



Factors influencing the success of local craft tourism businesses

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How to cite:

Tichaawa, T. & Chamboko-Mpotaringa, M. (2024). Factors influencing the success of local craft tourism businesses. *Bulletin of Geography. Socio-economic Series*, 65(65): 99-110. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.12775/bgss-2024-0026>

Abstract. This study examined the factors influencing the success of local craft businesses in sub-Saharan Africa, using Cameroon as a case study. By way of multiple sampling techniques, the study adopted a concurrent embedded mixed-methods research design to collect data from locals (385), tourists (200), and craft vendors (20). Key findings reveal that economic variables, locals' perceptions of the impacts of tourism and tourists' preferences influence the success of craft businesses. Statistically significant relationships were found between craft preference attributes such as pricing, cultural significance, and authenticity. The intersection of the stakeholders' perceptions provides valuable information for policymakers, local authorities, and tourism stakeholders to develop dynamic strategies that maximise the positive impacts of tourism development and craft businesses' success.

Article details:

Received: 28 June 2024
Revised: 19 August 2024
Accepted: 16 September 2024

Key words:

craft tourism,
stakeholders,
tourism development,
Cameroon

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1. Introduction

Local crafts have become important in inclusive tourism and tourism development, specifically in the creative tourism industries. These industries rely on an individual's creativity, skill and talent (Murwindarti, 2021). Research has established that crafts are a unique component of local culture sold to tourists, creating employment and economic benefits for the locals and allowing them to be innovative (Tapfuma et al., 2024).

Globally, there has been a growing interest in crafts produced at various destinations, with nations positioning themselves using such arts and crafts to promote creative tourism (Richards, 2020; Murwindarti, 2021). In sub-Saharan Africa and in countries such as Cameroon, the creative industries, encompassing visual arts, crafts, photography, cultural festivals, sculptures, paintings, music, dance and film are rapidly growing (Franco & Njogu, 2020), allowing businesses and local communities to benefit from opportunities and values generated from these (Makandwa & de Klerk, 2024).

Previous research related to crafts has focused on crafts' potential for tourism development (Hieu & Rasovska, 2017), promoting handicraft family business practices (Deb et al., 2022), female entrepreneurs in craft tourism (Makandwa & de Klerk, 2024) and role of creative tourism through arts and craft (Tapfuma et al., 2024). Studies that have explored the success of craft businesses have primarily focused on factors such as market demand (Zhu et al., 2021), experiential marketing (Ferreira & Sousa, 2020), active participation and collaboration of government and local communities (Nugraha & Saputra, 2024). Nonetheless, these studies overlooked locals' perspectives, tourists' preferences, and craft vendors' perspectives. Failing to consider locals' perspectives, tourists' preferences, and craft vendors' perspectives can lead to skewed and incomplete conclusions on factors influencing the success of craft businesses in a community, resulting in missed opportunities for sustainable development, business growth, and potential harm to local communities and the ecosystems. Our study seeks to close the gap by providing a more in-depth comprehension of the factors influencing the success of craft businesses, enabling policymakers and industry stakeholders to make informed decisions that not only cater to tourists' needs but also uphold the sociocultural fabric of destinations and maximise economic benefits for local communities. To achieve this, the study's objectives were two fold, 1) to identify factors

influencing the success of tourism businesses and 2) to examine the relationship between the factors influencing craft businesses' success in the context of sub-Saharan African countries.

2. Crafts and tourism in context

Defining crafts or craft businesses is a complex and debated issue due to the diverse nature of craft products (Pierantoni, 2018). Craft products encompass a wide range of goods made from various materials, making it challenging to provide a definitive definition based on material content, production techniques, or functional use (Rogerson, 2010). Local craft can be viewed either as a combination of cultural and traditional heritage, artistry, and businesses with linkages to various economic and cultural activities (Inocian et al., 2019; Murwindarti, 2021), or as products that are at least 80% handmade using materials like clay, natural fibre, beads, recyclables, and textiles (Rogerson, 2010). However, typical craft products include curios, homeware, novelties, gifts, fashion wear, and unique collectables, which can be categorised into 'handicrafts' and 'traditional crafts' (Tapfuma et al., 2024), with some crafts having a long history in specific geographical areas (Murwindarti, 2021).

The cultural heritage that traditional crafts embody is fundamental in any nation as it reflects the culture and traditions of the specific region (Yang et al., 2018). Crafts showcase the creativity and expressiveness of artisans, providing them with a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment (United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 2024). These crafts contain cultural values, ideological wisdom, and practical experience (Zhu et al., 2021). They are essential to preserving and promoting cultural heritage and artistic traditions, skills and techniques passed from generation to generation (Yang et al., 2018).

The relationship between tourism and crafts is multifaceted. Globally, craft businesses are recognised as a tool for poverty reduction (Yang et al., 2018). They play a significant role in the economic development of developing nations by providing income and livelihood opportunities for individuals and contributing to the overall growth of the economy (Tapfuma et al., 2024). Also, crafts have been recognised as a key element in promoting inclusive tourism and benefiting marginalised communities through the production and sale of arts and crafts (Strelnikova et al., 2023). This results in a symbiotic relationship, where crafts enhance

the tourism experience and tourism provides a market for local artisans to showcase their talents and culture.

Crafts have the potential to commodify local culture for the sake of tourism and bring profits to destinations (Inocian et al., 2019). Arts and crafts markets and shops are important tourist attractions in many destinations, adding vibrancy and diversity (Richards, 2020). They provide unique and authentic cultural products for tourists to purchase and take home as souvenirs (Shen & Lai, 2022). These handmade items often reflect the unique local culture, traditions, and heritage of a destination, adding value to the overall tourism experience (Soukhathammavong & Park, 2019).

3. Determinants of craft business viability

Some studies have reported common craft attributes necessary for craft's viability as an economic powerhouse, such as originality, uniqueness, handmade, aesthetics, cultural and historic integrity, artisans, and appealing material (Inocian et al., 2019; Littrell et al., 1993). Technological advancements and industrialisation have changed consumers' perceptions, needs and lifestyles (Chamboko-Mpotaringa & Tichaawa, 2023a), resulting in handicraft products slowly losing their market. Furthermore, Yang et al. (2018) maintain that as industrial products become more sophisticated, consumers of handicraft products decrease, forcing artisans to abandon their businesses and move to the cities to earn income, resulting in traditional crafting skills and techniques disappearing. However, from a supplier perspective, crafts are perceived as authentic and original when produced by highly skilled artisans and/or handmade. The quality of skilled craftsmanship and labour skills involved in making handmade crafts adds to the crafts' appeal and authenticity. Drawing on the works of Yang et al. (2018) and Zhu et al. (2021), who posit that crafts showcase cultural values and preserve traditions, the study conceptualises authenticity as the degree to which craft products are perceived as a true and accurate representation of the cultural, traditional, historical, and artisanal practices of its place of origin. In the same vein, cultural significance in this study is multifaceted, encompassing social values, historical importance and symbolic meanings that a particular craft holds within its originating culture. From a tourist's perspective, the originality and uniqueness of patterns used in crafts add novelty, value and authenticity to the products

(Soukhathammavong & Park, 2019). This implies that tourists value unique and original crafts, which are seen as special and distinct from mass-produced goods. Uniqueness adds to the craft's appeal and makes it a memorable keepsake of the travel experience.

It is generally acceptable that market forces of demand and supply regulate price behaviour in informal markets and that sellers will only sell if the price is sufficient to cover their costs. It is also against the same belief that the rational buyer will negotiate for the lowest price (Saayman et al., 2020). However, in craft businesses, pricing strategies are influenced by several factors. Craft vendors in informal markets often incorporate mark-ups that allow for negotiation with tourists, considering the complexity of the design, skills used, materials used, tourists' willingness to pay, budget, and nationality when setting prices. Soukhathammavong & Park (2019) ascertained that handicrafts in Luang Prabang receive premium pricing due to the quality materials used, durability and specialised local presentation. They further state that those crafts are appreciated by upper-class travellers who are willing to spend more on authentic, original, handmade products (Soukhathammavong & Park, 2019). For tourists, the ethnicity demonstrated in the crafts and having the artist present and handmaking one's craft positively influences the tourism experience, resulting in fairer price evaluations by foreign tourists and potentially increasing the probability of a sale and revenue for the craft vendor (Saayman et al., 2020).

Crafts and arts are usually the main tourism products sold to tourists in Africa, yet most decisions are made by the local governments and lack community engagement (Saarinen, 2016; Chamboko-Mpotaringa & Tichaawa, 2023b). Lack of community engagement negatively affects local artisans and tourists seeking authentic cultural experiences (Nugraha & Saputra, 2024). To ensure sustainable and responsible tourism, it is crucial to involve local communities in decision-making and empower them to benefit from the tourism industry meaningfully to ensure sustainable resource usage (Tapfuma et al., 2024).

4. Materials and methods

The study focused on Cameroon. The country's cultural diversity has led to the growth of craft tourism, as visitors are drawn to the unique handicrafts such as royal stools, raffia bamboo tables, seats, wooden and rattan pots, dishes

,woven bags, baskets, and jewellery produced in the country (Tichaawa, 2017; 2021). These handicrafts reflect the various cultures that have influenced Cameroon over the years and providing an enriching experience to domestic and international tourists. Consequently, just as is the case in many Sub-Saharan African destinations, craft tourism has become an important source of income for many communities in Cameroon by providing a platform for artisans to showcase their skills and earn a living (Harilal & Tichaawa, 2020). Enhancing tourism has become one of the government's top priorities, given its potential (Chamboko-Mpotaringa & Tichaawa, 2023b; Kimengsi et al., 2019). Despite these potentials, the success of craft tourism businesses is yet to be fully harnessed. Therefore, Cameroon was purposively chosen for this study based on the identified craft tourism potential.

The study employed a concurrent embedded mixed methods research design, where data was collected concurrently but analysed sequentially to provide rich insights and contextual understanding of the study findings. This method allows the combination of quantitative and qualitative research approaches to address the study objectives. It includes the perspectives of communities, demanders, and suppliers to understand better the factors influencing craft businesses' success.

The study used self-administered questionnaires developed through an extensive literature review to gather data from locals and tourists. The questionnaire aimed at locals contained questions to solicit locals' demographic profiles and dichotomous questions aimed at understanding the locals' perceptions of craft tourism. The tourists' questionnaire focused on demographic profiles and contained 5 Likert scale questions, with 1 indicating strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree, aimed at understanding tourists' preferences and perceptions of crafts. Using a semi-structured interview guide, demographic characteristics, product offerings, supply chain and ownership information were solicited from craft vendors.

Multiple sampling techniques were employed to select the research participants with the assistance of trained fieldworkers. For locals, a non-probability purposive sampling technique was used to include those living close to tourist attractions and craft centres and those directly impacted by tourism. In total, 385 residents were surveyed by means of self-administered questionnaire surveys. Furthermore, a non-probability convenience sampling approach was used to target 200 tourists. Saturation was reached after 20 craft vendors were purposively identified and interviewed based on their

involvement in selling crafts to tourists and the diversity of their products (Deb et al., 2022). The fieldwork was done in the South West (Limbe) and Littoral (Douala) regions of Cameroon. Statistical analysis of the demographic profile, descriptive analysis, and cross-tabulations with Chi-square and Phi-value to investigate the significant differences in the factors influencing the success of craft businesses were performed. The qualitative responses from the structured interviews with craft vendors were conceptually analysed and provided the basis for the results and discussion.

5. Results

5.1. Demographic profile of respondents

Table 1 shows that, of the 385 local residents surveyed, 67.8% were between 18 and 30, 21.7% were 31 and 45, and 10.5% were 46 and 60. 46.2% were female, while 53.8% were male. Regarding the surveys completed by tourists, most were aged between 46-60 (52%), followed by those in the age category 31-45 (38%). The age categories over 60 and 18-30 had the least representation of 8% and 2%, respectively. In the interviews conducted with the vendors (n=20), 10% were aged between 18 and 30, 35% were aged 31-45 and 5% were aged over 60 years. Most craft vendors (50%) were aged 46 to 60. 20% were female, while 80% were male. Most of the surveyed locals (71.7%) had a monthly household income of 50,000 CFA (less than \$100 US) and below, while 70.1% indicated they had received tourism-related personal or household income. All the surveyed craft vendors indicated they owned their businesses and received tourism-related personal or household income. Regarding tourists' spending on crafts, 30% indicated that they spent between 5001-10000 (approximately \$17) while only 3% spent more than 30000 (approximately \$50). The study's descriptive statistics results are shown in Table 1.

5.2. Locals' perceptions of the impacts of tourism

Understanding the local community's perceptions of tourism's positive and negative impacts on their community is crucial for the success of crafts businesses within a community. As presented in Table 2, the results show that many respondents

Table 1. Descriptive statistics results

Variables	Category	Ratios		
		Locals (n=385, in%)	Craft vendors (n=20, in%)	Tourists (n=200, in%)
Demographic variables	Age	18-30	67.8	10.0
		31-45	21.7	35.0
		46-60	10.5	50.0
		Over 60	0	5.0
	Gender	Female	46.2	20.0
		Male	53.8	80.0
	Highest level of education	Primary	7.9	85.0
		Secondary	50.9	5.0
		Tertiary	30.7	10.0
		Other	10.5	0.0
Economic variables	Household monthly income (total in CFA)	0 -25000	38.1	
		25001-50000	33.6	
		50001-100000	13.3	
		100001-300000	10.6	
		300001-500000	2.7	
		More than 500000	1.7	
	Are you the owner of the business		100.0*	
	Received tourism-related income (household/personal)		70.1*	100*
	Amount spent on crafts (in CFA)	0-5000		24.0
		5001-10000		30.0
		10001-20000		12.0
		20001-30000		31.0
		More than 30000		3.0

Source: Authors, improved version of the standard

reported that they had not received any tourism-related income on a personal level (90.9%) or as a household (90.9%), corresponding with the absence of tourism businesses in the community. However, it is favourable to note that among those with tourism businesses in the community, the majority (81.2%) have earned personal tourism-related income, and 74.4% have received household tourism-related income. This is not surprising as the number of years craft vendors indicated that they have been selling crafts within the community ranged from less than a year to 40 years. A craft vendor stated, "I have been selling crafts for more than 25 years now"-*Craft Vendor 2*, while another stated, "I have been selling here for less than a year"-*Craft Vendor 18*.

Regarding other tourism impacts, many respondents believe tourism has favourable

impacts associated with tourism businesses in the community (96.4%), in contrast to those who do not believe tourism has any positive impacts (3.6%). This corroborates the association between positive perceptions of tourism and the existence of tourism-related businesses. Regarding the perceived negative effects of tourism, the results indicate that 45.2% of respondents who perceive negative impacts of tourism have tourism businesses in their community, in comparison to those who do not perceive any negative impacts (54.8%). This suggests a less pronounced connection between negative perceptions of tourism and the presence of local businesses. Some vendors stated, "The presence of tourists allows us to perform our traditional dances and songs" -*Craft Vendor 5*, while another noted "Sometimes the place is too full, and there is

Table 2. Locals' perceptions of the impacts of tourism

Items		Tourism businesses in the community (n=385, in %)		
			No	Yes
Economic impact	Personal tourism-related income received	No	90.9	18.8
		Yes	9.1	81.2
	Household tourism-related income received	No	90.9	25.6
		Yes	9.1	74.4
Other tourism impacts	Perceived positive tourism impacts	No	42.9	3.6
		Yes	57.1	96.4
	Perceived negative tourism impacts	No	71.4	54.8
		Yes	28.6	45.2

Source: own elaboration

Table 3. Chi-square test results for locals' perceptions regarding the impacts of tourism

	Chi-square value (χ^2)	Significance level (p)	Phi-value (ϕ)
Personal tourism-related income received	1.628	.202	.120**
Household tourism-related income received	3.888	.049	.184**
Perceived positive tourism impacts	29.327	<.001	.499***
Perceived negative tourism impacts	2.852	.091	.155**

Notes: 5% significance threshold; Phi-value (ϕ): **small effect = 0.1, ***medium effect = 0.3, and **** large effect = 0.5.

Source: own elaboration

congestion, and we worry about crime during the peak seasons"-*Craft Vendor 8*.

Table 3 shows statistically significant differences (with small to medium effect-size differences household tourism-related income received ($\chi^2=3.888$; $p=.049$; $\phi=.184$) and perceived positive tourism impacts ($\chi^2=29.327$; $<.001$; $\phi=.499$). The study could not establish a relationship between the presence of tourism businesses in the community and personal tourism-related income received ($\chi^2=1.628$; $p=.202$; $\phi=.120$) as well as the presence of tourism businesses in the community and perceived negative tourism impacts ($\chi^2=2.852$; $p=.091$; $\phi=.155$).

5.3. Tourists' perceptions and preferences of crafts

The study revealed varied perceptions and preferences. Table 4 provides an overview of tourists' perceptions and preferences of crafts, which influence the success of craft businesses.

Most respondents (95%) agreed that an appealing craft is easy to pack and take home, with a mean score ($\bar{x}=4.18$) and standard deviation ($\sigma=0.5$),

while 93% indicated that appealing craft is linked to local culture ($\bar{x}=4.05$; $\sigma=0.435$). The statement 'Inexpensive price of craft is very important to me' received a mean rating of ($\bar{x}=3.24$) with a standard deviation of ($\sigma=0.878$). This indicates that while a small portion of respondents (19%) either agreed or strongly agreed that price is important, a significant portion (69%) remained neutral. Most respondents (94%) believe tourism promotes locally made crafts ($\bar{x}=4.51$; $\sigma=0.611$). The statement 'I buy crafts from quality shops than open markets' received a low mean ($\bar{x}=1.84$) with a low standard deviation ($\sigma=0.526$), suggesting that most respondents (93%) disagreed with the statement. This finding corroborates with the findings of the statement 'One cannot find good quality from street craft markets' where most respondents (83%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. A considerable number of respondents (41%) indicated that they only buy locally-made crafts in Cameroon, indicating their preference for locally-made crafts. The statement had a mean ($\bar{x}=3.35$) and standard deviation ($\sigma=0.687$). To sum up these varied preferences and perceptions, vendors indicated that masks, small sculptures, traditional bags, dresses, crafted knives, and animals are most

Table 4. Tourists' perceptions and preferences of crafts

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std. Deviation
An appealing craft is easy to pack and bring home	0.0%	0.0%	5.0%	72.0%	23.0%	4.18	0.500
Appealing craft is linked to local culture	0.0%	0.0%	7.0%	81.0%	12.0%	4.05	0.435
The low price of craft is very important to me	0.0%	12.0%	69.0%	2.0%	17.0%	3.24	0.878
Tourism promotes locally-made crafts	0.0%	0.0%	6.0%	37.0%	57.0%	4.51	0.611
I buy crafts from quality shops rather than from open markets	23.0%	70.0%	7.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.84	0.526
Cameroonian hand-made crafts are unique	4.0%	4.0%	64.0%	20.0%	8.0%	3.24	0.818
One cannot find good quality crafts from street craft markets.	36.0%	47.0%	14.0%	3.0%	0%	1.84	0.775
I only buy locally made crafts while in Cameroon.	0.0%	9.0%	50.0%	38.0%	3.0%	3.35	0.687
The outlook of a craft is more important than its origin.	27.0%	48.0%	25.0%	0.00%	0.0%	1.98	0.724
Craft should be hand-made.	0.0%	0.0%	11.0%	81.0%	8.0%	3.97	0.437
An appealing craft is original.	0.0%	21.0%	16.0%	61.0%	2.0%	3.44	0.845

Source: own elaboration

popular among tourists: "Most tourists mainly buy crafts from African art, traditional bags and small animals"-*Craft Vendor 15*. Regarding varied inexpensive price perceptions, vendors identified tourists by their purchasing power, paying well, and not negotiating for lower prices when buying: "Tourists do not argue prices too much."-*Craft Vendor 5*. In comparison, others propose to pay lower prices: I know a tourist because of the amount he/she will propose to purchase our crafts."-*Craft Vendor 1*.

Regarding tourists' perceptions of craft authenticity, Table 3 shows that 28% of the respondents view Cameroonian hand-made crafts as unique, 8% disagree while a large percentage (64%) neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement ($\bar{x}=3.24$; $\sigma=0.818$). Most respondents (63%) agreed that appealing craft is original, 21% disagreed, and 16% neither agreed nor disagreed ($\bar{x}=3.44$; $\sigma=0.845$), indicating varied perceptions. The statement 'Outlook of a craft is more important than its origin' received a low mean ($\bar{x}=1.98$), with most respondents (75%) disagreeing. Most respondents (89%) agreed that 'Craft should be hand-made' ($\bar{x}=3.97$; $\sigma=0.437$). It is not surprising that vendors indicated that although they buy

some of the things they sell, most of them they manufacture themselves: The items I sell, I make them myself. Sometimes I buy from others."-*Craft Vendor 3*.

Table 5 shows Chi-square and Phi-value test results for tourists' perceptions of crafts regarding price, cultural significance, quality and originality.

Table 5 shows statistically significant differences (with medium to large effect-size differences) between price and tourism promotes locally made crafts ($\chi^2=32.572$; $p<.001$; $\phi=.571$); one cannot find good quality crafts from street craft markets ($\chi^2=21.462$; $p=.011$; $\phi=.436$); the outlook of a craft is more important than its origin ($\chi^2=19.547$; $p=.003$; $\phi=.442$); craft should be hand-made ($\chi^2=38.513$; $p<.001$; $\phi=.621$) and an appealing craft is original ($\chi^2=33.252$; $p<.001$; $\phi=.577$).

In terms of the relationship between tourists' perceptions regarding the cultural significance of appealing craft and perceptions regarding tourism promoting locally-made crafts, the uniqueness of Cameroonian crafts and the outlook of a craft is more important than its origin, Chi-square (χ^2) and Phi-value (ϕ) results revealed statistically significant differences (with medium to large effect-size differences). The findings are that tourism

Table 5. Chi-square test results for tourists' perceptions regarding pricing, cultural significance, quality and originality

	Chi-square value (χ^2)	Significance level (p)	Phi-value (ϕ)
Pricing			
Tourism promotes locally-made crafts	32.572	<.001	.571****
One cannot find good quality crafts from street craft markets.	21.462	.011	.463***
The outlook of a craft is more important than its origin	19.547	.003	.442***
Craft should be hand-made	38.513	<.001	.621****
An appealing craft is original	33.252	<.001	.577****
Cultural significance of appealing craft.			
Tourism promotes locally-made crafts	9.453	.051	.307***
Cameroonian handmade crafts are unique	25.873	.001	.509****
The outlook of a craft is more important than its origin	10.351	.035	.322***
Quality			
Cameroonian handmade crafts are unique	35.752	<.001	.598****
One cannot find good quality in street craft markets	17.800	.007	.422***
I only buy locally made crafts while in Cameroon.	22.331	.001	.473***
The outlook of a craft is more important than its origin	13.197	.010	.363***
Originality (Local vs Imported craft)			
Inexpensive price of craft is very important	33.252	<.001	.577****
Tourism promotes locally-made crafts	62.584	<.001	.791****
Cameroonian handmade crafts are unique	51.870	<.001	.720****
One cannot find good quality in street craft markets	28.122	<.001	.530****
I only buy locally made crafts while in Cameroon.	23.974	.004	.490***
The outlook of a craft is more important than its origin	36.013	<.001	.600****
Craft should be hand-made	12.693	.048	.356***

Source: own elaboration

promotes locally made crafts ($\chi^2=9.453$; $p=.051$; $\phi=.307$); Cameroonian handmade crafts are unique ($\chi^2=25.873$; $p=.001$; $\phi=.509$), and the outlook of a craft is more important than its origin ($\chi^2=10.351$; $p=.035$; $\phi=.322$). Furthermore, regarding tourists' perceptions regarding quality, the study found significant differences (with medium to large effect-size differences): Cameroonian handmade crafts are unique ($\chi^2=35.752$; $p<.001$; $\phi=.598$); one cannot find good quality from street craft markets ($\chi^2=17.800$; $p=.007$; $\phi=.422$); I only buy locally made crafts

while in Cameroon ($\chi^2=22.331$; $p=.001$; $\phi=.473$) and outlook of a craft is more important than its origin ($\chi^2=13.197$; $p=.010$; $\phi=.363$).

Regarding tourists' perceptions in terms of the originality of crafts (local vs imported craft), results revealed statistically significant differences (with medium to large effect-size differences): the low price of craft is very important ($\chi^2=33.252$; $p<.001$; $\phi=.577$); tourism promotes locally made crafts ($\chi^2=62.584$; $p<.001$; $\phi=.791$); Cameroonian handmade crafts are unique ($\chi^2=51.870$; $p<.001$;

$\phi=.720$); one cannot find good quality from street craft markets ($x^2=28.122$; $p<.001$; $\phi=.530$), I only buy locally made crafts while in Cameroon ($x^2=23.974$; $p=.004$; $\phi=.490$); outlook of a craft is more important than its origin ($x^2=36.013$; $p<.001$; $\phi=.600$) and craft should be hand-made ($x^2=12.693$; $p=.048$; $\phi=.356$).

6. Discussion and conclusion

The study aimed to identify the factors influencing the success of craft businesses in developing countries. The tourism industry distinguishes itself from many other industries in that it involves the participation of people in both the production and consumption processes. Thus, tourists, locals, and craft vendors provide valuable insights into the study area under scrutiny. An analysis of the economic variables, as shown in Table 1, revealed that most locals belonged to lower-income brackets, which might affect their ability to purchase crafts, similar to a study conducted by (Deb et al., 2022). Despite being in lower-income brackets, many locals still engaged in tourism-related activities, which provided them with a source of income and showed the tourism sector's resilience in providing employment opportunities.

The study found that most craft vendors owned craft businesses. In the same context, most locals received income from tourism, highlighting craft tourism's impact on local economies and the importance of tourism as a livelihood source. This is unsurprising, as most craft vendor respondents were aged 46-60. These findings reflect other studies (Moagi et al., 2021) that indicated many respondents falling within the same age category. This age group is still economically active but might find it challenging to be first-time employees or to be kept in the system, yet they are still considered breadwinners in their households. Hence, craft businesses can be a viable economic option for individuals aged 46-60, who might find it hard to secure traditional employment opportunities. These findings are consistent with Deb et al. (2022), who maintain that craft businesses are socioeconomic mechanisms for local communities. The high ownership of craft tourism-related businesses also indicates the entrepreneurial spirit of the community and the potential for local economic development through craft tourism. This correlates with Valeri and Baggio (2021), who proposed that art and craft are distinct and unique types of family businesses

that facilitate an extraordinary level of guest-host relationships.

The study findings indicate that most respondents favourably perceive the convenience of appealing crafts, the authenticity and uniqueness of Cameroonian handmade crafts, buying locally made crafts in Cameroon, and viewing tourism as a promoter of locally made crafts. These study findings indicate tourists' support for local artisans and businesses. In support, the Association of Caribbean States – ACS, 2017 posit that tourists' interest in locally handmade ethnology has contributed to the growth of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). The tourist market offers many possibilities for sales, with a diverse range of sales venues and eager visitors who want to purchase culturally authentic and indigenous products (Association of Caribbean States – ACS, 2017). Similar to earlier studies that have identified the impact of artisanal crafts on regional competition and tourism growth (Deb et al., 2022), the study confirms that tourism promotes locally-made crafts. However, these findings contradict a study by Shen and Lai (2022), which found that most available crafts are sourced from foreign nations.

The study highlights tourists' perceptions of craft price versus preferences for specific craft attributes, such as locally made crafts, the uniqueness of Cameroonian handmade, authenticity, and originality, which influence their purchasing decisions, resulting in the success or failure of craft businesses in tourist areas. Study findings revealed that tourists spend varied amounts of money on crafts. This is not surprising because, in a tourist destination, craft vendors sell similar products that force tourists to select competitive prices (Deb et al., 2022).

Findings revealed tourists' high degree of variability in perceptions toward price ($\sigma=0.878$), reflecting tourists' different perceptions toward pricing. Despite the traditional economic theory, which posits that rational consumers make purchasing decisions based on a price that maximises their utility given their income, craft purchases are often influenced by different factors such as emotions and psychology (Saayman et al., 2020) or variability in perceptions toward appeal of originality ($\sigma=0.845$) and uniqueness of Cameroonian handmade crafts ($\sigma=0.818$) as highlighted in the study. The varied perceptions could be due to different individual preferences, levels of exposure to crafts, and varying interpretations of uniqueness. Some tourists strongly value crafts' cultural significance (Thompson & Cutler, 1997; Tovmasyan, 2023), originality (Inocian et al., 2019), or appeal but

do not prioritise price. Conversely, others may prioritise low prices over cultural significance, originality or appeal. Saayman et al. (2020) concur that the value of prices and money is subjective and relies on perception. For example, some tourists might value the quality of crafts and be willing to pay more, while others may prioritise lower prices even if it means sacrificing the quality of the crafts. Consistent with the literature (Inocian et al., 2019; Thompson & Cutler, 1997; Tovmasyan, 2023), results show a statistically significant influence of pricing perceptions versus preferences for specific craft attributes, such as locally made crafts, the uniqueness of Cameroonian handmade, authenticity, and originality. This underscores the importance tourists place on locally made crafts and quality, as well as the significance of authenticity and artisanal craftsmanship in the mindsets of the tourists (Hieu & Rasovska, 2017).

Regarding tourists' perceptions of the cultural significance of appealing crafts, the positive correlations yet significant differences between the cultural significance and uniqueness of handmade crafts and the importance of the outlook of a craft versus its originality underscore the value of the distinct cultural identity embedded in crafts. In the craft business, cultural authenticity is crucial in determining success. Craft vendors and locals believe that using traditional equipment, natural materials, and handmade processing makes crafts culturally authentic (Rogerson, 2010). On the other hand, tourists are interested in buying crafts as it allows them to experience authentic culture (Soukhathammavong & Park, 2019). The findings from the statements related to preference for quality shops ($\bar{x}=1.84$; $\sigma=0.53$) corroborate with the findings of the statement that one cannot find good quality from street craft markets ($\bar{x}=1.84$; $\sigma=0.78$), indicating a strong preference among respondents for open markets over quality shops when purchasing crafts, which could impact the profitability of craft businesses that primarily operate in traditional shops.

The study's findings shed light on the factors influencing the success of craft businesses in developing nations. With the growing interest in creative tourism and calls for sustainable tourism, the study contributes to the existing knowledge of crafts and creative tourism while also highlighting stakeholders' perspectives. The study advances theoretical knowledge as an interdisciplinary study drawing on multiple fields by combining insights from tourism, economics, sociology, and anthropology.

The study has significant managerial and policy implications for craft businesses in tourist areas. The study suggests that despite the lower income brackets of most locals, they still engage in tourism-related activities, which can provide a source of income and potential customers for craft businesses. Therefore, craft vendors should consider targeting tourists and locals to increase their sales despite the lower income most locals earn. Findings affirm that tourists' support for local artisans and businesses is strong, which can help promote and sustain the craft industry in developing countries. Also, there is a need to promote and support craft tourism-related businesses, especially among the economically active but marginalised age group of 46-60. As a result, individuals and governments can leverage the tourism sector's resilience in providing employment opportunities to support craft businesses and promote economic development in developing countries.

The study emphasises the significance of understanding tourists' preferences and adapting business strategies accordingly. Understanding tourists' varied perceptions towards pricing and the appeal of craft attributes such as authenticity, originality, uniqueness, and locally made crafts can help craft businesses develop pricing strategies aligned with tourists' perceptions and preferences. For example, craft businesses can offer different pricing options for tourists with different perceptions towards pricing, such as offering premium pricing for tourists who value the quality of crafts over price.

The study highlights the importance of offering culturally authentic crafts to tourists. Craft businesses should focus on preserving and promoting the cultural significance of their crafts by using local materials and hand-making them to create unique and original crafts that are not readily available in other tourist destinations. Collaboration and partnerships with local communities can help develop and promote locally-made crafts, creating a unique and authentic tourist experience. Tourists' strong preference for open markets over quality shops when purchasing crafts implies that craft businesses might have to consider expanding into open markets or finding ways to differentiate their products to attract customers who prioritise quality over convenience.

These results are important for attaining sustainable development goals (SDGs), ensuring no poverty, decent work and economic growth, and reduced inequalities. Policymakers can develop policies and regulations that promote the growth and sustainability of craft businesses in tourist

areas by providing support and incentives for craft businesses that focus on promoting local culture, authenticity, and artisanal craftsmanship. Moreover, policymakers can encourage local communities to participate in developing and promoting locally made crafts, which can help preserve the local culture and heritage.

The study provides insight into the complex interplay of economic variables, socio-economic impacts, tourists' preferences and perceptions as factors influencing the success of craft businesses. The value placed on pricing, appeal, quality, convenience, cultural significance, uniqueness, and the originality of crafts affects purchasing decisions, which can impact craft businesses' success. With an understanding of these various factors, craft businesses can make informed decisions to improve their chances of success in the competitive tourism market. This study was conducted in Cameroon, so there is no scope to compare it with other countries. Further studies can be multi-country and conducted with more respondents and can also assess the impact of digital transformation on the success of craft businesses.

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