

# How Destination Narratives Influence Visit Intention

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**Abstract:** The competitive environment of the tourism sector requires new strategies for constructing engaging narratives to stimulate interest, raise awareness and create an emotional connection with visitors, allowing for greater involvement that can influence their visit to the destination. The conceptual model of this study aims to analyse how destination narratives promote the intention to visit, exploring the influence of narrative structure and immersion on tourists' positive emotions, attitudes and behaviours. This study uses a quantitative approach based on structural equation modelling structural equations using the AMOS software. Considering a sample of 901 respondents, this research allowed us to conclude that the narratives influenced positive emotions and attitudes towards regions, conditioning the intention to visit the destination. In this way, this study brings contributions to academia and the professional world, as it allows for a deeper understanding of effective tourism marketing strategies and their practical implications.

**Keywords:** Narratives, Attitudes, Positive emotions, Intention to visit, Destinations

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## 1. Introduction

Narratives play a key role in how tourist destinations are promoted and perceived by potential visitors. The ability to tell engaging and emotionally resonant stories can significantly influence tourists' intention to visit. According to Wong et al. (2016), narratives communicate legends or stories stimulating tourists' interest in visiting the destination. Brechman and Purvis (2015) argue that while traditional advertising media limits creativity, storytelling through video ads allows for deeper understanding. Therefore, understanding how narrative structure and immersion affect tourists' emotions, attitudes, and intentions to visit is essential for developing effective marketing strategies. Thus, this study analyses the influence of narrative on the intention to visit and engage with tourist regions.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1 The Narratives and Emotions Associated With Destination

Brechman and Purvis (2015) highlight that traditional advertising media limit creativity, while video ads allow for greater narrative complexity, as van Laer et al. (2014) noted. Narratives include plots of incidents, conflicts, and final resolutions, as Chang (2009) stated. Brechman and Purvis (2015) add that well-structured narratives include chronology and causality, facilitating causal inference. Dessart (2018) corroborates that narrative immersion can generate positive emotions, influencing attitudes. The literature shows that tourist experiences are linked to positive psychological outcomes and well-being (Filep & Laing, 2019). Kwortnik and Ross (2007) show that holiday planning evokes positive emotions such as comfort and pleasure. Hosany and Gilbert (2010) created the "Destination Emotion Scale" to measure emotions associated with tourist destinations, focusing on joy, love and positive surprise. Positive emotions increase well-being and general happiness (Sirgy, 2010), making tourism vital for mental and emotional health.

### 2.2 Attitudes, Feelings and Engagement With Destination

Attitude is a learned and experiential predisposition that shapes consumers' consistent responses towards something, whether favourably or unfavourably (Pereira et al., 2019). In the context of tourism, attitude refers to tourists' feelings and predispositions towards holiday destinations and the services offered by these destinations (Bresciani et al., 2015). Several researchers have considered the study of engagement in the tourism industry as a relevant topic (Mariani, Mura, & Di Felice, 2018). Tourist engagement is both a psychological and interactive process, and these cognitive and emotional processes, as well as interactions with the destination, result in greater loyalty to the destination and the tourist site, thus motivating the tourist to consider revisiting the destination (Bowden, 2009; Bryce et al., 2015). Therefore, destination engagement is shaped by a combination of knowledge, impressions, perceptions, prejudices and thoughts about the place

(Jenkins, 1999), both from an emotional (Pike and Ryan, 2004) and rational (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999) perspective. Several studies consider the concept of consumer/tourist engagement in a tourist destination as an essential factor influencing tourist loyalty, satisfaction, and revisit intentions (Patterson, Yu, & de Ruyter, 2006; Vivek, Beatty, & Morgan, 2012).

### **2.3 Attitudes, Emotions and Visit Intention**

Several recent studies have demonstrated the relevance of attitude and behavioural intention to visit a destination (Ryu et al., 2010; Phillips et al., 2013). This intention reflects the predisposition of a potential tourist to visit a particular destination based on various internal and external factors (Su et al., 2020). It can manifest in different ways, such as visit intention or word-of-mouth. Visit intention measures an individual or group's psychological predisposition and intention to travel to a specific destination or participate in particular activities (Lu et al., 2016). Emotions, as subjective factors, significantly influence tourists' visit intentions. Santos et al. (2022) demonstrate that emotions are related to satisfaction, willingness to recommend and the general perception of the destination image, which, in turn, affect changes in tourists' visit intention. Furthermore, advertising can influence tourists' attitudes, beliefs, purchasing behaviours, and visiting intentions (Byun, Jang & Shawn, 2015; Weng et al., 2021).

### **2.4 Research Hypotheses**

Based on the literature review, this research will analyse the following research hypotheses:

*H1: Narrative structure positively influences narrative immersion.*

*H2: Narrative immersion positively influences positive emotions.*

*H3: Positive emotions positively influence attitudes toward the region described in the narrative.*

*H4: Attitudes toward the region influence the intention to visit that region.*

*H5: The intention to visit the region influences engagement with the region.*

*H6: Narrative immersion positively influences engagement with the region.*

## **3. Methodology**

To analyse the determining effects of the intention to visit and involvement with the tourist region, it was decided to choose Portugal as the study's unit of analysis. It is considered a relevant country for studies in the tourism area due to its geographical and cultural diversity. The country offers many tourist attractions ranging from stunning beaches in the Algarve to historic and urban landscapes in cities such as Lisbon and Oporto. This variety makes it possible to explore different types of tourism (cultural, sporting, gastronomic, etc.) and comprehensive studies in this area.

### **3.1 Questionnaire Design and Data Collection**

This research was conducted quantitatively, using a self-administered questionnaire, to which participants, who were invited via email to participate in the study, responded after watching a video about a region of Portugal. To obtain comprehensive answers, videos were shown randomly about different regions of Portugal (Algarve, Alentejo, Centro region, Interior region, city of Lisbon and city of Oporto).

The questionnaire measurement items were assessed on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree", and were constructed based on scales from previous studies. To measure, we used three items adapted from Santos et al. (2023) to measure the structure of the narrative; immersion in the narrative was based on the three items from Augusto et al. (2021); to measure the concept of positive emotions, we followed the 4-item scale from Augusto et al. (2023); attitudes were measured using the 4-item scale from Carlson et al. (2020); visit intention was measured by adapting the 3-item scale from Bianchi et al. (2017); and engagement with the region was measured using the items from Santos and Santo (2019). In this study, a non-probability sampling method was used to collect data from tourists, an approach widely used in social science research that has been documented as a robust data collection method. A total of 915 responses were obtained, of which 68.3% were women. Regarding age, the majority were between 18 and 29 years old (65.2%), followed by those between 30 and 49 years old (20.6%).

### 3.2 Preliminary Data Analysis

Initially, we conducted a preliminary data analysis and applied several regression models to the different constructs to determine each item's Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). We found that all VIF values are below the threshold recommended by the literature (VIF <5), which leads us to conclude that multicollinearity does not represent a concern (Hair et al., 2018). Regarding the analysis of skewness (Sk) and kurtosis (Ku), the results indicate that the items are aligned with normality (Sk<3; Ku<7) (Hair et al., 2018). We also calculated the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value and performed Bartlett's sphericity test to assess the adequacy of our sample. The KMO value is 0.903 (>0.7), and the sphericity test was significant (p<0.05), rejecting the null hypothesis and indicating that the data are suitable for factor analysis. Furthermore, following the guidelines of Podsakoff et al. (2003), we proceeded with the Harman single-factor test, which revealed six factors, with the first factor explaining 18.57% of the variance. Based on this, we assess that common method bias is not problematic in this study.

## 4. Results

This study used the structural equation modelling (SEM) approach using AMOS software (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988; Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). First, we used confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). We found that the measurement model consists of all latent factors and the 24 measurement items denote the fit indices as showing a reasonable fit of the measurement model [ $\chi^2 = 856.540$ ;  $df = 174$ ,  $\chi^2/df (4.923)$ ; comparative-fit-index [CFI] = 0.955; normative-fit index (NFI) = 0.944; Tucker-Lewis Index [TLI] = 0.946; goodness-of-fit-index [GFI] = 0.914, and root-mean-square-error-of-approximation [RMSEA] = 0.066] (Hair et al., 2018).

### 4.1 Construct Validity and Reliability

The measurement model was analysed for reliability and validity. First, Cronbach's Alpha values were calculated for all factors, which ranged from 0.817 to 0.936, all above the recommended threshold value of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2018). Then, to assess convergent validity, we observed the standardised item loadings and the average extracted values (AVE) of the constructs in Table 1. All constructs' standardised item loadings (Table 2) are above the minimum value of 0.70, indicating adequate convergent validity.

**Table 1: Measurement Model**

Latent variable	Items Code	$\Lambda$	t-values	R <sup>2</sup>	CR	AVE	Alpha
<b>NaSt</b>	NaSt1	0.822	(a)	0.675	0.813	0.593	0.813
	NaSt2	0.77	23.945	0.593			
	NaSt3	0.714	22.021	0.51			
<b>NaTx</b>	NaTx1	0.711	(a)	0.506	0.876	0.705	0.870
	NaTx2	0.887	25.202	0.787			
	NaTx3	0.907	25.553	0.823			
<b>EMPOS</b>	EMPOS1	0.96	(a)	0.922	0.934	0.780	0.936
	EMPOS2	0.955	64.351	0.913			
	EMPOS3	0.803	36.771	0.645			
	EMPOS4	0.802	36.65	0.643			
<b>ATT</b>	ATT1	0.866	(a)	0.75	0.924	0.753	0.924
	ATT2	0.841	32.873	0.706			
	ATT3	0.885	36.011	0.783			
	ATT4	0.878	35.519	0.771			
<b>INTVIS</b>	INTVIS1	0.877	(a)	0.769	0.865	0.682	0.857
	INTVIS2	0.882	30.539	0.778			
	INTVIS3	0.707	23.853	0.5			
<b>ENG</b>	ENG1	0.86	(a)	0.74	0.922	0.748	0.917
	ENG2	0.924	38.838	0.855			

Latent variable	Items Code	$\lambda$	t-values	R <sup>2</sup>	CR	AVE	Alpha
	ENG3	0.901	37.255	0.813			
	ENG4	0.766	28.171	0.587			

Source: Own elaboration

Notes:  $\lambda$  = Standardized coefficients; (a) the value one was defined to obtain the item metric; CR – Composite reliability, AVE = Average Variance Extracted, NaSt = Narrative Structure, NaTx = Narrative Immersion, EMPOS = Positive Emotions, ATT = Attitude, INTVIS = Visit Intention, ENG = Engagement.

Additionally, we confirmed that the composite reliability (CR) values for the constructs are the values recommended in the literature (CR > 0.70), ranging between 0.813 and 0.934, as shown in Table 1 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). In this follow-up, we also assessed discriminant validity using the criteria of Fornell and Larcker (1981). Table 2 demonstrates that the AVE of the constructs (presented on the diagonal of Table 3) is higher than the squared inter-construct correlations between them, thus confirming the discriminant validity in this study.

**Table 2: Discriminant Validity**

Construct	NaSt	NaTx	EMPOS	ATT	INTVIS	ENG
<b>NaSt</b>	<b>0.593</b>					
<b>NaTx</b>	0.582	<b>0.705</b>				
<b>EMPOS</b>	0.389	0.391	<b>0.780</b>			
<b>ATT</b>	0.298	0.183	0.191	<b>0.753</b>		
<b>INTVIS</b>	0.089	0.075	0.099	0.334	<b>0.682</b>	
<b>ENG</b>	0.065	0.076	0.147	0.048	0.056	<b>0.748</b>

Source: Own elaboration

Note: Values marked in bold indicate the average variance extracted. Values off the diagonal are the squared inter-construct correlations NaSt=Narrative Structure, NaTx=Narrative Immersion, EMPOS=Positive Emotions, ATT=Attitude, INTVIS=Visit Intention, ENG=Engagement

**Table 3: Hypothesis testing**

Hypothesis	$\beta$	t value	p-value	
<b>NAST → NATX</b>	0.781	18.196	0.000	Corroborated
<b>NATX → EMPOSI</b>	0.654	18.323	0.000	Corroborated
<b>EMPOSI → ATT</b>	0.449	13.655	0.000	Corroborated
<b>ATT → INTVIS</b>	0.582	16.94	0.000	Corroborated
<b>NATX → ENG</b>	0.245	6.559	0.000	Corroborated
<b>ATT → ENG</b>	0.128	3.55	0.000	Corroborated

Source: Own elaboration

$\beta$ =Path Coefficients, NaSt=Narrative Structure, NaTx=Narrative Immersion, EMPOS=Positive Emotions, ATT=Attitude, INTVIS=Visit Intention, ENG=Engagement

The six research hypotheses were verified in the model presented, and the structural model under study presents an adequate adjustment  $X^2=1064.959$ ;  $df=183$ ;  $p=.000$ ;  $X^2/df=5.819$ ;  $GFI=0.900$ ;  $CFI=0.942$ ;  $NFI=0.931$ ;  $IFI=0.942$ ;  $TLI=0.933$ ;  $RMSEA=0.073$ ) (Hair et al., 2018).

## 5. Discussion of Results and Conclusion

The narrative structure can significantly impact narrative immersion by providing a coherent and engaging plot that facilitates the immersion of readers or viewers in the story. Hypothesis H1 was confirmed by this study

( $\beta_{\text{NAST} \rightarrow \text{NATX}} = 0.781$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), which suggests, in line with the literature, that structural elements such as chronology (beginning, middle, and end), causality (causal relationships between events), and character development are crucial to creating a transportive narrative experience (Grigsby et al., 2023). Thus, a well-structured narrative helps individuals visualise events vividly and leads them to become deeply involved with the plot, resulting in greater immersion and empathy (Ryu et al., 2019).

Narrative immersion positively influences emotions by deeply involving individuals in the story, allowing them to experience the characters' emotions as if they were their own. In this context, hypothesis H2 was corroborated ( $\beta_{\text{NATX} \rightarrow \text{EMPOS}} = 0.654$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). Studies show that immersion in a well-structured narrative increases empathy and identification with the characters, intensifying positive emotional responses (Grigsby et al., 2023). Therefore, the ability of a narrative to transport its recipients not only facilitates immersion but also amplifies the positive emotions experienced during the narrative.

Hypothesis H3 was confirmed, following what the literature suggests. ( $\beta_{\text{EMPOS} \rightarrow \text{ATT}} = 0.449$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). Previous studies, such as those by Kwornik and Ross (2007), show that tourists experience positive emotions when planning trips, which provides well-being even before the trip. The literature also highlights that positive emotions directly influence emotions in forming positive attitudes (Sirgy, 2010; Hosany et al., 2015). To confirm with the literature that attitudes towards a region indicate an intention to visit a destination, we can use studies highlighting the relationship between attitudes and tourist behaviours. For example, Phillips et al. (2013) and Ryu et al. (2010) demonstrate that positive attitudes towards a destination significantly predict the intention to visit. In this investigation, attitude also directly influences the decision to see a tourist destination, which is why hypothesis H4 was also confirmed ( $\beta_{\text{ATT} \rightarrow \text{INTVIS}} = 0.582$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ).

To confirm hypothesis H5 with the literature ( $\beta_{\text{ATT} \rightarrow \text{ENG}} = 0.128$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), we can refer to several studies that explore the relationship between attitudes, involvement and loyalty to the destination. Bowden (2009) and Bryce et al. (2015) highlight that positive attitudes towards a tourist destination encourage greater participation of tourists, both in psychological and interactive processes. Thus, positive attitudes influence the decision to visit and strengthen tourists' bonds and continuous involvement with the destination. In addition to attitudes towards the region, immersion in narratives promotes participation in the area, which leads us to confirm hypothesis H6 ( $\beta_{\text{NATX} \rightarrow \text{ENG}} = 0.245$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). Narrative immersion significantly influences engagement as narratives attract individuals' attention and create a strong emotional connection with the characters and the plot, promoting more intense and lasting engagement (Grigsby et al., 2023).

## 6. Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

This study has some limitations that should be considered. Firstly, the sample used is predominantly composed of young adults, which may not represent the age diversity of tourists in general. In addition, the data were collected through a self-administered questionnaire, which may introduce response bias. Therefore, for future research, it is suggested that the sample be expanded to include a broader and more diverse age range and tourists from different regions and countries. Furthermore, future studies could explore the impact of various narratives, such as stories told by digital influencers or through augmented reality, which could offer valuable contributions to tourism marketing strategies.

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