

ANALYSIS OF SOUVENIRS PURCHASE PATTERN IN INTERNATIONAL TOURIST IN SABAH

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ABSTRACT

Over the last few decades, the tourism industry has grown tremendously in Malaysia, especially in Sabah. The shopping sub-sector is an increasingly important component in the industry as well as accommodation, food and beverages, local transportation, entertainment and more. Statistics released by Tourism Malaysia records the bulk of international tourist spending in the country for shopping. Shopping spending increased from 31.3% in 2015 to 31.7% in 2016, surpassing the expenditure of accommodation for the second consecutive year. The purpose of this study is to identify patterns of souvenir buying among international tourists in Sabah. The characteristics and types of souvenir products that are a favorite of tourists in the state are identified. In addition, the factors that motivate international tourists to buy a souvenir product offered and the availability of tourist spending allocation to buy souvenirs in Sabah were also identified. The findings reveal that the important features that international travelers prefer in choosing souvenirs are local products, picture imaging, and accessories and decorations. Meanwhile, local food products in the form of dry products are the main choice of international travelers followed by mini products such as key chains, pens, bumper stickers and others, and postcards and handicrafts. In addition, the souvenir features that attract international travelers to buy them are products must be traditional, easy to carry and value for families and friends. It is also found that in addition to self-esteem is given to neighbors and relatives as their main purpose is to buy souvenirs. The encouraging and important findings of this study are the majority of tourists, 83.8%, stated that the selection of souvenir products offered in Sabah meets their needs. The purchase of souvenirs is an important activity and experience in tourism to tourists, so it is hoped that this study will contribute to improving and furthering the souvenir industry in Sabah especially and other places throughout Malaysia in general. In the further advance of souvenir industry in Sabah, the researcher recommended to improve the quality of current souvenir products especially popular products of tourist choice, get to know tourists and get information from them, produce souvenir products of tourist choice, plan appropriate promotional strategies for souvenirs and provide training and communication skills courses to sales people.

Keywords: Product Category, Product Type, Souvenir Features & Store Features.

INTRODUCTION

The souvenir industry, especially handicraft products, is a sub-industry activity that can contribute to income as well as create new employment opportunities for the people, especially those living in rural areas. Currently, the local handicraft market especially for the souvenir sub-sector is still relatively small

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compared to the growing tourist arrivals to reach 3.38 million people in 2013. According to the statistical report released by Tourism Malaysia, international tourist spending for 2016 has increased by 18.8% to RM82.1 billion compared to RM69.1 billion in 2015 (Albattata, Shukri, Yajid, Khatibi, 2019). The bulk of international tourist expenditure was on shopping (31.7%), accommodation (24.9%) and food & beverage (13.1%). Shopping spending increased from 31.3% in 2015 to 31.7% in 2016, outpacing accommodation spending for the second consecutive year.

The needs of tourists in tourism generally include accommodation, transportation, food, recreation and shopping expenses. Shopping is a must-have component in tourism. Shopping can contribute to the improvement of the economic market of a country, especially Malaysia (Azmi, Ahmad, Abdullah, Shaw, 2019; Asri, Hamid, 2018). This is clearly evidenced from the pattern of tourist spending to Malaysia in 2005 where shopping was the second largest component, contributing 20.4% behind accommodation needs (33.1%), while food and beverage spending contributed 17.4% (RMK9) (Cohen, Manion, Morrison, 2005). This is in line with the increase in total tourist arrivals which contributed to foreign exchange earnings which increased at an annual growth rate of 12.4 per cent from RM17.3 billion in 2000 to RM31.0 billion in 2005.

Based on the findings of a study conducted by the Economic And Social Commission For Asia And The Pacific Bangkok (ESCAP) in 1991 (Azmi, Buliah, Ramaiah, Ariffin, Ngelambong, 2017) domestic and international tourists spend money for the purpose of shopping on certain items especially such as leather goods, textiles, pewter ware, jewelry, non-electric, fragrance in Malaysia. This clearly shows that shopping is an important factor in encouraging a person to travel.

In addition, the results of this study also show that there are many tourists who are interested in buying local arts and crafts. Local craft products such as embroidery, beadwork, wood carving and batik printing have the potential to expand (Ali, Salleh, 2010). However, stakeholders in the national tourism industry whether from government or private bodies are more focused on market promotion of other tourism products and too little promotion is done to highlight craft products as souvenirs to tourists both domestic and international (*Foroughi, Buang, Sherilou, 2011*).

Although there are various types of products sold in the local market as crafts but most of the products still do not reflect the traditional values, uniqueness and authenticity. Among these souvenir entrepreneurs, they market various types of artificial craft products purchased from foreign countries such as China, Indonesia and Thailand (Asbollah, Hassan, Yusoff, Idris, 2017). This can be seen in tourist hotspots such as Gaya Street, Philipinno Market and handicraft shops around Kota Kinabalu City. This will definitely give a bad impression to tourists especially international tourists who may think that most of the craft products in Sabah are not genuine.

Therefore, the study of tourist buying patterns of souvenirs is important to the development of the local handicraft industry. Understanding this is very important to the local handicraft industry in providing suitable craft products to meet the needs and desires of tourists. However, it is still given less attention in the country's tourism industry (Tourism Malaysia 2017). Researchers believe that knowing the patterns and styles of souvenir purchases by tourists will be able to

provide ideas to improve and enhance product quality and produce new local craft products in the context of cost, quality, design and more (Ishak, Noorbiah, Rejab, Kassan, 2010).

MATERIALS AND METHOD

The study of tourist purchasing patterns on the purchase of local handicraft products in Sabah is categorized as quantitative research that takes a "descriptive" research approach through frequency, percentage, mean, mode, median, standard deviation and variance. However, the inferential approach is also used in some situations (Jamaludin, Yeop Yunus, 2014).

Data collection is using methods common in social research, namely literature review and fieldwork (Kayat, Azmi, Buliah, 2018). The literature review also includes a review of the literature and annual reports, especially on the tourism sector, tourist arrival statistics, production and marketing of souvenir products, including in the state of Sabah is very important to design the concept of this study.

Pre-testing of the research instrument was also conducted. The purpose of the pretest is to ensure that the questionnaire form provided can be administered effectively especially in the required data collection (Tourism Statistic, 2017). Another aspect that is emphasized is the accuracy of the questions, appropriateness and arrangement of the questions posed according to the objectives of the study in addition to the effective time. The questionnaire was written in three language namely English, Chinese and Korean, and next distributed to international tourists at selected hotels and resorts throughout the state of Sabah (Marzuki, 2010). Data collected through questionnaires were processed using Statistical Packages of Social Sciences (SPSS). In addition to using quantitative methods in the analysis through descriptive displays such as diagrams and frequency tables are used to see the basic profile of respondents. Mean analysis is also used to see the differences in respondents' views on a variable based on gender, country of origin, age and occupation.

In addition, cross tabulation analysis is also used to see the distribution patterns and relationships with the two study variables studied (Mohamad, Ishak, Rashid, 2017). This method is used to see the characteristics of products and types of souvenirs that respondents are interested in as well as the characteristics of shops visited by respondents.

RESULT DISCUSSION

As it has been stated that the souvenir business can have a huge impact on the Sabah state economy, therefore souvenir retailers who market products or services directly to their customers must know the characteristics or attitudes of each segment of its users, by trying to obtain information from them (Marangkun, Thipjumnong, 2018). The information obtained must be shared with souvenir manufacturers. Meanwhile, souvenir manufacturers need to use the information obtained to produce souvenirs that can meet the needs and tastes of customers.

If viewed from the gender variable, the results of the study found that female tourists are more likely to bring home souvenirs than males (Nadzri, Fauzi, Abd Rahman, Baharudin, 2017). Based on the analysis conducted, it was found that 85.5% of the respondents who said 'Yes' were women compared to men (73.3%).

However, the findings of the study show that there are only 35.0% of respondents who provide a special budget to buy souvenirs when visiting Sabah.

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However, even though the respondents did not provide the budget, it does not mean that they did not buy souvenirs. They just don't plan to buy souvenirs at first but will buy them when they find the souvenirs they want (Norman, Abd Wahid, 2017).

From the various types of souvenir products listed in the questionnaire, it was found that both men and women prefer to buy local food as souvenirs when visiting Sabah (Ojalere, 2017). For female respondents other than local food, respondents also chose souvenir items on the location such as pens, key chains, bumper stickers; picture postcard; handicraft items and information books were listed as 5 types of items that had a high probability of being purchased by the tourists. Apart from local food, the five types of products that were most likely to be bought by male tourists were art items; leather goods; picture postcards and handicraft items (Rahman, Zaman, Hassan, Wei, 2018).

On average, male tourists were found to be more likely to choose souvenir products that had the characteristics of 'easy to carry', 'traditional features', 'value for money to family and friends', the product was their 'favorite', 'many uses', and 'authenticity' of the product. While female tourists were more concerned with the features of souvenir products featuring 'traditional features', 'valuable gifts to family and friends', the products were their 'favorites', the price of the product was 'affordable', and the 'authenticity' of the product.

As for the characteristics of the souvenir shop, it was found that both male and female tourists stated that they chose the characteristics of the shop that 'allowed customers to try' the product to encourage them to visit the souvenir shop and buy souvenir products to take home. In addition male tourists also stated that stores that emphasize on 'high salesperson knowledge of the product', 'safety while shopping', 'friendly salespeople', and 'reasonable prices', as the top 5 motivating factors they visit a gift shop. Meanwhile, female tourists chose 'safety while shopping' as the second most important factor in their visit to a souvenir shop (Tourism Statistic, 2021). This is followed by store characteristics that emphasize on 'high salesperson knowledge of the product' and 'friendly salesperson' as the top 5 factors that influence them to visit a gift shop.

Referring to the reason for buying souvenirs, the majority of tourists (55.6%) spent their money on buying souvenirs for themselves as a memento. In addition, the majority of tourists (52.1%) also bought souvenirs as gifts to their friends. Meanwhile, as many as 13.7% of tourists choose to meet social needs as an excuse when they buy souvenirs to give to the head or senior in their workplace department. In addition, 13.7% of tourists also bought souvenirs to meet the demands of their neighbors. Most tourists also buy souvenirs for themselves for 'various' purposes which is 12%. There were only a few respondents who bought souvenirs out of respect for the recipient. Specifically, only 10.3% of tourists chose this reason for giving souvenirs to relatives.

Most tourists stated that the shopping experience in Sabah was 'fun', 'valuable' and 'important' in spending some of their money to buy souvenirs. On average, 'enjoyable', 'valuable' and 'important' to male tourists, and 'enjoyable', 'valuable' and 'attractive' to female tourists.

Overall, the majority of tourists, 83.8%, stated that the selection of souvenir products offered in Sabah meets their needs.

CONCLUSION

The existence of the souvenir sub-industry in the tourism industry in Sabah should not be ignored by state government economic planners. This is because the souvenir sub-industry has the potential to contribute to the economic development and revenue of the state. Therefore, they need to help in raising awareness among marketers and manufacturers of souvenir products. The main objective of this study is to obtain useful information in helping local producers develop potential souvenir products in Sabah. The study also reveals findings from urban centers throughout the state of Sabah which are often the focus of tourists in the tourism industry and represent the Sabah souvenir product business (Woon, Ban, 2019). Researchers hope this study can provide useful information to the tourism industry, and will be the key to understanding the pattern of souvenir buying among international tourists visiting Sabah.

There are some limitations in this study. One of the limitations is that it is only conducted in Sabah. Therefore, the study sample is limited to international tourists visiting Sabah only (Yusoff, Husain, Yahya, 2018). The conclusion made is based on their response which cannot describe in general terms other destinations visited by tourists in Malaysia. Therefore, further research on this topic needs to be made. Further studies may be more interesting if done on the repulsive and attractive factors of souvenirs in the future as the researcher did not study in depth in this study. Furthermore, as with backup applications, marketers need to devise strategies to promote souvenirs. If future studies focus on display, how and where tourists get information about souvenirs, souvenir marketers or manufacturers will be able to figure out what changes in souvenir offerings need to be made to make their stores more attractive to tourists.

Finally, based on research result and analysis of current problems on the sale of souvenirs in Malaysia, the researcher put forward some suggestions for the development of the tourism industry, especially the souvenir industry in Sabah (Yazid, Wel, Omar, 2016). The recommendations are to improve the quality of current souvenir products especially popular products of tourist choice, get to know tourists and get information from them, produce souvenir products of tourist choice (Yoopetch, 2017), plan appropriate promotional strategies for souvenirs and provide training and communication skills courses to sales people.

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NOMENCLATURE

ESCAP Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
Bangkok
RM Malaysian ringgit
RMK9 Ninth Malaysia Plan
SPSS Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

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