

WHY TOURISTS PURCHASE SOUVENIRS?

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Abstract

This research studies the various reasons why tourists buy souvenirs during their vacation. This paper was conducted via interviews and questionnaire, which was distributed to 270 respondents around Sarawak. Data was analysed using Means and Factor Analysis. The findings showed that tourists buy souvenirs because of: 1. Love, Beautiful and Unique, 2. Gift To Loved Ones, 3. Has Picture and Remind Of The Place, 4. Traditional and Show Culture, 5. Wear and for Myself, 6. Cannot Find in My Own Country, 7. Learn Other Country and Culture, 8. Collection and Friends, 9. Different Shape, Color and Design and 10. Proof and Research. This paper is of value to provide better understanding about tourists' preference of souvenirs especially for those retailers in the related industry.

Keywords: Tourist; Souvenir; Purchase; Sarawak.

JEL Classification Codes: M21; M31.

1. Introduction

In many developing countries like in south East Asian such as Malaysia, Thailand, and Philippines and in the western countries like Mexico tourism is a major economic factor (Vellas and Becherel, 1995). As for Malaysia where the tourist arrivals are increasing each year for example in the year 2004 the arrival is 15.70 million and in 2005 16.43 million, tourism is a major income contributor (Tourism Malaysia, 2006). The expenditure made by the tourist mostly come from accommodation, foods and shopping. Souvenir sales are no laughing matter, in the US it generates an annual sale more than \$25 billion (Love and Sheldon, 1998).

Shopping in terms of souvenir is one of the distinctive reasons why people travel to other places. It is the nature of humans, to have some form of item representing where they have travelled (Swanson, 2004). It is a badge of honour that indicates that the person has already made that journey or visited a certain place. During vacations and trips, tourist will spend money in terms of entertainment, accommodation, transportations, other services and shopping. One of the popular activities during vacations and trips is shopping (Oh, Cheng, Lehto, and O'Leary, 2004). Therefore it is important to have a better understanding on the reason why tourist buy souvenir in order to develop souvenirs that are saleable. This research focuses on respondents' views of why they buy souvenirs and presents the findings for management to utilize.

2. Literature Review

The right mixture of souvenir products will have a positive effect on purchase decision to buy the souvenirs (Simonson, 1999). In Sarawak, it is assumed that this mixture should include 'Pua Kumbu', beads, bamboo, reed basket and other cultural based products. The assortment of souvenir available to the tourist should also not be universally same. Souvenirs come in various forms, such as mass-produced items and figurines; arts and crafts (Turner and Reisinger, 2001); gem and jewelry (Turner and Reisinger, 2001); antiques (Grado, Strauss, and Lord, 1997); collectibles (Michael, 2002); land local products like foods and wear (Gordon, 1986). Souvenir can be divided into five categories (Gordon, 1986). The categories include pictorial image souvenir, piece-of-the-rock souvenir, symbolic shorthand souvenir, markers, and local product souvenir.

Each categories shows that souvenir can be produced in different manner and shape depending on the creativity. This is because there are at least four types of souvenir buyers (Littrell et al., 1994). The first type of tourist, which is those that are into ethnic, arts and people; the second type are into history,

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nature and parks; the third is into urban entertainment and the last are those active outdoor oriented tourist.

Although shopping has become the popular activities among the tourist, there are still few researches done on the tourist shopping behaviour (Jensen-Verbeke, 1991). Different types of tourist prefer different types of souvenirs and therefore have different purchase intentions. Purchase intention among tourist can be seen in several ways. One of them is the difference from a demographic perspective (Anderson and Langmeyer, 1982; Anderson and Littrell, 1995; Littrell, 1990). Age difference among tourist influences the purchasing intention of souvenirs. Younger tourist will tend to buy souvenir products, which can be found in the urban area, and this refers to entertainment seeking tourist in the city. On the other hand, older tourists tend to buy souvenirs with an aesthetic value. Older tourists appreciate the value of souvenirs and the experience they had while on their travels. The examples of souvenir that they tend to buy are souvenirs such as house décor and items that can be used at home.

Souvenir purchase intention is also influenced by tourist attitude towards other cultures (Kim and Littrell, 2001). Tourist that respect and tolerate other cultures will appreciate more the experience they had during their vacation and it will lead them to buy local products as souvenirs. Other factors include ethnocentrism. Tourists with high ethnocentrism will not support the purchase of souvenirs from other countries because they believe that it will have a bad impact on their local economy (Netemeyer, Durvasula and Lichtenstein, 1991).

Other issues related to the purchase of souvenirs include the level of cultural knowledge, including the knowledge of the language, belief, and the principles of life practiced by the nationals (Wiseman, Hammer, and Nishida, 1989). People with basic knowledge on the visited country's culture are believed to be easier to appreciate it and therefore would purchase relevant souvenirs. Misconception about other culture also can be minimized if the person knows how to respect others and have deeper understanding in the different lifestyle among people in the world. Gift giving is also another reason for souvenir purchase. Gift giving is an act of expressing love, and sharing one's travels (Belk and Coon, 1993).

Tourism shopping activities has contributed a lot in the economics of most countries. It has become large and powerful sector in countries like United States, Mexico, Malaysia, Thailand, and Philippines (Vellas and Becherel, 1995; Norman, 1995). The dynamic growth of tourism shopping has increased the need for more research (Moscardo, 2004). These studies look at the various shopping activities of tourists. Some studies examine the symbolic meaning of souvenirs bought by tourist (Gordon, 1986; Littrell, 1990; Shenhav-Keller, 1993). Tourist will tend to buy souvenir that have a symbolic meaning for them such as religious books and crafts. Others studied tourist perceptions towards souvenirs (Kim and Littrell, 1999).

3. Methodology

Tourist arrivals in Sarawak have consistently been over 2 million people per year from 2004 (Sarawak Tourism, 2007). A minimum sample was calculated to be 202 respondents. This study utilizes a two-stages of qualitative and quantitative data collection method (Lapierre, 1996 #1566; Churchill Jr., 1979 #931). Fifteen respondents were interviewed at various tourists' attractions that sell souvenirs (Perry, 1998). Respondents were asked, "Why do you think people buy souvenirs?" Interviews were conducted in Kuching, Mukah, Bintulu and Miri. Data collected from the interviews were analysed using frequencies. From the findings of the interviews, a list of statements was obtained and placed in a questionnaire format. A total of 270 sets of questionnaires were distributed to the local tourists and international tourists around Sarawak and 267 sets were retrieved. This was more than the minimum number required and the rate of return was 98%. A five-point Likert Scale was used where (1) for strongly disagree, (2) for disagree, (3) for neutral, (4) for agree and (5) for strongly agree. Data collected from the questionnaires were analysed using mean and factor analysis.

3. Findings

Table 1 shows the profile of respondents. Table 2 depicts the means for the various statements that is shown in accordance to the factor analysis findings.

Table 1: Profile of Respondents

Demographic Factor		Frequency	%
Gender	Male	123	46.1
	Female	144	53.9
Age	21 years - 30 years	110	41.2
	31 years - 40 years	77	28.8
	41 years - 50 years	47	17.6
	51 years above	33	12.4
Marital Status	Single	140	52.4
	Married	127	47.6
Country of Origin	Local Tourist	152	56.9
	International Tourist	115	43.1
Educational level	PMR, SRP, Sijil	6	2.2
	SPM, O-Level, SME	40	15.0
	STPM, Diploma	97	36.3
	Degree, Bachelor	97	36.3
	Masters	21	7.9
	PhD	6	2.2

Table 2: Mean of the Reasons Why Tourist Buy Souvenir

Reasons	Variables	Std.		Mean	Std. Deviation
		Mean	Deviation		
Collection & Friends	As a collection	3.38	1.09	3.28	1.06
	Friends asked to buy	3.04	1.29		
	Show to friends	2.96	1.25		
	Give to relative	3.67	0.89		
	Give to friends	3.37	0.93		
	Gift	3.58	0.92		
	Can sell them	2.37	1.26		
	To decorate	3.37	1.07		
	Love to collect	3.25	1.04		
Can keep it	3.83	0.87			
Learn other country & culture	Learn about other country	3.53	0.91	3.50	0.88
	Learn about other culture	3.61	0.89		
	Gives information	3.11	0.88		
	Keep all experience	3.76	0.82		
Different shape, colour & design	Different shape	3.39	1.04	3.48	1.00
	Various colour	3.33	1.04		
	Various design	3.72	0.92		
Love, beautiful & unique	Personally love it	4.23	0.74	4.18	0.80
	Beautiful	4.12	0.87		
	Unique	4.19	0.79		
Has picture & remind of the place	Has picture of the place	3.47	0.99	3.85	0.85
	Remind about the place	4.22	0.71		
Traditional & show culture	Traditional	3.57	0.99	3.85	0.95
	Shows culture	3.79	0.94		
	Different from my country	4.20	0.91		
Gift to loved ones	A gift to loved ones	3.58	0.92	4.01	0.82
	Memory	4.43	0.72		
Cannot find in my country	Cannot find in my country	3.82	1.05	3.82	1.05
Wear & for myself	Love to wear it	3.42	0.86	3.84	0.83
	For myself	4.26	0.79		

Proof & research	Proof that I've been to Sarawak	3.83	1.06	3.25	1.03
	Can do research	2.66	0.99		

Table 3 representing the rotated component matrix for reasons why tourists buy souvenirs. The Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin (KMO) for the factor analysis is 0.814, indicating that the analysis was adequate and appropriate. Bartlett's Test showed a Chi Sq of 3416.64 and a significance of $p < 0.001$. Ten components were extracted with a cumulative variance of 66.199.

Table 3: Rotated Component Matrix – Reasons Why Tourists Buy Souvenirs

Variables	Component				
	Collection & Friends	Learn other country & culture	Different shape, color & design	Love, beautiful & unique	Has picture & remind of the place
As a collection	.679				
Friends asked to buy	.672				
Show to friend	.669				
Give to relative	.644				
Give to friends	.599				
Gift	.595				
Can sell them	.583				
To decorate	.581				
Love to collect	.574				
Can keep it	.342				
Learn about other country		.833			
Learn about other culture		.830			
Gives information		.781			
Keep all experience		.485			
Different shape			.881		
Various color			.874		
Various design			.765		
Personally love it				.714	
Beautiful				.708	
Unique				.506	
Has picture of the place					.754
Remind about the place					.701
<i>Eigen values</i>	7.523	2.744	1.858	1.747	1.416
<i>% of Variance</i>	13.025	9.460	8.449	6.541	5.460
<i>Cumulative %</i>	13.025	22.484	30.933	37.474	42.934
<i>Alpha</i>	.845	.807	.890	.556	.516

The factor analysis finding is detailed in Table 4

Table 4: Rotated Component Matrix – Reasons Why Tourists Buy Souvenirs (Continued)

Variables	Component				
	Traditional & show culture	Gift to love ones	Cannot find in my country	Wear & for myself	Proof & research
Traditional	.786				
Shows culture	.742				
Different from my country	.487				
A gift to love ones		.763			
Memory		.546			
Cannot find in my country			.715		
Love to wear it				.786	
For myself				.493	
Proof that I've been to Sarawak					.755
Can do research					.418
<i>Eigen values</i>	<i>1.331</i>	<i>1.277</i>	<i>1.182</i>	<i>1.099</i>	<i>1.007</i>
<i>% of Variance</i>	<i>5.327</i>	<i>4.956</i>	<i>4.564</i>	<i>4.261</i>	<i>4.156</i>
<i>Cumulative %</i>	<i>48.261</i>	<i>53.217</i>	<i>57.781</i>	<i>62.043</i>	<i>66.199</i>
<i>Alpha</i>	<i>.610</i>	<i>.444</i>		<i>.352</i>	<i>.298</i>

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
a. Rotation converged in 10 iterations.

4. Discussions and Conclusion

The research set out to identify various reasons why tourists buy souvenir during their trips to Sarawak. The results obtained based on the factor analysis list out several reasons including love, beautiful and unique, gift to loved ones, has picture and remind of the place, traditional and show culture, wear and for myself, cannot find in my own country, learn other country and culture, collection and friends, different shape, color and design and proof and research. These reasons seem to agree with what past literatures have discussed (Love and Sheldon, 1998; Gordon, 1986; Hitchcock, 2000; Kim and Littrell, 1999; Gordon, 1986; Stanley, 2000).

Thus, this paper may have a positive implication to provide better understanding about tourists' preference of souvenir products especially for those retailers in the related industry. Retailers of souvenir products may shift their focus more on tourist preferences in the selection of souvenir products that may attract tourists the most. In addition, this may also become a turning point for the industry to make use of the tourism products to be marketable and concurrently be able to promote local products through tourism activities.

Nevertheless, this research is limited to souvenir products available mainly in Sarawak. Tourists in other parts of the country may have different reasons for buying souvenir since different states may have different types of souvenir products which may leads to different reasons for buying them.

Therefore further studies should be carried out in other states of the country or may be extended to a cross-cultural study on different countries' souvenir products. This will give way for a more noteworthy comparisons and analysis to be carried out.

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