

OPEN ACCESS

Volume: 13

Special Issue: 1

Month: February

Year: 2026

P-ISSN: 2321-4643

E-ISSN: 2581-9402

Citation:

Vijayalakshmi, R., and
Jaya Bharathi, K. "A
Study on Perception and
Contribution of
Tourists towards
Sustainable Souvenirs in
the Circular
Economy with Special
Focus on Karaikudi."
*Shanlax International
Journal of Management*,
vol. 13, no. S1, 92–100.

DOI:

[https://doi.org/10.34293/
management.v13iS1-i1-
Feb.10336](https://doi.org/10.34293/management.v13iS1-i1-Feb.10336)

A Study on Perception and Contribution of Tourists towards Sustainable Souvenirs in the Circular Economy with Special Focus on Karaikudi

R. Vijayalakshmi

*Teaching Assistant, Department of Tourism and Hotel Management
Alagappa University, Karaikudi, Tamil Nadu, India*

K. Jaya Bharathi

*Teaching Assistant, Department of Tourism and Hotel Management
Alagappa University, Karaikudi, Tamil Nadu, India*

Abstract

The souvenirs act as a one of the sources of tangible memories of the tourism destination and it contributes to the economy. The tourists visit these destinations and tend to purchase souvenirs that carries the identity of the destination, its tradition, heritage and culture. As a tangible tourism product, it also reflects the destination image. The tourists also purchase the souvenirs for long lasting memories. As tourists are also showing keen interest in the responsible consumption, experiential and sustainable travel, they focus on responsible consumption. It paves way for manufacturing sustainable souvenirs as it can contribute to the circular economy. Hence, the exposure to sustainable souvenirs for tourist can lead to the circular economy, conserve environment and sustainable development. There are many destinations in India remembered by its sustainable souvenirs. For instances, sustainable souvenirs like Kondapalli toys remind Andhra Pradesh, Kathputli Puppets reminds Rajasthan. In specific to Tamil Nadu Thalayatti Bommai also referred as dancing doll or head shaking doll and Thanjavur paintings represent Thanjavur are sustainable souvenir. In this context, the study aims to understand the perception of tourist towards sustainable souvenirs and circular economy. The research work also focuses on various sustainable souvenirs available in Karaikudi. It also explores the contribution of tourist towards sustainable souvenirs and circular economy. The study is mixed in nature. The thematic analysis, t-Test and ANOVA test were done for the study. The implications of the research work reveal the tourists are interested in purchasing the sustainable souvenirs as it supports local vendors. It also uncovers that these sustainable souvenirs can create an impact in circular economy as it can be recycled, reused and carries high shelf life. The tourist's contribution is significant as they personally schedule time for shopping and visit the shops personally to purchase these sustainable souvenirs.

Keywords: Sustainable Souvenirs, Circular Economy, Sustainability, Perception, Contribution, Tourist, Responsible Consumption.

Introduction

Sustainable souvenirs are products that promotes local culture, tradition and heritage. Tourists travel experience is been influenced by transportation services, accommodation services, activities in the destination and shopping. In shopping, tourists buy the souvenirs as the symbolic remembrance of the destination. In recent days, tourists are focussing more on the responsible, immersive and experiential travel. Hence, they prefer eco-lodges, green transportation, digital payment systems and adopt in the green tourism principles. In similar terms, they also spend time in quality shopping and buy eco- friendly products as they are sustainable in nature. This also enhances the economy and global recognition for local vendors and artisans. In this context, the sustainable souvenirs play a vital role in shopping tourism. The sustainable souvenirs can also be termed as eco-friendly products. It includes products made from recycled crafts, organic materials and indicates the culture and heritage of the destination.

The circular economy refers to the regenerative system that involves reduce, recycle, reuse and long-term utilization of products. It supports local communities and sustainable development. As sustainable souvenirs are environment friendly, it contributes to the tourism circular economy. It also comprises of home decor products like handcrafted wall hangings, artefacts and souvenir items resembles Chettinad culture and tradition. Circular Economy Cell (CE Cell), Eco-Mark rules, Mission LiFE (Lifestyle foe Environment), Plastic Waste Management Rules, Startup India are few initiatives that addresses the importance to encourage the sustainable practices. This paper aims understand the perception and contribution of tourist towards sustainable souvenirs and circular economy. As Karaikudi is known for its heritage, the study also examines the various sustainable souvenirs available in Karaikudi. It also explores in designing the sustainable framework integrating perception and contribution of tourists toward sustainable souvenirs within a circular economy.

Review of Literature

The circular economy can enable the industry efficient and also resilient (Strippoli et al., 2024). The enhancements in the environmental performance in specific to the activities of the agro-tourism can promote sustainable tourism being a new approach to the circular economy (Rodríguez et al., 2020). As tourists are the key stakeholders, it is important to be aware of their environmental footprint and impact on the location (Rudan et al., 2021). For people those who didn't visit the place yet, these souvenirs might create an intention for them to visit the places (Duan et al., 2023). The souvenir industry encompasses of both handmade and mass production as it carries traditional knowledge (Hashim et al., 2021). The heritage and community-based souvenir can enhance personalized shopping experiences and meet tourists expectations in a better way (Bernardo et al., 2023). The main component in travel activity is travel shopping and has contributes to the tourism economy (Singh, 2023). Handicrafts plays a vital role in exhibiting the tourism resources of a country and attracts tourists (Mukunda, 2022). The customer-product relationship has a significant impact on visit intentions (Han et al., 2021). The purchase for the purpose of gifts and self-use has greatly impacted by fashion motivation, perception of price perception, consumer attitude and perceived value (Saepudin et al., 2023).

Objectives

1. To understand the perception of the tourists towards the sustainable souvenirs and circular economy.
2. To examine the various sustainable souvenirs available in Karaikudi.
3. To analyze the contribution of tourist towards sustainable souvenirs and circular economy.
4. To design the sustainable framework integrating perception and contribution of tourists toward sustainable souvenirs within a circular economy.

Research Gap

The research papers based on circular economy highlights on the principles, impact in the sustainable development goals (SDG's) and the contribution of the tourists. The research also explores the demand for sustainable souvenirs and perception of tourists about utilizing sustainable souvenirs. The majority of the research work lacks the insights on contribution of sustainable souvenirs within circular economy. In addition, the majority of the research work also lacks inputs on the various sustainable souvenirs available in Karaikudi that contributes towards circular economy. Hence the perception and contribution of tourist towards sustainable souvenirs and circular economy have been emphasized on the study. The various sustainable souvenirs available in Karaikudi has also been studied. In addition, the study also paves way for designing sustainable framework integrating perception and contribution of tourists toward sustainable souvenirs within a circular economy have also been focused.

Scope for the Study

The research is confined to the sustainable souvenirs available in Karaikudi and its contribution in circular economy. The study also explores the perception and contribution of tourist towards sustainable souvenirs and circular economy. In addition, it leads to green environment, support livelihood of local communities and conservation of the Chettinad tangible tourism products. The research work also uncovers various sustainable souvenirs available in Karaikudi. The research paper also tries to design the sustainable framework integrating perception and contribution of tourists toward sustainable souvenirs within a circular economy.

Limitations of the Study

The major limitation of the study is time constraint and hence the findings and suggestions are obtained accordingly. As the research work is confined to Karaikudi, the results may not be generalized to other tourism destinations.

Research Methodology

Design

This is a mixed study. It comprises of both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Structured face to face interviews were carried out for the research work that involves tour operators, travel agents and souvenir sellers. Expert opinions were gathered from academicians. Observation was also a part of the study to understand the buying behaviour of tourists. The questionnaire was used to collect data from domestic tourists.

Data Collection Method

The data were collected from respondents with proper willingness and transparency was maintained throughout the research.

Primary Data

Primary data was collected from the academicians, tour operators, travel agents, souvenir sellers and domestic tourists.

Secondary Data

Secondary data was collected from the official websites, articles, research papers, travel magazines, journals and official reports.

Sampling

Simple random sampling was used to choose the sample. The sample size for Qualitative Research Respondents is 5. The sample size for Quantitative Research Respondents is 101.

Analysis

Thematic analysis was taken into consideration to analyse the transcripts and the categorised into main themes. In addition, percentage analysis, ANOVA test, t-Test were also done for the study.

Hypotheses

Null hypotheses

- H01 : There is no significant association among tourists' awareness about sustainable souvenirs, awareness of the concept of circular economy and preference in buying souvenirs that are eco-friendly.
- H02: There is no significant association between interests of tourists to purchase souvenirs that are eco-friendly in Karaikudi as sustainable souvenir enhances the travel experience of tourists and preserve local culture, tradition and heritage.
- H03: There is no significant association between tourists suggesting the sustainable souvenirs to their surroundings and its affordability.

Analysis and Discussions

Thematic Analysis

The thematic analysis was carried to know the various sustainable souvenirs available in Karaikudi. It was also done to design the sustainable framework integrating perception and contribution of tourists toward sustainable souvenirs within a circular economy.

Sustainable souvenirs available in Karaikudi

The respondents were aware about the sustainable souvenirs. They highlighted that tourists are interested to buy local handmade products as souvenirs. They also listed some of the popular souvenirs that tourists tend to purchase such as Chettinad Cotton Sarees, Athangudi Tiles, Chettinad Kottan (Baskets), Terracotta Dolls and Pottery, Stone Crafts, Wood crafts and Brass crafts. These tourists are interested to buy these souvenirs as they carry rich cultural and heritage significance. They are also keen in purchasing quality products. In addition, they prefer these products as it supports circular economy, local vendors, local communities, artisans and craftsperson. It also generates revenue for local communities and artisans.

Sustainability and Circular Economy

The respondents were highly involved in promoting sustainable tourism and souvenirs. They were also interested in circular economy. They highlighted that it conserves environment and reduces waste. Hence the brand image of the tourism destination can be uplifted. In addition, the respondents also depicted the majority of the tourists prefer slow and experiential travel and the willingness to follow sustainable practices in tourism destinations. This travel pattern reflects in their purchasing behaviour.

Percentage Analysis

Table 1 : Demographic data

Demographic Determinants		Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)	Total
Age	Below 20	4	3.96	101
	21 - 30	68	67.33	
	31 - 40	24	23.76	
	41 - 50	2	1.98	
	Above 50	3	2.97	
Gender	Male	51	50.50	101
	Female	50	49.50	
	Prefer not to say	0	0.00	
Highest educational qualification	10th/SSC	1	0.99	101
	12th/HSC	4	3.96	
	Diploma	0	0.00	
	Undergraduate	38	37.62	
	Postgraduate	57	56.44	
	Doctorate	1	0.99	
Occupation	Entrepreneur	15	14.85	101
	Public sector employee	16	15.84	
	Private sector employee	53	52.48	
	Freelancer	17	16.83	
Monthly Income (₹)	Less than 10,000	25	24.75	101
	10,001 to 20,000	27	26.73	
	20,001 to 30,000	8	7.92	
	30,001 to 40,000	15	14.85	
	40,001 and above	26	25.74	

From the data, it can be interpreted that 51 respondents were male and 50 respondents were female. This denotes that there is almost equal gender distribution. Majority of the respondents were between the age group of 21 to 30. It also indicates that all the age groups were involved in the study. Majority of the respondents were postgraduate and were working in private sector as employees. The majority of the respondents were earning above ₹10,000 and approximately above ₹40,000.

Null Hypothesis

H_0 1 : There is no significant association among tourists' awareness about sustainable souvenirs, awareness of the concept of circular economy and preference in buying souvenirs that are eco-friendly.

Table 2 ANOVA test

Anova: Single Factor						
Summary						
Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance		
Tourists' awareness about sustainable souvenirs	101	128	1.267327	0.197822		
Tourists' awareness of the concept of circular economy	101	124	1.227723	0.177624		
Tourists' preference in buying souvenirs that are eco-friendly	101	110	1.089109	0.08198		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	1.768977	2	0.884488	5.800866	0.003374	3.025847126
Within Groups	45.74257	300	0.152475			
Total	47.51155	302				

Interpretation

Since $P < 0.05$, the null hypothesis has been rejected. It denotes that there is a significant association among tourists' awareness about sustainable souvenirs, awareness of the concept of circular economy and preference in buying souvenirs that are eco-friendly. It can be interpreted that tourists prefer to buy souvenirs that are eco-friendly as they are aware about sustainable souvenirs and circular economy.

H02: There is no significant association between interests of tourists to purchase souvenirs that are eco-friendly in Karaikudi as sustainable souvenir enhances the travel experience of tourists and preserve local culture, tradition and heritage.

Table 3: ANOVA test

Anova: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance		
Tourists' purchase souvenirs that are eco-friendly in Karaikudi	101	145	1.435644	0.248317		
Buying sustainable souvenirs enhance the travel experience of tourists.	101	191	1.891089	0.63802		
Buying sustainable souvenirs preserve local culture, tradition and heritage.	101	178	1.762376	0.58297		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	11.13531	2	5.567657	11.36792	1.74224E-05	3.025847
Within Groups	146.9307	300	0.489769			
Total	158.066	302				

Interpretation

Since $P < 0.05$, the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence there is a significant association between interests of the tourists to purchase souvenirs that are eco-friendly in Karaikudi as sustainable souvenir enhances the travel experience of tourists and preserve local culture, tradition and heritage. It can be interpreted that tourists purchase sustainable souvenirs as it enhances their travel experience and preserve the local culture, tradition and heritage.

H03: There is no significant association between tourists suggesting the sustainable souvenirs to their surroundings and its affordability.

Table 4 t-Test

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		
	Sustainable souvenirs are affordable.	Tourists suggest sustainable souvenirs to their surroundings
Mean	2.287128713	1.04950495
Variance	0.946732673	0.047524752
Observations	101	101
Pearson Correlation	0.120894008	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	100	
t Stat	12.80856037	
P(T<=t) one-tail	4.12619E-23	
t Critical one-tail	1.660234326	
P(T<=t) two-tail	8.25239E-23	
t Critical two-tail	1.983971519	

Interpretation

Since $P < 0.05$, the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence there is a significant association between tourists suggesting the souvenirs that are sustainable to their surroundings and its affordability. It can be interpreted that tourists suggest sustainable to their surroundings as it is affordable in nature.

Percentage Analysis

Table 5: Sustainable Souvenirs and Circular Economy

Integration of Sustainable Souvenirs with Circular Economy	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Sustainable souvenirs support circular economy.	36%	49%	15%	0%	0%
Sustainable souvenirs support local vendors.	30%	57%	12%	1%	0%
Sustainable souvenirs support local communities.	33%	50%	16%	1%	0%
Sustainable souvenirs support artisans.	38%	46%	15%	1%	0%
Sustainable souvenirs are affordable.	21%	44%	23%	10%	2%

Sustainable souvenirs lead to conservation of environment.	33%	50%	15%	2%	0%
Buying sustainable souvenirs enhances the travel experience of tourists.	33%	50%	14%	2%	1%
Buying sustainable souvenirs preserve local culture, tradition and heritage.	41%	45%	14%	0%	0%
Buying sustainable souvenirs supports responsible consumption.	30%	52%	17%	1%	0%
Circular economy reduces waste and supports reuse, recycle.	40%	49%	11%	0%	0%
Contribution of tourists is essential for circular economy.	40%	54%	6%	0%	0%

Interpretation

From the table, it can be interpreted that majority of the respondents agreed that sustainable souvenirs support circular economy, local vendors, local communities, artisans, responsible consumption, affordable, lead to conservation of environment, enhances the travel experience of tourists, preserve local culture, tradition and heritage. The circular economy reduces waste and supports reuse, recycle. The contribution of tourists is essential for circular economy.



Figure 1: Sustainable framework: Integrating perception and contribution of tourists toward sustainable souvenirs within a circular economy

Suggestions

It can be suggested that promoting sustainable souvenirs can highly contribute to the circular economy. The local vendors and communities can pass the traditional knowledge to the upcoming generation so that the artforms are preserved and conserved. It is also suggested that reduce, recycle and reuse can continue to practice in all the destinations as it ensures green environment. It can also be suggested that local artisans can be encouraged and awareness among tourists related to these eco-friendly and handmade products can be given. The souvenirs can also have sustainable packing systems.

Scope of Future Research

The upcoming studies can explore on the potentials, prospects and challenges for the local artisans and souvenir sellers. The studies can also cover the approaches of circular economy that are related with heritage and rural tourism in Karaikudi.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, it can be concluded that tourists are interested to buy quality sustainable souvenirs. They are also willing to contribute to the sustainable souvenirs and circular economy. They are highly interested to support circular economy, local vendors, local communities and artisans. They support responsible consumption and circular economy as it leads to conservation of environment, enhances the travel experience of tourists, preserve local culture, tradition and heritage.

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