Article

Effects of Story Marketing and Travel Involvement on Tourist Behavioral Intention in the Tourism Industry

Yi-Min Li

Department of Tourism Management, National Kaohsiung University of Applied Sciences (Yanchao Campus), Kaohsiung 807, Taiwan; E-Mail: ymli@cc.kuas.edu.tw; Tel.: +886-7-615-2231 (ext. 7246)

Abstract: Story marketing has been widely applied to modern societies. As a matter of fact, attraction is a critical part of tourism for any visitor attractions throughout the world. A visitor attraction requires sufficient attraction to appeal to customers' interests. Story marketing is currently the most popular marketing strategy. The success of using stories in visitor attractions as a marketing tactic for tourism attraction lies in the fact that story-telling is able to best attract people. Both adults and children love listening to stories, which can lead a way to people's hearts and stories are also the best strategy for communication with others. Aimed at visitors to the Wushe Township as the research participants, a total of 500 copies of questionnaires were distributed, and 287 valid ones retrieved, with a retrieval rate of 57%. The research results show: (1) a significantly positive effect of story marketing on travel involvement; (2) a notably positive effect of travel involvement on behavioral intention; (3) remarkably positive effect of story marketing on behavioral intention.

Keywords: story marketing; travel involvement; tourist behavioral intention

1. Introduction

Stories are very close to our daily life. There have been stories around us since childhood to help us understand the world. A story allows us to systematically understand the world, that it is not simply art in a movie or a novel, but how it can be seen by historians, psychologists, educators, journalists, lawyers, and others in daily life [1]. Children grow up with their mother's bedtime stories in childhood,

while a manager could lead employee development with story-telling. Stories have apparently become a part of human life.

With ongoing time, tourism has changed from mass tourism to individual travel. From the viewpoint of marketing, shooting the target has replaced random promotion in modern societies [2]. A marketing strategy with stories in visitor attractions could induce consumer interest in understanding more detailed information. Story marketing therefore could be said to be a way to best touch people. Besides, most stories are expressed in a sensible way to psychologically resonate with the hearts of people. Nonetheless, among many marketing strategies, most literature on increasing tourist numbers using stories is affected by dramas, in which the placement marketing of arranging "products" into the characters, stories, as well as the atmosphere for attracting consumers travelling to a destination is utilized. With transference, dramas are applied to enable people to identify with the shooting locations. Stories are regarded as an effective marketing instrument. Having people generate transference with dramas allows them presenting identity to the shooting locations. Story marketing is the most valuable success factor in sales and could change the seller value to the buyer value. Valuable stories reveal unique ideas to consumers that the more effective stories would present higher value. When consumers believe in the product quality and price being the basic threshold, the added value of a product would become the key success factor. Consumers are likely to favor storytelling products. However, the story cognition in visitor attractions and the degree of involvement are mutually influential.

This study attempts to understand and discuss whether it is the stories which induce the travel involvement of people, or whether travel involvement results in story search and follow up. The effects of story marketing and travel involvement on tourist behavioral intentions are therefore explored in this study.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Story Marketing

A story, developed from a narrative, is generally referred to as "to tell a story" [3]. A story is defined as the logic in a sequential relationship, induced by a story-teller through time and space or the through experiential behavior [4]. A story has always been a common cultural element in societies, as it helps people understand life experiences, and to master surrounding events and various situations encountered in life, depending on the actual stories [5]. Consequently, Koll *et al.* [6] regarded a story as a narrative, which could help people perceive, understand, and form a self-concept. Story Marketing is to precede communication marketing through story-telling [7]. Park and Njite [8] also considered stories as communications, it being understood by the public that stories are often used for marketing and management to deliver the value and emotion. Story-telling is not new in marketing; a lot of people have marketed products through story-telling. Telling a story with a narrative in advertising is called narrative advertising, which touches consumers by telling stories to produce resonance and thus further generate purchasing behavior [9]. Huhtamo [5] regarded stories as a powerful medium to deliver information. Guttentag [4] indicated that story-telling, with lots of magic power, could become an important commercial instrument and trend and could appear resonance with consumers. Park and Njite [8] considered stories as the fact with emotional package which would drive people to take actions.

Loureiro [10] pointed out three characters in stories: (1) A story is a factual report of events; (2) A story is a myth, a version allowing the story-teller to speak out or explain; (3) A story is a narrative, a tool allowing people to understanding an event and construct the facts. The relationship among the three lies in the difference between a story and its authenticity. A report story puts stress on the authenticity that the described event completely conforms to the facts; a myth story might not conform to the facts, but the authenticity is given by the story-teller; and, a narrative is not necessarily true, but the sense of reality is established by the narration of the story-teller, *i.e.*, the story-teller systematically expresses the observed events and the way of telling the story makes people believe it to be fact. Actually, human life is full of myths. A simple story with touching characters and resonant plots could lead people to understand the world [10]. In this case, the "story" in story marketing is referred to as the subjective authenticity of the story-teller.

Koo and Ju [11] discovered that the validity of information changes with the product varieties and measurement. In other words, the performance of the products is emphasized, and the measurement is diverse, without being restricted specifically. Referring to Loureiro *et al.* [12], the dimensions of positive feelings, warm feelings, and negative feelings are all used in this study. The dimensions contain: (1) positive perception, including humor, happiness, and confidence; (2) warm perception, showing more humanity (or interpersonal connection), aesthetics, and warm feelings; and (3) negative perception, covering fear, sense of guilt, and sorrow.

2.2. Travel Involvement

Chen and Chen [13] pointed out involvement as the interest stimulated in certain situations as well as the perceived importance of an individual. Hair *et al.* [14] regarded involvement as individual perceived correlation based on the demands, value, and interests in certain events. Hulusic and Rizvic [15] also indicated that the idea of involvement changes from consumer behaviors to leisure opinions and leisure behaviors are strongly correlated with enduring involvement; involvement is therefore defined as the psychological state of motivation, encouragement, or interest among individual, groups, or products. Koo and Ju [11] pointed out involvement as personal correlation with a certain event and the tactic of influencing consumers receiving and dealing with information.

Loureiro [10] suggested understanding participation through the meaning or correlation with activities, from which consumer decisions and processes in leisure could be further understood with emotional attachment or meaning. Shih [16] classified the involvement in consumer behaviors into high involvement and low involvement. Vincent and Tianming [17] argued that consumers with high involvement presented high interests in data collection and would pre-evaluate before purchase, while consumers with low involvement showed lack of data collection, seldom compared product attributes, were not sensitive to brand cognition, and did not favor specific products. Referring to the scale developed by Hulusic and Rizvic [15], the McIntyre dimensions of attraction, self-expression, and centrality to lifestyle are adopted and utilized in this study. Chen and Chen [13] discovered that attraction was the most influential factor in consumers participating in activities in tours. However, Koo and Ju [11] found out the higher effects of self-expression and centrality. Shih [16] indicated that enduring involvement would affect experiences, image, and revisit intention, while experiences would influence destination image and revisit intention. A visitor with more involvement in a touring spot would present

higher destination affirmation. The unique attraction of a destination was the major factor in visitors collecting data and selecting destinations. In other words, the more involvement in a touring destination, the higher emphasis appeared. Similarly, consumers with higher enduring involvement in tours revealed higher concerns.

In this research, McIntyre applied the dimensions of: (1) attraction, the connection between products and personal emotion; (2) self-expression, products and self-identity; and (3) centrality to lifestyle, effects of products on life styles.

2.3. Behavioral Intention

The idea of behavioral intention originated from Theory of Attitude in psychology and is currently mostly discussed with consumer behaviors. Attitude contains a cognitive factor, an emotional factor, and an intentional factor [18]. Cognitive factors refer to personal knowledge and belief in the attitude target; emotional factors indicate personal feeling or emotion about the attitude target; and, intentional factors present personal action or behavioral intention on the attitude target. Cognitive factors and emotional factors are regarded as the determinants of attitude, *i.e.*, the overall evaluation is determined by belief and feeling, while the behavioral tendency is determined by attitude [19]. Hyun and O'Keefe [20] pointed out behavioral intention as individual positive or negative behavioral tendency or intention to the attitude target. Generally, it refers to the possibility or tendency of an individual special action or method based on attitude. Kotler and Keller [21] regarded it as an individual following a definite activity or possible behavior or tendency for an attitude target; or, it might be the possible action tendency of an individual being used for predicting human behavior [11]. Behavioral intention refers to human action or tendency to a certain attitude target, used for predicting and understanding consumer behaviors. Based on the above definitions, behavioral intention is defined in this study as possible action or tendency affected by attitude targets.

Attitude is a condition to measure intention [22]. Wise *et al.* [23] regarded behavioral intention as loyalty and divided it into cognition, emotion, desire, and action loyalty. Hyun and O'Keefe [20] also pointed out the relationship between behavioral intention and loyalty and divided behavioral intention into loyalty, conversion tendency, willingness to pay more, external response, and internal response. Nevertheless, Hsiao *et al.* [19] considered that attitude came from belief and emotion, but the measurement of intention could more accurately predict behavior than attitude could. A person might favor certain products, but not have the necessity or capability to buy; and, intention is to measure the degree of preference, but does not guarantee the purchase of such products. Kotler and Keller [21] pointed out the obvious effects of psychological and behavioral involvement on behavioral intention. The joyful value and the number of participation in activities would affect the future behavioral intention. A visitor with higher involvement in activities showed lower effects on risks and expenses. Behavioral intention generally refers to the possibility and tendency of an individual taking special actions or methods aiming at the attitude. Attitude, resulted from belief and emotion, would generate possible action tendency of an individual through cognitive factors or emotional factors. The key in this study is to understand the consumer behaviors in a tour or after receiving information related to touring spots. In this case, the intention scale developed by Esper and Rateike [18] conforms to the purpose in this study that it is selected for the measurement. The dimensions contain: (1) cognition, referring to individual

knowledge and belief in an objective; (2) emotional factor, indicating personal feeling or emotion towards an objective; and (3) action loyalty, showing individual action or behavioral intention towards an objective.

2.4. Research Assumption

There are various factors affecting people deciding to travel to specific visitor attractions. A person with strong emotions would present a stronger emotional reaction to the received information and the attitude behavior. Stories with emotional appeal are a marketing tactic that deliver an emotional reaction in people while emotional information is utilized to influence the mood. A better effect would be obtained on including such events with emotion [23]. Businesses influence human behavior with emotional response to external information. Moreover, emotion could also be presented on involvement of travel involvement in visitor attractions where the involvement of a person in connection with an event and a situation is discussed [24]. The effects of stories or travel involvement could eventually influence behavior [25]. In such a case, emotion could affect human response and could be utilized for influencing both involvement and behavior.

Marketing is communication among people through information, in which story marketing is regarded as the most effective communication [26]. The emotional tactic using story situations could best touch people's hearts [27], but the effects change with demographic background. Loureiro [10] indicated that inner thoughts respond to external performance. In other words, consumers' feelings are affected after receiving information and the perceived story marketing further presented as well as the travel involvement in visitor attractions. As a matter of fact, the authenticity of stories in visitor attractions could enhance visitors' identification and induce the tourism intention. To be influenced by a situation, people need to understand the relevant information after receiving the stories in visitor attractions; the higher involvement in such stories would increase the possibility to visit these places.

H1: Story marketing presents significantly positive effects on travel involvement

With regard to involvement, Fog [28] regarded involvement as being related to personal demands, value, and interests in certain events. In the AIDA model, it is also found that people perceive the importance and value of tourism after hearing the stories in visitor attractions. This generates interest through the situation, and gives the intention to further understand the contents and relevant information about such visitor attractions [9].

H2: Travel involvement reveals remarkably positive effects on behavioral intention

Tao [22] mentioned that consumers desire information after paying attention to information and eventually present behavior according to personal preference conforming to the stages of cognition, emotion, and behavior in the AIDA model. The model is applied to this study as the main framework; *i.e.*, consumers become interested in an event after paying attention to the stories in visitor attractions and with further understanding may show "action".

H3: Story marketing shows notably positive effects on behavioral intention

3. Sample and Measuring Indicator

3.1. Research Sample and Participant

Wushe, with the name of Sakura City, is located 1148 m above sea level in the Ren'ai Township of Nantou County in Taiwan. It is cool all the year round and has been famous in Sakura since the time of Japanese rule. Wushe Incident, the rebellion of indigenous people against colonial Japanese, is the most attractive story in Wushe. To resist the long-term oppression by Japanese authorities, the chief of the Seediq aborigines, Mouna Rudaqo, and the tribes in Takadaya attacked Japanese at an athletics meet at Taiwan-Chinese Musyaji Elmentary School. The Japanese authorities immediately took military action and suppressed the attack with air force, bombs, and tear gas. The tribes participating in the action were almost exterminated, hundreds of indigenous people committed suicide, and the survivors were moved to Alan Gluban. Wushe Incident, as the last violent armed resistance to the Japanese after Tapani Incident, shocked the Japanese authorities and international societies.

Focusing on Wushe Township, the visitors are taken as research participants, and random sampling was utilized for the questionnaire survey in this study. A total of 500 copies of questionnaires were distributed, the copies of questionnaires with incomplete answers and invalid ones with the reverse questions not passing the test are removed to avoid rigid thinking and random answer of participants and 287 valid ones retrieved, with a retrieval rate of 57%.

3.2. Reliability and Validity Test

Validity refers to a measuring instrument being able to effectively measure the research questions. Validity can generally be divided into content validity, criterion-related validity, and construct validity. The questions applied in this study are referred to as domestic and international researchers' research questions, discussed with the instructor before distributing formal questionnaires, and the following pretest revealed that the questionnaire had a certain content validity. The overall structural casualty among the dimensions of story marketing, travel involvement, and behavioral intention were analyzed with the Linear Structural Relation Model; and, the data input were based on the correlation coefficient matrix of the above observed variables. The analysis result with Linear Structural Relation Model shows the overall model fit achieves reasonable range and that it presents favorable convergent validity and predictive validity. According to the suggestion of Kerlinger [29], the correlation coefficients of sub-items and total items are used to verify the construct validity of the questionnaire, *i.e.*, to judge the questionnaire content with the correlation coefficients of sub-items and total items through Reliability Analysis. The correlation coefficients of sub-items to total items in dimension are larger than 0.5, showing the construct validity of the dimensions in this questionnaire.

The reliability and validity of the questionnaire in this study are further understood with the Reliability and Validity Analysis. According to Cuieford [30], a higher Cronbach's α reveals better reliability. Based on the standard, the formal questionnaire was developed in this study, and the measured Cronbach's α appears between 0.78–0.90, conforming to the range.

4. Empirical Result Analysis

4.1. Evaluation Indicators in the LISREL Model

The LISREL Model (linear structural relation) combines Factor Analysis in traditional statistics with Path Analysis and includes simultaneous equations in Econometrics so that it is a research instrument able to calculate multi-factor and multi-causal paths. Regarding the evaluation of model fit, Bagozzi [31] proposed to evaluate from the preliminary fit criteria, the overall model fit, and fit of the internal structural of the model.

The research data are organized in Table 1, and the explanations aimed at the preliminary fit criteria, the fit of internal structural of the model, and the overall model fit are shown below.

Table 1. Analysis of the overall linear structural model.

Evaluation Item	Parameter/Evaluation Criteria		Result	*t*
Preliminary fit criteria	Story marketing	Positive feeling	0.826	11.36 **
		Warm feeling	0.837	12.71 **
		Negative feeling	0.753	9.85 **
	Travel involvement	Attraction	0.722	7.43 **
		Self-expression	0.671	6.25 **
		Centrality to lifestyle	0.696	6.37 **
	Behavioral intention	Cognitive factor	0.783	7.19 **
		Emotional factor	0.742	8.46 **
		Action loyalty	0.794	8.82 **
Fit of internal structure of model	Story marketing → travel involvement		0.738	7.41 **
	Travel involvement → behavioral intention		0.764	7.55 **
	Story marketing → behavioral intention		0.832	8.67 **
Overall model fit	χ^2/Df		1.762	
	GFI		0.973	
	AGFI		0.951	
	RMR		0.004	

Note: ** $p < 0.01$.

In terms of preliminary fit criteria, Table 1, the three dimensions (positive feeling, warm feeling, and negative feeling) in story marketing showed a significant effect on story marketing ($t > 1.96$, $p < 0.05$); the three dimensions (attraction, self-expression, and centrality to lifestyle) in travel involvement presented a remarkable explanation on travel involvement ($t > 1.96$, $p < 0.05$); and the three dimensions (cognitive factor, emotional factor, and action loyalty) in behavioral intention appeared to be the notable explanation on behavioral intention ($t > 1.96$, $p < 0.05$). Apparently, the overall model presented favorable preliminary fit criteria.

In regard to the fit of the internal structure of the model, story marketing and travel involvement (0.738) showed significantly positive correlations, travel involvement and behavioral intention (0.764) revealed remarkably positive correlations, and story marketing and behavioral intention (0.832) showed notably positive correlations in that H1, H2, and H3 were supported.

Regarding the overall model fit, the overall model fit χ^2/Df appeared 1.762, less than the standard 3, and RMR = 0.004 revealed the appropriateness of χ^2/DF and RMR. Besides, the chi square was sensitive to sample size in that it was not suitable for direct judgment. However, the overall model fit presented GFI = 0.973 and AGFI = 0.951, larger than the standard 0.9 (the closer GFI and AGFI are to 1 showed the better the model fit), such that this model showed better fit indicators.

4.2. Hypothesis Test of Overall LISREL Model

Figure 1 shows the correlation path of this study, where the estimates between dimensions and variables are significant. The hypothesis verification results are shown in Table 2.

Figure 1. Correlation path.
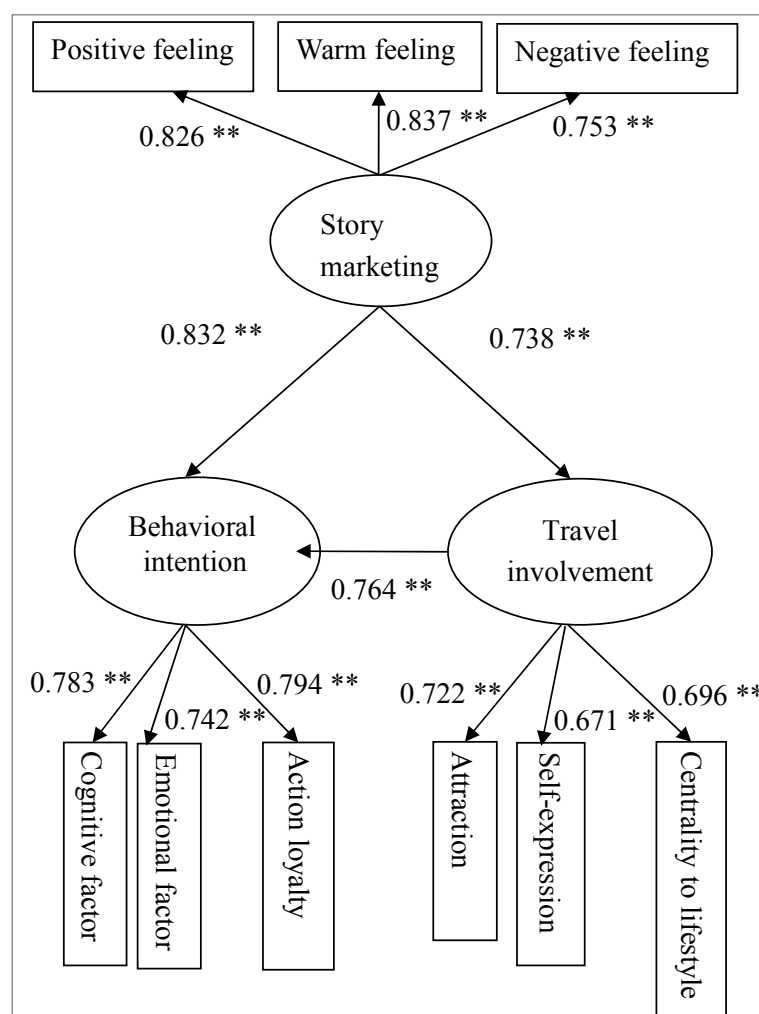
Note: ** $p < 0.01$.

Table 2. Hypothesis test.

Research Assumption	Correlation	Experimental Result	P	Result
H1	+	0.738	0.00	Supported
H2	+	0.764	0.00	Supported
H3	+	0.832	0.00	Supported

5. Conclusions

The research results show the significantly positive effects of story marketing on travel involvement and behavioral intention. The application of stories to new-media advertisement covers various story-telling skills in traditional stories and pioneer interactive stories, which are integrated into advertisement appeal, so that consumers are soaked in the changeable situations and the atmosphere created in the stories so as to become connected with the products. With distinct aspects to viewing questions, advertisement is classified with various standards. Among numerous advertising classifications, advertising with story marketing is considered critical. Stories are the common cultural element in human societies. Stories are so natural, common, easily learnt and mastered that they have never been questioned. For this reason, marketing communications with story-telling have been promoted in recent years. Practicing marketing without consumers being aware is solidified in advertising, *i.e.*, common advertising with story marketing, which influences public behavior or concepts through story-telling. Stories in advertising with story marketing are often utilized for advertising in the tourism industry. It not only is better comprehended, but could also instruct and enhance the production and development of advertising. Besides, it is consummate for story marketing.

6. Suggestions

After concluding the results and findings, the following suggestions, aiming at the practicality of the research, are proposed as below.

I.   Tourism involvement presents significantly positive effects on behavioral intention. Researchers regarded tourism involvement as an individual perceiving the relevance of tourism products based on personal demands, value, and interests. After all, products are the objectives of consumers that a tourism business could not compromise on the quality of products, as it is relevant to the demand cognitive value and interests of consumers after contacting tourism products and could affect the behavioral intention. As a result, tourism businesses are suggested to well examine the quality of product so as to enhance visitors' tourism involvement, affect consumers' behavioral intention, and create favorable tourism image of local touring destinations.

II. Story marketing shows remarkably positive effects on tourism involvement. As mentioned in literatures, consumers were influenced the perception after receiving information. Consumers would like to understand the relevant information when they were affected by the story situations in story marketing that the consumer involvement was promoted. Tourism businesses therefore are suggested to skillfully use suspense in the story marketing and offer a hint of the story ending in the beginning in order to enhance the audience's doubt, simulate the intention to continuously understand the tourism products, increase the attraction and artistic effects of story marketing, and impress the audience by the final surprise or realization. The consumers' tourism products involvement can therefore be promoted.

III. Story marketing reveals notably positive effects on behavioral intention. Researchers used to consider stories with emotional appeals as a marketing tactic and utilize the information with emotional appeals for delivering people's emotional responses so that tourism businesses could use the emotional responses to external information for influencing people's behaviors. Among

distinct advertisement, humor presents rich emotion. Favoring humor is a common characteristic of people in the world. Humorous advertisement could be popular by crossing the obstacles of nations, languages, customs, and beliefs. For this reason, tourism businesses are suggested to induce the audience' joyful and unforgettable experiences in the tourism products through humorous plots in the story marketing so as to have the consumers present purchase behavioral intention.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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