marketing destinations through first-person stories

a narrative structure analysis

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1 background
theoretical foundation

2 purposes

3 method
data collection
analysis procedure

4 analysis & findings

5 conclusion
People create stories to organize their experiences and communicate those experiences to others.

Narratives

People use the self-constructed narratives stored in their memory as a basis for judgments of other people, objects, or events.

Narratives enable people interpret the world around them in order to create meaning and to encourage imagination.
narratives

storytelling is one of the most powerful tools for presenting products, services, or brands to consumers
"narrativistic" attitude of tourists

Tourists communicate their travel memories through a combination of text, images, videos, and/or music to share stories about tourism products and experiences.

DMOs have started to incorporate the narrative and interactive nature of first-person stories as a feature of their websites (e.g., visitPA.com).

User-created contents | Consumer-generated media
What a Long Strange Trip...

During the summer of 2005, lots of people got to know our PA Roadtrippers - their stories circulated far and wide, and their blogs became pretty darn famous! Maybe that’s because their adventures were so compelling and (sometimes) downright odd. The first class of PA Roadtrippers were real people, not actors or advertising types, and they filed their dispatches faithfully so that their audience could experience the State of Independence through their eyes. We invite you to browse around and get to know them; we’ll bet you’ll be exposed to some cool things you never knew existed in Pennsylvania.}
narratives

blogs is a digital version of word-of-mouth, offers thick experiential aspects of a travel
explores how personal travel narratives are constructed by deconstructing the stories into meaningful sequences

examines the merits of introducing a journal-like narrative approach to destination marketing by abstracting the key marketing elements from the stories
interpretivist approach, analyze the qualitative data based on subjective interpretation
visitPA.com roadtripper blogs

- history buff: 2 stories
- culture vultures: 3 stories
- hipster roadtrippers: 3 stories
Temporal Dimension (Episodes)

Causal Inference

Relational Organization (Episode Schema)

Characterization

Space Categorization

Product Evaluation
characterization: introduction of hero & heroine

The effectiveness of a story relies on its ability to present structured characters’ action sequences.

Characters in a story are lived identities to which people can relate in real life.
characterization: access to lived tourist identities

**History Buff**
Robert (37), Married
*Keywords*: book, city living, history, tradition, kids, parents

**Culture Vultures**
Manisha (26) & Preethi (27), Singles
*Keywords*: second-year business students, top tier school, clueless about direction, bridal shower, dress, makeup

**Hipster Roadtrippers**
Mike (29) & Tamara (30), Married
*Keywords*: Mexican (food/spot), cool spot, drinks, music, game, history walk
the characterization is strongly associated with the product that they (PA tourism office) are trying to sell, i.e., different types of tourist attractions and forms of trip itineraries.
the introduction of **multiple characters** in a story is important for audiences’ **sense-making process**, they are able to understand the **narrative plots** by connecting the **narrative parts** from the characters’ **interactions** with each other.
story episodes: temporal dimensions

The narrative structure of the blogs were deconstructed based on the chronology or temporal dimension of **events**.

**Temporal sequences of tourists’ movement**

**Three time intervals:** morning, afternoon, and evening
History Buff – Day 2

Morning
- National Constitution Center Tour
- Breakfast Marathon Grill
- Chinatown Tour

Afternoon
- Lunch at City Tavern
- Gilbert Stuart House
- African American Museum Tour

Evening
- Stroll around Whalebone Alley
- Mummers Museum Tour
- Independence Hall Tour
- Liberty Bell Center Tour

Eastern State Penitentiary Visit

Dinner at Alma de Cuba

Story episodes: temporal dimensions

Hipster Roadtrippers – Day 2
The experiences represented in the narratives can be plotted into spatial movements. The spatial sequences of tourists’ movement signify the attractions and places visited by each blog character and their movement patterns. The space categorization of each travel genre can be plotted into spatial movements.
space categorization: spatial networks
The narratives were deconstructed by their relational organization: goals – actions – outcomes.

Keyword search on each identified episodes.

**Extract 1**

We walked around for quite some time, but finally decided that we wanted to do some serious shopping. So we jumped in a cab and headed down to Rittenhouse Square. Rittenhouse Square is an upscale section of Philly that is known for great boutiques and stores.

Manisha and I spent a couple hours walking up and down the streets, stopping at various stores and trying on clothes. Manisha was looking for a dress for her upcoming bridal shower so that was the focus of our shopping adventures today. After searching for hours, we still had not found the perfect dress.
extract positive & negative feelings

most stories contain positive evaluation, a few negative notions were mostly results of negative outcomes in attempts to achieve certain goals, not directly related to the quality of the products

general statements about satisfaction, the quality of attractions and facilities, the level of information available to make decisions, and knowledge gained
key marketing elements

- **Introduction of Tourist Identities**: By labeling characters with different travel genres.
- **Introduction of Tourist Drama**: By presenting multiple characters – provide notions of "realness" and character believability.
- **Real Spatio-Temporal Movement**: Of tourists as product characteristics – provide cognitive construction of hypothetical travel scenario.