



Department of Development Studies
Discussion Paper 5

***The Economics of Souvenir Sales and their Role in
Tourism:
A Case Study of Bari Imam***

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Introduction

The phenomenon of tourism has enormous consequences on environment, culture, and society which cannot be underestimated. For developing countries, where economic activity is often limited to only a handful of sectors, tourism really paves the way for diversification. The tourism sector in such countries has noticeable effects on the growth of economy and so the combination of developing countries and tourism can be a great remedy to solve many economic problems. The first benefit of tourism sector is the provision of jobs to increase people's income and improve their living conditions which can be a major source for economic and social progress.

Talking about the role of souvenirs in tourism, it is considered an important component of the tourist experience. They are closely connected to a large number of other phenomena namely cultural, social and economic, such as consumption and globalisation (Goss, 2004), materiality, identity, and culture (Morgan & Pritchard, 2005), and shopping (Timothy, 2005).

Shopping is said to be the most universal of all tourist activities and a tremendously important leisure pursuit. Taking home mementos and souvenirs as evidence hold great symbolic value related to pleasurable travel experiences and memories the owner associates. The acquisition of mementos and souvenirs is a recognised act related with many activities, including leisure and other travel experiences as few people will go for a vacation without purchasing some form of evidence to capture the experiences and memories (Gordon, 1986; Littrell et al., 1994).

Selling souvenirs has been repeatedly considered an effective way for communities to take economic advantage from tourism, especially in rural or poor areas. Many studies prove that among the tourist activities shopping is the major one (Fairhurst, Costello, and Holmes 2007; Kim and Littrell 2001), and especially the souvenir purchases form a very important component of the travel expense (Littrell et al. 1994; Lehto et al. 2004).

Objectives of the Research

The objective of this research is to analyse the relationship between economic growth and tourism spending.

Regardless of the souvenir significance in the tourism industry (Shenhav-Keller 1993; Lehto et al., 2004), a few researchers are investigating the need or motivations behind souvenir purchase. The main purpose of this paper is to observe the economics and role of souvenirs in Bari Imam. Hence, the first objective is to identify the supply and demand patterns of sellers and tourists respectively (what tourists buy, frequency of buying, whether the demand for souvenirs vary from female to male and the supply chain of souvenirs) and the impact it has on the incomes or living standards of the souvenir sellers. The second objective is to study the role of souvenirs for those who buy these (why people buy souvenirs and what motivates them to buy to buy these?).

Research Questions

This research intends to answer the following questions:

1. What type of souvenir tourists buy?
2. What motivates them to buy the souvenirs?
3. How does the demand for souvenirs vary from female to male?
4. Whether the generated revenue enough for the shopkeepers to meet their needs?

What is Motivation?

Motivation is the answer to the question, why we do what we do. The motivation theories attempt to answer what reasons motivate a person to do certain tasks or to act in a certain way. It is one of the most important things to study about tourists.

A Classification of Motivation Theories (Content vs. Process)

The motivation theories are broadly categorised into two different perspectives: Content and Process theories. Content theories focus on individual needs and goals and deal with what motivates people. Process theories, on the other hand, deal with the process of motivation and are concerned with how motivation occurs. .

Methodology

In order to understand the souvenir purchase patterns and behaviour in relation to questions as posed above, I undertook a quantitative approach. Structured interviews were conducted with the shopkeepers selling souvenirs in the Bari Imam.

Since the area is a famous religious site, every year at the Urs, birth celebration gains momentum, devotees in thousands set out for the Margalla foothills and meet at NurpurShahan to pay their respect. Although many visit the shrine all year round, only last year the number surpassed a head count of 1.2 million visitors. So I had to deal with two units of variables for this case study and so the respondents comprised the shopkeepers and the tourist coming to Bari Imam, Islamabad. The quantitative data was collected through structured interviews. Talking about the tourist participants, the questions asked were about their souvenir purchases and the use and motivations behind the purchase of these souvenirs. Whether the purchase is solely for as a memorabilia or do they attach any religious significance as well. For this study I took a total of 30 short interviews, I took equal number of male and female respondents, (fifteen each), in order to avoid biased results and the interviews lasted for as long as 15 minutes.

On the other hand, shopkeepers were asked about the seasonal trends in supply/demand, popular items, the ratio of male female buyers, and to what extent the sales of souvenirs are contributing towards their living standards. Hence, the research tends to provide understanding for motivations behind souvenir purchase which is not previously addressed in the literature. Each shop comprised one to three shopkeepers-respondents with a total of around 20 shops were covered for this research and the interviews were conducted in three days consecutively lasting between 15 to 25 minutes.

Review of Literature

Tourism can have a greater impact on economic activity which has been recognised long ago (Dwyer et al., 2004). Tourism is a good source of increasing overall economic activity, which is normally seen as quite desirable. International tourism has been given an increasing attention as a potential growth sector for many countries (Brohman, 1996). The prompt tourism growth triggers an increase in household income levels and thus multiplier effects can be seen in government revenues and the balance of payment which help in promoting tourism-related government policies.

Since tourism is known to bring more money into the community in the form of foreign exchange earnings, increased incomes, employment opportunities and taxes (Archer, 1995, Balaguer and Cantavella-Jorda, 2002, Dritsakis, 2004 and Durbarry, 2002), for the purpose of promoting economic growth many governments are now engaging towards tourism development (Sahli& Nowak, 2007). Religious tourism can also create more jobs, increase incomes and infrastructure, hence bringing economic impacts too. Here, pilgrimage tourism can be defined as a journey away from the ordinary world of every day work, home to some specific sacred sites formalised, renowned and maintained by some religious belief. Now, looking specifically toward religious tourism, we find a lot of research already being done. Das Gupta (2006) outlines that religious tourism plays a great role in changing the

socio-economic scenerios. Likewise, Shinde (2003) proposes a dynamic model of pilgrimage tourism, which allows understanding the contact between the host community and pilgrimage tourists and the supplementary impacts. As portrayed there is both an immediate impact on the environment of the host community due to the direct contact of the visitors with the religious institutions, and also an indirect influence on the indigenous economy and the society. Shakiry (2001) says that in Islamic developing countries religious land marks and facilities would lead to the rise of pilgrimage tourism in such countries. Therefore, it is evident that several sources of cash earning and several new occupations have emerged due to unlocking pilgrimage tourism. More tourist can be attracted to religious sites by focusing internally like protecting the environment and embellishing the areas in the immediate locality of pilgrimage sites as well as serving these areas with the necessary services. As according to some more researches, pilgrimage tourism is recognised as a prime industry in most parts of the world in order to obtain maximum foreign exchange. Social significance of religious tourism cannot be termed as less important. As, Mcgrath (1999) argues about the importance of pilgrimage travel as an economic, social and spatial phenomenon which should not be ignored. Tourism industry requires diversity as it can bring very essential capital and Pakistan is a land of diverse cultures. Here, diversity is existent in every walk of life, such as weather (natural) to languages and behaviours (social factors) all vary from one place to another. Religious tourism sites are not destination only for some specific religious believer but they also attract others from different belief systems which further strengthens our national unity, so the time has come to use these prospects to earn foreign exchange, hence, being regionally helpful religious tourism can generate employment, and can boost the cultural principles. As, with the help of religious tourism many modern social evils, caused by materialism, can be well cured (Mishra, 2000). Most studies specifically measuring the impacts of pilgrimage tourism approve that sacred destinations are strongly influenced by the stream of pilgrimage tourists visiting them (Collins-Kreiner et al., 2006; Rinschede, 1992; Vukonic, 1996). Apart from the religious institutions, sacred sites are time and again surrounded by religiously orientated industries and facilities, example being souvenir shops, travel agencies, hotels and even clinics, creating employment opportunities for the host community (Evans, 1998).

According to some researches, tourist major activities is shopping (Fairhurst, Costello, and Holmes 2007; Kim and Littrell 2001) and the significant component of the shopping expenditure is the souvenir purchase (Littrell et al., 1994; Lehto et al., 2004). Research has also suggested that expenditure on shopping comprises almost a third of the total spending (Littrell et al., 1994; Fairhurst, Costello, and Holmes, 2007). Shopping is the highest tourist's activity in Las Vegas. They paid out \$290.00 per trip per person on average on gifts and souvenirs (Emmons, 2000). The impacts of tourism can be increased by selling local products and by helping local people retain ownership of businesses that serve tourists (Stynes, 1997). Substantial amount of literature can be found on the significance of souvenirs which tourists buy and the impact of it on local economies (Kim & Littrell 1999, 2001; Revilla & Dodd 2003). Owing to the high level of tourist expenditures, Healy (1994) suggests that locally made souvenirs can play a great role in order to increase the incomes of women, children and the elderly of rural tourist destinations.

Like in few cases, the sale of handicrafts is one of the few sources of income for indigenous societies with barter economies, allowing them to start making investment decisions. For example income earned through tourism by the Uros people of Lake Titikaka in Peru is used to purchase provisions from local markets in order to continue handicraft production. In developed economies, handicrafts are mostly displayed at fairs and specially-designed markets, as major tourist appeal makes them exceptional occasions for promoting and selling crafts. The Kaziukas Fair in Lithuania is a 200 year-old event which exemplifies this exercise.

Particularly, religious souvenir sales, namely sacred water (Maseeh2002), candles and icons (Evans, 1998) and other religious items (Dubish, 1995) bring in large amount of revenue, for example Assisi and Lourdes in Italy and in France respectively (Fleischer, 2000). According to Secall (2003), this

physical interest perspective taken from the pilgrimages has always been there in human history. Taking the example of Medjugorje in Bosnia-Herzegovina, a holy site which was discovered suddenly, brings a dramatic and rapid change to the local residents while, some religious sites have been visited for centuries and there the impacts develop over a long period of time.

From the tourists perspective, including the role of souvenirs as gifts, there exists many other motivations for the purchase of souvenirs as well (Kim and Littrell 2001; Gordon 1986), as signs (Gordon 1986) plus as a reminder (Littrell et al., 1994; Swanson 2004) and it has been identified that souvenir products range from mass produced products to speciality items and antiques (Swanson and Horridge 2004). From another study of Kim and Litterall (1999), they pointed out that, personal values may influence consumption behaviour, even as travel activities comprise physical participation and intensities of interaction with host communities. Forecasting tourists' travel activities, psychological characteristics and souvenir buying behaviour is vital for marketers in tourism who may use the data to improve the souvenir industry.

Various past researches have also shown different behavioural patterns of purchases made by male and female. It is an important element to examine gender differences of any study into tourism behaviour as men and women spend differently on tourism products (Swain, 1995). It appears that gift-giving norms are associated to demographic variables much as they affect consumer behaviour. Fischer and Arnold (1990) in an interesting study by the researchers found gender differences in Christmas gift shopping. Women's gift giving deeds differed from men's. Ever since, their self-identities are built upon showing love to others, women are the main gift givers. According to the outcomes of their survey, female respondents sometimes focused more on the opinion that Christmas shopping is an obligation to be fulfilled. Fischer and Arnold (1990) concluded that sex, gender personalities and gender attitudes, all affect gift-purchasing patterns, and that women are more inclined to purchase souvenirs frequently than men (Littrell, Anderson, and Brown 1993), and also with souvenirs being more psychologically important to many women tourists (Anderson and Littrell 1996). Moreover, since the traditional gift giving traditions have been performed by women in Japan, gift buying may be observed as women work for Japanese (Minami 1998).

From the demand side, there can be many motives for purchasing souvenir by tourists who can be influenced by the culture and customs of a society (Park, 2000). From the supply side, the manufacturers of souvenirs struggle to identify tourists' needs and preferences. The sales of souvenirs are regarded as the commodification of culture in order to fulfill popular beliefs (Hitchcock, 2000). Other reasons for the purchase may be to gift others while taking care of authenticity as well. The souvenirs role as gifts includes both roles as restoration (Gordon 1986), along with gifting and behaviours of self-gifting (Ward & Tran 2007). Authenticity is persistently recognised as essential to indigenous souvenirs (Asplet & Cooper, 2000). The quest for authentic experience is the key persuader for tourism, argued by Yu and Littrell (2003). Therefore, tourists often spread their searches for authenticity in their purchase of souvenirs. The fact that souvenirs are authentic to purchase items is an important factor (Swanson & Horridge, 2004; 2006). The issues of availability, validity, reliability, and comparability of authenticity are considered by a variety of measures (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006). The current understanding that authenticity is an open concept reliant upon the tourists themselves, tourism associated businesses, indigenous communities and their knowledge and belief in, their own past (Chhabra, 2005; Cohen, 2002; Taylor, 2001). Souvenirs are mostly influenced by tourist's preference. Wicks et al. (2004) concluded that among all types of souvenirs authenticity may be the most important factor that affects tourists' buying intentions so one can say that authenticity is the most important characteristics of souvenirs. Tourists want to recognise the local appeal to the souvenir. Tourists also favor symbolic and manufactured products, made in the local areas and handcrafts that are traditional and have cultural meaning. Littrell, Anderson, and Brown (1993) put forward a series of criteria used by tourists when buying souvenirs. These include uniqueness and originality, workmanship, aesthetics seen as traditional, cultural and historic integrity,

local craftsmanship. Literature produced by Wilkie(1994), Williams (2002), Swarboke and Horner (1999), Gabbott and Hogg (1998) and Arnould et al.(2002), nevertheless, have identified that the core concept of purchasing behaviour is the decision-making process and also termed purchasing behaviour as a complex theory.

Locale

The locale that I have chosen to study for this research is Bari Imam which is located in the foothill of Margalla.

Significance of the Study

In narrowing economic imbalance, religious tourism in Pakistan plays a vital role. The areas which have no core competence/business, especially rural areas, are surviving due to religious tourism. It provides the local population help to take care of their requirements, through business and employment opportunities. For example, The Wazir Khan Mosque in Lahore, the Shahi Mosque in Chiniot, Mahayana Buddhism, and Gurdwara Panja Sahib which is located in Hasan Abdal near Rawalpindi is known to be the pilgrimage centre for the Sikh Community.

Bari Imam is one of these many religious sites. In order to offer their offerings and seek blessings devotees stand in mile long queue. It provides livelihood to local population who sell different type of souvenirs generating employment opportunities in the semi-urban small town. The aim of this study is to investigate the economic benefit of souvenirs in a small area of Bari Imam. Specifically, the objectives of the study are to identify and evaluate the major direct and indirect economic benefits and the behavioural patterns of male and female towards the purchases of souvenirs. To look at whether the retailers are earning enough to make the ends meet, there was a requirement to study first the demand and supply elements of the souvenirs and to notice whether men and women have different behaviours towards purchasing a souvenir.

Data Analysis

Shopkeeper-respondents mentioned, during the interviews, different number of souvenir items, but limiting the product list in this study I studied the demands patterns of only a few items namely, *tasbeehs*, calligraphic frames, *taweez* (phylactery) and small jewelry items to take with them to homes as souvenirs plus the rose petals and *chadar* to place on the grave. Below is the hierarchical presentation of these items, one being the highest demanded item 1) *chadar* and rose petals, to some extent they are demanded together and equally 2) *tasbeeh* 3) calligraphic frames 4) *taweez* (phylactery) 5) jewelry items.

Popular Souvenirs in accordance with Gender Difference

Overall women seemed to be an active buyers of most of the souvenirs where men marginally falling behind them. The quantitative results showed little gender effect on souvenir purchases when it comes to buying *tasbeehs* and calligraphic frames, where women were leading in the figures and were spending slightly more than the men. However, there, was a significant difference in the purchase between the genders for rose petals and *chadar* for the grave. Where, the women were in lead with a great margin. One of the shopkeepers even mentioned that women tend to have higher belief and expect their every wish to be fulfilled if they pray with a clean heart, hence, women being the more frequent consumers for this category of souvenirs. The only category where men were spending more was jewelry section but without any significant difference. Marginally, males were the more frequent purchasers of different gem-rings, pendants with the names of Allah, Hazrat Mohammad (PBUH) and Hazrat Ali. The most popular souvenir for both male/female was *taweez* (phylactery) which could be easily bought from any of the shops. These were written Quranic verses on papers and if demanded the *taweez* (phylactery) can be covered in a small leather box, with some additional charges.

Motivation behind the Purchase

When asked about the motivation behind buying the souvenirs (whether for personal use, for gifting purposes or to keep as a memorabilia) 73.3% of these souvenirs were bought as memorabilia or for their own use, no matter what they buy. Many respondents commented on the need for souvenirs to remind them of their visit to Bari Imam. There were a number of mentions to the purchase of souvenirs as gifts for friends and family, ranking second with 26.7%. The interviews clearly identified the importance of gift giving rituals for them, especially from a place like Bari Imam. Mostly purchasing souvenirs like *tasbeehs*, jewelry and calligraphic frame items were clearly mentioned as gifts. But in view of gender differences, 80% of women and 66.7% men buy souvenirs for themselves.

Souvenir Quantity

The number of souvenirs that participants acquired changed over time. 55% of sellers reported a decrease in number of souvenirs purchased over the last year. Only 30% reported an increase and 15% reported no change. Majority of participants, in other words, reported a change in the number of acquired souvenirs, as time passes, fewer buying souvenirs. This could be mostly detected among the female interviewees. 70% reported the main cause to be lack of good quality products. While others mentioned about lack of uniqueness, style of product and originality.

Demand/Supply of Souvenirs

The shopkeepers don't really are attached to the network or production process of their souvenirs, there exists a market in Rawalpindi from where they get the souvenirs at a whole sale rate. From sellers perspective there tends to be more demand for the souvenirs as the days tend to get longer, like during the summers while the demand declines in winters due to lack of facilities such as poor shop lights. Visitors are also afraid to come at night due to the surrounding slums, huge crowd of beggars and other associated security reasons.

Demand for Religious Souvenirs

The visitors mostly demanded religious items rather than buying non-religious ones. Of the total 40 tourist respondents, 55% reported to prefer buying religious souvenirs from the shops of Bari Imam. While the rest, 45% comprised those who were indifferent and bought other stuff as well.

Income Contribution

Nevertheless, 20% of the shopkeepers seemed happy with the prevailing demands, this included a category those who had quality products and different variety of souvenirs plus another category was that of people who are quite religious in regard to the shrine. Most of them revealed about their strong association with the shop and *dargah* as they place high respect to the grave with a belief that their *rizik* will only come from the shop they own. This belief brings them nearer to their *murshid* who is a *waseela* for their well-being and to be always hopeful no matter what the conditions may become.

But 80% of the shopkeeper-respondents were not really happy with what they were earning and said they barely meet the daily household expenses. The reason what I observed was that they had poor quality goods and more of the general items rather than specific souvenirs. Adding to this their location was not so good as well. These shops were more away from the main entrance to the shrine of Bari Imam.

Results and Findings

This study provides a new understanding of a number of aspects of customer purchase behaviour when it comes to buying souvenirs. Both in the souvenir purchases and the motivations for purchase, the significant gender differences, provide new insights in this study. To shopkeepers of Bari Imam, this information will be of relevance, as it will enable them to structure and order more of those products which are demanded by majority of the visitors, making them relevant and attractive to consumers. The following are the findings.

Firstly, regarding travel and tourism products, we may find relatively few researches into gender differences; some of the previous research has found that women tend to purchase souvenirs more frequently than men. This research supports this finding across most dimensions of souvenirs, as mentioned above in the findings.

Secondly, there is evidence of the importance of good quality of souvenir purchases, when it comes to shopping them, as 70% visitors reduced purchasing. So the retailers need to focus on the quality of their product/souvenirs they are selling in order to increase their sales and hence their incomes.

Thirdly, this study clearly demonstrates that, rather than more general items, people want to purchase souvenirs reflective of the religious items. The importance of a religious connection to the souvenirs, both from the tourists as well as from the shopkeepers was clearly evident through this research. This finding encourages souvenir retailers to change the product range and to be more focused on religious items.

Fourthly, in relation to purchase motivations, the findings provide an important understanding of consumer behaviours. According to this case study a strong support is identified as souvenirs for the visitors themselves, with this being stronger support amongst the females. Contradicting with what the previous researches such as Gordon (1986) and Ward and Tran (2007) identified, souvenirs are mainly bought as a gift for others. Souvenir retailers of Bari Imam need to recognise the need and demands of those visiting them. This also provides important distinction for retailers as the products tourists may buy for their own consumption and for others as a gift. There is strong support and recognition by both sexes for the souvenir as for them there exist some gender effect as well. For further research, there is an opportunity here, to differentiate in the types of products bought as self-gifts and as gifts for others.

Fifthly, overall the shopkeepers are not so satisfied with what they earn. And the sales of souvenirs are not generating enough funds to meet their current expenses. The reason for this being that the tourist visits are seasonal, more in summers and less in winters and so fluctuating the earnings. Here the location of the shop, quality and variety of the products matter and influence as well.

In order to increase revenues from tourism there can be found two basic ways for a business or community to follow. Firstly, the number of visitors need to be increased, secondly, the amount that each visitor spends also. This way, if a destination is able to attract more tourists, there will be more spending. The visitors will spend money on lodging and they will eat more meals and will have more time to shop in local stores hence boosting business activities in the economy. This is why governments are devoted to attract more visitors to any tourist destination areas. Shopping is one of the most popular tourist activities, as shown in most surveys of visitors, and some of the results also showed that most of souvenir retailers have wrong understanding about the concept of marketing, and particularly in this case study the shopkeepers of Bari Imam know little about how to capture the market for souvenirs and to attract more customers. So, firstly there is a need to educate or the retailers of Bari Imam should know about the products demanded by their visitors or frequent customer's need. Most of them don't implement the marketing strategies successfully as they operate without targeting the customers and don't search for customers' needs. Therefore, souvenir retailers need to focus on specific prospective customers to develop the suitable marketing strategies. Moreover, souvenir retailers have to be updated to the new trends and should focus more on quality and authenticity when it comes to high competition of marketplace. Differentiation strategies should be considered in order to attract customers. Here the government can play an important role as well, like taking care of the security measures. The area covered by Bari Imam is quite big, and crowd gets large numbered on special occasions but there seemed lack of proper police check posts, and security cameras to take control of hustle. Plus poor roads and sanitation system is another problem faced by both the tourist as well as the retailers. The putrid smell is

another factor affecting the inflow of tourists negatively. So the government should also take care of all these factors, in order to motivate tourist to visit Bari Imam frequently.

Limitations of the Research

Small sample size and less duration of the interviews are amongst the limitations of the research.

Conclusion

The results of the study have clearly shown a major role in socio-economic development that pilgrimage tourism is playing. When measured against GDP and exports, it has been already researched for many countries that, the pilgrimage tourism has a very large economic significance. Many countries in general and particularly the least developed countries, pilgrimage tourism, if not competitive, have comparative advantage, efficiently converting domestic resources into foreign exchange. Such foreign exchange, if appropriately used, can purchase the investment goods necessary to support more broadly based economic development policies. It has also illustrated that, in raising the standard of living and in reducing poverty in local communities, appropriate pilgrimage tourism-related interventions can play a role. It is often necessary, however, to develop and implement policies that take advantage of the potential benefits of pilgrimage tourism in socio-economic development. This is simply a matter of awareness so that at the planning stage, the joint benefits to pilgrimage tourists and local communities can be considered.

In case of Bari Imam we can say that the shopkeepers need to look at different factors and motivations that lead the customers for purchasing. Keeping in mind the quality, quantity, and different choices of men and women, accordingly to their preferences, the shopkeepers can get great benefits through more sales which help in raising their living standards.

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