Micro and Small Enterprises (MSE) play a critical economic role in developing economies in employment and wealth creation. Though Kenya has a critical mass of over 1.3 million MSEs, the level of export market participation is low with only about 30% actively participating in exporting. This is despite the huge potential within the commercial craft MSEs who can exploit the global market to market Kenya’s unique cultural and artistic products. The general objective of this study was therefore to investigate the determinants of initial export market participation among MSEs in the commercial craft sector in Kenya. The study adopted the stage theory and the factor proportions theories of internationalization. The study used mix of explanatory and descriptive research designs.

The target population for the study was 140 MSEs in the commercial craft sector in Kenya registered with EPC at the time of the study. The study covered all the 116 MSEs in the commercial craft sector in Kenya registered with the export promotion council located in Nairobi. Primary data was collected by use of a semi-structured questionnaire. The descriptive analysis was done by use of mean, factor analysis for data reduction and multiple regression analysis to establish the relationship between the independent and the dependent variable. The findings show that initial export market participation is influenced by internal-proactive factors, external-proactive factors and size of the firm. The study concludes that to enhance export market participation and ensure a vibrant and competitiveness in the global marketplace, these proactive factors need to be addressed.