

Informal Marketing Strategies of Artisans in Funeral Textiles Consumption

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the informal marketing practices and challenges faced by funeral textile artisans in Mountain Province, Philippines, with the aim of proposing possible interventions. Using a descriptive research design, data were gathered from 52 participants through interviews and focus group discussions and were analyzed thematically. The findings reveal that word-of-mouth, community trust, kinship networks, and visibility during rituals serve as culturally embedded promotional tools. These strategies, rooted in social capital and relational marketing theories, sustain livelihoods without formal advertising. Nevertheless, artisans deal with accessibility issues, income uncertainty, digital exclusion, and lack of branding. This pattern of challenges highlights the pressing need for supportive, culturally sensitive market interventions. The study suggested a need for community-based marketing infrastructure and policy support, while contributing to the marketing theory through embeddedness, experiential, and relational marketing as a sacred context. Moreover, policy support for informal cultural enterprises, government, and cultural bodies should recognize funeral textile weaving as a cultural enterprise. Providing micro-financing, access to mobile connectivity, and inclusion in cultural tourism programs can help sustain and scale these traditional crafts. Lastly, future research may compare different communities to see if these informal, trust-based marketing strategies still work in more modern or digital settings.

Keywords: artisans, funeral textile, informal marketing, strategies...

1. INTRODUCTION:

Textiles serve as exceptionally important cultural, spiritual, and social values. For instance, in many traditional and rural societies, textiles would be used as ceremonial objects, such as funeral textiles, often woven by hand and used for funerary rites to honor the deceased. These textiles usually mark respect and reflect identity and the relationship between the living and the dead (Hoskins 19998; Velasco and Hilario 2015). Countries such as the Philippines, Indonesia, and various parts of Africa still have artisans who weave these funeral textiles, firms that are part of time-honored cultures. Nevertheless, although they are important, these artisans usually do not have access to the formal marketing tools and could have reached more clients and increased their income.

Instead of official advertising or internet marketing, funeral fabric makers depend on casual marketing methods, like personal recommendations, local fame, personal relationships, and advice from community leaders or funeral planners (Chen 2012; Zontanos and Anderson 2004). These strategies work well in small communities where trust and tradition guide purchasing decisions. Funeral textiles in case of emergency are often the result of friends' recommendations to trustworthy artisans. Artisan past work records are considered community standing, and promptness usually speaks louder than formal advertisements.

Even though these casual tactics are based on old customs and local faith, they also have difficulties. Artisans who rely only on personal connections frequently have difficulty finding clients beyond their area, experience

unpredictable sales, and overlook chances to expand their business (Brogan and Dooley 2024). Additionally, the brief creation period, typically just a few days from passing to interment, demands artisans to be prepared instantly, lacking the chance to advertise beforehand.

This research investigates funeral textile artisans' informal marketing methods, identifies the constraints they're experiencing, and considers why these practices facilitate or inhibit their attempts to market their craft. The outcomes will ultimately help support traditional artisans and preserve cultural heritage in practical, respectful, and inclusive ways.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Informal marketing means tactics small companies or single creators use that do not depend on official ads, branding, or online marketing. These techniques frequently appear in poor or countryside areas where shopkeepers lack funds, modern tools, or official education (Chen 2012). Artisans in the unregulated market often advertise their goods by relying on personal connections, local fame, recommendations, and gossip, particularly when trust in culture and social bonds significantly affect buying habits (Zontanos and Anderson 2004).

Informal marketing is crucial for survival in the traditional craft sector. Weldegebriel and Kebede (2024) reported that in Ethiopia's handicraft industry, artisans utilized repeat customers and networks of family and community referral as their sole marketing approach because it was inexpensive, culturally appropriate, unpredictable, and limited. Similarly, Trulsson and Per (1997) explained that for informal textile producers in Africa, social capital

supporting business is generally more—at least equally—from business than commercial advertising, and that this situation applied to informal textile producers as well, as its own body of producers speaking on behalf of the entire industry and its stakeholders would not be able to work independently of it.

However, relying too much on unofficial promotion may also prevent craftspeople from growing. In a research on micro-entrepreneurs in rural India, Agrawal (2016) observed that informal approaches frequently fall short of linking craftspeople with larger urban marketplaces, especially those outside their social circle. External purchasers anticipate visibility through official channels like internet stores, exhibitions, or printed catalogs, whereas local buyers might rely on word-of-mouth. This dilemma is especially pertinent for artisans operating in specialist industries, like funeral textiles, where time sensitivity adds an additional degree of complexity.

In informal marketing strategies, artisan and small producer businesses know many developing areas worldwide. Instead of formal advertising or digital promotions, these strategies are based on personal social connections, community reputation, and cultural networks (Chen 2012). In contexts where artisans have limited leverage over business capital, training, or the internet, informal marketing is the only way for them to reach customers (Zontanos and Anderson 2004).

Informal marketing, such as word-of-mouth referral, presence at community events, and visibility or recommendation by locals, can provide, especially from satisfied clients or reputable individuals in the community, opportunities for artisans to develop trust and loyalty, as they do not have to invest large promotional fees. As Else, Kingslow, and Losby (2003) noted, craft producers in informal sector used referrals to sustain the demand for their customers to return. These tactics were very successful within tight communities, as repeat sales were generally weak or did not go beyond local marketing and distribution.

However, informal marketing may be useful for survival but is inadequate for sustaining growth or enabling producers to access larger external markets, according to some experts. Ghosal, Prasad, and Behera (2020) discovered that rural artisans practicing the handcraft industry in India found it challenging to penetrate urban or national markets. According to their study, marketing would require digital tools, branding, or even marketing cooperatives in order to be sustainable in the long term. So informal marketing is still a thing, but there are reasons to recognize its deficiencies at scale and predictability.

Funeral textiles have cultural significance in many cultures. In areas of Asia and portions of Africa, textiles are elements of funeral rites that show respect to the deceased, signify family lineage, and mark ethnic/cultural identity (Dias, Ogle, and Diddi 2020; Salvador-Amores 2018; Willard 2004). These textiles are usually handmade, woven by local artisans using traditional methods passed down through generations. Because of funeral textiles' cultural and spiritual importance, many families prefer to commission them from artisans familiar with community beliefs and customs. This preference

reinforces the use of informal marketing, since families often choose weavers based on trust, word-of-mouth, or recommendations from elders. Funeral rituals also create opportunities for indirect promotion, as other community members see and admire the weaver's work during the event.

However, this cultural visibility has limitations. Because funerals are unpredictable, artisans must be ready to respond on short notice, which prevents advance marketing or planning. They cannot build stock or advertise a finished product, as each order is often customized and urgent. This makes timing a major challenge and forces artisans to rely on rapid information sharing through informal channels like SMS, phone calls, or local runners. While informal marketing strategies suit the cultural nature of funeral textiles, they also present several challenges. First, they limit artisans to their immediate communities, reducing the chances of reaching clients from other regions, cities, or diaspora populations. Artisans depend on seasonal or uncertain orders without broader visibility, affecting income stability. This issue was highlighted by Trulsson 1997), who noted that while informal networks help start a business, they are often insufficient for sustaining long-term profitability.

Second, the urgency of funeral textile production puts pressure on marketing and delivery. Depending on cultural customs, families may need a product within 24 to 72 hours. Artisans not well-connected through local networks may miss opportunities simply because their services are not known quickly enough. In this case, informal marketing works well only for those already well-established in the community. Third, artisans in culturally sensitive spaces, like death and mourning, may avoid bold or contemporary marketing because they present concerns over decorum and appropriateness (Ladeegard 2019). In his work with online platform studies in Southeast Asia, many artisans working in sacred or traditional crafts expressed reluctance when considering marketing and selling their products online, citing fears of disrespecting cultural practices or looking too "commercial". Lastly, artisans traditionally have little to no formal branding or business tools, which limits their ability to craft a professional identity, price their items competitively, and/or access institutional support. Rengganis (2022) states that having a brand is an important way for traditional artisans to distinguish themselves from other makers that sell similar products in competitive markets. In this case, funeral textile producers, without strong marketing or branding, may be undervalued or misconstrued on a larger scale, outside their cultural communities.

Even though informal marketing strategies have limitations, some studies indicate that a blend of digitized and traditional approaches can enhance artisan impacts. For instance, training initiatives from the ILO in 2018 have been enabling rural weavers in the Philippines and Indonesia to establish Facebook accounts, participate in online marketplaces, and utilize mobile payment platforms, all while maintaining their local connections. This mixed technique benefits artisans culturally as they can maintain traditions while expanding their market reach towards even global levels. Nonetheless,

researchers caution that not all artisans reap the same level of advantage with digital changes. Many of these changes tend to be slow because of outdated technology coupled with age, education levels, infrastructure conditions, or even language barriers (Ladeegard 2019). Due to a lack of electricity or internet services in certain regions, these informal methods remain the only realistic option. Therefore, policies aiming at such issues must be flexible and tailored, based explicitly on the cultural setting and reality facing artisans.

While there is an expanding literature on informal marketing in craft, there is little narrow-focus research into artisans who produce funeral textiles. Previous research has generally focused on informal marketing in general or in non-time-critical crafts. Funeral textiles are special, as they involve cultural importance, urgency, emotional consideration, and compact business construction. Thus, it is evident that research that examines how bullion stringsmiths particularly employ informal mechanisms, what problems they can encounter, and how these affect their income generation and awareness is necessary.

The present research seeks to meet this lack by examining the informal marketing practices of the funeral textile artists, including the ways they work, restrictions, and possibilities both within traditional and changing environments.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research design. In this sense, the research is a descriptive research type suitable for identifying and analyzing the branding practices of self-employed construction workers. Descriptive research strives to understand and describe the present state, standard practices, value systems, beliefs, processes, and trends (Calderon and Gonzales 2018). This approach was chosen because it reflects the objective of the study, which relates to the marketing operations that are employed by artisans in the funeral textile. In addition, descriptive research enables the identification of problems in practice and thus makes recommendations for appropriate responses possible.

Respondents. This involved fifty two (52) funeral textile artisans in Tadian, Mountain Province, Philippines, purposively selected (snowball sampling). The participants were weavers, seamstresses, and sellers of funeral textiles (blankets, headgear, and clothes). Informed consent was taken from all the respondents before participation, and they were informed of the confidentiality of their responses.

Research instruments. A semi-structured interview guide was used to collect data and to promote rich information responses by participants. Focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted to ensure that the findings from individual interviews were reliable and valid.

Data collection procedures. The primary data collection tools were interviews and focus group discussions. Each individual interview lasted approximately 15 minutes, while FGDs took at least 30 minutes. All interviews and discussions were audio-recorded with the participants' consent. Following data collection, the recordings were transcribed and organized based on emerging patterns of

similarity and difference. The study obtained ethical clearance from the Mountain Province State University Ethics Committee prior to its implementation.

Data analysis. As Clarke and Braun (2013) outlined, a thematic analysis approach was employed to identify recurring patterns and themes within the data. The transcripts were coded, categorized, and examined to uncover central themes related to the participants' marketing practices. To maintain participant anonymity, code identifiers such as A1 (Artisan 1), A2, and so on were assigned.

4. FINDINGS

Reflecting critically and thematically on the transcript of the interviews and focus group discussions resulted in the following themes.

4.1.1 Word-of-Mouth Marketing

One of the most common informal marketing practices by the respondents is word-of-mouth referral. This approach involves personal recommendations by previous clients or respected elders, who share their positive experiences with others in the community. Such recommendations are particularly effective in emotionally sensitive contexts like funerals, where families seek service providers who are not only reliable but also culturally and spiritually respectful (Brown et al. 2005).

Compared to traditional advertising, which may be perceived as profit-driven, the respondents view word-of-mouth as genuine and trustworthy. It draws upon existing social relationships, where people are more likely to rely on the opinions of those they know and respect. In the case of funeral textiles, which carry cultural and spiritual meaning, this form of promotion becomes important. These textiles symbolize respect for the deceased, the continuity of cultural heritage, and shared community values. As such, families often prefer artisans who are recommended within their trusted networks.

This observation aligns with Trusov, Bucklin, and Pauwels (2009) findings, who argued that word-of-mouth can have a greater impact on consumer behavior than conventional marketing, particularly in tight-knit communities. Similarly, East et al. (n.d.) highlight the stronger influence of word-of-mouth when the product or service being evaluated holds emotional or cultural significance, as is the case with funerary goods and rituals. On the other hand, Keller and Swaminathan (2019) suggests that in urbanized and competitive markets, where consumer options are more diverse and personal connections are less prevalent, the effect of interpersonal recommendations may weaken. Nonetheless, in rural and semi-urban settings like those explored in this study, strong community ties support word-of-mouth as a cost-effective and culturally aligned promotional strategy.

These findings reinforce the principles of Social Exchange Theory (Homans 1958), which asserts that human interactions, including economic decisions, are driven by mutual benefit, trust, and social obligation rather than purely transactional motives. In this context, referrals are not made for financial gain but emerge from gratitude, shared norms, and communal responsibility.

Satisfied clients, community elders, and funeral organizers feel a duty to guide others toward trusted and culturally competent artisans. This also indicates Granovetter's (1985) idea of embeddedness, which suggests that economic actions are embedded in social networks and cultural structures. Pricing strategies of funeral textiles artisans depend not only on the quality of the product but also on the craftsman's reputation. This highlights that in informal economies, social trust and relationship capital play an equally important role in business success as other promotional strategies.

Altogether, this study paints a picture of a socially embedded livelihood that leverages social relationships and trust-based referrals to secure a robust client base, thus enabling these respondents to enjoy sustained business in this culturally sensitive market, funerary practices in the Philippines. Word of mouth is an accepted, powerful, and culturally suitable means for informal marketing, especially in rural areas, where traditional values and social integrity hold prime positions in daily life.

4.1.2 Reputation-Based and Cultural Connection

The trustworthiness of a respondent within their community is extremely important in marketing their products. For respondents, it is important to be known as someone who produces quality work and respects that work's cultural value. Over time, respondents who exhibit craftsmanship, cultural sensitivity, and trust will receive trust and respect in return from their community. They are not building this reputation overnight; it takes many years of participating in local traditions, producing, and relationship building.

As the respondents put it, when families choose weavers, they are generally more comfortable with some whose identity is already understood and trusted by the community. In these delicate circumstances, price is the last consideration: the families are seeking artisans under whose hands local customs will be honored and common values reflected. The funerals and wakes were times when respondents could promote their work, although no structured promotional opportunities were available. When people attend these events, they see the textiles being used and ask who made it. These vignettes provide a natural "show, do not tell" of the respondent. When people talk or share experiences, the respondent's name circulates amongst family members, neighbors, and local leaders. This way, the product can "sell itself" by means of social networks and everyday discussions, no advertising required.

Such reputation-based exchanges resonate with Uzzi (1997) theory of embeddedness, emphasizing "the reliance of economic action" on trust and face-to-face interaction in informal economies. "People have had this very intuition for 2,000 years," according to Uzzi (1997), noting that people who engage in transactions conditioned on mutual understanding and shared norms have higher chances of success. For this research, the participants attain profiles and clients through active participation in community events, cultural activities, communing with the local elder, and regular face-to-face contact. Also, this finding is consistent with Granovetter (1985) seminal

embeddedness work, in which he suggests that economic behavior does not occur in a vacuum but in strongly socially based settings. From the actors' perspectives, it is not price or advertising, but rather their social reputation, cultural involvement, and social relationships that attract clients through forging interpersonal trust in a community.

Other scholars have also shown agreement with such findings. Portes (1998) stressed the importance of social capital, the resources available through personal and group networks, as a distinguishing factor in informal business success. In their insight, they asserted that stronger community networks lessen uncertainty and enhance access to economic opportunities, especially when formal ones are lacking or absent. However, some studies offer a contrasting perspective. For example, Keller (2013) suggests that formal advertising and branding in more urban or competitive markets may be more effective than reputation alone. In such settings, weaker social ties and greater consumer choice may reduce the impact of informal referrals. Still, the context of this study, set in closely-knit Filipino communities, suggests that informal, trust-based strategies remain effective, especially when products carry cultural or emotional meaning.

The findings of this research reinforce the theories of Uzzi (1997) and Granovetter (1985) on embeddedness, showing that economic actions are socially driven. The respondent's ability to gain clients depends on skill or product quality and how well they are integrated into the local social fabric.

These markers of continued visibility (e.g., funerals and personal relationships with elders) as well as reputation for cultural suitability are components of an informal, yet highly effective marketing system. This also aligns with the abovementioned concept regarding marketing in informal economies as a social process in trust, tradition, and everyday processes. The participants in the study did not rely on printed posters, social media, or price-based competition; they developed their profiles based on social presence, reputation, and heightened cultural fit. This illustrates the important realization that reputation and relationships with the community may hold more value in traditional, informal markets than formal business tools.

4.1.3 Use of Kinship and Community Networks

Respondents said they use kinship and local community networks to promote their goods. Instead of using printed materials, social media, or other commercial means, marketing is done through word of mouth through family, neighbors, and community elders. These individuals act as informal agents, especially in urgent situations like funerals, helping families find reliable and culturally appropriate weavers.

This marketing approach is effective based on trust, emotional closeness, and shared cultural values. In Filipino communities, where extended family ties are strong and community life is tightly interwoven, people are more likely to believe and act on recommendations from someone they know personally. A cousin's, aunt's, or close neighbor's suggestion holds more credibility than a flyer or social media post. This behavior reflects the

Filipino cultural value of bayanihan, which refers to communal cooperation and helping one another in times of need (Jocano 1998). In this cultural framework, supporting a local artisan is not just a favor; it is a shared moral responsibility. Referrals are usually not motivated by money or rewards but by a sense of collective care, loyalty, and reciprocity. Such referrals reinforce social ties while helping sustain local livelihoods.

This form of promotion is also a clear example of social capital, defined by Bourdieu (1986) as the resources people gain from belonging to social groups and networks. In this study, the respondent's access to customers is not by how loudly they market themselves, but by how embedded they are within trusted social circles. Their ability to maintain a steady client base depends on how well they are connected to the informal support systems of their community.

Putnam (2000) emphasized the importance of social capital in improving economic performance and trust in local networks; he stated that these dense social ties allow for the efficient transfer of information and enable greater cooperation in societies with strong communal norms. Similarly, Portes (1998) found that social ties in informal economies often substitute for formal marketing infrastructure, particularly in rural and culturally tight-knit settings. Conversely, Granovetter (1985) introduced the idea of "weak ties," arguing that distant, casual acquaintances could also play a role in spreading information and providing access to opportunities. While this may apply in urbanized or diverse markets, the setting of this study demonstrates that strong ties such as family and close neighbors remain dominant in spreading trust-based recommendations for culturally sensitive services. The research strongly supports Bourdieu (1986) concept of social capital, illustrating how artisans benefit economically not because of direct marketing skills, but because of their relationships within a close-knit social network. These networks serve both an economic and cultural function; they maintain the sacred meaning of the funeral textiles while allowing artisans to reach clients without compromising cultural integrity.

The findings also align with relational marketing theory, which emphasizes the value of long-term relationships, trust, and shared norms over transactional, one-time exchanges (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). In this case, client acquisition and retention are not driven by promotions, but by reputation, relational trust, and cultural embeddedness. Moreover, this supports Granovetter (1985) broader theory of embeddedness, which argues that economic actions are deeply rooted in ongoing social relationships. The respondent's ability to sustain demand is a result of their participation in family gatherings, cultural events, and community rituals; their social life becomes their marketing channel. This study shows that community trust, kinship ties, and cultural values play a critical role in the success of the respondents' marketing. Their marketing is not transactional but relational and cultural, built on the strength of their social networks rather than formal promotional strategies. In informal economies, especially in culturally rich rural communities, who you know and how well you are known can be just as important as what you make.

4.1.4 Visual and situational promotion

The respondents mentioned that they benefit from visual and situational marketing when their works are unintentionally showcased at cultural events like wakes and burials. Community members naturally see the textiles up close at these gatherings and appreciate their craftsmanship, design, and respect for cultural traditions. Even though these events are not intended as marketing venues, they become informal displays of the respondent's skill.

For instance, mourners at a funeral might notice the textile and ask, "Who made this?" or "Where can I get a similar one?" These questions often lead to interest, inquiries, and future orders—even without any direct promotion on the respondent's part. In effect, the product markets itself through meaningful, real-world exposure. This type of marketing closely aligns with the idea of experiential marketing (Schmitt 1999), where consumers are influenced more by seeing or interacting with a product in a real situation than by advertisements. In service contexts with strong emotional connections, real-time experience and emotional resonance build greater trust and memory in consumers (Berry and Bendapudi 2007). Emotional storytelling and cultural symbolism are key to loyalty for products tied to one's identity and tradition (Gobe, 2001). However, caution is also advised. Cultural theorists like Cohen (2017) warn that over-commercializing sacred or ritual items can erode public trust and damage perceived authenticity. When a product feels exploitative rather than respectful, it risks harming both its reputation and cultural value.

These findings support experiential marketing theory (Schmitt 1999) within informal, culturally-driven economies. They also align with symbolic interactionist theory, showing that the value of cultural products is constructed through social interpretation and ritual experience. Here, the textile is not simply bought but seen, felt, and contextualized within shared traditions.

For the respondents, the visibility of their work at funerals enhances both their reputation and the perceived authenticity of their craft. The organic setting deepens emotional connection and conveys trustworthiness. This study highlights how organic exposure in culturally significant events acts as an effective and cost-free marketing channel for artisans. Through socially meaningful contexts, trust is fostered and long-term cultural credibility is maintained. It demonstrates that meaningful experiences, not just advertisements, drive consumer interest and trust in traditional marketplaces.

4.2 Challenges experienced by weavers in marketing their funeral textile

Limited market reach is a challenge to the respondents since informal marketing is confined to their immediate community. Typically, customers include family members, neighbors, or referrals from local heads, which only constrains their visibility and makes it hard for artisans to expand into new markets or attract customers from other towns. They solely depend on occasional seasonal orders for income and sales, as visibility is dim and growth, slow.

Secondly, the respondents face fluctuating demand and income. Formal businesses channel advertisement to ensure regularizing these flows, but informal marketing channels bring irregular demand. It goes the same way in the case of funeral textile orders, which are called upon rather abruptly due to unexpected events or incidents like death and mostly include customers who come via reference, shifting artisans' income to very much less predictable situations. Planning or investing in better tools or raw materials for production becomes difficult in this situation.

The third issue is the limited access to digital platforms. The respondents are not using online tools such as social media, websites, or online marketplace platforms. This is because there is low internet access, low digital skills, or they are not used to online marketing. Therefore, they are missing potential opportunities for marketing their work to a wider audience that is familiar with tech and who may be interested in traditional woven products in a cultural or memorial context.

Lastly, there is no formal branding or direct promotion. The respondents describe a rather blurred brand image of the promotional materials. Hardly any use of logos, product labels, or price listings is made. When there is no formal branding, there is nothing to set the product apart and to promote recognition over and above the local area. In such instances, opportunities could be lost for extra pricing or attracting more buyers who value authenticity and craftsmanship.

5. DISCUSSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1. This study will add to the literature in two ways. First, the research facilitates marketing and anthropology and grounds informal marketing in ritual and cultural implications, not just those assigned by commercial and standard marketing studies. Second, it places means of experiential marketing in context, whereby it is using the concept of experiential exposure to non-commercial sacred events, adding additional outlets for. Thirdly, highlighting relational economies, it illustrates how informal, relationship-based marketing functions naturally in traditional, rural settings, challenging assumptions that formal branding is universally required. Lastly, advancing embeddedness theory by examining a Philippine funeral context, this study provides empirical support to theories that generalize economic embeddedness across varied contexts and products.

It is recommended to leverage digital platforms with cultural sensitivity. While informal marketing through kinship and word-of-mouth remains effective, integrating culturally appropriate digital tools (e.g., community Facebook pages or messaging apps) can help expand artisans' reach beyond their locality without compromising authenticity. Community-based branding support may also be practiced through the Local Government Unit (LGU) or local cooperatives by assisting artisans in creating basic branding elements—such as labels, logos, and storytelling materials—that reflect cultural identity and craftsmanship to enhance product recognition and trust. Moreover, skills training on relational and experiential marketing programs should be developed in digital marketing and how artisans can

sustain relational trust and utilize event-based exposure, such as wakes, as authentic channels of promotion.

5.2 Implications

The findings suggest the development of community-based marketing infrastructure for the artisans, such as artisan registries, mobile referral systems, or culturally sensitive branding workshops. These initiatives should be rooted in social trust and relational networks to complement, not replace, existing informal practices while expanding market access and resilience in rural settings.

Moreover, policy support for informal cultural enterprises, government, and cultural bodies should recognize funeral textile weaving as a cultural enterprise. Providing micro-financing, access to mobile connectivity, and inclusion in cultural tourism programs can help sustain and scale these traditional crafts.

The theoretical implications study expands the theory of informal marketing by showing how kinship-based promotion works in rural artisan communities. This study extends Granovetter (1985) and Uzzi (1997) theories of embeddedness by demonstrating how economic behaviors, such as client acquisition and marketing, are deeply anchored in culturally ritualized contexts. In contrast to generic applications of embeddedness in commercial or organizational settings, this research shows that marketing decisions are inseparable from local customs, social obligations, and symbolic rituals. It reinforces the notion that economic action is not merely embedded in social structure but is co-produced through everyday cultural practices and communal events in informal economies. The findings offer empirical support for the application of experiential marketing (Schmitt 1999) and relational marketing theory (Morgan and Hunt 1999) in non-commercial, sacred settings. Unlike typical market-driven models, this study demonstrates that emotional salience and relational trust, rather than deliberate branding, drive consumer engagement. This challenges traditional assumptions in marketing theory by positioning cultural symbolism, embodied presence, and social interpretation as key determinants of market behavior, broadening the theoretical scope of marketing scholarship in ethnographically rich, informal sectors.

5.3. Limitations and suggestions for further research

This study focused on rural and semi-urban Filipino communities with strong family ties and shared cultural traditions. Because of this, the findings may not fully apply to cities or diverse areas where people are less connected and traditions are not as widely followed. Future research should compare different communities to see if these informal, trust-based marketing strategies still work in more modern or digital settings. Using different research methods and studying various groups can help improve our understanding of how informal marketing works in different social and cultural situations.

Moreover, the study highlights how trust and reputation work through face-to-face connections but does not examine how digital tools like Facebook or messaging apps might also support or change these informal marketing practices. Because of this, traditional methods

like word-of-mouth are evolving in today's digital world and are not fully understood. Future research should look into how artisans use both online and offline tools to build trust, stay authentic, and reach more people. This can help explain how digital tools are becoming part of informal businesses, especially in communities with limited access to formal markets.

Declarations

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Author's Contribution

The author solely conceptualized the study, collected and analyzed the data, and prepared the manuscript.

Data Availability

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest related to this study.

Ethics Statement

The study adhered to ethical research standards, ensuring voluntary participation, informed consent, and the confidentiality of all respondents.

Disclosure of AI Use

The author used OpenAI's ChatGPT (version May 2024) and Grammarly to improve the clarity and grammar of the manuscript. All content was reviewed and verified by the author.

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