lifestyler
Ann	Kirriemuir	hand stitched maps	Late developer
David	Salisbury	wooden furniture designer	Idealist
Alan	Cookstown	jewellery, decorative mirrors	Lifestyler

Sean	Limavady	ceramics	Entrepreneur
Phillip	Dublin	musical instrument maker	Lifestyler but with entrepreneurial ambition
Luc	Co. Cork	furniture maker	Idealist
Marina	Co Cavan	ceramics	Lifestyler
Hans	Co Kildare	textiles	Late developer – with direct sales experience
Patricia	Dublin	wall hangings	Idealist
Kit	Devon	jewellery	Entrepreneur
Kevin	Lurgan	glass painting	Lifestyler
Twy	Belfast	ceramics	Lifestyler
Anne	Stockport	textile wall panels	Idealist – produces things she has feelings for
Judith	Ceredigion	quilt maker	Idealist– sells through commissions
Gerard	County Meath	wood products	Late developer

Figure 1: Integrative Framework of Contributing Factors in Aesthetic Analysis of Celtic Craft

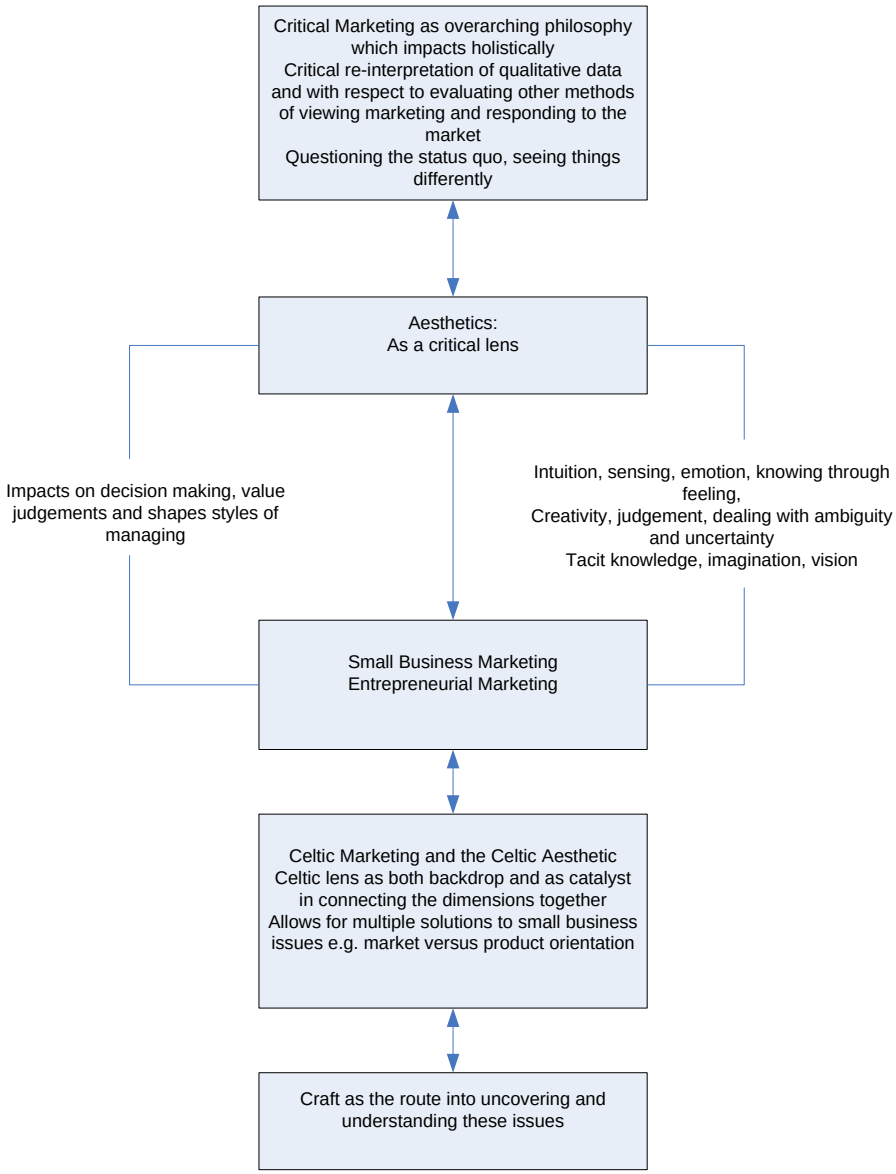

Table 2: Aesthetic styles of craft owner/managers

LIFESTYLER	ENTREPRENEUR
expansion of business unimportant unwilling to take many risks importance of quality of life may or may not export generally reactive unwilling to follow business and marketing philosophy and develop related skills strong use of the lifestyle aesthetic creative approach to making craft motivated by quality of life will expand based on comfortable level	risk taker most likely to embrace business and marketing philosophy long-term realisation of importance of customer relationships/networking mixture of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation effects mixed aesthetics of business and artistic priorities creative approaches to production and marketing opportunity driven use of entrepreneurial marketing competencies motivated by profit most likely to grow the business best chance of exporting the work due to entrepreneurial drive
IDEALIST	**LATE DEVELOPER**
risk taker with the craft unwilling to accept business and marketing philosophy dominance of 'Art for Art's sake' beliefs may or may not export realisation of importance of establishing and building relationships and generating reputation views self as artist rather than craftsperson motivated by connection with art will have concerns over mass production intrinsically motivated uses high levels of creativity to make craft as art strong use of artistic competencies heightened impact of aesthetics as art	tends to come from non-creative background less likely to export unlikely to accept 'new' ideas believe in valuing own experience of business and life able to bring outside skills to the business (e.g. sales and marketing)) may find problems with accessing existing networks motivated by being able to pursue alternative career path may or may not grow production depending on comfort level may be slow to find effective blend of business and creative synergies endeavours