

Touristic Souvenirisation in Social Media: Comparison of Tanzania and South Korea Souvenir Sellers

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Abstract

The study aimed to compare the social media content and activities of souvenir sellers in Tanzania and South Korea to decipher differences in social media marketing strategies. Data was collected from 70 Tanzanian and Korean souvenir sellers by assessing their Instagram accounts. Through a mixed-methods approach, souvenir seller accounts were sampled using an initial purposive sampling technique followed by a snowball non-probability sampling technique. Six variables were analysed using descriptive and t-test techniques: the number of posts, followers, dates of posts, likes and accounts followed by the souvenir sellers. The data on the nature and type of descriptions and images used by souvenir sellers were analysed using content and thematic analyses. Significant differences were found in social media marketing metrics, including the number of posts, followers, posting dates, and likes, with South Korean souvenir sellers outperforming those in Tanzania. The findings support the Brand Post Popularity Model, as social media content can be related to audience responses. Moreover, the findings enforce the souvenir-handcraft continuum, with souvenirisation being crucial in authenticating and embedding meaning. The study offers insights for Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) and sellers on how to enhance the souvenirisation of their handcrafted items.

Keywords: Souvenir, Sellers, Souvenirisation, Storytelling, Comparative, Digital
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Introduction

Over the years, the souvenir industry has experienced significant growth, reflecting the expansion of tourism (Shen & Lai 2022; Swanson & Timothy 2012). Since 2019, the gift and souvenir market has been growing at an estimated annual rate of four per cent, with a projected value of US\$16.33 billion by 2022 (Technovio 2022). As reminders for tourists of their time at a destination or as unique gifts for others from the places they have visited, souvenirs are intricately linked to local culture (Brennan & Savage 2012; Duan et al., 2023; Liu et al. 2025; Wu et al. 2022). Implicitly, their potential lies not only in globalising local cultures but also in enhancing their local economies (Lacher & Nepal 2011; Lira et al. 2020). Strategies to improve souvenir sales are crucial for fostering sustained benefits from the souvenir economy (Heroux & Church 2014; Soukhathammavong & Park 2019).

Souvenirs are ambivalent objects embedded with meanings, ideas and feelings (Haldrup 2017; Swanson & Timothy 2012). They are related to the culture and history of their places of origin (Shtudiner et al. 2019; Soukhathammavong & Park 2019). Souvenir studies have focused on both the demand side (i.e., customers/tourists) and the supply side i.e., retailers (Amaro et al., 2020). Many have explored the demand side, particularly customers' perception (Amaro et al. 2020; Fangxuan & Ryan 2018; Kugbonu et al. 2020; Sthapit 2018; Torabian & Arai 2016; Wu et al. 2022). Some have focused on the supply side (Heroux & Church 2014; Milman 2015; Soukhathammavong & Park 2019; Trinh, Ryan & Cave 2014). The sellers' roles are designed to create demand by enticing potential customers to purchase souvenirs (Soukhathammavong & Park 2019).

After the tourist's encounter with souvenirs, the communication from the sellers is the most important in transmitting the meanings (Sthapit et al. 2022). A thorough understanding of marketing communication by souvenir sellers appears to be missing in the literature. Heroux and Church (2014) attempted to comparatively capture the general marketing strategies used by souvenir sellers in Canada and the USA. However, they did not specifically address the communication aspects of marketing. Furthermore, with the rise of e-commerce as the primary mode of purchase (Abendroth 2011; Shen & Lai 2022; Yuan et al. 2022), research on souvenir sellers' communication through the internet is pertinent. The importance of

researching digital souvenir selling is further emphasised by Shen and Lai (2022), who underscore the potential of the internet in souvenir marketing, marking a new era in business. Social media is a marketing channel through which souvenir sellers disseminate their information (Yuan et al. 2022). The ability of social media to facilitate the communication of verbal and non-verbal messages is helpful in embedding meaning into the products being marketed (i.e., souvenirs). What are souvenir sellers doing in embedding those meanings, ideas and feelings through social media? What is the effective way of doing that? The scholarly attempt to answer such questions is limited (Boley et al. 2013).

To contribute to knowledge, this study explored the social media marketing communications of souvenir sellers. It is presumed that the contextual cultural environments of souvenir sellers can differentiate their marketing strategies (Heroux & Church 2014). This study compares the social media marketing strategies of souvenir sellers in Tanzania and South Korea. These two countries provide fertile ground for comparing souvenir sellers' communications through the internet, as one country (South Korea) is far ahead of the other (Tanzania) in terms of economic and technological development. Yet, both utilise the internet to sell souvenirs. Moreover, the two countries have distinct cultures that can offer more vivid insights into the cultural aspects of embedding meanings in souvenirs through their narratives and communications.

Literature review

Meaning of souvenirs

Souvenirs are objects that serve as a remembrance of an event, occasion, place or a person (Swanson & Timothy, 2012). They have been associated with tourism for ages (Hume 2014) and considered essential purchases by tourists visiting a particular destination (Fangxuan & Ryan 2018; Swanson & Timothy 2012; Wilkins 2011). Souvenirs are purchased either for the tourist's personal use or as a gift for others (Sthapit & Bjork 2019). The final user of the souvenir keeps it to evoke their past travel experiences or to share those experiences with others (Boley et al. 2013). The purchase of souvenirs as gifts might not fully fit the definition of a souvenir, but somewhat resemble tourism handicraft commodities given to others, rather than being retained for personal use to evoke past travel experiences. Thus, in

this study, souvenirs are considered personal items that serve to evoke and extend travel experiences long after the actual journey has become history (Sthapit & Bjork 2019).

Swanson and Timothy (2012) propose a conceptual taxonomic amplification of souvenirs, encompassing symbolic reminders, tourist commodities, other commodities, and miscellaneous reminders. Souvenirs, as symbolic reminders and tourist commodities, are typically traded within the tourism value chain and are intended to be considered proper souvenirs (Swanson & Timothy 2012) compared to other categories. Thus, souvenirs serve as both symbolic reminders and tourist commodities, anchoring the process of souvenirisation in this study as both souvenirs and tourist commodities are traded, implying communication between the seller and buyers that actuates the exchange. This communication between souvenir sellers and buyers can be assumed to be an essential part of the souvenir-making process, known as souvenirisation. Consequently, this study argues that the communication between the souvenir seller and the potential buyer is part of creating and embedding meaning in the traded object, which can be either a souvenir or a mere tourist commodity. Of particular interest in this study are the messages communicated by souvenir sellers through online social media platforms, which have become ubiquitous in tourism, particularly in the context of souvenir sales (Shen & Lai 2022).

The essence of souvenir purchase is in its ability to evoke travel memories (Swanson & Timothy 2012) long after the tourists leave the destination. The ability of a souvenir to evoke memories depends on both its tangible (the object/item itself) and intangible aspects (Swanson & Timothy, 2012). The tangible part of the souvenir, however, requires an infusion of meanings and symbols onto the actual object (souvenir) being purchased (Collins-Kreiner & Zins 2011; Sthapit & Bjork 2019; Swanson & Timothy 2012). These meanings are typically associated with either the place or its culture (Duan et al. 2023). Such a process of infusing meaning and symbols onto the object part of a souvenir (souvenirisation) has scarcely been researched. Husa (2020) is among the few researchers who focus on the negotiations and interactions between sellers and tourists in the exchange process, highlighting the crucial role of communication in authenticating souvenirs (souvenirisation). Using the concept of mutual gaze, Husa (2020) captured the conceptions of souvenir sellers and buyers regarding the meaning of

souvenirs, rather than the communications between the parties that reflect the souvenirisation process.

Souvenirization as a process of meaning embedding

Despite souvenirs being a common theme in academic works, the practice of making, trading, and marketing them is a common aspect of tourism. The definition of souvenirisation is recent and still evolving. Souvenirisation is the process of transforming a cultural, traditional, and historical object of a place (a souvenir) into a tradable tourist commodity (Husa 2020) that evokes memories, emotions, and behaviours in tourists after they return from a vacation (Gao et al. 2025). As souvenirs embody the history and cultural aspects of a place, they are considered a medium of communication that transmits the history and culture of a place to another (Wu et al. 2022). Thus, souvenirs symbolically evoke travel memories (Gordon 1986) through the embodied cultural and place-based meanings. For the meaning to be embodied in souvenirs, communication between the seller and the buyer is crucial, reflecting the souvenirization process.

In the process of souvenirisation, authenticity is central and crucial as its management can lead to either a souvenir or simply a tourist product (Duan et al. 2023). The authenticity of an object (i.e. a souvenir) is the belief and impression of uniqueness, genuineness, and aesthetic attributes of that object (Lin & Wang 2012). Wang (1999) developed three theoretical concepts of authenticity: objective, constructive, and existential. The objective part reflects the genuine, authentic, and correct aspects of souvenirs, which can only be judged by experts or players on the supply side (Soukhathammavong & Park 2019). The constructive typology of souvenirs reflects the authenticity derived from the process of communication between buyers and sellers, leading to knowledge for the buyer (Wang 1999), which, in essence, imbues souvenirs with meaning and symbolism. The last typology of authenticity, existential, pertains to the actual real-time experience of an object or place (Wang 1999). Of the three types of authenticity, constructive authenticity is relevant in the current study.

As souvenirs, like other tourism products, are also tradable through electronic means (Abendroth 2011; Sigala 2020), it is pertinent to appraise the communications through that platform. Such research will help determine whether the communication is truly embedding meaning (i.e.,

souvenirisation) through the storytelling process. The storytelling approach (Moscardo 2020), which emphasises the importance of providing marketing information in a narrative, story-lined manner, is used to evaluate the souvenir sellers' social media communications.

Souvenirisation and Storytelling

Storytelling is a form of communication that conveys its contents in a narrative form, which is both enjoyable and evocative of emotions, while also being educational (Kim et al. 2020; Moscardo 2020). This concept in the social sciences, including tourism, is a burgeoning field (Moscardo 2020), as it offers immense opportunities for effective communication. In tourism research, storytelling has gained momentum (Chen et al. 2020; Kim et al. 2020; Moscardo 2020), but there is a lack of specific focus on souvenir sellers. Despite the role of storytelling in souvenirisation, the lack of empirical evidence is long overdue. Milman (2015) in Mexico found that souvenir vendors' selling communication lacked the elements of storytelling. Such a finding from Milman (2015) implies a challenge in the communication process between souvenir buyers and sellers, which might nullify the value of souvenir as messengers of the extraordinary (Gordon 1986). This scenario necessitates an empirical study on storytelling within souvenir exchange.

The current study examines the act and the outcome of storytelling in capturing and comparing the social media communications of Tanzanian and Korean souvenir sellers with tourists. Particularly in tourism, which is an experiential product and souvenirs, which are a symbolic product (Gordon 1986), the storytelling approach is essential in the dynamic and digital age. In expanding the concept of storytelling, Moscardo (2020) bifurcated it into two aspects: the story itself and the act of telling. The story part refers to the content being communicated, while the telling part focuses on how the story is conveyed. The story part can be assessed based on its authenticity and educational value. While authenticity connotes information coherence, educability reflects the extent to which the information imparts knowledge to the receiver (Kim et al. 2020). On the other hand, the telling part, which contains more emotional content compared to the story part, which is cognitive (Moscardo 2020), is divided into three components: enjoyment, descriptiveness, and emotionality (Kim et al. 2020). These attributes of storytelling are employed in the current study to assess the messages communicated by souvenir sellers through

social media platforms. The three categories are used due to their parsimonious nature, as well as their ease of understanding and application.

Online souvenir promotion

Marketing and promotion of souvenirs is key for the competitiveness and prosperity of the souvenir business (Milman 2015; Yuan et al. 2021). Today, competitiveness requires the use of the internet, including social media, in marketing and promotion (Buhalis 2020). Souvenirs have also been noted to be marketed through online platforms (Abendroth 2011; Huang et al., 2020; Yan et al., 2023; Yuan et al. 2022). Online souvenir marketing has been strongly advocated by several authors (Shen & Lai 2022; Sigala 2020) due to the high turbulence, including pandemics like COVID-19, and consumer dynamics that force buyers and sellers to meet online. Bernardo et al. (2023) identified five areas that require research emphasis in the context of souvenirs, including the impact of technology.

Specifically, in the context of tourism souvenir research, both offline and online, sellers' marketing strategies have received limited empirical attention (Soukhathammavong & Park 2019; Trinh et al. 2014). In both selling channels, the authenticity (meaning/symbolism) of souvenirs requires the process of souvenirisation (sellers' communication/storytelling to potential buyers). Yan et al. (2023) emphasise souvenir purchases in a destination rather than through the internet to provide a more emotional connection between the tourist and the destination, cautioning against selling souvenirs online. In line with technological aspects in souvenir selling, Guo, Cui, and Zhao (2024) compared the purchase intentions of tourists for souvenirs with handwritten and machine-written notes, noting that the latter led to higher purchase intentions than the former. Based on these previous findings, it is evident that souvenir marketing has evolved to incorporate technological aspects, with some differences in the marketing consequences. Despite the growing use of the internet in selling souvenirs, coupled with the possibility of electronic communications to be used to connect tourists to the source of the souvenirs, studies are lacking.

Souvenir studies offer insights into potential contextual differences in marketing (Heroux & Church 2014), which can lead to variations in buyer

behaviour. Heroux and Church (2014) found that Canadian and American souvenir marketing strategies differed in terms of products, prices, places, and promotion. While the two are geographically, technologically, economically and culturally closer, it is interesting to explore the same for contexts that are more distant in those aspects. This study examines two contexts: Tanzania and South Korea.

Brand Post Popularity (BPP) Model

Marketing effectiveness in the context of social media is evaluated through the popularity of the post on the respective social media platform (Lin, Swarna, & Bruning 2017). In social media, the popularity of a brand's post is judged by its engagement, measured by the number of followers, likes, comments, and shares of the post by the target audience (Yu & Egger, 2021). These indicators of social media engagement are commonly referred to as the Brand Post Popularity (BPP) model (De Vries et al., 2012; Robson & Banerjee, 2023), which has become a standard approach for evaluating social media marketing communications (Yu & Egger 2021).

Generally, the BPP model indicates that the antecedents of a post's popularity on social media include informativeness, entertainment, vividness, interactivity, post length, and the valence of the post (De Vries et al. 2012). Among the antecedents of post popularity, informativeness and vividness, which are subsumed under the presentation aspect of the message (Robson & Banerjee 2023), have proven to be more practical in application and are common among others (Robson et al. 2022). Hence, this study opted for these aspects in evaluating the social media posts. Vividness depicts the extent to which a post is visually appealing (De Vries et al. 2012). Vividness in social media is enhanced using captivating, colourful images (Robson et al. 2022) under a given context that reflects the authenticity of the communicated brand or product. Informativeness connotes the richness of facts in the post (Robson et al. 2022), where the level of informativeness reflects the optimality and completeness of brand information being communicated. The optimum information in a post is sufficient enough to enable the receiver to synthesise the message completely, but not too much to confuse the receiver about the brand. Thus, informativeness is relative depending on the context of communication and the type of brand or product being communicated.

Brand post popularity, particularly in terms of vividness and informativeness, has been shown to relate to consumers' purchase intentions and actual behaviour (Lin et al., 2017; Robson et al. 2022). However, there seem to be few studies in the context of tourism (Volo & Irimias, 2021) that examine consumption, which is typically experiential, necessitating sensorial appeal, such as visual (Yu et al. 2020), as well as being risky during the pre-purchase stage. Surprisingly, souvenirs, a typical tourism product, have been less researched using the BPP model, despite emerging research indicating that they are marketed through social media (Yuan et al. 2022) and the internet in general (Yan et al. 2023). Thus, in complementing and extending empirical knowledge, this study squarely focuses on souvenir marketing through social media, which is referred to as *souvenirisation* in the current study.

Methodology

The study descriptively compared the communicated messages, both pictorial and textual, by souvenir sellers from Tanzania and South Korea. In this study, pictures and texts are used to reflect the vividness and informativeness aspects, respectively, of the antecedents of Brand Post Popularity (De Vries et al. 2012; Robson et al. 2022). The data was collected from Instagram² On the souvenir sellers' accounts. From each country, 35 Instagram accounts of souvenir sellers were purposively sampled by choosing accounts that actively sell souvenirs and related handcrafts. The researcher used hashtags such as #souvenirtanzania, #souvenirkr, #souvenirmurah, #souvenirultah, and #visittanzania to access souvenir sellers' accounts easily. Snowball sampling was used to complement the purposive sampling. Once an account was selected, the researchers examined the followers and following lists to gain access to more souvenir sellers from the respective country. The collected posts from the souvenir sellers' Instagram accounts, concerning the time posted, spanned from January 1, 2020, to January 1, 2021. To avoid capturing data from different days that could affect the quantitative data, all IG posts were collected on the 5th January, 2021 (10:00 hours East African Time).

² Instagram (IG) is a social media and an effective business promotional tool, handy and able to feature videos, pictures and texts and most used media by tourism marketers with a global use by over two billion individuals.

The quantitative indicators of post popularity included likes, replies, and followers (Yu & Egger 2021), while the qualitative ones were represented by textual descriptions reflecting post informativeness and pictorial descriptions indicating vividness. Additionally, the number of posts, the days since the last post, and the number of other accounts followed by the sellers were quantitatively captured to signify the informativeness dimension. The visual aspects of the pictures posted by the souvenir sellers were captured as qualitative data for the vividness aspect of the BPP model. Additionally, the number of posts, days since the last post, and the number of other accounts followed by the sellers were quantitatively measured to signify the informativeness dimension of the BPP model.

Quantitative analysis compared the mean scores for number of posts, followers, following, number of replies, number of likes, and days since last post for the two countries (Tanzania and South Korea) using independent sample t-tests. Textual and pictorial data were coded based on information and visual attributes, resulting in the emergence of higher-level themes. The content analysis of the qualitative information initially focused on five dimensions of storytelling: authenticity, education, enjoyment, description, and emotion (Kim et al. 2020). It was necessary to use the five dimensions as an opener for the exploration of the qualitative information. The vividness of the images posted was appraised based on the background of the photos and the dominant colours used (Yu et al. 2020). As one of the researchers has resided in South Korea for four years and frequently visits the country regularly, in addition to being a permanent resident of Tanzania, the colour aspects of both cultures were familiar to the researcher. Thence, the image and colour aspects of image vividness were qualitatively compared for the two countries by a well-versed person in both cultures.

Results

Of the total 70 Instagram posts analysed by souvenir sellers from Tanzania and South Korea, 19 and 11 pictures were analysed, respectively, for South Korean sellers and Tanzanian sellers. Additionally, 13 of the Tanzanian pictures posted were of paintings, while only 3 of the Korean posts included paintings. Regarding souvenirs with functional value, 20 and 14 posted pictures reflected the utility of Korean and Tanzanian souvenirs, respectively. For Korean posts, 10 were for ornamental souvenirs, while there were none for Tanzania.

The quantitative descriptive results for the number of posts, followers, following, replies, likes, and average time since the last posts are shown in Table I. The results of independent sample t-tests comparing the two countries indicate that the mean scores for South Korea are statistically higher than those of Tanzania. The mean number of posts for Korean souvenir sellers on Instagram was significantly higher (1046.86) compared to their Tanzanian counterparts (295.54), with the test indicating statistical differences between the means. South Korean souvenir sellers have many more social media followers than Tanzanians. South Korean souvenir sellers appear to update their Instagram web pages more frequently compared to Tanzanian sellers, as the mean difference between the two groups is statistically significant, with Koreans having the shortest mean (3.8 days) compared to Tanzanians (14.8571 days). The results indicate that there are no significant differences between the souvenir sellers from the two countries in terms of being followed, as well as the number of replies they receive on social media platforms. Marginally, the number of likes on the Instagram pages of South Korean sellers is higher (301.57) than that of Tanzanian sellers (99.37).

Table 1: Independent Sample T-Test between Tanzania and South Korea

Variable	Country	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	Sign.
Posts	Tanzania	295.54	402.339	-3.942	.000
	South Korea	1046.86	1053.476		
Followers	Tanzania	3149.89	4330.259	-2.942	.005
	South Korea	10659.46	14464.684		
Following	Tanzania	924.57	1178.342	.953	.344
	South Korea	692.20	832.043		
Replies	Tanzania	2.57	5.164	-1.248	.216
	South Korea	5.57	13.247		
Date of last photo	Tanzania	14.8571	19.87926	3.186	.003
	South Korea	3.8000	5.12663		
Likes	Tanzania	99.37	173.239	-1.783	.079
	South Korea	301.57	648.144		

The qualitative results of the content from souvenir sellers in the two countries are summarised in Table II. The contents of the pictorial and narrative elements were assessed based on inductively derived categories, which included messages, picture background, product, colour, product

utility, and language used. Upon comparing the communication contents from souvenir sellers from the two countries, the main themes were derived that reflect the initial attributes.

Table 2: Qualitative results on the Theme of Posts between Tanzania and South Korea Souvenir Sellers

SN	Attribute	Contents		Theme
		Korea	Tanzania	
1	Message	There are narrative messages The messages have a well-storied pattern 'Did you know? The Mandala is about the journey to the centre...'	Significantly few posts had a clear message. The main contents were on price, business hours, and product availability. We are considering auctioning some of the bags from our upcoming stock.' One had a focus on empathy, featuring hand-blown items made by makers in Tanzania, who are people with disabilities, and beaded by Maasai women.	Storytelling/dramatising
2	Picture background	The background used is a complementary and enticing colour scheme that blends well	Rarely included, and if present, it is not complimentary. Many pictures are standalone with no background.	Picture presentation
3	Product communicated	Traditional tea and food items, cultural artefacts, and clothing	Painting, clothing	Nature of product
4	Dominant colors	Few (grey, brown) and rarely mixed	Variety and mixed	Dominant colors

5	Product utility	Many of the communicated products are symbolic and evoke spiritual, emotional, and culturally embedded.	Many of the communicated products are utilitarian, like baskets, dresses, and paintings.	Product utility
6	Language clarity	Mostly English, though with grammatical and spelling mistakes. Currently, I'm getting late answering the inquiry.'	Some used Swahili (the local language), which was not even perfect, with poor grammar, spelling mistakes, and the use of slang. 'Kwa picha za kuchola Kwa rangi Basi nione mm' Some mixed English and Swahili 'Drop r comment mtu wangu wa nguvu'	Language

Typical examples of Instagram posts from sellers in the two countries are assembled in Table III. The figure clearly shows that the pictures from Tanzania sellers are much brighter and have deeper, more saturated colours compared to those from Korea, which are less colourful and less saturated. The length of the narrations in the Korean captions for the pictures is significantly more elaborate compared to those in Tanzanian posts.

vs South Korea

The collage consists of four social media posts arranged in a 2x2 grid. Each post includes a profile picture, a name, a post image, and a caption. The posts are from 'culture2society', 'museumshop_goods.official', 'darkgalleryofficial', and 'chipproject.seoul'. The images show various art-related items: a patterned fabric, a small white figurine, a sunset painting with palm trees, and a tiger painting.

In other words, the results of this study found that South Korean souvenir sellers capitalise more on social media as a marketing platform. The results indicate that the number of Instagram posts and followers of South Korean souvenir sellers is three times higher than that of their Tanzanian counterparts. Moreover, South Korean souvenir sellers posted their products more frequently than Tanzanian sellers. Additionally, the number of Instagram likes for South Korean posts is marginally higher than that of Tanzanian sellers. Furthermore, the results indicate that online marketing communications of South Korean souvenir sellers feature story-lined messages, whereas their Tanzanian counterparts primarily provide unstructured information. The presentation of the pictorial messages from South Korean souvenir sellers featured a background that enhanced the appeal of the souvenirs and used fewer colours. On the language aspect, the marketing communications of both sides had issues with English grammar and spelling. The Tanzanian souvenir sellers' language presentation was a mix of Swahili and English, with frequent use of slang.

Conclusion and implications

Scholarly work on online souvenir marketing strategies remains limited. This study compared the social media marketing communications of souvenir sellers from South Korea and Tanzania using data from vendors' Instagram accounts. The study reveals significant differences in social media communication between souvenir sellers from South Korea and Tanzania, as measured by both quantitative and qualitative indicators. The comparison of souvenir sellers from two culturally and technologically distinct contexts offers different theoretical insights. In its original connotation as a symbolic product, a souvenir entails the importance of interpretation and storytelling to the buyers (Gordon, 1986; Kuhn, 2020). South Korean sellers appear to have capitalised on the souvenirization of their products by providing stories that reflect the products being communicated on social media. However, Tanzanian sellers, who essentially provide information rather than stories (Stubb, 2018), appear to be selling less authentic souvenirs. Such a finding affirms the proposition that souvenirs and handicrafts can be arranged on a continuum as the same product differentiated by the symbolic meaning embedded in it.

The theoretical lens of the Brand Post Popularity Model, which uses the number of likes, posts, and followers as a proxy for the effects of communications on social media (Yu et al., 2020), provides support for the

model's assertion. As the metrics of likes, posts, and followers for Korean posts were higher than those for their Tanzanian counterparts, it can be logically concluded that the narrations in the Korean posts have had a positive effect on the viewers. However, based on the tourism aesthetic paradigm that brighter colours attract more viewers and engagement (Yu et al., 2020), the results from the current study suggest otherwise. This is because the Korean posts received more positive responses than the Tanzanian posts, which were more colourful. An additional explanation, in addition to the aesthetic paradigm, is deemed necessary. As colours are an integral part of social life, reflecting different cultures (Rose-Greenland, 2016), viewers may hold certain perceptions of the various cultures and authenticity of the products communicated through social media. Thence, nullifying the application of the aesthetic paradigm without relating to the culture being reflected by and with the handicraft and souvenir being communicated.

Managerially, the study's findings have significant implications regarding souvenirization. Online sellers must clearly define themselves as either souvenir sellers or craft sellers. When describing themselves specifically for souvenir sellers, it is essential to understand the meaning of a souvenir and then embark on a holistic process of souvenirization, with online platforms offering an avenue for this process. The process of online souvenirization should focus on both the message and visual presentations, which should complement each other in terms of the way the stories are narrated, the colour combination, the utility of the souvenir, and the language used. Such strategies are likely to enable sellers to charge relatively higher prices compared to those who do not employ souvenirization (Yan et al. 2023). For those aiming to sell handmade products online, it is essential to focus on factual information, such as price, product availability, and usage, as buyers are less likely to create a personal meaning and attachment to the product compared to those who are buying souvenirs.

For sellers aiming to sell authentic souvenirs, they can use social media platforms to complement the messages they communicate, which may be from themselves or other destination organisations. If it can be assumed that a tourist who has visited a destination and wishes to purchase a handicraft that will remind them of their destination experience, then the seller can minimise the extent of stories. A possible strategy is to allow tourists to use travel information, such as QR codes and ticket details, to

verify that the buyer is seeking a souvenir and not a handicraft.

To enhance souvenirisation for Tanzania souvenir sellers, destination managers should implement policies and regulations that not only preserve the destination's culture but also ensure that souvenirs are exchanged through fair trade. Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) should invest in building the capacity of handcraft producers and sellers to communicate the stories behind their products, as well as the art of storytelling, which will ensure the products embed meaning for tourists. As none of the online communications indicated a trademark or connotation of Intellectual Property Rights, DMOs should facilitate the process of preserving the originality of the products as well as legally protecting them from dubious producers and sellers who are not associated with the place of origin culture of the product.

The interest of many governments is to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products. Thus, the DMOs should ensure the products are culturally congruent with the destination. As countries and regions encompass diverse people and places with distinct cultures, implying different handicrafts, care should be taken not to promote a few unique artefacts as souvenirs for the larger area. For instance, in Tanzania, the famous Tingatinga paintings, originally from the southern part of Tanzania and the northern part of Mozambique, have not only become a craft reflecting Tanzania as a country but also other East African countries. The same scenario is observed in Korea, where porcelain utensils and colourful mini purses, originally from a small community, have become a symbol of Korean souvenirs. For DMOs to give due respect to the economic and cultural benefits of the souvenirs' place of origin, efforts should focus on empowering the artisans from those areas whose culture is reflected in the souvenirs.

The study had several limitations that should be acknowledged. The reliance on social media posts of souvenir sellers provides a partial picture of souvenir sellers' marketing communication as it descriptively captures what is being communicated without reflecting the motives and commercial consequences of the strategy. The idea of comparing two countries (Tanzania and Korea) that are culturally distinct and where Korea is far ahead of Tanzania in terms of Internet use has provided an initial understanding of the differences. Future studies can explore the possibilities of comparing countries that are similar in terms of culture and

technological development to decipher whether online marketing strategies differ. To capture the souvenirisation process more holistically, future studies can consider other means of meaning embedding, apart from social media communications, that are also relevant. Moreover, future studies can utilise longitudinal studies to capture the dynamic aspects of souvenirisation, unlike the snapshot approach of using social media content at a single point in time.

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