

**INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION NEEDS OF THE HANDICRAFT
INDUSTRY IN KENYA: A CASE STUDY OF WAMUNYU WOOD CARVERS
IN MACHAKOS DISTRICT**

By

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ABSTRACT

The wood handicraft industry has high economic potentialities. It contributes substantially as a foreign exchange earner and at the same time provides gainful occupation to over eighty thousand people countrywide. However, in the past three years, three quarters of Kenya's export market has been lost. This study investigates the reason for this by looking at the information and communication needs among wood carvers in Wamunyu location in Machakos district, with a view to identifying their problems and correcting weaknesses.

A case study approach was adopted for this research. Two sample groups were targeted. Simple random sampling was used to select a sample from members of Wamunyu handicraft co-operative society limited, while cluster sampling was used to select a sample from non-members of the co-operative society. A total of two hundred respondents were selected with a hundred respondents selected from each group. Data was collected by means of interview schedules and focus group discussions. Observation and documentary sources were also used to collect data from the respondents. Data collected were analysed using descriptive analysis and tables used to enter specific types of data and show relationships between variables.

The study found that the rural based wood carvers experienced problems in relation to their work, which could be associated with lack of relevant and adequate information in certain areas of their work. The respondents sought information on wood as a raw material, markets, product development and quality control, finance, product costing, government policies and regulation among others. It was also observed that the rural based wood carvers attempted to satisfy their information needs by consulting some communication channels such as their colleagues, middlemen, radio, posters and notices. It was also found that the available

communication channels frequently utilised by the wood carvers were not fully adequate in satisfying their information needs.

It was therefore recommended that oral channels, visual media, adult education, rural-focussed broadcasts and print media as well as infrastructure supportive of wood carving related information be improved. By so doing, it is hoped that these wood carvers would become more knowledgeable hence more effective and productive in their duties.