

Purchasing Satisfaction on Symbolic Items among International Tourist in Kuala Lumpur

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ABSTRACT

The tourism industry will ensure tourists' splurge in the country they visited. Tourists purchase because of the desire for keepsake and tangible memories of their holiday experience including represent the destination and as evidence throughout their experiences. Marketing mix used by marketers to produce the response they want to achieve from the target market. This study attempted to identify how marketing mix can influence tourist purchasing decision on symbolic items and determine overall satisfaction. The objective of this study was to identify which symbolic items most purchased by tourists as well as to examine the relationship of the marketing mix and their purchase behavior. The results indicate the highest symbolic item purchased by the tourists was t-shirts. From the finding also, the researchers have found that there are relationship between marketing mix and purchasing behavior of symbolic items among international tourist. Therefore, the results can be practically applied by the industry practitioners. It provides additional insights into factors that influenced the tourists purchasing decision on symbolic items and overall satisfaction on products purchased.

KEYWORDS: Tourist Purchasing Satisfaction, Marketing Mix, Symbolic Items, Kuala Lumpur.

INTRODUCTION

Resulting from the rising number of tourists that travel to Malaysia, it indicates that there are several tourist expenditure components made by the tourists when they come to Malaysia. One of the expenditure components is shopping and to reinforce. In [11] stated that shopping is essential for everyone in their daily survival life and it was a necessary activity. Trips and shopping had taken place since the prehistoric era [7, 34]. In [33] also found that shopping is a pleasurable activity and it can be considered as a travel inspiration because of the desire for keepsake and tangible memories of their holiday experience. It means that tourist not only shopping for their use at the destination they travel, but they also purchased items that can be brought back to their country of origin as mementos or personal use. Usually, tourists purchase items that may represent the destination or reminding them of the trip they had. Despite that, in [38] mentioned that the types of evidence or reminder are different according to people throughout their experiences, preferences and others. In this study, souvenirs here refer to symbolic items. The word reworded to symbolic items to show more varieties of products that can be mementos to tourists. In [31] which refers souvenirs as symbolic items supports this, and considered as a universal reminder for each event or moments especially while travelling to a destination. In [3] also defined souvenirs as a symbol on their travelling or as objects to remind the consumer about the moment during their travelling or purchase to bring back to their origins. In this research studies, it focuses on the factors that influence the tourists' purchasing behaviour on symbolic items using the 5P's marketing mix.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Symbolic Items

As a reminder of the travelling, the tourists may want to purchase anything that will remind them of the place they have travelled. This would lead to the purchasing of souvenirs. In [31] mentioned that souvenirs can be symbolic items and is the universal reminders for each event or moments. Moreover, in [3] also defined souvenirs as objects to remind the consumer about the moment during their travelling or purchase to bring back to their origins. Previous studies also had classified souvenirs into various categories, such as arts and crafts, gem stones, jewellery, leather goods, house wares, markers (e.g. plates, mugs, tea towels, and t-shirts) depicting words, symbol or picture represented by the souvenirs, collectibles, postcards and others [30, 31, 32]. Moreover, bringing back souvenirs considered as part of tradition for certain culture in the country, as in the case of Japanese. This has mentioned by [11, 18, 22] in their study, whereby the Japanese buy souvenirs or called as Omiyage when they travel. Omiyage

is the tradition of giving gifts to friends, relatives, neighbours and co-workers after a trip. Souvenirs can be in the form of typical local craftwork or products that are unique from what they usually see in terms of packaging, brand names, logo, colours and other elements [6, 13]. Previous studies have agreed this whereby, tourist shoppers seek unique products or symbol that is rare or unavailable at their place or they seek for products that represent the destination [14, 19, 26].

Marketing Mix

Marketing is defined as the formation, pricing, promotion and distribution of ideas, goods and services in order that exchanges may be created, that are able to satisfy both consumer and organization objectives [5]. In [15] added that marketing is the activity, the set of institutions and a process of creating, communicating and delivering which have value for consumers, partners and society at large. According to [2], the marketing mix is first described by [14] which the researcher identified twelve controllable marketing elements that would result a profitable business operation if the marketing mix were properly managed. In this study, it is only used the "Five P's" service marketing mix. The "Seven P's" service marketing mix suggested by [10] is more suitable for large scale of a service organization or business sector [3]. As this study focus on symbolic items, which is the souvenirs and consumer shopping goods, it is more suitable to use "Five P's" marketing mix to identify the purchasing behavior among tourists in Kuala Lumpur. The proposed marketing mix seems better to explore the behavior and to explore either the variables influenced purchase behaviors.

Hypothesis 1: There is a relationship between symbolic items purchased and the tourist purchasing behavior using marketing mix elements.

Marketing Mix Dimensions

First dimension of marketing mix is product which according to [36] is any combination of goods and services that offered to tourist to ensure able to satisfy their needs and wants. Added more, product can be tangible or intangible [12] that can offered for purchase or use by tourists. It can be categorized the product as tangible and service as intangible. Service product is normally in the tourism industry whereby service defined as any activity or benefit that does not result of ownership or anything [12, 26]. In this context study, the product here refer to the symbolic items which offered by sellers to the tourists travelled on Malaysia. Moreover, there are previous researchers [1, 3, 14, 17] agreed that product quality, uniqueness, and other elements of product factors has significant role on purchasing behaviour.

Hypothesis 1a: There is a relationship between product factor of symbolic items and tourist purchasing behavior.

Next dimension of marketing mix is price, as in [25] mentioned that pricing is also important. It needs to consider not only based on the quality of the product itself, but also including the consumer and the tourist's point of view. agreed that most of shopping goods purchased were based on price and the quality.

Hypothesis 1b: There is a relationship between price factor of symbolic items and tourist purchasing behavior.

As for the third dimension is place. Place is defined by [36] that it refers to having the right product, in suitable places, at the right time to be purchased by consumers. In [27] added that place define towards the availability of the product and proper distribution channel is needed to ensure that the product availability have the proper amount. In [20, 21] also find in their studies that the neatness and cleanliness of a shopping location is an important factor for tourists before they purchase the products at the destination.

Hypothesis 1c: There is a relationship between place factor of symbolic items and tourist purchasing behavior.

For the next marketing mix variable is promotion. In [36] suggested in order being effective, organization need to plan promotional activities thoroughly and using the correct amount of promotional tools. Promotion and promotional tools used to influence the consumer buying behaviour, and often the images, words, and sounds directed to appeal emotions that basically, tourists are mostly personality driven and seeking for experiences [27]. In [3] indicates that promotion or information source gave an impact and influencing purchasing behaviour among tourists.

Hypothesis 1d: There is a relationship between promotion factor of symbolic items and tourist purchasing behavior.

Personnel is the last dimension in marketing mix dimensions. Based on [27], this added element in the marketing mix is consider important because personnel create more bonding and contact with tourists in order to sell the products. In [31] also agreed that salespeople should show great attitude with a friendly conversation to attract tourists to purchase. In concluded, the personnel factor showed that there is significant relationship of personnel and tourist purchasing behaviour [3, 21].

Hypothesis 1e: There is a relationship between personnel factor of symbolic items and tourist purchasing behavior.

Tourist Purchasing Behaviour

Based on [16], tourist behaviour is focused on shopping activity, which divided into two between shoppers and non-shoppers and this is called as shopping behaviour. In [4] defined shopping behaviour as activities tourist engage in while examining or purchasing merchandise or services. In [3] concludes that, tourist purchasing behavior can be defined as same as consumer behavior and shopping behavior. Moreover, decision making was defined by [28] as mental orientation which it characterized choices made by tourists [37]. As in this study, it looked into the buyer responses either they are satisfied or not.

Satisfaction

In [3] mentioned that satisfaction of consumers usually based on the comparison of expectation and experiences. From the tourists point of view, it can be said that tourist's expectation are depending on past experience and other types of non-experiential information such as friends and family, tourist guideline books and others [1]. Other researchers also agree that satisfaction comes after the purchasing behaviour is experienced by the tourist and resulting into loyalty including repurchased of the products [8, 9, 16].

METHODOLOGY

Research Instrument

A self administrated questionnaire is utilized to achieve the objectives of the study. The measurements were adapted from [3] which the variables derived from the proposed marketing mix formation model by [10]. A five point Likert's scale is utilized to measure the influenced factors on symbolic items which is the souvenir. Questions on the descriptive information such as products bought and location of purchasing the products were given several choices, where respondents may choose more than one answer. The outcome of this type of question will determine the products that respondents most bought and place them favor to purchase it.

Data Collection

The data gathered from the international tourists found along the Kuala Lumpur City Centre Bukit Bintang area or known as the Golden Triangle of Kuala Lumpur. The type of sampling used in this study is the non-probability convenience sampling as it is convenient to get the data from the population. The questionnaires that have been distributed were 384, whereby the respondents that have answered the questionnaires completely were 230 respondents that generate 58% of response rate.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

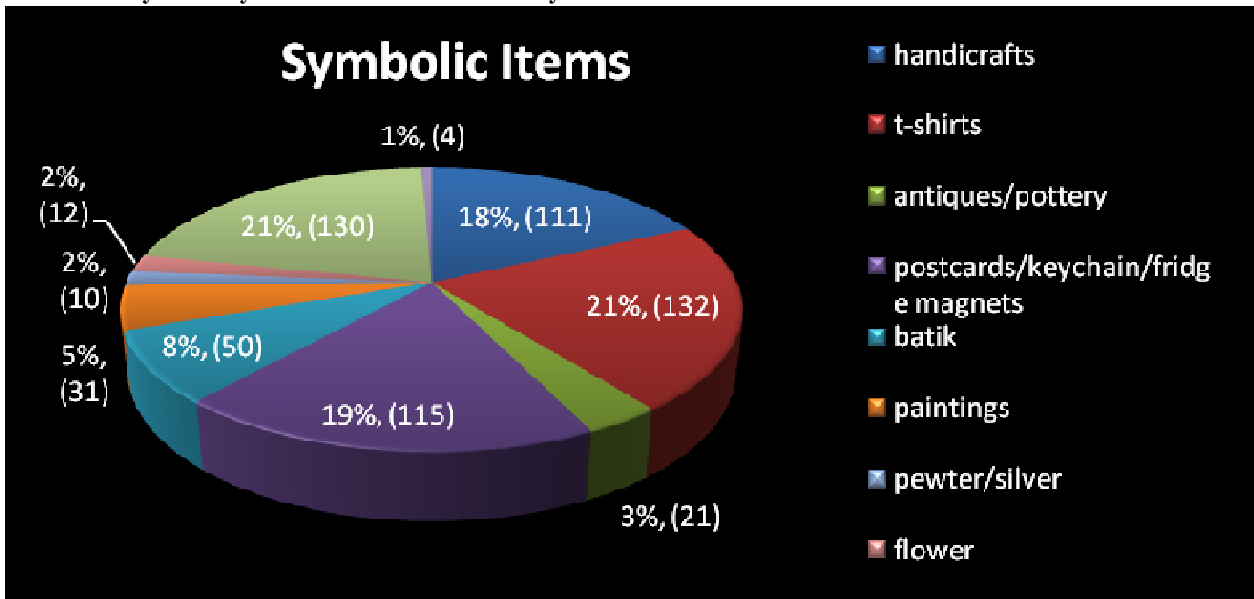
Reliability Test

Table 1: Results of reliability test (N = 230)

Items	Cronbach's Alpha	No of items
Symbolic Items		
Product	0.746	10
Price	0.704	5
Place	0.748	5
Promotion	0.701	4
Personnel	0.701	2
Tourist Purchasing Behavior	0.788	11

According to [24] the reliability test of Cronbach Alpha, it should be above 0.70. Overall dimensions for marketing mix (product, price, place, promotion and personnel) produced high value 0.748 for place and lowest value 0.701 for promotion. The values were considered acceptable and more than appropriate to proceed with any further testing.

Mean Score Analysis on Symbolic Items Purchased by Tourist



Based on the result which been computed, the highest symbolic item purchased by the tourists was t-shirts with the name or picture resembled the place with 132 frequencies. Second highest percentage of 21% was food that narrowed into nuts, dodol and chocolate followed by 19% where tourist purchased items on postcards, key chains and fridge magnets. Food resembled culture food of Malaysia such as dodol, whereas it is something unusual for tourists to found in certain destination and make the tourists purchased them. The frequencies on purchasing the handicrafts stated 111 frequencies while batik items set eight frequencies. As for paintings, flowers, pewter or silver and others represent 5%, 2%, 2% and 3% respectively. The respondents mentioned that other symbolic item that they purchased was the traditional musical instruments.

Pearson Correlation Analysis on Relationship between Symbolic Items towards Tourist Purchasing Behavior using Marketing Mix

Table 2: The result of Pearson r correlation coefficient analysis

Variables	Purchasing Behaviour
Symbolic Items	
Product	.410**
Price	.332**
Place	.342**
Promotion	.229**
Personnel	.312**
Purchasing Behaviour	-

Based on the Pearson Correlation analysis in Table 2, the result shows that product with the score of ($r = .410^{**}$; $p < 0.01$) has a strong correlation towards tourist purchasing behavior. As for place is ($r = .342^{**}$; $p < 0.01$), price score ($r = .332^{**}$; $p < 0.01$) and personnel score is ($r = .312^{**}$; $p < 0.01$). The lowest score and weak correlation is between promotional dimension and tourist purchasing behavior which is ($r = .229$; $p < 0.01$). Therefore, it can be concluded that there are positive relationship between symbolic items towards tourist purchasing behavior using marketing mix. In order to answer hypothesis 1a to 1e, a Regression Analysis were undertaken.

Regression Analysis of Symbolic Items and Tourist Purchasing Behavior

Table 3: Results of regression analysis

Predictors	R ²
Step 1: Model Variables	
Marketing Mix Attributes	
Product	0.168
Place	0.117
Price	0.110
Personnel	0.097
Promotion	0.052

Based on Table 3, the result shows that out of the five dimensions, product impacted the most to tourist's purchasing behavior with the score of ($R^2 = .168$, Adj. $R^2 = .164$, $P < 0.001$). Then, followed by place ($R^2 = 0.117$, Adj. $R^2 = 0.113$, $P < 0.001$), price factor ($R^2 = .110$, Adj. $R^2 = .106$, $P < 0.001$), personnel factor able to explain the 9.7% ($R^2 = 0.097$, Adj. $R^2 = 0.093$, $P < 0.001$) and also promotion dimension ($R^2 = 0.052$, Adj. $R^2 = 0.048$, $P < 0.001$). Therefore, the analyses supported hypothesis 1a to 1e.

CONCLUSION

As was supported by the research results, it is strongly agreed marketing mix is one of the marketing approaches on tourist purchasing behavior. As mentioned earlier, marketing mix factor also has proved being useful for marketing and decision making in retailing including useful for case study analysis in business schools [10]. The study findings clearly showed that product contributed the most towards tourist purchasing behavior. It shows that product factor which emphasize on quality, unique and authentic, creative designs and other elements have a relationship on the purchasing behavior. Through the result, it also clearly stated that place have a positive relationship on tourist purchasing behavior. The symbolic items should be place at neat and clean location to attract more purchase from the tourist. This is also supported by [29, 39]. Other marketing mix (price, promotion and personnel) dimensions will help to increase the purchasing behavior of tourist that come travel to Malaysia whereby it has positive relationship towards tourist purchasing behavior.

For future research, it is recommended for this study to set in different setting to compare the purchasing behavior of symbolic items according states for future research. Based on [19], Penang and Melaka are listed as most visited state by international tourists. In addition, in [35] listed both states as Historic City of the Straits of Malacca on 2008. In regards with that, the study may look into the purchasing behavior of symbolic items. It may lead to a different result and be useful for future usage.

As a conclusion, based on the discussion above, it is strongly supported that marketing mix is not only for business industry, it is also suitable to the hospitality industry namely the tourism industry. Thus, studying on the purchasing behaviour may help to increase the percentage of items purchased in Malaysia. Moreover, from the findings of this study, it benefits the marketer and also tourism government and authority in term of shopping aspects namely symbolic items. The marketers can perform appropriate approach to be in line with the needs and wants of tourists.

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