



Factors influencing choice of souvenirs by international tourists

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to assess the factors influencing souvenir choice by international tourists in Ghana. Data was collected from 196 international tourists who were systematically sampled from souvenir shops and attraction sites within the capital city of Accra. The results showed that accessibility to the shopping outlets, shopping environment, travel characteristic and souvenirs characteristic played key roles in the tourists' choice of souvenir. This study intends to provide baseline information needed to promote research in the role of souvenirs to the tourism experience in Ghana since this theme has attracted limited attention from tourism researchers. Knowledge of these factors would help artist and the management of Center for National Culture (CNC) to modify souvenirs to reflect the features that would attract more tourists and increase spending on souvenirs. The observation that accessibility to shopping outlet is foremost, implies that demand for souvenirs could reduce in tourist do not locate outlets with ease while other factors could be re-looked at by regulatory bodies so as to enhance the demand. This study provides insight into the component of the souvenir decision making which is vital as souvenirs serves as memory tokens that preserve tourists' experiences and a source of tourism revenue to the tourism destination.

Keywords: Souvenirs, choice, tourists, factors, shopping, Ghana

Introduction

Decision-making regarding purchase in tourism is unique (Qirici, 2011) and purchases are usually not spontaneous but are results of carefully planned activities as they have financial implications. Souvenirs are not necessities of everyday life and what tourists look out for in souvenirs differs from consumables. According to Goeldner and Ritchie (2003), an essential tool for a successful business is to understand the buying behaviour of its customers. To produce arts and crafts that would appeal to the taste of tourists and enhance profitability for stakeholders, there should be an assessment of factors that influence tourists' choice of arts and crafts. A sustained and increasing souvenir business translates into employment and income for locals (Xie, Wu & Hsieh, 2012; United Nations World Tourism Organization; UNWTO, 2012) whilst serving as an opportunity to preserve and promote culture. However, Lisa and Sheldon (1998) observe that research on souvenirs is product-oriented which is



evident in research works on arts and crafts in Ghana. Studies on arts and crafts in Ghana have been conducted mainly in disciplines such as History, African Studies and Anthropology (see for example David, 2000; Nyarko, 2011; Annku & Lodonu, 2012; Nortey, Wamuaja & Okai, 2014) with very limited attention from the tourism perspective. The former disciplines focus their research on the product and the producer with limited attention to understanding factors affecting consumers' decision to purchase souvenirs in Ghana. Factors influencing tourists' choice of souvenirs have been ignored by tourism researchers within the Ghanaian tourism literature. The purpose of this research is to assess the factors influencing tourists' choice of souvenirs in Accra, Ghana. The key findings are important as they do not only contribute close the gap in terms of the limited literature in the Ghanaian context, but contribute to the growing literature on the international tourists and their purchasing behaviour linked to souvenirs.

Factors influencing choice of souvenirs

According to Way and Robertson (2013), shopping behaviour of international tourists differs by market, environment and products. The tourists' interaction with the product (souvenir) and the shopping environment initiates the choice. Timothy (2005) categorized factors that influence tourists' demand for souvenirs into two factors: intrinsic (demographic and psychographic features and cultural background) and extrinsic factors (retail place characteristics, services provided to customers and characteristics of souvenirs). Yoon-Jung (2007) also classified factors affecting the choice of souvenirs as individual traveller characteristics, trip characteristics, and the destination environment. In this study, the taxonomies of Timothy (2005) and Yoon-Jung (2007) were adapted to serve as the building blocks of the study.

Background Characteristics of Tourists

Socio-demographic characteristics such as sex, age, educational level, income and culture of tourists have an influence on demand for souvenirs. Literature reveals that the sex of tourists does not only affect the type of souvenirs they purchase (Turner & Reisinger, 2001) but also the amount of money they are willing to spend on souvenirs. Xie and Bao, (2006) are of the view that females buy more souvenirs than their male counterparts. Educational level also influences tourists' choice of outlets when purchasing souvenirs; tourists with a high school qualification prefer outlets with attractive environments, whereas the more educated tourists choose outlets that guarantee quality and authenticity (Samuel et al., 2011). Other demographic characteristics that influences choice of souvenirs are income (Yu & Littrell, 2005; Qirici, 2011) and culture (Park, 2000; Hobson & Christensen, 2001)

Trip Characteristics

A study conducted by Yoon-Jung (2007), in the USA revealed that leisure travellers spend the highest amount of money on shopping for souvenirs. However, Luo and Lu (2011) found that business travellers to the Canton Fair in China, spent more on souvenirs than leisure travellers. This contradiction is due to geographic differences as both destinations may have different target markets. Moreover, the company on a trip such as friends or relatives influences the choice of souvenirs bought as they might provide advice and views on purchasing decisions (Bob, 2009).

Souvenir Characteristics

The originality and authenticity of souvenirs is an important trait tourists look out for in souvenirs (Swanson, 2004; Ming, 2011; UNWTO, 2012). Though authenticity is relative rather than absolute it is a major criterion for "serious tourists" (Ming, 2011: 74). A study conducted in Ghana by David (2000) revealed that the main criterion used by international tourists to differentiate the genuine *kente* cloth from replications is the originality of skills portrayed by the artist. Also, international tourists seek souvenirs that are moderately priced (Swanson, 2004; Samuel et al., 2010). Tuomisto (2012) found that tourists to Tampere, Finland bought fewer souvenirs than planned as they perceive prices to be high. However, a contradictory



view was proposed by Chang et al. (2012) who believe that tourists will be willing to pay more when they perceive souvenirs to be of high quality. In such instances, price becomes a criterion for determining authenticity and quality as some tourists believe quality would cost more (Torabian & Arai, 2016). Other souvenir characteristics include quality (Thirumaran et al., 2014), aesthetic beauty (Yu & Littrell, 2005) and size. According to Swanson (2004) international tourists seek souvenirs that are reasonably sized in order to avoid huge luggage fares.

Shopping Environment

The shopping environment at every destination must be attractive in order to lure tourists to make purchases (Samuel et al., 2010). A serene and good shopping ambience can change the mood of travellers translating into impulse buying (Swanson, 2004). Moreover, proximity of outlets to hotels or attraction sites makes it easier to locate outlets (Yazdani, 2007). Wicks (2004) therefore suggested that outlets should be nearer to accommodation facilities, attractions and tourists' points of entry and exit in order to reduce the amount of time spent to locate outlets, especially by first time visitors. Tzuhui et al. (2009) assert that the characteristics of a good shopping outlet is the availability of parking space and proximity to lodging facilities.

Pricing System

Beside the price of souvenirs, tourists are also concerned with the pricing system either the use of the price tags or the traditional bargaining system. According to Wong and Law (2003), some tourists perceive the traditional bargaining system as an experience in itself whilst others feel discriminated against as they cannot ascertain whether they were over-charged. A study by Cevat et al. (2007) in Cappadocia, Turkey found that 50.8% of tourists enjoy the traditional bargaining system whilst 48.7% see the system as reducing the trust between visitors and sellers. Tourists who do not trust the bargaining system would opt for outlets with price tags as typical of shopping malls and super markets in order to reduce their doubts about the true price of souvenirs.

Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA)

According to Yu and Littrell (2005), the theory frequently used to study the decision-making behaviour of tourists is the Theory of Reasoned Action propounded by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980). Davies (2012), also, used TRA in studying tourists' behaviour toward shopping. TRA is built on the premise that human behaviour and actions are intentional, voluntary and deliberate. An individual's behaviour is therefore the end result of a carefully planned activity which an individual intended to perform, with knowledge of possible consequences considering its costs and benefits. Ajzen (1988) is of the view that the best way to predict behaviour is to ask people what they are intending to do since every action is deliberate and planned. The purchase behaviour of tourists is as a result of careful thought after considering various factors. To predict souvenir purchase behaviour, tourists were asked to outline the factors they consider in their choice of souvenirs.

Research Methodology

The study setting was Accra, the capital of Ghana. With respect to tourism development, the city has top-notch hospitality and tourism facilities including high grade hotels and restaurants and a host of attractions ranging from pristine beaches, mausoleums and museums, historical buildings and forests. Accra has several facilities or places where souvenirs are sold, notably among these are Arts Centre, La Beach, and Osu Oxford Street. Thus, most tourists seeking to present to friends and relatives souvenirs or have one themselves do visit these places. The study relied on a case of tourists who have visited Ghana between January and February 2014. Data was collected from selected 'souvenir joints' which were selected because tourists usually visit such places to purchase souvenirs during their stay in Accra. The data was



collected from tourists who were systematically selected when they visited the 'souvenir joints'. Specifically, tourists were selected at every fourth interval at the selected facilities. The selected respondents were then given questionnaires to complete and return before leaving the 'souvenir joints'. No incentives were offered for participation and all ethical aspects were observed.

Questionnaires were used to solicit information regarding decision-making choices in relation to souvenirs. The instrument was designed in English since it was assumed that a high percentage of tourists visiting the country are fluent in both written and spoken English. Respondents who could not express themselves fluently in English were excluded from the research. The questionnaire was structured into three main modules. The first module sought to gather information pertaining to souvenirs bought in Ghana while the second module of the research instrument had its focus on soliciting information on the factors influencing tourists' choice of souvenirs. These factors were measured on a three point Likert scale of 1= Agree, 2 = neutral and 3 = disagree. The final module captured respondent's socio-demographics and travel characteristics with variables such as sex, age, educational level, income level, nationality, travel party size among others. The questionnaire was pretested in Cape Coast, specifically the Cape Coast and Elmina Castle in December 2013, where lots of 'souvenir joints' are regularly visited by tourists. Of the 215 administered questionnaires, 196 were deemed useful for further analysis. Questionnaires excluded from the study were those that were partially answered whilst others were not returned to the field assistants. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 21 was used for analysing the data. Descriptive statistics and factor analyses (principal component analysis) were the main statistical tools employed in the data analysis. The descriptive statistics were used to determine the mean and standard deviations of the factors underlying souvenir purchase decision-making process whereas the factor analysis, specifically, the Principal Component Analysis with Varimax Rotation applying the Kaiser Normalisation was also used to assess the underlying structures (factors) influencing souvenir purchase decision making.

Results

Sample Characteristics

In relation to the socio-demographic characteristics, the study revealed that 61.2% of respondents were females and 62.8% were between the age range of 21 and 30 years. More than half of the respondents were high school leavers (63.3%), European (62.3%) and students (60.7%). Half of the respondents (50%) earned less than 10, 000 dollars annually.

Factors Influencing Choice of Souvenirs

Factors influencing choice of souvenirs were explored and were grouped under six thematic areas based on literature. Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation scores of the items under each of the six themes. It was evident that 91.7 percent of respondents noted that they were influenced by the souvenir characteristics to purchase them. For them, 97.9 percent (m=1.40) agreed that they considered the quality of the souvenirs, whereas 95.4 percent (m=1.48) also agreed to the fact that price influenced their choice of souvenir. This notwithstanding, respondents were uncertain with respect to raw materials used (m=1.93) and size of souvenir (m=1.63). Travel characteristics of respondents and the shopping environment also influenced tourists with respect to their decision to purchase souvenirs. It could be deduced further from the table that the tourists were to some extent influenced by friends and colleagues (m=2.0) and attitude of vendors (m=1.59) respectively. In general respondents were of the view that the preference of souvenirs did not play a key role in influencing souvenir purchase decision making (m=1.61).

Disaggregating this factor, it could be deduced that respondents agreed (m=1.29) to buy



quality but reasonably priced souvenirs. They also agreed (m=1.13) to the fact that souvenirs made from local materials was their preferred option, whereas having a preference for small-sized souvenir was concurred by many (m=1.46). With regards to the choice of souvenir outlets as a key factor, respondents were indifferent (m=1.97). Specifically, most of the variables measured as indifferent: vendors' attitude and appearance (m=1.58), outlets closer to hotels or attractions (m=2.29), proximity (m=2.11) and availability of a parking lot at the facility (m=2.35).

Table 1. Factors influencing choice of souvenirs (N = 196)

Factor	Percentage in agreement	Mean	Standard deviation
Souvenir characteristics			
Price	95.4	1.48	0.586
Quality	97.9	1.40	0.531
Perceived authenticity	94.4	1.54	0.602
Raw material	77.0	1.93	0.724
Design of souvenir	97.4	1.36	0.532
Size	87.8	1.63	0.693
<i>Overall agreement</i>	91.7	1.56	0.611
Travel characteristics			
Friends and colleagues	72.0	2.00	0.751
Family	71.9	1.97	0.771
Motivation for travel	65.8	2.13	0.737
<i>Overall agreement</i>	69.9	2.03	0.753
Tourist's characteristics			
Tourists culture	69.9	2.10	0.694
Tourist's personality	70.4	2.08	0.710
Perception about souvenirs	87.7	1.90	0.582
<i>Overall agreement</i>	75.9	2.03	0.662
Shopping environment			
Shop attribute	71.9	2.07	0.702
Attitude of vendors	92.9	1.59	0.622
<i>Overall agreement</i>	82.4	1.83	0.662
Choice of outlets			
Vendors attitude /appearance	61.2	1.58	0.796
Ease of movement within outlet	64.3	1.45	0.658
I choose outlets closer to my hotel/ attraction	21.4	2.29	0.799
Proximity	26.0	2.11	0.787
Availability of parking lot	20.4	2.35	0.800
<i>Overall agreement</i>	38.7	1.97	0.768
Preference for souvenirs			
I buy souvenirs with high quality at any price	28.1	2.14	0.829
I buy high quality but reasonably priced souvenir	74.0	1.29	0.518
I prefer souvenirs made from local materials	88.3	1.13	0.364
Pricing system does not determine souvenirs I buy	41.3	2.02	0.922
I like small-sized souvenirs	61.7	1.46	0.635
<i>Overall agreement</i>	58.7	1.61	0.654

Scale: 1-1.49 = Agree; 1.50-2.49 = Neutral; 2.50-3.0 = Disagree

Factors that account for choice of souvenirs

Following the descriptive statistics in Table 1 above, the study carried out further analysis to identify variables that influenced international tourists' decision to purchase souvenirs. In order to arrive at this, the data reduction technique (factor analysis) was performed using the principal component analysis method on 24 variables to identify the significant factors (Table 2). The suitability of the data for the factor analysis was confirmed as the Bartlett's test of Sphericity was significant at $p < 0.05$. Also, the Kaiser-Meyer Oklin (KMO) index of 0.674 confirmed the suitability of the technique on the data set (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Cronbach's alpha was also used to determine the suitability of the scale used. Pallant (2005)



noted the ideal Cronbach's alpha (α) should be above 0.7, that is, $\alpha > 0.70$. Pallant further argued that an α -value of $\alpha > 0.50$ is should be the ideal situation if the items on a scale are less. The Principal Component Analysis (PCA) extracted 17 items under 5 constructs accounting for 54.55 percent of the total variance in factors influencing tourists' souvenir purchase decision making. This notwithstanding, each of the 5 constructs measured differently to the explanation involved in the total variance. Factor 1 which measured accessibility to shopping centre accounted for 2.64 (10.891%) of factors influencing tourists on souvenir purchase decision making choices. Specifically, the variables that accounted for this loaded between 0.7 and 0.8 with proximity to souvenir outlets being 0.827 and outlets being closer to the hotel or attractions also loading 0.789. Factor 2 measured the shopping environment which also explained 2.283 (9.512%) of the total variance explained in factors influencing souvenir choice decision making. With respect to Factor 2, issues pertaining to attitude or appearance of the vendors (0.875) and the ease of movement within 'souvenir joints' loaded 0.833. Factor 3 measured travel characteristics of respondents as also influencing their decision making. As indicated in Table 2, this factor accounted for 2.258 (9.407%) of variations explained.

Disaggregating this construct, items such as family (0.697), motivation for travel (0.688) and influence from friends and colleagues (0.407) played key roles in souvenir purchase decision making. Factor 4 which explained 2.010 (8.377%) of the variations in souvenir decision making choice measured souvenir characteristics. Detailing the building blocks of this construct, variables such as raw material used in the production of the souvenir (0.678), perceived authenticity of the souvenir (0.651) and the quality of the souvenir (0.635) all had an impact on tourists' souvenir purchase decision making. Lastly, Factor 5 which measured tourist characteristics as a major factor also explained 1.951 (8.130%) of the variations explained in the entire model. This factor explicitly loaded tourists' personality (0.755) and tourists' culture (0.721) as influencing international tourists' decision to purchase souvenirs.

Table 2. Factors that account for choice of souvenirs

Factor	Factor Loading	Eigenvalues	% of variance explained	Cronbach's alpha (α)
<i>Accessibility to shopping centre</i>				
Proximity affects choice of outlets	0.827			
I choose outlets closer to hotel/attraction	0.789	2.614	10.891	0.786
Availability of parking lot	0.782			
<i>Shopping environment</i>				
Appearance of vendor influence choice of outlet	0.875			
Ease of movement within outlets	0.833	2.283	9.512	0.673
Attitude of vendors	0.421			
<i>Travel characteristic</i>				
Family	0.697			
Motivation for travel	0.688	2.258	9.407	0.681
Friends and colleagues	0.407			
<i>Souvenir characteristic</i>				
Raw material	0.678			
Perceived authenticity	0.651			
Quality	0.635	2.010	8.377	
Price	0.391			0.534
<i>Pricing</i>				
Price system	0.823			
Shop attribute	0.544	1.976	8.235	0.521
<i>Tourist characteristic</i>				
Tourists personality	0.755			
Tourists culture	0.721	1.951	8.130	0.757
Total variance explained			54.553	

Bartlett's test of sphericity (Approx. Chi-Square) = 1.610, alpha = 0.000

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy = 0.674



Discussion

Purchase of souvenirs may be seen as a leisure activity and a luxury of life, however this decision to purchase souvenirs is influenced by varying factors with different degrees of importance attached to each factor. The first component of accessibility to shopping centers is crucial, as tourists would only make purchases when they are able to access an outlet. This increases the importance of the location of the outlet in relation to the distance from tourist areas; both attraction and accommodation as proximity was the foremost factor considered by tourist in choosing outlets. Shorter distances would make it easier especially for first time visitors to locate outlets (Yazdani, 2007; Tuomisto, 2012) to purchase souvenirs. Proximity of outlets to tourists also influences whether tourists purchase souvenirs as tourists with limited time may not wish to cover a relatively longer distance to purchase souvenirs which has implications on sales and the incomes of vendors. This also suggests that the type souvenirs bought can be influenced by the characteristics of the outlet.

Tourists that have had access to souvenir outlets do evaluate the shopping environment with regards to the ease of movement within the shop and the appearance and/or attitude of vendors (Tzuhui et al., 2009). The attitude of sales agents and their warmth impacts tourist's perceptions of their experiences as the service delivery attitude of staff affects tourist satisfaction (Luo & Lu, 2011). Swanson (2004) recommends that sales representatives should be respectful, friendly, courteous and willing to explain and address the questions and concerns of tourists who visit their outlets. Moreover, tourists, like every consumer, would prefer spacious outlets which they can easily move through and with a parking lot for their buses, coaches and cars.

Friends and family travelling together on a trip may provide each other with solicited or unsolicited suggestions which influence the items purchased as souvenirs (Bob, 2009). Also, tourists who seek to be accepted by their reference group (family and friends) may purchase the same or similar souvenir items as their counterparts. However, the extent of control that tourists have over their decision-making will influence whether they adhere to the suggestions of friends and family or otherwise. Furthermore, motivation for travel affects choice of souvenir (Yoon-Jung, 2007; Luo & Lu, 2011) meaning that a tourist travelling for business purposes would react to shopping for souvenirs differently to a leisure traveller. The purpose of travel may also affect choice of destination which also influences the types of souvenirs available for purchase as these represent the material culture of a host destination.

With reference to souvenir attributes, tourists were concerned with the raw material used in making the souvenir (Torabian & Arai, 2016), quality (Yazdani, 2007), perceived authenticity (Thirumaran et al., 2014) and price (Samuel, et al., 2010; Tuomisto, 2012). Tourists differ in the level of importance attached to any of these factors. Factors like quality and price were of utmost concern to tourists, while characteristics of perceived authenticity and raw materials were not of much significance as is evident in Table 1. Related to the issue of price is the pricing system and shop attributes. Some shops attach price tags to their souvenir items which increases trust in the vendor and pricing decision (Swanson, 2004). Other shops and vendors adopt the bargaining system which in itself is an experience (Wong & Law, 2003). This pricing systems appeal to different types of tourists which affects sales of souvenirs and visitor perceptions of the pricing system. The characteristics of tourists had minimal effect on shopping for souvenirs since souvenirs are commemorators of travel experience and items are purchased based on their ability to reflect and preserve the tourism destination or experience with little focus on the personality traits of tourist. Items purchased as souvenirs serve as evidence of the destination visited and the tourism activities undertaken by the tourists.



Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to assess the factors influencing souvenir choice by international tourists in Ghana. Data used for analysis was collected from 196 international tourists who were systematically sampled from souvenir shops and attraction sites within the capital city of Accra. Based on the main findings the following conclusions were drawn. Six main components affected choice of souvenir which implies that tourists attach importance to the purchase of souvenirs as like other tourism products such as accommodation and attraction. The purchase of souvenirs is planned and includes a thorough assessment of several factors which are both intrinsic (souvenir attribute) and extrinsic (shopping environment). Secondly, shopping for souvenirs is perceived as a tourism experience hence tourists are not only concerned with the souvenir product itself, but also the service delivered by the souvenir vendor and the service environment.

The personal characteristics of tourists have minimal effect on the purchasing of souvenirs which is unlike shopping for consumables where the consumer purchase products that reflect their tastes, need and desired satisfaction. In the purchase of consumables, consumers choose goods and services based on the perceived instrumental benefits they would add to their personality and life, hence personal characteristics may be the most important factor influencing choice of goods perceived to be necessities. This is not the case in the purchasing of souvenirs.

The observation that tourists purchase souvenirs after an assessment of a host of factors, suggests that tourists attach importance to items purchased as souvenirs. This implies that artists in the production of souvenirs should design products with high levels of artistic skill, creativity and with the consumer in mind. Knowledge of these factors would help artists and the management of the Center for National Culture (CNC) to modify souvenirs to reflect characteristics that would attract more tourists and increase spending on souvenirs. The management of the CNC could take advantage of the relevance of accessibility to shopping environments to decentralize the arts and craft centres so as to have shops in locations with clusters of tourist accommodation facilities and at major attraction sites to ensure easy access to souvenir shopping outlets by tourists. Also the CNC could promote on-line souvenirs shops to bridge the gap in distance. This could promote sales for vendors across the country as tourists could purchase souvenirs from all regions of the country without having to visit those regions. Finally, the management of the CNC in collaboration with the Ghana Tourism Authority could organize workshops intermittently to train souvenir vendors on effective customer relations and communication, as the service delivery method affects satisfaction with the souvenir shopping experience.

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