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COMMODYING INDIGENOUS ART AND CRAFTS TO ENHANCE TOURISM EXPERIENCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

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Abstract. This study seeks to explore how indigenous crafts in South Africa can be commoditised as a souvenir to enhance the tourism experience. To achieve the research aim, the study first conducted a survey to determine the attributes that influence tourists' souvenir purchase preferences. A Likert-type scale questionnaire was used, comprising of questions that cut across the design performance and cultural evaluation indices. The results were analysed using descriptive statistics, and based on the findings from the survey, experimental research was further conducted to develop a series of souvenir samples with the attributes embedded. This was achieved by employing the Cultural Design Model to transform indigenous crafts into tangible mediums (souvenirs or tourist arts) that satisfy the intangible images of tourists' experience, promote cultural aspects to the visitors, and also convey the essence of tourism destination to potential consumers. Finally, the study revealed that this transformative approach provides some unique opportunities for involving previously neglected groups by building cross-cultural relations, creating entrepreneurial opportunities and bringing development to rural areas.

Keywords: Indigenous crafts; Souvenir; Tourist art, Tourism, cultural design

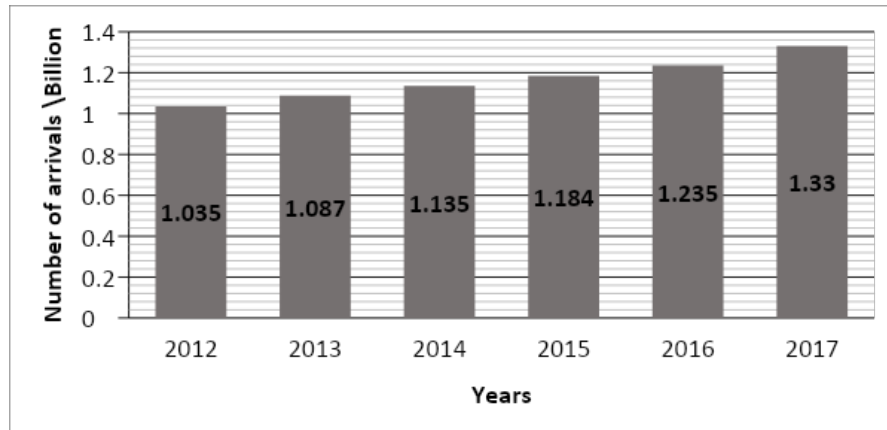
1. Introduction

With the ethnic and cultural diversity, South Africa is known for its indigenous arts and crafts (cultural objects), such as beadwork, pottery, basket making, embroidery etc. However, as South Africans become increasingly urbanised and westernised, aspects of this traditional culture have declined and only sustained among rural inhabitants who still lead largely impoverished lives. But then, evidence shows that these cultural objects, which originate from a multi-cultural blend of traditions, offers great potentials for enhancing tourism sector both locally and in the global market.

Tourism sector is one of the largest and fastest-growing industries in the world, contributing to 9% of the global GDP, and accounts for one in eleven jobs worldwide ("World Tourism Organization," 2015). The year 2012 was a milestone year for tourism, recording over one billion (1.035 billion) international tourists arrivals globally within a year (World Tourism Organization, 2013); US\$1.2 trillion direct and indirect impact on the world

economy, US\$70 billion in investment and US\$1.2 trillion in exports (Fuller, 2013; WTTC, n.d.). For six consecutive years (2012-2017), there was a sequence of uninterrupted growth in international tourist arrivals, amounting to around 288 million more international tourists between 2012 and 2017, and an average of 4.5% increase in arrivals per annum (Fig. 1).

Figure 1: Global international tourist arrivals



Source: UNWTO (cited by Olalere, 2019)

As for South Africa, which has been one of the top-most tourism destinations in Africa, the foreign tourist arrivals within the second quarter of 2016 (April-June 2016) grew by 11% to 2.2 million and generated R16.8billion tourism revenue (“SA Tourism Strategic Research Unit,” 2016). The high volume of leisure tourists and the top attractions across the country, which are mostly natural attractions and shopping malls, drives the increasing revenue generated from tourism. One of the ubiquitous activities and important leisure pursuit of many people during vacations and trips is shopping (Oh, Cheng, Lehto, & O’Leary, 2004). Apart from visiting tourist attractions, many tourists purposefully seek enjoyable shopping opportunities as a familiar activity in an unfamiliar environment. According to the quarterly report by the South African Tourism department, shopping and nightlife are the top activities for tourists in South Africa. The estimated value of revenue generated from shopping in the second quarter of 2016 is R4.9billion, which remains the biggest spend category in South Africa tourism (“SA Tourism Strategic Research Unit,” 2016).

Even though the complexities, meanings, and practices of shopping have not been well understood (Swanson & Timothy, 2012), studies shows that shopping in terms of souvenir is one of the distinctive reasons why people travel to other places (Brennan & Savage, 2012; Lunyai, Run, & Atang, 2008; Swanson, 2004). According to Brenna & Savage (2012), souvenirs are central to the tourism experience, because, they are embedded with strong semiotic messages that transform intangible experiences into tangible memories. Besides, they enable us to freeze a passing moment in an extraordinary reality and to re-live the experience in routine time and space (Collins-Kreiner & Zins, 2011). Hence, the host

community or tourism destinations are economically benefiting from souvenir design, production and sales.

Therefore, commoditising the cultural objects as souvenirs is a potential way of promoting cultural aspects to visitors and also conveying the essence of tourism destination to potential consumers. Besides, commercialising indigenous art and crafts as souvenir (which is an important component of tourism products) can play a significant role in building cross-cultural relations, providing immediate employment, creating entrepreneurial opportunities and bringing development to rural or neglected communities. Hence, this study seeks to explore the meaning of cultural objects from South African indigenous cultures, extract their cultural features, and transform the cultural features into contemporary products (souvenirs) that meet contemporary market needs and tourist expectations.

2. Methodology

Before tourists decide whether to purchase a souvenir, they consider the relative attributes of the product, which includes; the authenticity, relationship to the local area, portability, usability, price of the product, design, superior quality workmanship, attractive colours, traditional themes, and nature-based souvenirs (Goeldner, Ritchie, & McIntosh, 2000; Littrell et al., 1994). Thus, product attributes determine product choices, because buyers often purchase based on the attribute that they considered important. Hence, it is important to have a better understanding of how tourists perceive souvenirs and the attributes that they seek, in order to increase the likelihood of product purchase and advance the connection of the product with tourists' preferences. Against this back drop, the specific objectives of the study are:

- i. To examine how product attributes influence tourists' perception towards souvenirs*
- ii. To identify the important attributes (features), that can help promote tourism and also enhance tourism experience in South Africa*
- iii. To conceptualise and develop products (souvenirs/mementos) with important attributes embedded*

The study employed a quantitative, exploratory research method in the form of a survey to achieve objective one and two of the study. The population for the survey was foreign tourists who had visited or are on a visit to South Africa. The study targeted a total of 500 respondents, a value which was determined by using the FPC factor as recommended by (Smith, 2013). Both online survey questionnaires and face-to-face self-administered questionnaires were used for the study. For the online survey, the name and contact details (email) of tourists were retrieved from International travel blogs through purposeful sampling technique. According to the definition by Puhlinger and Taylor (2008), travel blogs are the equivalent of personal online diaries written by tourist to report back to friends and families about their activities and experiences during trips.

The Google blog search was used with the following search phrase: tourism and souvenir in South Africa, shopping, and souvenir in South Africa, South African Tourism.

Tourists selection from the blogs were narrowed based on two criteria: 1) the person's entries on the travel blog must reflect that he/she was a foreign tourist to South Africa, 2) must report shopping as part of his/her activities during the trip to South Africa. The reason for the second criteria is to focus specifically on recreational or leisure shoppers as first profiled by Bellenger and Korgaonkar (1980).

For the self-administered survey, the researcher visited some selected tourist destinations in South Africa to distribute questionnaires to foreign tourist. The two mediums (online and face-to-face) were proposed so as to allow comparison of data and see possible variations. The questionnaires comprise of two sections. Section 1 includes six demographic questions while section 2 are questions developed based on ten (10) evaluation indexes, which cut across the design performance and cultural elements as proposed by Hsu, Chang, and Lin (2013). Five-point Likert-type scales were used, ranging from 5, 'very important' to 1, 'very unimportant.' The respondents (foreign tourists) were asked to rate the criteria they used when purchasing souvenir during their visit to South Africa. The outcome of the research was analysed using descriptive statistics, with the aid of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

To achieve the third objective of this study, which is *"conceptualising and developing products (souvenirs/mementos) with important attributes embedded,"* an experimental study was conducted where the findings from the survey were used as a guide in developing products/souvenirs. In order to effectively encode the cultural features and the product attributes in the design and product development, the study employed the Cultural Design Model by Lin (2007). The model consists of three stages: identification, translation and implementation.

The identification stage involves identifying important product attributes and extracting cultural features from original cultural object, and this comprises of three cultural levels: outer level (such as colour, texture, pattern etc.), mid-level (such as usability, function etc.), and inner lever (such as cultural meaning, emotion). The second stage (Translation) transforms the cultural features into design knowledge and relate the knowledge to design issues or problems in modern society, while at the last stage (implementation), the researcher combines the design knowledge gained on cultural objects and the survey findings with his sense of design to create contemporary cultural products (souvenir). However, this paper did not report the findings of the experimental study as it is still ongoing.

3. Results and Discussion

After distributing the questionnaire to 364 respondents (foreign tourists), 231 responded to the survey, which amounts to 63.5 percent responses. However, prior to data analysis, 23 incomplete questionnaires were removed, leaving a total of 208 samples. The sample consists of both male (61.1 percent) and female (38.9 percent) participants with the age range from 18 to 59 and the highest percentage (46.2%) being between the ages of 18 and 29. 38.5% of the participants have an education background in Arts and Design, and 42.3% have income range from \$1000 to \$3999 per month (Table 1). The highest percentage of the

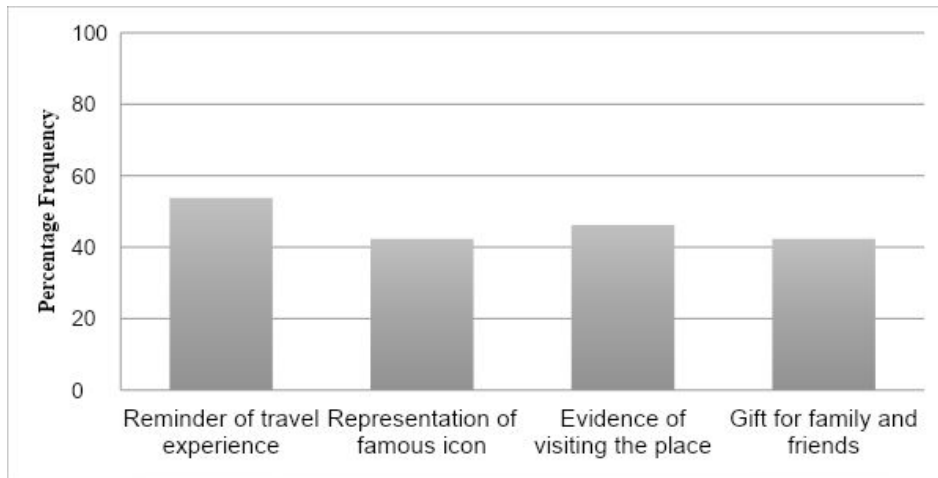
participants (57.7%) reported that they travel between 2 to 4 times per year for vacation. When asked the major purpose of their trip, nearly two-third (65.4 percent) of the respondents reported the purpose of their trip to be leisure tourism, 15.4 per cent are education tourists while 7.7 per cent are business tourists.

Table 1: Demographic data of participants

Demographic Factor		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	127	61.1
	Female	81	38.9
Age	18 - 29	96	46.2
	30 - 44	72	34.6
	45 - 59	40	19.2
Education Background	Arts and Design	80	38.5
	Science and Engineering	40	19.2
	Business, Commerce & Management	64	30.8
	Others	24	11.5
Income per month	Less than \$1000	80	38.5
	\$1000 - \$3999	88	42.3
	\$4000 - \$11,999	40	19.2
How often do you go on vacation?	Once per year	64	30.8
	2-4 times per year	120	57.7
	5-8 times per year	24	11.5
What type of tourist do you often go for?	Business tourist	16	7.7
	Education tourist	32	15.4
	Leisure tourist	136	65.4
	Others	24	11.5

The nature of this survey was to identify why tourists buy souvenirs during their trips to South Africa and the product attributes that influenced their purchase decision. When asked about the major purpose for buying a souvenir, the foreign tourists were allowed to respond with as many answers as were applicable to them. The results obtained based on the descriptive statistics revealed that 53.8 percent of the participants purchase a souvenir to serve as a reminder of their travel experience. Additionally, 46.2 percent reported they buy souvenirs as evidence of visiting a place while 42.3 percent indicated that they buy souvenirs as a representation of famous icons, and also as a gift for family and friends (Fig 2).

Figure 2: Purpose of souvenir purchase



Source: Olalere, 2017

Figure 3 shows that “reminder of travel experience” is the most stated reason for buying a souvenir, which is evidence that the souvenir plays a significant role in sustaining travel experiences. This is similar to Brenna and Savage’s definition of souvenir as “central to the tourism experience that transforms intangible into tangible experiences” (Brennan & Savage 2012). Similarly, Collins-Kreiner and Zins, (2011), and Swanson (2004) opine that souvenir helps tourist to re-live the experience in routine time and space.

Figure 3: Mean values of the product attributes’ influence on souvenir purchase preference

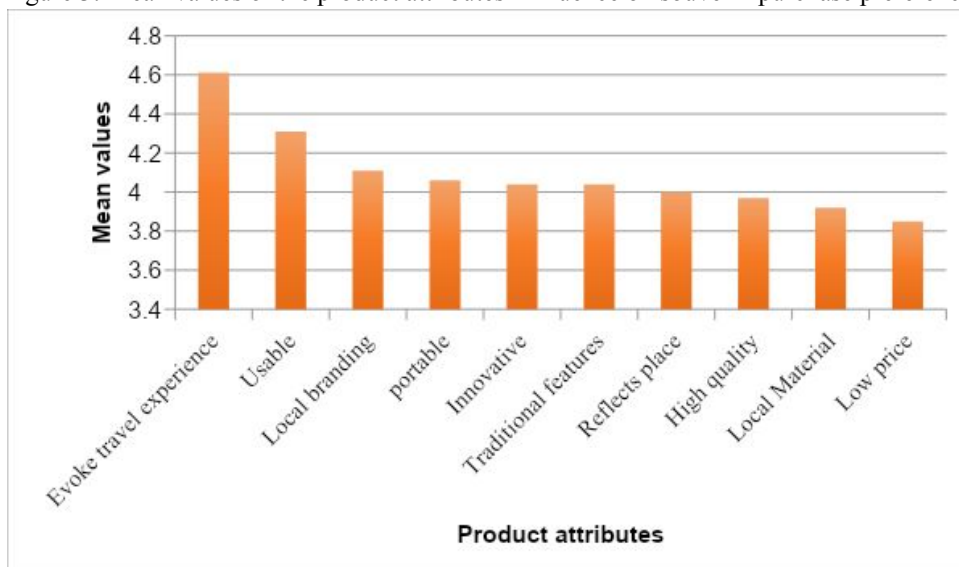


Figure 3 shows that the product attribute with the highest mean value of 4.61 is the attribute that evokes a travel experience. This rating corresponds with the respondents’ purpose of purchasing a souvenir. That is, the highest percentage of respondents reported “reminder of travel experience” as their purpose for a souvenir purchase and therefore they seek souvenirs that can evoke their travel experience (even long after the trip). According to Desmet (2003), we never buy a product without having some motive for investing our resources; therefore, souvenirs can be regarded as an instrument that helps us accomplish our goals (evoking travel experience). Hence, the anticipated event of possessing the souvenir, which will fulfill a goal (evoking travel experience), is the point of reference for appraising

the product as motive compliant (Desmet & Hekkert 2002; Desmet & Hekkert 2007; Luke 2009) and this results in a desire and consequent decision to purchase the souvenir.

Usability and local branding are the 2nd and 3rd highest rated attributes respectively. The functional attribute can also be linked to the purpose of purchasing the souvenir. Since many respondents prefer a product that reminds them of the travel experience, an interactive or engaging souvenir can also be a means of evoking or re-living the travel experience. Furthermore, since the “evidence of visiting a place” is the second rated reason for purchasing a souvenir, souvenirs with the local branding can serve as evidence that the tourist has visited the particular location.

Interestingly and possibly counterintuitively, the price is the lowest attribute that influences tourists’ souvenir purchase decisions. Even though much research shows that price has a significant impact on purchase intention or decisions (Thu Ha & Gizaw 2014; Álvarez & Casielles 1993; Seng & Husin 2015; Faith & Edwin 2014), this study shows that price has much smaller influence on souvenir purchase decision than possibly predicted. Based on the ten (10) items in the evaluation, reliability analysis (Cronbach’s Alpha) was calculated to test the reliability and internal consistency of data. The results show that the alpha coefficient is 0.789. According to Hair et al. (1998), a Cronbach’s Alpha of more than 0.7 indicates that the items are homogenous and are measuring the same constant. Thus, the recorded Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.789 recorded, which is higher than the recommended value as suggested by Hair et al. (1998) indicates that the measures in this study are reliable.

Conclusion

One of the key national policies developed to ignite the tourism engine of growth in South Africa is marketing and promotion (“Department of Environmental Affairs And Tourism,” 1996). Souvenir production and sales can be used as a medium towards achieving tourism growth, by incorporating product attributes (features) that act as a tangible medium that satisfies the intangible images of tourists encounter or experience during a trip or vacation. This will help in promoting cultural aspects (which are of interest to the visitors), and also conveying the essence of tourism destination to potential consumers.

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