

# Niche Retailing: Souvenir Attributes and Purchase Intentions

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## Abstract

*Retail tourism is a niche retail market of importance in Australia to both business and government with international students comprising a significant proportion of this market. A convenience sample of 216 international higher education (IHE) students at a West Australian university revealed that demographic characteristics showed statistically significant differences in authentic souvenir attributes and intention to purchase. Whilst female IHE students tend to buy arts, paintings or jewellery, IHE students from the Asian region tend to buy collectables or accessories. Older IHE students are more likely to purchase authentic souvenirs as gifts for other people. Overall, Australian souvenirs made in Australia were considered as being of high quality, expensive, authentic and prestigious compared with Australian souvenirs made elsewhere. Additionally, factor analysis showed that features influencing souvenir purchases could be grouped according to the four attributes of innovativeness, portability, symbolism and popularity.*

## Introduction

Berman and Evans (2001) define retailing as ‘the business activities involved in selling goods and services to consumers for their personal, family, or household use’ (p. 3). Postmodern international, globalised, neoliberal market contexts have enabled retail sales to reach their highest in history; however, business and government face numerous challenges associated with retailing (Berman & Evans, 2001; Jamal, 2003; Timothy, 2005). These include: macro-issues, such as globalisation; generic issues, such as consumer boredom and expectation; strategic issues, such as average sale or the interplay of retailing and ethnic identity; and regulatory and operational issues, such as access to retailing whether through appropriate retail opening hours or access to new retail technologies (Reinders & Baker, 1998; Pavleen & Singh, 2007; O’Cass & Grace, 2008).

Niche retailing occurs where ‘retailers identify specific customer segments and deploy unique strategies to address the desires of the segments’ (Berman & Evans, 2001: 82).

Retail businesses must develop strategies to determine the customer market to which to appeal on the basis of its characteristics and needs—that is, to identify purchase attributes and intentions to purchase according to their identified market segment. Acknowledging the differing needs of markets provides scope for government to review policy relating to retail business in areas such as opening hours. Models for appropriate operation strategies need to be developed to enable businesses to meet the demands of niche retail markets. The challenges of work–life balance are demonstrated clearly with the changing socio-demographic and psychographic needs of niche markets, and thus present a challenge to business for associated changes in their retail operations. Berman & Evans (2001) suggest that ‘this approach will have a large future presence since it lets many retailers stress factors other than price in their strategies’ (p. 82).

Two key niche markets identifiable in Western Australia (WA) are the large international student population and the large fly-in/fly-out worker population. Although these could both be considered local retail markets, they are also tourist retail markets due to a range of characteristics. Both of these cohorts have considerable purchasing power; however, their consumption patterns may vary considerably to those of local patterns due to work, study and travel commitments. Thus it is pertinent for business to assay the needs of these markets in terms of purchase characteristics and purchase intentions. This paper investigates the needs of international higher education (IHE) students—a cohort of significance to Australia in terms of education and retail income (ABS, 2007; Access Economics, 2007; AEI, 2007, 2008).

International students are considered a significant sector of the global tourism market, the economic value of which is well recognised and reported. Tourism is one of the world’s largest industries generating approximately US\$7,060 billion of worldwide economic activity and 231.2 million jobs in 2007 (WTTC, 2007). Globally, tourism is expected to account for 10.4 percent of global gross domestic product (GDP) and is expected to grow at a level of 4.3 percent per year over the next ten years. In 2006 Australia was ranked in eighth position by UNWTO (2007) on its list of top tourism earners. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2007), the tourism industry accounted for AUD\$37.6 billion of total GDP in 2005–06, which is an increase of 5.5 percent from the previous year. Domestic tourists generated 75.8 percent, with the other 24.2 percent generated by international visitors. Expenditure by tourists has been recorded as experiencing an increase of 5.1 percent in 2005–06 compared to 2004–05.

The ABS (2007) has reported that tourist expenditure for shopping, which includes the purchasing of gifts and souvenirs, accounts for the second largest proportion of tourism consumption, with numerous studies estimating that tourist spending on souvenir purchases can account for approximately one third of their total spend (Littrell *et al.* in Yu & Littrell, 2003; ABS, 2007). Therefore, it can be argued that retail tourism expenditure, in particular on souvenirs, is economically important for many retail businesses. Consequently, this research study investigates the niche market of tourist souvenir purchases in WA. Whilst the term *souvenir* commonly refers to commercially produced and purchased objects (Swanson, 2004), this study adopts the broader definition of souvenirs

as ‘material objects which serve as reminders of people, places, events or experiences of significance in a person’s biography’ (Jafari, 2000: 547).

Purchasing souvenirs is one of the favoured activities that forms an integral part of many tourists’ travel experience. Souvenirs serve as a tangible way for the tourist to remember the journey as well as to prove that they have actually visited a certain country (Swanson, 2004). Studies of souvenir purchase behaviour describe major variables which can be considered as influential factors on tourist purchasing decisions. These include demographic characteristics (Reisinger & Waryszak, 1994; Anderson & Littrell, 1995; Hobson & Christensen, 2001; Pan & Laws, 2001), product attributes, type of souvenir products, and purchase motives (Dillon & Reif, 2004; Moscardo, 2004; Swanson, 2004; Goeldner & Ritchie, 2006; Swanson & Horridge, 2006). In some Asian cultures, for example, bringing home souvenirs from an overseas trip as gifts for family, friends and colleagues conveys important meaning in strengthening the established relationships (Reisinger & Waryszak, 1994; Pan & Laws, 2001; King, Dwyer & Prideaux, 2006). Research conducted by Tosun *et al.* (2007) found that authenticity of the product was the first factor considered by tourists looking for souvenirs. Goeldner & Ritchie (2006) also state that the most important element in tourist shopping is the authenticity of souvenir products.

The meaning of *souvenir authenticity* is not well defined in the literature and this has allowed the term to be used in different ways to imply different meanings (Waitt, 2000; Chhabra, 2005). Thus, by examining tourist perceptions of souvenirs, an insight into the notion of souvenir authenticity may be gained. Furthermore, investigating behavioural issues of tourists in regard to their purchase of authentic souvenirs is also deemed to be significant in understanding market demand and will be valuable for the Australian souvenir industry.

Tourism marketing research has revealed that international students constitute a significant cohort of international tourists (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Taylor, Shanka & Pope, 2004). International students have also been reported to make a significant contribution to the economy and Australian tourism by visiting places of interest, working in hospitality, stimulating *visits by friends and relatives* (VFR) tourism, and purchasing souvenirs (Shanka, Ali-Knight & Pope, 2002; Michael, Armstrong & King, 2003; Son & Pearce, 2005; Min-En, 2006). Leiper and Hunt (1999) report that international students constitute approximately three percent of all international visitors, but suggest that they contribute up to 20 percent in terms of economic impact associated with inbound tourism in Australia. The significance of the souvenir retail contribution to the Australian economy is evidenced by the paucity of literature in the area, thus this study has investigated souvenir consumption from the IHE student perspective.

The objectives of the study were, therefore, to investigate what authentic souvenir means from the tourist perspective, to examine the kind of product categories that are associated with authentic souvenirs, to discover the attributes considered by tourists in looking for authentic souvenirs, and to assess perceptions towards various aspects of Australian souvenirs that are made in Australia compared to Australian souvenirs that are made in overseas countries. This paper is comprised of five sections. Following this

introduction, a literature review provides an overview of international students in Australia. The attributes of souvenirs are delineated and the concept of authenticity with regard to souvenirs is explored. The next section outlines the research methods implemented for the project. Results are then presented, followed by concluding remarks.

## Literature Review

When considering commercially produced and purchased tourism mementoes, there seems to be an increasing discourse regarding the concept of souvenir authenticity. This discussion appears to be growing in countries such as Australia where concern over the nature of Australian souvenirs sold within Australia has been reported within the context of authenticity of tourism marketing. The basis for this often negative discussion appears to be the result of the growing number of souvenir manufacturers following the global pattern of outsourcing their production so that an increasing amount of imported souvenirs and so-called Australian souvenirs are being produced outside of Australia without utilising Australian raw products, labour or processes (Alfredson, 1999; Gilhooly, 2000; Williams, 2000; Altman *et al.*, 2002; Reisinger & Turner, 2002; Rimmer, 2004; Maugeri, 2006; Min-En, 2006). These outsourced business activities rely on low wage labour, low production costs and often mass production processes within the countries that manufacture the imported souvenirs (Pun in Notar, 2006). The souvenirs are ordered from another country (most commonly within Asia), which then exports the product to Australia to be sold to tourists at relatively low prices compared with Australian-manufactured souvenirs.

According to Notar (2006), the existence of imported souvenirs within a country's tourism market causes authenticity anxiety for tourists. Furthermore, tourist purchase of imported souvenirs made in overseas (non-Australian) countries generates less value-added income to the Australian economy than the purchase of Australian-produced souvenirs (Access Economics, 2007). The existence of imported souvenirs is also likely to reduce the income of local craftsmen and -women and manufacturers, as well as pose a threat to the future of the local tourism industry (Gilhooly, 2000; Williams, 2000; Maugeri, 2006). Given that the souvenir industry is facing fierce competition in gaining economic benefits from tourist spending, it is of interest to examine how Australian made souvenirs are perceived by tourists in comparison to imported Australian souvenirs.

Over the past two decades, increasing numbers of overseas students are studying in Australia with an almost 40 percent increase in the number of enrolments of international students from 2002 to 2006 (AEI, 2007). Recruitment of international students has brought substantial financial benefits to Australia (Leiper & Hunt, 1999; Taylor *et al.*, 2004), with Asmar (2005) reporting that in 2003 international student enrolments contributed over \$4 billion to the Australian economy. The top nine student markets studying in Australia in 2006 were from the Asian region comprising over 74 percent of the total international student cohort (AEI, 2007). These top nine international student markets also fall into the top 20 international tourist markets to WA (Tourism Western Australia, 2008). Min-En (2006) acknowledges the importance of international students by explaining their contribution to tourism through visiting places of interest, doing casual work in hospitality, stimulating VFR and purchasing souvenirs.

Extant literature recognises that purchasing souvenirs has been an activity in which tourists frequently participate while travelling as it forms an integral part of their travel experience. It is estimated that approximately one third of the total tourism expenditure has been on retail purchases which include gift and souvenir purchases (Littrell *et al.* in Yu & Littrell, 2003). Lau and Au (2000) noted that tourist expenditures for purchasing souvenirs can account for 33–56 percent of total travel spending. In Australia, according to Williams (2000), spending on souvenirs by overseas tourists accounts for around \$1.7 billion each year. The ABS (2007) reported that in 2003–04, tourism consumption for gifts and souvenirs in Australia was the second largest proportion after transportation expenditure. The fact that tourism expenditure on souvenir purchases is high indicates that souvenirs have become a major component of the tourism retailing system, employing millions of people in production, distribution and sales, and generating significant benefit to the economies of destinations (Timothy, 2005).

Kim and Littrell (1999) provide an account showing that intention to purchase souvenirs can be predicted by tourist attitudes towards souvenirs. The argument advanced here is in line with Fishbein's model (cited in Solomon, 2006: 251) which proposes that an individual's attitude toward an object is the summed set of beliefs that a particular product possesses certain attributes weighted by the evaluation of those product attributes. In Kim and Littrell's (1999) research, three product attributes— aesthetics, uniqueness and portability—were found to be the critical considerations of tourists' decisions affecting purchasing behaviour. The result reveals that attitudes toward the aesthetic qualities and uniqueness of souvenirs have strong positive effects on purchase intentions. Kim and Littrell, however, found no relationship between attitudes toward the portability of souvenirs and purchase intentions. In contrast, Graburn (cited in Swanson & Horridge, 2004) and Goeldner (cited in Swanson, 2004) found that portability is an important attribute that influences tourists' decisions to purchase particular souvenirs.

In addition, attributes such as a relatively inexpensive price, fragility and manageability (ease of care and cleaning) are also considered by tourists when looking for souvenirs. Other product attributes which have been found to be important in influencing tourists' decisions to purchase souvenirs are aesthetics (appealing colour and design), uniqueness (item representing new ideas) (Littrell *et al.*, 1994; Swanson & Horridge, 2004), symbolism of the place visited (such as having a pictorial image and/or having a mark of the visited place) (Littrell *et al.*, 1994), quality (Turner & Reisinger, 2001) and authenticity (Goeldner cited in Swanson, 2004).

The growing concern over the increasing number of Australian souvenirs which are not Australian made has been noted in relation to the tourism industry, particularly in terms of Aboriginal arts and crafts (Altman *et al.*, 2002). Timothy (2005) argues that selling cheap overseas made products can decrease a shopper's (tourist's) satisfaction level, especially when these outnumber locally made items in souvenir shops. This claim is supported by a number of research studies undertaken by Reisinger and Waryszak (1994), Pan and Laws (2001) and Reisinger and Turner (2002). Their results concluded that many souvenirs are made in Asia and the lack of availability of high quality Australian made souvenirs has caused dissatisfaction among tourists, particularly Japanese, Chinese and

Korean. The existence of imported souvenirs within a country's tourism market is also likely to cause authenticity anxiety for tourists (Notar, 2006), reduce the income of local craftsmen and manufacturers, as well as pose a threat to the future of the local tourism industry (Gilhooly, 2000; Williams, 2000; Maugeri, 2006). It is also debatable whether or not tourist perception of authenticity is associated with the provenance of souvenirs, and whether or not tourists would be willing to pay more for authentic art/craft, as feedback from retailers strongly indicates that price is often more important than provenance to souvenir hunters (Altman *et al.*, 2002; Rimmer, 2004).

The link between authenticity and the tourist experience has been explored by many scholars. It has been found that tourists wishing to purchase often extend their search in order to find authentic souvenirs, with research also showing that authenticity of a product was the first factor in motivating tourists to buy souvenirs. However, due to lack of definition of the term *authentic* in the context of tourism, and the fact that the tourism industry and tourists can often differ in their interpretation of authenticity with regards to souvenirs, it is generally accepted that authenticity is attributed to the object by the tourists (Anderson & Littrell, 1995; Waitt, 2000; Cohen cited in Yu & Littrell, 2003; Yu & Littrell, 2003; Tosun *et al.* 2007). Thus, it is likely that tourists use a range of various cues and criteria to define authenticity of souvenirs. The authenticity of a souvenir product is associated with the fact that the product is a locally made item and that the souvenir is typical or indigenous to the visited place (Littrell *et al.*, 1994; Goeldner & Ritchie, 2006; Asplet & Cooper cited in Tosun *et al.*, 2007). Anderson and Littrell (1995) found tourist perception of the authenticity of souvenirs acknowledged two additional categories: that the souvenir is made in the place the tourists have visited and the authenticity of souvenirs is also derived from workmanship—that is, the souvenir is considered as authentic if it is handmade by local people according to tradition.

Reisinger and Steiner (2006), however, assert that tourists are active creators of authenticity and that marketed authenticity is based on consumer demand. Moscardo and Pearce (1999) also note that authenticity is a judgment or value placed on an object (souvenir) by the observer (tourist). The aforementioned arguments, therefore, provide a useful foundation for exploring and understanding how consumers think about authenticity.

## **Research Method**

This quantitative research study was conducted in two stages of exploratory research followed by descriptive research. The time horizon of the field study research was cross-sectional, using a self-administered questionnaire survey. The questionnaire covered seven main sections relating to tourists' souvenir consumption. This paper investigates the survey sections: 1) souvenir attributes 2) souvenir categories 3) definition of an authentic souvenir 4) perception towards Australian souvenirs that are made in Australia 5) perception towards Australian souvenirs that are made in overseas countries 6) demographic profile of the respondent.

The research instrument was constructed according to the reasons for buying souvenirs which were categorised into three motives: as a reminder of the travel

experience (Anderson & Littrell, 1995; Tosun *et al.*, 2007); as evidence to prove a visit to a certain place (Kim & Littrell, 1999; Swanson, 2004); and as gifts to other people (Reisinger & Waryszak, 1994; Hobson & Christensen, 2001; Moscardo, 2004; King *et al.*, 2006). Several product attributes which are generally considered by tourists when purchasing souvenirs were adapted from the range of souvenir attributes identified in the literature: authenticity, portability, price, fragility, easiness to care for, symbolism of the place visited, innovativeness and aesthetics (Littrell *et al.*, 1994; Kim & Littrell, 1999; Turner & Reisinger, 2001; Swanson, 2004; Swanson & Horridge, 2004). Due to the importance various demographic groups place on brands in their general retail behaviour (Berman & Evans, 2001), it was thought important to include an attribute of *famous brand* in the scale to further investigate this buying behaviour specifically in relation to souvenir purchasing.

The range of products identified as potential souvenirs were derived from Gordon (cited in Anderson & Littrell, 1995) and Swanson and Horridge (2004) and include books, foods, postcards, toys, accessories, arts, jewellery, antiques, clothing, stationeries, collectables and crafts. To investigate tourist perceptions toward the authenticity of souvenirs, five definitions of souvenir authenticity were used in the questionnaire based on research conducted by Littrell and Anderson (1995), Markwick (2001), Yu and Littrell (2003), Chhabra (2005), Beverland (2006) and Tosun *et al.* (2007). According to the aforementioned studies, the meaning of souvenir authenticity can be derived from the connection to the past, representation of culture, local production, uniqueness and whether souvenir products are handmade.

To examine how Australian made souvenirs are perceived compared to imported souvenirs, respondents were asked to rate their perceptions with respect to quality, price, authenticity and prestige on a modified Likert Scale (1=the least to 7=the most). The questionnaire included demographic questions.

The sample unit for this research was individual international students attending university in WA. A convenience sampling approach was employed for this research. The most convenient areas on campus which were considered to be high-traffic areas, such as the library, computer laboratories and the university cafeterias, were selected to access international students. Students were approached and screening questions were asked to determine if they were international students. Once this was established, they were then asked if they would like to participate in the survey on the spot. If they agreed, the survey was administered. Two hundred and sixteen (N=216) international students completed the survey. The statistical program SPSS (v.15) was utilised for data analysis.

## Results

A profile of the respondents (N=216) showed that 56 percent were postgraduate students and 44 percent were undergraduate students. Approximately 58 percent of respondents were female and 42 percent were male. International students from Asian countries constituted 64 percent of the respondents (N=138), with the remaining 36 percent coming from Europe, Africa and Northern America. Of the 64 percent Asian student cohort, 34 percent were from Indonesia, 20 percent were from Malaysia, 14 percent were from China and 10 percent were from Singapore. This sample is

representative of the international student cohort of Australia, with 65 percent of international students coming from Asia (AEI, 2008).

When investigating the meaning of what an authentic souvenir is to tourists, the results showed that the highest mean value for defining authentic souvenirs included the term *representing traditional culture* (5.82) followed by *made in local place* (5.75). The method of production was important and indicated by the response of *handmade* (4.74) and the fact that it is *unique* (4.25). The least important definition is the *age of the product* (3.72), which is in effect less than the mean score. The result indicates that tourists strongly associate the authenticity of a souvenir with the fact that it represents the traditional culture of the visited place and the fact that it is made locally in the place that they have visited.

Thus, the result supports the argument of Goeldner and Ritchie (2006) and Asplet and Cooper (cited in Tosun *et al.*, 2007) that tourists perceive souvenirs as authentic if they are locally made and are typical or indigenous to the destination. The findings suggest that the Australian tourism industry could emphasise the authenticity of Australian made souvenirs by providing information on how tourists can distinguish between the authentic souvenirs and non-authentic souvenirs (e.g., through the use of an *authenticity* label or *Made in Australia* label) and by making Australian made souvenirs more available in the market. Souvenir retailers could also be encouraged to sell Australian made souvenirs by providing an *official* sign to be displayed in their store. This sign would assure tourists that they are guaranteed to get authentic souvenirs when they buy souvenirs at stores showing the sign.

To investigate significant differences between groups of demographic profiles, age groups, country of origin and gender in regard to their perception of authentic souvenirs, an independent samples t-test was performed. The findings indicate that the definition of authenticity is more related to being *handmade* and being *unique* as perceived by the respondents from Asian countries compared with respondents from other regions ( $t = 2.105$  and  $2.483$ ,  $p < .05$ ) (Table 1).

**Table 1: Mean Comparison Souvenir Purchase and Demographic Profiles (N = 216)**

BUYING AUTHENTIC SOUVENIRS	GROUPS	MEAN*	T	SIG
<i>Handmade</i>	<b>Asia</b>	<b>4.91</b>	2.105	.036
	Other	4.44		
<i>Unique</i>	<b>Asia</b>	<b>4.48</b>	2.483	.014
	Other	3.83		

Source: Original table.

Note: \* Likert scale 1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = Strongly agree.

The kind of product categories that are more likely to be purchased by tourists as souvenirs was investigated. Accessories are the most favoured category that tourists prefer to buy as souvenirs followed by clothing, collectables, crafts, arts and paintings, jewellery, postcards/booklets, local food/beverages, toys, stationery and books. Some respondents also mentioned other kinds of souvenir such as signs, music/film CDs, shot glasses and cups (house wares).



Previous studies have found significant differences between demographic profile groups with regard to their choices and purchasing of souvenir categories (Lehto *et al.*, 2004; Combrink & Swanson cited in Swanson & Horridge, 2004). This was examined by independent samples t-test comparing the various demographics characteristics, where only gender and country of origin showed statistically significant difference on four categories of products. This included accessories, arts and painting, jewellery, and collectables (Table 2). Female respondents were found to be more likely to purchase arts and paintings or jewellery compared with male respondents, whilst respondents from Asian countries were found to be more likely to purchase accessories or collectables compared with students from other regions (Table 2).

**Table 2: Product categories by Gender and Country Regions (N = 216)**

Categories	GENDER			COUNTRY OF ORIGIN		
	Male	Female	t-value	Asian	Other	t-value
<i>Books</i>	3.74	3.61	.519	3.48	3.99	-1.922
<i>Local Food/Beverage</i>	4.10	4.19	-.345	4.07	4.29	-.853
<i>Postcards/Booklets</i>	4.30	4.49	-.753	4.30	4.60	-1.239
<i>Toys</i>	4.12	4.06	.267	4.07	4.12	-.184
<b>Accessories</b>	5.09	5.28	-.987	5.38	4.88	<b>2.630<sup>b</sup></b>
<b>Arts, Paintings</b>	4.49	4.99	<b>-2.106<sup>a</sup></b>	4.70	4.94	-.979
<b>Jewellery</b>	4.40	5.07	<b>-2.831<sup>b</sup></b>	4.70	4.94	-1.198
<i>Antiques</i>	4.18	4.13	.208	4.15	4.14	.042
<i>Clothing</i>	5.20	4.80	1.781	5.06	4.81	1.069
<i>Stationeries</i>	3.82	4.01	-.732	4.10	3.63	1.813
<b>Collectables</b>	5.07	5.02	.231	5.20	4.74	<b>2.020<sup>a</sup></b>
<i>Crafts</i>	4.66	5.06	-1.622	5.04	4.64	1.651

Source: Original table.

Note: \*Likert scale 1 = Least preferred; 7 = Most preferred. <sup>a</sup> $p < .05$ ; <sup>b</sup> $p < .01$

From the results recorded in Table 2, it can be seen that significant differences were found between groups of male and female tourists with regard to their preferences of product, as indicated by Sig. (2-tailed)  $< 0.05$ . The finding is in line with the research of Lehto *et al.* (2004) on Taiwanese tourists as well as Combrink and Swanson's research (cited in Swanson & Horridge, 2004), which found that there is a significant difference between males and females making souvenir purchase decisions with regard to product categories. In Lehto *et al.*'s (2004) research, it is reported that female tourists were likely to purchase clothing, jewellery, arts and crafts, while their male counterparts were likely to purchase local food or beverages. Meanwhile, Combrink and Swanson (cited in Swanson & Horridge, 2004) identified differences between men and women in terms of their choices of collectables, books about the area, antiques, toys and local foods. The results of this current research show that significant differences were found between male and female tourists for arts, paintings and jewellery. From Table 3, it can also be seen that

female tourists were more likely to buy arts, paintings and jewellery compared to their male counterparts.

**Table 3: Ranked Product Categories by Gender (N = 216)**

CATEGORIES	MALE	T-VALUE	CATEGORIES	FEMALE	T-VALUE
<i>Clothing</i>	5.20	1.781	<i>Accessories</i>	5.28	-.987
<i>Accessories</i>	5.09	-.987	<i>Jewellery</i>	5.07	-2.831 <sup>b</sup>
<i>Collectables</i>	5.07	.231	<i>Crafts</i>	5.06	-1.622
<i>Crafts</i>	4.66	-1.622	<i>Collectables</i>	5.02	.231
<i>Arts, paintings</i>	4.49	-2.106 <sup>a</sup>	<i>Arts, paintings</i>	4.99	-2.106 <sup>a</sup>
<i>Jewellery</i>	4.40	-2.831 <sup>b</sup>	<i>Clothing</i>	4.80	1.781
<i>Postcards/booklets</i>	4.30	-.753	<i>Postcards/booklets</i>	4.49	-.753
<i>Antiques</i>	4.18	.208	<i>Local food/ beverage</i>	4.19	-.345
<i>Toys</i>	4.12	.267	<i>Antiques</i>	4.13	.208
<i>Local food/ beverage</i>	4.10	-.345	<i>Toys</i>	4.06	.267
<i>Stationeries</i>	3.82	-.732	<i>Stationeries</i>	4.01	-.732
<i>Books</i>	3.74	.519	<i>Books</i>	3.61	.519

Source: Original table.

Note: \*Likert scale 1 = Least preferred; 7 = Most preferred. <sup>a</sup> $p < .05$ ; <sup>b</sup> $p < .01$

Table 4 shows the products ranked according to purchase preference of Asian respondents and all other IHE students. The results show that respondents from Asian countries are more likely to purchase accessories or collectables compared with students from other regions.

**Table 4: Ranked Product Categories by Country Regions (N = 216)**

CATEGORIES	ASIAN	T-VALUE	CATEGORIES	OTHER	T-VALUE
<i>Accessories</i>	5.38	2.630 <sup>b</sup>	<i>Arts, Paintings</i>	4.94	-.979
<i>Collectables</i>	5.20	2.020 <sup>a</sup>	<i>Jewellery</i>	4.94	-1.198
<i>Clothing</i>	5.06	1.069	<i>Accessories</i>	4.88	2.630 <sup>b</sup>
<i>Crafts</i>	5.04	1.651	<i>Clothing</i>	4.81	1.069
<i>Arts, Paintings</i>	4.70	-.979	<i>Collectables</i>	4.74	2.020 <sup>a</sup>
<i>Jewellery</i>	4.70	-1.198	<i>Crafts</i>	4.64	1.651
<i>Postcards/Booklets</i>	4.30	-1.239	<i>Postcards/Booklets</i>	4.60	-1.239
<i>Antiques</i>	4.15	.042	<i>Local food/Beverage</i>	4.29	-.853
<i>Stationeries</i>	4.10	1.813	<i>Antiques</i>	4.14	.042
<i>Local Food/Beverage</i>	4.07	-.853	<i>Toys</i>	4.12	-.184
<i>Toys</i>	4.07	-.184	<i>Books</i>	3.99	-1.922
<i>Books</i>	3.48	-1.922	<i>Stationeries</i>	3.63	1.813

Source: Original table.

Note: Likert scale 1 = Least preferred; 7 = Most preferred. <sup>a</sup> $p < .05$ ; <sup>b</sup> $p < .01$

The research also attempted to investigate what attributes souvenirs exhibit that are considered important by tourists. A test of internal consistency reliability was performed through Cronbach's alpha. The Cronbach's alpha score for souvenir attributes, ( $\alpha$ ) = 0.75, indicated that the scale can be considered reliable.

**Table 5: Attributes of authentic souvenirs (N = 216)**

SOUVENIR FEATURES	MEAN*	STANDARD DEVIATION
<i>Portability</i>	5.80	1.214
<i>Fragility</i>	5.80	1.131
<i>Authentic</i>	5.54	1.296
<i>Attractive design</i>	5.49	1.347
<i>Innovative</i>	5.34	1.395
<i>High quality</i>	5.29	1.409
<i>Not expensive</i>	5.19	1.643
<i>Pictorial image</i>	5.09	1.627
<i>Mark of place</i>	4.86	1.619
<i>Attractive colour</i>	4.63	1.547
<i>Easy to care</i>	4.56	1.656
<i>Famous brand</i>	3.69	1.750

Source: Original table.

Note: \*Likert scale 1 = least important; 7 = most important.

Cronbach's Alpha coefficient ( $\alpha$ ) = 0.75.

As can be seen from Table 5, the three most important attributes considered by tourists when looking for souvenirs were portability (5.80), fragility (5.80), authenticity of the product (5.54) and attractive design (5.49). This finding supports the argument of Graburn (cited in Swanson & Horridge, 2004) and Goeldner (cited in Swanson, 2004) that portability, fragility and authenticity are important attributes that influence tourist evaluations in purchasing souvenirs. To identify the underlying dimensions of the twelve-item souvenir attributes scale, principal component analysis (PCA) with varimax rotation was performed. Prior to performing PCA, the suitability of data for factor analysis was assessed.

The Kaiser-Meyer-Okin value was 0.7, exceeding the recommended value of 0.6, which suggests that the data are suitable for factor analysis (Allen & Bennet, 2007). Analysis of the souvenir attributes scale revealed a four factor solution. As shown in Table 6, the components comprise: Factor 1 - innovativeness, attractive design, and authenticity; Factor 2 - portability and fragility; Factor 3 - symbolism, having mark of place, having pictorial image, and inexpensive price; and Factor 4 - popularity, famous brand, attractive colour, high quality and manageability (ease of care and cleaning). In total, these factors accounted for around 61.43 percent of the variance in the questionnaire data.

**Table 6: Factor Analysis of Souvenir Attributes (N = 216)**

<i>Features</i>	COMPONENT			
	<i>1</i> <i>Innovativeness</i>	<i>2</i> <i>Portability</i>	<i>3</i> <i>Symbolism</i>	<i>4</i> <i>Popularity</i>
<i>Innovative</i>	.765			
<i>Attractive Design</i>	.757			
<i>Authentic</i>	.691			
<i>Fragility</i>		.820		
<i>Portability</i>		.768		
<i>Mark of Place</i>			.821	
<i>Pictorial Image</i>			.799	
<i>Not Expensive</i>			.567	
<i>Famous Brand</i>				.773
<i>Attractive Colour</i>				.557
<i>High Quality</i>				.540
<i>Easy to Care For</i>				.526
<b><i>Eigen value</i></b>	<b>1.979</b>	<b>1.855</b>	<b>1.852</b>	<b>1.685</b>
<b><i>% of explained variance</i></b>	<b>16.49</b>	<b>15.46</b>	<b>15.43</b>	<b>14.05</b>
<b><i>Cronbach's alpha</i></b>	<b>.676</b>	<b>.630</b>	<b>.667</b>	<b>.579</b>

Source: Original table.

Note: Method - PCA. With varimax rotation and KMO normalisation (MSA = .696; sig. = .000).

To assess tourist perceptions toward various aspects of Australian souvenirs that are made in Australia compared to Australian souvenirs that are made in overseas countries, a Paired Samples t-test was performed. Mean values of each aspect (quality, price, authenticity and prestige) are shown in Table 7. These were then compared to observe how tourists perceive Australian souvenirs that are made in Australia compared to Australian souvenirs that are made in overseas countries. These results can also be seen in Table 7.

**Table 7: Australian Souvenirs which are Made in Australia/Overseas (N = 216)**

ATTRIBUTE	AUSTRALIAN MADE	OVERSEAS MADE	PAIRED SAMPLES T VALUES	SIG.
<i>Of High Quality</i>	4.67	3.64	8.675	.000
<i>Expensive</i>	5.29	3.73	10.331	.000
<i>Authentic</i>	4.68	3.22	11.373	.000
<i>Prestigious</i>	4.19	3.20	8.070	.000

Source: Original table.

Note: \*Likert scale 1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree.

In general, Australian souvenirs that are produced in Australia were perceived as being of higher value than those of overseas make. Australian made souvenirs were perceived as having higher quality, being more authentic and more prestigious compared to Australian souvenirs that were made in overseas countries. However, Australian made souvenirs were considered to be more expensive than imported Australian souvenirs. Since price is one of the considerations of tourists buying souvenirs, the relatively expensive price of Australian made souvenirs may influence tourist willingness to buy Australian made souvenirs. Tourists that are price sensitive may be prone to sacrifice their intention to buy authentic, Australian made souvenirs for the imported ones. This might be the case especially considering that tourists may need to buy souvenirs in large numbers as gifts for other people and may come from countries where the exchange rate of their currency is lower than the Australian currency.

Reasons for purchasing authentic souvenirs were investigated by performing independent sample t-test across demographic characteristics with the only significant finding being that of age. The results showed that older respondents were more likely to buy authentic souvenirs as gifts for others compared with younger respondents (Table 8). Generally, respondents indicated that they would buy authentic souvenirs as a reminder of their travel to a tourist destination, as evidence of their travel journey, or as a gift for family or friends.

**Table 8: Reasons for Buying Authentic Souvenirs by Age (N = 216)**

REASONS	AGE ≤ 23 YEARS	AGE ≥ 24 YEARS	STD DEVIATION
<i>Reminder of travel experience</i>	5.49	5.78	-1.426
<i>Evidence of travel journey</i>	4.49	4.86	-1.520
<b><i>Gift for others</i></b>	<b>4.73</b>	<b>5.57</b>	<b>-3.802c</b>

Source: Original table.

Note: \*Likert scale 1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree.  $\varphi < .005$

## Conclusion

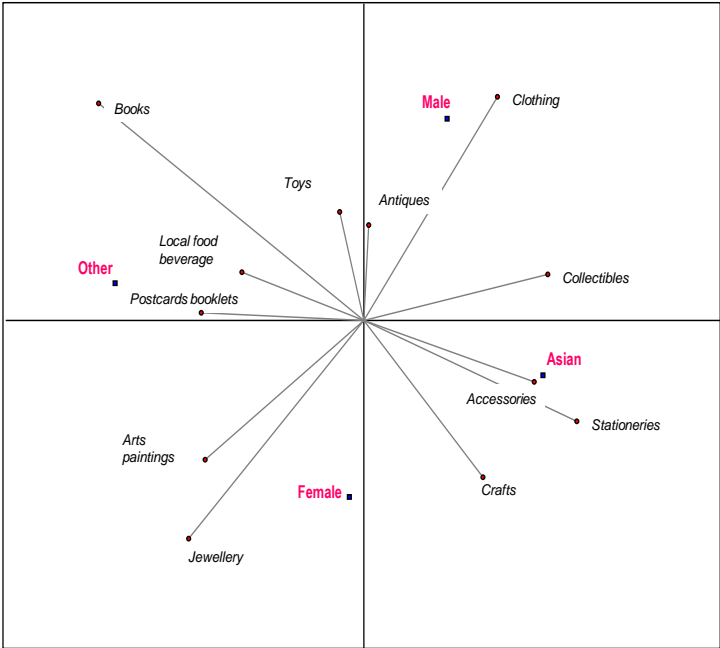
Niche retailing is increasing due to the ability of the retail sector to identify and meet the specific needs of market segments. This paper investigated the IHE niche market, reporting their perceptions of the authenticity of Australian souvenirs and their purchasing behaviours. This research is of great concern to the Australian souvenir industry since it is facing increasing competition from overseas manufacturers, as are many countries globally, to capture a market share of tourist spending on souvenirs. The research found that tourist key motives for purchasing souvenirs were to remind them of their travel experience through authentic and unique experiences and to bring back gifts for other people (Solomon, 2006). This result confirms the study by Yu and Littrell (2003) that found tourists often extend their searches for authenticity in their purchase of souvenirs, and Kim and Littrell (2003) state that ‘tourist attitude toward the uniqueness of a souvenir affected purchase intention for an ethnic product and a generic handcraft’ (p. 651). Furthermore, Swanson and Horridge (2006) and Turner and Reisinger (2001) concur that tourists want unique souvenirs that contain memories of their trip and are unique to the

destination they have visited. Figure 1 provides a perceptual map of the main findings of the paper highlighting the type of souvenirs IHE markets are likely to purchase according to gender and country of origin.

The results of this research also show that souvenir product categories that are found to be positively correlated to authentic souvenirs are arts, paintings, antiques and crafts. In purchasing authentic souvenirs, tourists would prefer to buy authentic souvenirs that are easy to bring home (portability), of high quality and not easily damaged or broken. Aesthetic qualities, inexpensive price and the innovativeness of authentic souvenirs are also likely to influence their evaluation and purchase decision. Hence, Australian souvenir manufacturers need to consider these key features when designing and producing authentic Australian souvenirs in order to establish their market share and to gain competitive advantage over imported Australian souvenirs.

This research also found that IHE students perceive the Australian made souvenirs as superior in terms of quality, authenticity and prestige, but consider them to be more expensive compared to the overseas made souvenirs. This relatively expensive price of Australian made souvenirs may influence the intention of price-sensitive tourists to buy authentic Australian made souvenirs. Hence, the Australian souvenir industry needs to consider these matters to be able to increase their market share and to gain competitive advantage over overseas manufacturers.

**Figure 1: Perceptual Map of the Findings of the Paper**



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Limitations of this research include the fact that it was a convenience sample (IHE students on one campus in one state in Australia). Future research may investigate purchase intentions related to price paid for souvenir type according to authenticity and uniqueness. Price sensitivity between various target groups such as IHE students, MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferencing, Exhibitions) visitors and VFR visitors would provide a detailed account adding to the souvenir literature. Other growth sectors of interest to the retail tourism sector would be the grey market. It would also be of interest to undertake research into what IHE students seek to purchase—that is, purchase intention regarding the availability or non-availability of products. In light of trends in destination-branded areas, research into destination branded products would also provide interesting findings for not only retail purchases in the form of souvenirs, but also in terms of destination branding and protection of place identity.

With the ever increasing consumption of tourism services and experiences, the growth in consumption of tangible, identifiable reminders that evoke a memory is increasingly significant to retail business. The purchase of tangible reminders of people's travels in the form of authentic and unique souvenirs provides scope for a range of business-related research to enable theory development within the retail tourism literature with implications for the tourism retail industry. Additionally, this research provides scope for study into issues relating to government regulation for niche retailing. Research areas could include issues such as retail shopping hours for niche retailers to provide access to markets such as student or fly-in/fly-out markets, planning strategy for location of such businesses, transportation to access niche businesses, the increasing number of niche service businesses and the use of technology in niche retailing.

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