

SOLIDIFYING TOURISTS' POST-TRAVEL MEMORIES THROUGH SOUVENIR

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Abstract: This paper explores how souvenir can be designed as a means of promoting tourism destinations and experiences. To achieve the research aim, the study first conducted a survey to determine the attributes that influence tourists' souvenir purchase preferences. A Likert scale questionnaire was used, comprising of questions that cut across the design performance and cultural evaluation indices. The results, which were analysed using descriptive statistics, indicate that the top three attributes that tourists look for in souvenir are features that evoke travel experience, usability and branding with destination features. Based on these findings, experimental research was further conducted to develop a series of souvenir with the attributes embedded. The outcome suggests that the approach could help promote the cultural aspects and also convey the essence of tourism destination to potential visitors.

Key words: cultural product design, experience-centred design, souvenir, product attribute, tourism.

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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 (Olalere, 2017). The 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; World Travel & Tourism Council, 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 international arrivals per annum (Olalere, 2019; World Tourism Organization, 2019). There was an exceptional growth rate in 2017 (+7%) and 2018 (+6%) (World Tourism Organization, 2020a), and in 2019, the international tourist arrivals globally increased by 4% to reach 1.5 billion (World Tourism Organization, 2020b) (Figure 1).

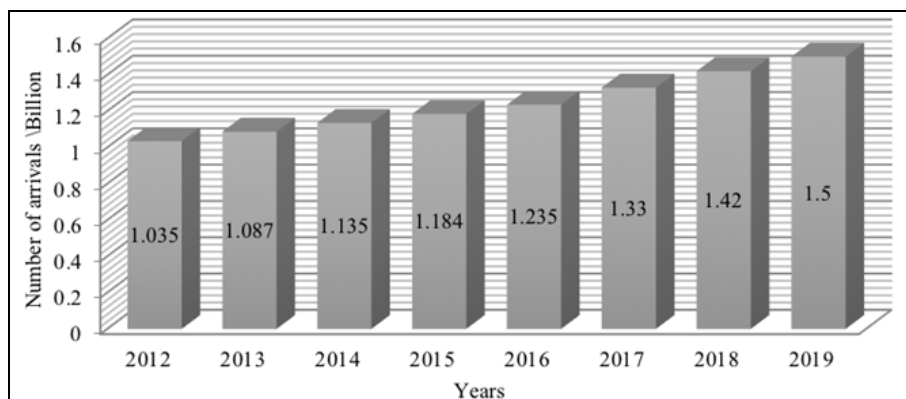


Figure 1. Global international tourist arrivals (Source: World Tourism Organization, 2020b)

As for South Africa, which has been one of the top-most tourism destinations in Africa, the foreign tourist arrivals in 2018 grew by 1.8% (compared to 2017) to 10.5 million and generated R82.5 billion tourism revenue (South African Tourism, 2019a). In the first quarter of 2019 (January to March), South African Tourism recorded R25.1 billion total foreign direct spend, which amounts to 24.1% increase in direct spend compared to the same period in 2018 (South African Tourism, 2019b). Data by South African Tourism (2019a) shows that 64% of the revenue generated in 2018 are from leisure spending. Hence, the high volume of leisure tourists and the top attractions across the country, which are mostly natural attractions and shopping malls, drive the increased revenue generated from tourism.

According to Oh et al. (2004), one of the ubiquitous activities and important leisure pursuit of many people during vacations and trips is shopping. 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

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for tourists in South Africa (Olalere, 2017; South African Tourism, 2016). The estimated value of revenue generated from shopping in the second quarter of 2016 is R4.9 billion, which remains the biggest spend category in South Africa tourism (South African Tourism, 2016).

Even though the complexities, meanings, and practices of shopping have not been well understood (Swanson and Timothy, 2012), studies show that shopping in terms of souvenir is one of the distinctive reasons why people travel to other places (Brennan and Savage, 2012; Lunyai et al., 2008; Swanson, 2004). According to Brennan and 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 and Zins, 2011).

Apart from souvenir serving as a memento of tourism experience, it also plays a significant role as an agent of economic development by accelerating economic growth, alleviating poverty and increasing sustainable development within the host communities through souvenir production and sales (Lacher and Nepal, 2011). Besides, it can also help in promoting tourism destination and experiences to potential visitors, which is an effective means of developing the tourism industry. This is evidence in the inclusion of marketing and promotion as one of the key national policies to ignite the tourism engine of growth in South Africa (South African Tourism Task Team, 1996). The policy stressed the importance of marketing and promoting attractions (both well-established and emerging attractions) and experiences to tourists and potential visitors. Similarly, several studies indicated that souvenir could directly or indirectly serve as a means of promoting tourism destinations and experiences (Gordon, 1986; Olalere, 2017; Swanson and Horridge, 2004, 2006). However, there is little or no study that explores how such souvenir can be designed and produced. Most of the studies focus on souvenir purchase intention, behaviour and the factors that influence tourists' purchase decisions (Amaro et al., 2019; Anderson and Littrell, 1996; Bynum-Boley et al., 2013; Haldrup, 2017; Kim and Littrell, 2001; Lunyai et al., 2008; Meitiana et al., 2019; Swanson and Horridge, 2004; Wilkins, 2010). There is apparently no study conducted on how those identified factors (such as product attributes) can be applied to develop souvenir that meets tourists' expectations, promote attractions and experiences.

Research shows that many souvenirs do not meet tourists' expectations, as they often lack aesthetics, functionality and meanings; thus, as time passes, they are most times deserted and stripped of their role as travel mementoes (Collins-Kreiner and Zins, 2011; Lee et al., 2017). Hence, an approach towards enhancing the meaning of souvenirs, as suggested by Lee et al. (2017, 178), is to make them function as an emotional connector that enhances and maintains tourists' travel experiences. Against this backdrop, this study seeks to explore how souvenir can be designed in a way that solidifies tourists' post-travel memories and maintains a connection with tourism destination.

The remaining sections in this paper increase the breadth of knowledge in relation to the study by firstly, describing the method used in data collection, analysis, and the experimental procedures. Secondly, the findings from both the survey and experimental case study were presented, and the methods used were rationalised in the discussion. Finally, the last section of the paper summarises the findings to answer the research questions, highlights the limitations of the study and recommends future research directions.

METHODOLOGY

To achieve the aim of this study, which is to explore how souvenir can be designed to enhance tourism experience, the study was guided by the following research questions:

- i. *What are the product attributes that influence tourists' perception towards souvenirs?*
- ii. *How can the identified attributes be embedded in a souvenir to enhance its meaning as a means of reliving tourism experiences?*

The exploratory study was executed in two stages; survey and an experimental case study.

Survey

The stage employed a quantitative, exploratory research method in the form of a survey to answer the first research question. The population for the survey was foreign tourists who had visited or are on a visit to South Africa. The name and contact details (social media account) of tourists were retrieved from International travel blogs through purposeful sampling technique (Backpackr, Travello, Travelstart, Getaway, and Ranger Diaries). 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 study used an online survey questionnaire (Qualtrics Online Survey), and selected participants who agreed to participate in the survey were sent the link to the questionnaire. 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). 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 et al. (2013). Five-point Likert 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), and the findings revealed those attributes that greatly influence souvenir purchase decisions.

Experimental case study

To answer the second research question, an experimental study was conducted where the findings from the survey were used as a guide in developing souvenirs. The undergraduate students in a second years design class were selected to participate in this experimental case study. Before the student participated in the experimental case study, they attended two briefing sessions. At the first briefing session, the students were briefed about the initial survey and the findings. The details of the study were presented to the students so that they can have a clear understanding of the purpose of the study, the progress and findings. The second briefing focussed on the application of the findings in developing souvenirs. At this session, students were exposed to the cultural design model by Lin (2007), and examples of products designed using this approach were presented to the student so that they can have a clear understanding of its application.

This transformative approach developed by Lin (2007) called the *Cultural Design Model* uses scenario and story-telling approaches, which comprises of four steps; 1) setting a scenario (investigation); 2) telling a story (interaction); 3) writing a script (development), and 4) designing a product (implementation). Setting a Scenario: Before exploring people's experience, it is important first to understand their background and domain; that is, how they interpret or interact with objects they meet on a daily basis, taking into consideration the economic issues, social culture and technological applications. Hence, this step analysis situations or objects to determine the important features or characteristics that can be applied at any of the 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).

- **Storytelling:** Based on the scenario that has been set in the previous step, this step builds empathy and understanding of users' past experiences to develop a storytelling that describes intended user's need and the features of the product.
- **Development:** This step involves concept development based on the developed scenario and story. Here, relevant ideas are created using visual methods such as text and pictograph, and the product attributes are embedded at three cultural design levels; i) visceral; ii) behavioural and iii) reflective level (Norman, 2004). The embedded attributes at the visceral level are tangible attributes that enhance the physical appearance of the design. At the behavioural level, the attributes are human-related and enhance the functionality, user pleasure, usability etc. In contrast, the attributes at the reflective level are intangible and enhance the subjective level such as self-image, emotion and affection.
- **Design a product:** Here, the design knowledge gained, and the sense of design are combined to create the product. The features applied in the design process are also evaluated.

The class, comprising of twelve students, was divided into three groups (four students per group). Each group was asked to select a tourism destination in South Africa and then design a souvenir that promotes the destination to tourists. The main criteria set for the souvenir design is that it must possess the top three product attributes indicated in the previous survey findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Two hundred thirty-one (231) responded to the online survey questionnaire, which amounts to 63.5 per cent 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 per cent) and female (38.9 per cent) participants with the age range from 18 to 59. The highest percentage of the respondents (46.2%) are between the ages of 18 and 29, while 42.3% of the total respondents have income range from \$1000 to \$3999 per month (Table 1). Nearly 60 percent of the participants reported that they travel between 2 to 4 times per year for vacation.

When asked the major purpose of their trip, around 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
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 purpose of this survey was to identify the product attributes that influence tourists' souvenir purchase decision. In other words, investigate why tourists buy souvenirs during their trip(s) to South Africa and their expectations when buying souvenirs. When the respondents (foreign tourists) were asked about the major purpose for buying a souvenir, 53.8 per cent of the participants reported that they purchased a souvenir to serve as a reminder of their travel experience. Since respondents were allowed to select as many answers as applied to them, the result obtained based on the descriptive statistics also revealed that 46.2 % buy a souvenir as evidence of visiting a place while 42.3 per cent indicated that they buy souvenir both as a representation of famous icons and as a gift for family and friends (Figure 2).

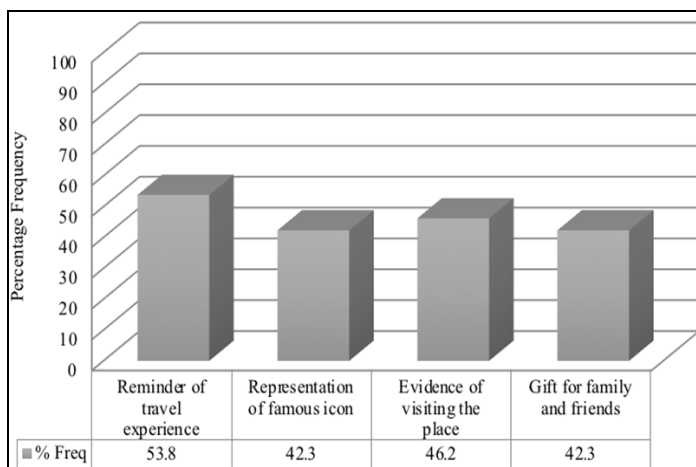


Figure 2. Purpose of souvenir purchase (Source: Olalere, 2017)

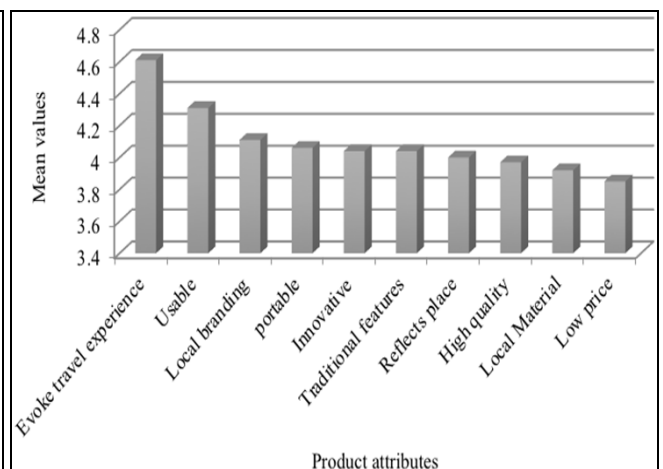


Figure 3. Mean values of the product attributes' influence on souvenir purchase preference

Figure 2 shows that "reminder of travel experience" is the most stated reason for buying a souvenir, which is evidence that souvenirs play a significant role in sustaining travel experiences (Olalere, 2017). This finding is similar to Brenna and Savage's definition of souvenir as central to the tourism experience and can potentially transform intangible into tangible experiences through embedded

semiotic messages (Brennan and 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 shows that the most important attribute that tourists look for in a souvenir is to evoke a travel experience; this attribute recorded the highest mean value of 4.61. The rating corresponds with the respondents' purpose of purchasing a souvenir. That is, the highest percentage of respondents reported "reminder of travel experience" as the reason for buying a souvenir, and therefore they seek souvenirs with the attributes that can evoke their travel experience (even long after the trip). Desmet (2003) opines that there are always some motives attached to any product we invest resources on, in this case, souvenir could be seen as an instrument that helps tourists accomplish a goal (evoking travel experience). Hence, they anticipated an event of possessing a souvenir that will evoking travel experience (expectation). According to Desmet and Hekkert (2002), Desmet and Hekkert (2007) and Luke (2009), any souvenir that meets that expectation is appraised as motive compliant, which results to a consequent decision to purchase the souvenir.

Usability and branding with destination feature 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 their travel experiences, an interactive or engaging souvenir can also be a means of evoking or re-living travel experiences. Furthermore, since the "evidence of visiting a place" is the second-rated reason for purchasing a souvenir, souvenirs branded with destination features would serve as evidence that the tourist has visited a particular place. 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 and Gizaw, 2014; Álvarez and Casielles, 1993; Seng and Husin, 2015; Faith and Edwin, 2014), this study shows that price has a lesser 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 result shows 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 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.

Experimental Case Study: Souvenir Design

This experimental case study was guided by the findings from the survey and the cultural design model by Lin (2007). Each of the three groups (four students in each group) selected a tourism destination in South Africa and then designed a souvenir that promotes the destination to tourists. The main criteria set for the souvenir design is that it must possess the top three product attributes indicated in the previous survey findings, which was presented to them in the first briefing session. That is: firstly, it must evoke travel experience of the selected tourism destination. Secondly, it must be functional (usable), and lastly, it must reflect the local identity of the place (branded with destination features). The students worked on this project for four weeks, with three hours of contact time per week. Each group was allowed to continue the project outside the formal three hours class per week. The three groups were asked to employ the four steps of the cultural design process. 1. Setting a scenario; 2. Storytelling; 3. Development; 4. Design a product. At the first step, the findings from the survey guided in setting the scenario as it reveals the features (attribute) that tourists seek in a souvenir. At the second step, the tourists' expectations were further described using storytelling and developed into relevant design ideas at the third step, as shown in Figure 4-6. Lastly, the design knowledge gained was employed at the fourth step in creating the souvenir products (Figure 4-6).

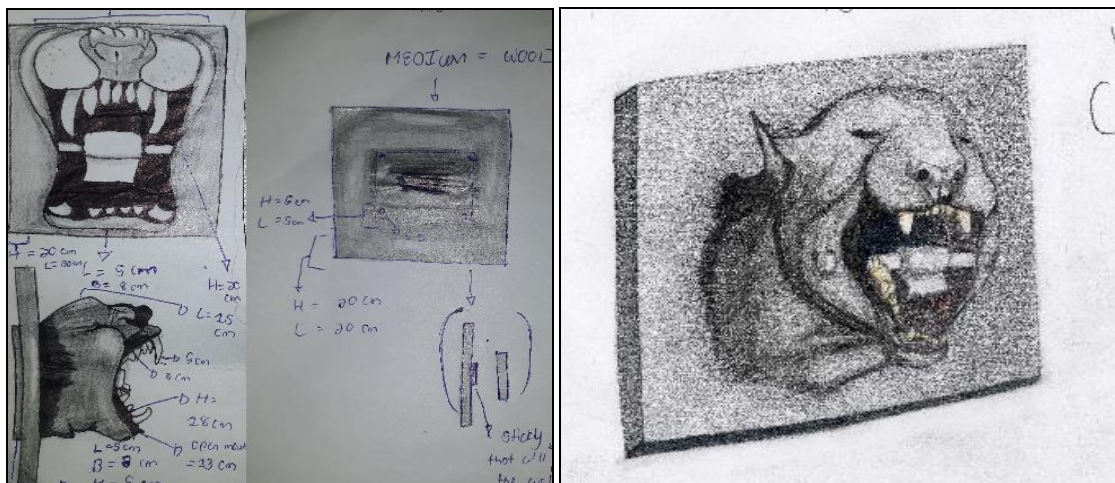


Figure 4. Wall tissue paper holder using black leopard as the design influence

i. Group A: Kruger National Park

The first group (Group A) selected Kruger National Park for their experimental case study. The team designed a wall tissue paper holder using black leopard as the design influence (Figure 4). Black leopard often said to be a myth, is elusive as it only makes up a mere 1% of the entire leopard population. Record shows that there are several reported sightings of black leopard around the Kruger National Park than anywhere else in the world. Even though most of the reported sightings can only be confirmed orally, the group intends to create awareness about this uniqueness as a means of promoting the national park.

ii. Group B: Addo Elephant National Park

The second group (Group B) selected Addo Elephant National Park and developed a portable camp chair with an elephant as the design influence. Addo Elephant Park, one of the top three National Parks in South Africa, was established in 1931 to specifically protect Addo elephants that were on the brink of extinction due to decimation. Therefore, the group used an elephant as a design influence in creating a portable camp chair. Elephant was used as the design influence as it not only reflects the name and the major attraction at the park, it also tells a story and represent a narrative of how and why the park was established or proclaimed. Figure 5 shows the concept development stages that the group went through before arriving at the final product, which is a portable camp chair.



Figure 5. A camp chair inspired by the head of an elephant

iii. Group C: Castle of Good Hope

The third group (Group C) selected the Castle of Good Hope, which was declared a historical monument in 1936 (Castle of Good Hope, n.d.). The castle is the oldest existing colonial building in South Africa. It has a bell tower situated over the main entrance, which was used to announce time and also warn citizens of any danger (Figure 6). The group developed a table lamp stand using the bell tower as the design influence (Figure 7).



Figure 6. Castle of Good Hope main entrance (Castle of Good Hope, n.d.)

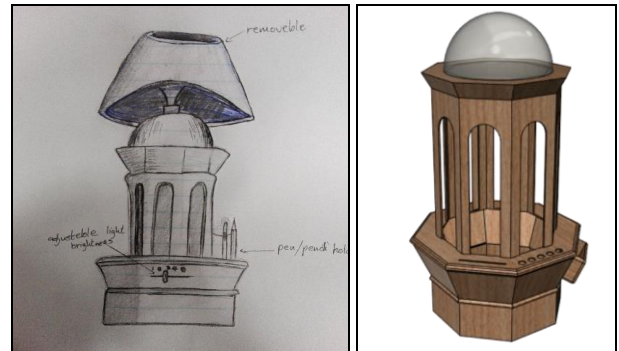


Figure 7. A table lamp design in form of the Castle of Good Hope

In summary, the groups (A-C) were able to embed the attributes (evoking trace experience, usable and destination features) in the souvenir designs at the three levels of cultural design. The attribute, aimed to evoke travel experience, was introduced at the reflective level through product-user interaction. Group-A designed a souvenir that engaged users at a subjective level through interaction with leopard's bodily structure. For example; the tissue is positioned in the mouth cavity in a way that when pulled, it seems like pulling the tongue of the leopard. The leopard teeth are also introduced for cutting the tissue paper. Hence, this interaction triggers experiences and memories at subjective (reflective) level. The usability attribute is at the behavioural level where the souvenir is designed to function as tissue paper holder, and the structure of the black leopard's head used as design influence ignites experiences at the visceral level.

Group B and C also employed the three levels of cultural design in developing their souvenirs. Both the camp chair and the table lamp are functional at the behavioural level, and the product-user interaction will also ignite memories and experience at the reflective level. Lastly, the designs are influenced by destination features (elephant and Castle of Good hope entrance gate), which have the potential to trigger experience at the visceral level. Overall, the analysis above shows that the three cultural design levels are interconnected and can influence each other. A good example is the behavioural and reflective level, where the functionality has a great impact on the result experience. Hence, it is important to consider the design levels holistically when applying them in product development.

CONCLUSION

One of the key national policies developed to ignite the tourism engine of growth in South Africa is marketing and promotion (South African Tourism Task Team, 1996). Interestingly, studies have shown that the use of cultural product design approach in developing modern products (in this case souvenirs) can help to improve the sustainable flow of cultural capital (Moalosi et al., 2010; Qin et al., 2019; Zhan et al., 2017). That is, through the incorporation of product attributes that satisfy the intangible images of tourists' encounter or experience during a trip or vacation, souvenir can play a significant role in promoting cultural aspects, conveying the essence of tourism to potential visitors, and enabling tourists to re-live the experience in routine time and space. Furthermore, the previously neglected communities can benefit from these entrepreneurial opportunities and bringing development to their rural areas by promoting potential destinations or attractions (such as ecotourism) within their areas through souvenir design.

Therefore, the study has been able to demonstrate how souvenir can be designed to enhance tourism experiences. This was achieved by identifying the product attributes that influence tourists' perception towards souvenir and then exploring how the attributes can be embedded in a souvenir to enhance the tourism experience. The outcome of the survey revealed not only the ten important attributes but also highlights the attribute according to their level of importance. The study also contributed to the body of knowledge by advancing the application of the cultural design model in souvenir design. The study further validated the role of the cultural design levels and their interconnection in product development. It is important to note that this study focuses on only international tourists. The survey conducted used international tourists as respondents, hence, the findings may not be applicable to domestic tourists. The term souvenir in this study is also limited to tangible products or crafts. Some future research directions will be to conduct a comparative study that examines the similarities and differences in souvenir purchase behaviour between international and domestic tourists. This paper also recommends a further study on souvenir design, with specific focus on getting tourists' feedback or perception on souvenirs designed using the cultural design model.

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