11th International Strategic Management Conference 2015

The influence of storytelling approach in travel writings on readers' empathy and travel intentions

Ali Ekber Akgün[a] , Halit Keskin[a] , Hayat Ayar[a,1] , Ebru Erdoğan[a]

[a] Gebze Technical University, Kocaeli, 41400, Turkey

Abstract

As a fascinating concept, storytelling attracts many researchers from a variety of disciplines. Of particular interest is the power of storytelling both on a corporate and on a product level. However, its components and implications on the people and their behavioral intentions (i.e., word and mouth, visit intention) within travel marketing are limited. In this study, we empirically investigated the relationship between the components of storytelling, empathy and behavioral intentions. By studying 155 readers, we found that perceived esthetics, narrative structure, self-reference will evoke reader empathy. We also showed that empathy was found to generate positive emotional response and behavioral intentions toward travel destination. In this sense, we suggested that travel narratives need to consider esthetics, narrative structure and relevance to readers and empathy can be considered as a determinant of emotion in the research of marketing.

Keywords: Storytelling, Travel writing, Heuristics, Empathy, Behavioral Intention, Travel.

1. Introduction

Storytelling, composed of communication instruments (i.e. stories, social media, visual elements...) that has a crucial place in a content marketing strategy, is one of the most powerful, quick and effective ways to breathe new life into brands and to drive market changes (Fog, Budtz and Yakaboylu, 2005). In this respect, we see that researchers in marketing literature emphasize the storytelling approach, which refers to framing information so that it is understandable, meaningful, and memorable (McLellan, 2006), as an effective and influential technique to shape brands of the future and to create an emotional investment both on a corporate and on a product level (Aaker and Smith, 2011).

Storytelling research is built on a multidisciplinary foundation. According to psychological researches, storytelling have become the building blocks for cognitive reasoning (Friedberg, 1994), social change (Aaker and Smith, 2011),

---

[1] Corresponding author. Tel. + 90-262-605-1405

Email address: h.ayar@gtu.edu.tr

memory (McGregor and Holmes, 1999) and view of self and others (Bamberg, 2010). Management scholars have examined storytelling as approaches to problem solving and action research (Mitroff and Kilmann, 1975), collective centring and sense making (Boyce, 1995), organizational renewal (McWhinney and Battista, 1988). Marketing researchers have shown that while storytelling in traditional advertising is used as part of the firm's corporate branding strategy and as a sales promotional tool to generate recognition and identification, it is now used as the central driving force in advertising (Fog, e. al. 2005).

Along with its strategic value as a branding concept, storytelling has gained increasing attention as a global marketing trend in the tourism industry. According to tourism studies, stories about the destination can give the destination a unique competitive advantage and the tourist a more meaningful experience (Mossberg, 2008). With social networking technologies, in particular, storytelling approach in tourism have created the ripple effect. Based on the social network theory, social media provides many advantages to both individuals and companies. For instance, while individuals get opportunity to reach everybody regardless of their emotional intensity and social distance, companies have a better chance of reaching their customers in a short time, directly and more intensely (Aaker ve Smith, 2011). Therefore, travel narratives in social media have become popular instrument to evoke readers' empathy.

Interestingly, it should be noted that while a number of recent research studies have discussed empathy in a sales context in order to understand and satisfy customer needs (McBane, 1995), a few studies have examined empathy in media context in order to influence customers' behavioral intentions through modern marketing communication methods (i.e. storytelling approach) (Hsiao, Lu, and Lan, 2013; Aaker and Smith, 2011). Indeed, empathy can influence readers' behavioral intentions towards destination by stimulating author's experience and feelings in their own mind.

In light of these arguments, this research serves to a dual purpose. The aims of this study are to (1) recognize the elements of storytelling in travel writings and then help travel companies design their travel narratives for optimal effectiveness, and (2) investigate the effect of heuristics on empathy and in addition empathy's effect on behavioural intention. Accordingly, we structure the paper as follow. First, we present a literature review where we discuss and demarcate our area of interest and define our key concepts. Here we attempt to a better understanding of the influence of storytelling on travel writings from a heuristic perspective, consistent with Hsiao et. al. (2013). The literature review is followed by a section where we present the hypotheses guiding our study. Once the hypotheses are outlined, we present the research method section with a description of the research design, the sample and measures used. Thereafter follows the analysis and a presentation of the results. The research ends with a discussion and implications of findings. In addition, the study concludes with a section where we present suggestions for future researches.

2.Literature Review

2.1.Storytelling and Travel Narratives

According to Pellowski (1990:6-7), there are seven salient theories towards an origin of storytelling based on studies from different disciplines including anthropology, archeology, folklore, philology, semiology, linguistics and the discipline of literature. These theories show that: "1) it grew out of playful, self-entertainment needs of people; 2) it satisfied the need for explaining the surrounding physical world; 3) it came about because of an intrinsic religious need in humans to propitiate the supernatural forces believed to be present in the world; 4) it evolved from the human need to communicate experience to other humans; 5) it met an aesthetic need for beauty, regularity, and form through expressive language and music and body movement; 6) it stemmed from the desire to record the actions or qualities of one's leaders, in the hope that this would give them a kind of immorality; and 7) it encoded and retained the norms of social interaction that a given society lived by" (Keshta, 2013:17). Basically, storytelling is an art of describing real or imaginary events with word, photo and audio. From the point of view of marketing, storytelling is defined as a tool to encourage consumer loyalty through entertainment or emotional connection (www.zideate.com, 2015). Other definitions of storytelling are shown in table 1.

Table 1 Definitions of Storytelling in Different Context

Authors	Definition of Storytelling	Context	Examples (Fog et. al., 2005)
Delette (1997)	"…is the oral interpretation of a story, during which the storyteller invites the listeners to create meaning through conversation and imagination"	Education	"Xerox decided to gather "coffee break stories" and structure them in an easily accessible education database" (p. 146).
Sole and Gray Wilson (1999)	"…sharing of knowledge and experiences through narrative and anecdotes in order to communicate lessons, complex ideas, concepts, and causal connections''	Organizational communication	"For more than 50 years, 3M has been acutely aware of the role that storytelling can play in developing the values and culture that have enabled 3M to successfully maintain its high rate of innovation." (p. 128).
McDrury and Alterio (2002)	"…is a uniquely human experience that enables us to convey, through the language of words, aspects of ourselves and others, and the world real or imagined, that we inhabit."	Learning	"The management team of SuperBest, a chain of Danish supermarkets used storytelling at their annual convention in 2002 for presenting their strategies to their 170 stores" (p. 92).
Barzaq (2009)	"…is knowledge management technique and a way of distributing information and oriented to audiences and a sense of information"	Knowledge Management	"IBM has made targeted use of storytelling for a number of specific projects. Also, IBM uses storytelling when sharing and embedding knowledge in the company" (p. 144).

Since the seminal study by Pellowski (1990), the power of storytelling garnered broad attention in sociology (Polletta, Chen, Gardner, and Motes, 2011), psychology (McGregor and Holmes, 1999), management (Boje, 1995), and marketing (Hsiao et. al. 2013; Fog et. al. 2005). Specifically, while management researchers have examined the effects of storytelling in managing organizational change (Abbey, 2010), enabling knowledge transfer (Wijetunge, 2012), improving leadership skills (Grisham, 2006), and promoting entrepreneurial efforts among others (Garut et al. 2014); marketing researchers have studied the impacts of storytelling on advertising and brands (Fog, et.al., 2005). Indeed, storytelling has different functions for an organization. For instance, storytelling can share norms and values, develop trust and commitment, share and store tacit knowledge, facilitate unlearning, generate emotional connection, stimulate imagination, and initiate the change (Sole and Wilson, 1999). Jensen (1999) also says that storytelling is an instrument that firms can use to inform existing and potential customers what the firms is about. Harley-Davidson for example symbolizes the story of ''freedom'', while Nike symbolizes the "will to win" (Fog et.al. 2005).

Recently, travel narratives have become an important product of storytelling and are now regarded as a prominent experience good (Hsiao et. al. 2013). According to Wu and Liu (2011) storytelling travel writings are marketing tools to use different forms like words, voices and pictures and are narration process to express the values of contents. Because, travel narratives include more detailed and in-depth information than the traditional sources about a destination's characteristics. Also, travel narratives provide word of mouth publicity which influences tourist travel decisions. With these properties, travel narratives become an important promotional instrument to attract attention towards destination (Hsiao, Lu ve Lan, 2012).

Delgadiilo and Escalas (2004) have proposed that chronology and causality are two important elements of story's structure. Events should be organized in terms of a temporal dimension with action occurring over time. In this regard, narrative structure is an important element of a well prepared travel narrative (Escalas, 1998). According to Bruner (1990), two basic aspects stand out in well prepared stories: landscape of action and consciousness. The landscape of action consists of events that are visible. The landscape of consciousness means the adoption of the protagonist by the reader (Aaker and Smith, 2011). The content of travel narratives become visible through photos, layout design and sound, and good esthetics can raise the visibility and seduction of the stories. In addition, a good travel narrative could move the reader's emotional memories, enabling the reader to identify and empathize with the author's experience and emotion, thus improving the influence and impact of the story (Hsiao et. al. 2013).

2.2.Heuristics

People often use heuristics to be able to cope with some complex problems, which can not solve rationally (Hammond et al., 2006). In other words underlying heuristics, people tend to make decisions with beliefs or subjective evaluations in case of some uncertain events such as an election in a country, a defendant's guilt or future financial situation (Tversky and Kahneman, 1974). Heuristics often helps giving decisions more quickly and come to a solution easily. Tversky and Kahneman (1974) has mentioned three types of heuristics such as the representative heuristic, the availability heuristic and adjustment-and-anchoring heuristic.

Representatives heuristic: The representative heuristic is a psychological the term, which helps people to anticipate the existing situation to depending on a similar case or a comparable event that happened in the past (Taversky and Kahneman, 1974). In this case, while people making judgments about a new situation, they generally consider the degree of the similarity between the fact and a standard situation (Kahneman and Tversky, 1972). For instance, if you heard of a man talking about how he goes to church every week, you may assume that he was a religious man, however he might be just a gardener who works at a church. The representative heuristic may be used in creating value as packaging or product design in the case of product marketing area. For instance, the specific design of Iphone set an example to other manufacturer to attract people's attention as if their products have similarities to Iphone. Therefore, visual quality or elegancy may have effect on consumer perception positively which have the edge on the marketing strategy (Hsiao et. al. 2013). In the scope of current study storytelling travel writings refer the representatives heuristic (sea view, luxury brand shop pictures), which make article more aesthetic and so on destination comes more attractive to reader.

Availability Heuristic: People use memorable part of their experiments, which indicate the availability heuristic, help people to take stock of the situation. Availability may be affected by many reasons. From the perspective of marketing more colorful, or effective products can be remembered easily (Hsiao et. al., 2013). For example, a well-known symbol of Milka is a purple cow, the melody of Coca-Cola, or the unforgettable slogan of Ülker Biskrem. Furthermore, availability plays an important role in purchasing decision of consumer. Chernev et al. (2003) noted that generally the more available products, the more preferable products. In addition, word-of mouth is a powerful source for communication. People tell each other their experiences or stories what they heard and then they can compare with the new stories. Available heuristic such as catchy headings, vivid colors, salient pictures, help travel writings can be more memorable and available with narratives (Hoyer and MacInnis, 2006). Escalas and Stern (2003) stated that a story with good narratives may disclose optimistic emotions and feelings.

Anchoring-and-adjustment heuristic: People tend to get a result adapting core values and decisions for initial values or similar positions (Epley and Gilovich, 2006). For example, if you need to judge ability of anyone else, the anchor might be your own level of ability. So people consider their own experiences when they judge other peoples' behavior or ability levels. Readers judge travel narratives based on their own past experiences and memories. Besides this process is known as recalling which is called as self-referencing (Sujan et al., 1993). If storytelling travel writing reveals positive emotions about holiday destination, readers can have a favorable impression to the destination. Moreover it can be said that self-referencing in memories is a key factor for a successful storytelling travel writing (Hsiao et. al. 2013).

2.3.Empathy

Empathy is one of the important communication elements leading interpersonal relationships. It was translated to English from "empatheia" in Greek as "empathy" by Edward Bradford Titchener in 1909. While the term empathy has attracted many researchers from a variety of disciplines, many studies have discussed or investigated the concept of empathy at the individual level (McBane, 1995). One of the most interesting studies is Carls Roger's researches. According to Carls Roger, empathy is considered "a core condition in counseling and can be defined as communicating a sense of caring and understanding" (Leong, 2008: 1056).

In general, empathy is the capacity to be able to feel somebody's feelings. Empathy is viewed to be a consistent personal characteristic, although psychologists have argued whether empathy were either cognitive in nature (Mead, 1934) or affective (Sullivian, 1953). While cognitive studies are defined empathy as role-taking and perspective-

taking, scholars who regarded it as affective were concerned with the emotional experiences of an emotional response. However, it was highlighted that empathy has both cognitive and emotional dimensions during 1980s. The integrative Cognitive-Affective model show that empathy (1) decreases egoism, (2) socializes individuals, (3) gains capabilities such as social reconciliation, high-level consciousness, communication skills and emotional inclination (Espelage et. al. 2004). More recently, the context and dimensions of empathy is extended with concepts such as collective empathy (Akgün et. al. 2015).

Mirror neuron system in brain system permits individuals to simulate others' experiences and read others' mental thoughts in their own mind. Previous studies have shown that imagination and observation evoke mirror neurons and researchers suggest that this system is an important tool to develop empathy. According to the simulation theory, people using their brains as a model can understand others' minds and show empathy (Hsiao et. al., 2013).

2.4.Behavioral Intentions

Fishbein's theory of reasoned action assumes that individual behavior is stimulated by behavioral intentions where behavioral intentions are an outcome of an individual's attitude toward the behavior and subjective norms surrounding the performance of the behavior. Ajzen's theory of planned behavior purposes that individual behavior is charged by behavioral intentions, which are an outcome of individual attitudes toward the behavior, a subjective norm and perceived behavior control (Ajzen, 1991). In both theories, behavioral intentions are primary antecedent of an individual's behavior. In this context, marketing scholars have examined behavioral intentions to understand consumer behavior (Zeithaml et. al. 1996; Cronin et. al. 2000). Behavioral intention refers to "instruction that people give to themselves to behave in certain way" (Triandis, 1980). Zeithaml et. al. (1996) reveal that behavioral intention can be favorable (say positive things, remain loyal to company, recommend company, spend more with company, pay price Premium) or unfavorable (say negative things, switch to another company, complain to external agencies, do less business with company). Since the content of research includes a destination, we examined word and mouth and visit intention.

3.Hpotheses Development

3.1.Heuristic and empathy

Prior studies have revealed that heuristics affect consideration of human beings and thus the decision making process (Slovic et al.2007). When people depict an object or a person, it contains heuristics. For example, when you see a girl, you will probably say 'She is a beautiful or ugly girl' or you see just a car but you will probably say "It is an extravagant car or very cheap". Besides it is also known that mirror neurons help people to show empathy to others on the grounds of an 'emotional response that stems from another's emotional state or condition and that is congruent with the other's emotional state or situation' (Eisenberg and Strayer, 1987).

Human beings make decision about so many things and one of the most effective components of some choices is aesthetic. Freedberg and Gallase (2007) emphasize that images affect people's some decisions and judgments. When storytelling travel writings take into account, pictures, figures play an important role in the reader's emotions such as referring empathy to places. They illustrated past experiences in their mind so it make sense for decisions. For example, Zanzibar is a charming place to go if you see its pictures or listen travelers' observations.

According to Escalas and Stern (2003) the narrative structure of a story had effects on the reader's feelings as well as how well developed stories impact future behavior and decision-making. Moreover, the narrative structure helps generating empathy to places. In terms of travel writings, if the author portray Zanzibar fluently and attractively, the reader show positive emotions.

Self-referencing in memories bring back the reader's past experiences and feelings (Argo et al.,2008). Previous researches showed that people put oneself in somebody's position; it will help evoking positive emotions of holiday destination.

Therefore, we hypothesize that:

H1: Esthetics presented by storytelling travel writings will positively influence reader empathy.
H2: The narrative structure of storytelling travel writings will positively influence reader empathy.
H3:Self-referencing caused by storytelling travel writings will positively influence reader empathy.

3.2.Empathy and Behavioral Intention

Based on the writings on the "emotions at individual" (Espelage et. al. 2004; Hakansson, 2003), we argue that empathy is positively associated with behavioral intentions of individuals. Cognitive empathy refers to the ability of readers to understand the feelings of author. Affective empathy is the affective reaction readers have to the affective states of author. Behavioral empathy indicates the ability of readers to respond to the feelings of author (Akgün et. al. 2015). In this sense, high empathy can evoke individual behavior. Psychological studies show that people are likely to share events affecting them emotionally (Aaker and Smith, 2011). Milman and Pizam (1995) also investigate that when potential visitors evoke from the awareness to the familiarity stage concerning a specific destination, their attention in it and their intent to visit also increases. Further, with the growth of social media, storytelling approach to building dragonfly effect is critical. The dragonfly effect symbolizes ripple effect of small actions on masses (Aaker and Smith, 2011). The ripple effect occurs on readers' emotions and thus empathy can turn into behaviors. On the other hand, consumption activities include both utilitarian and hedonic consumption. When empathy is regarded as a product or service of utilitarian and hedonic motivations, it can be predicted to affect behaviors. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

H4a: The empathy elicited by travel narrative will positively influence word of mouth.

H4b: The empathy elicited by travel narrative will positively influence readers' visit intention.
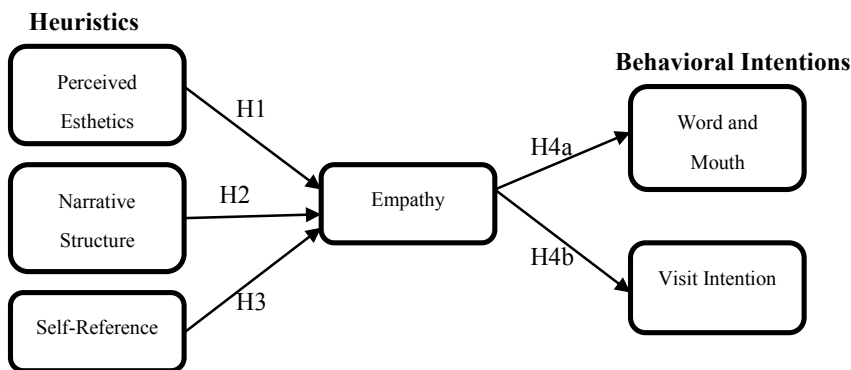

Figure 1. Research Model

4.Research Design

We selected travel narratives as the research content for this research, because traveling has become a popular activity. To avoid reader cognition from being influenced by other factors, such as destination recognition and seduction, the content used in this research featured less popular travel destinations. Thus, while Turkish people prefer to visit Europe and USA, we selected Zanzibar as the study content. According to Aaker and Smith (2011), the storytelling approach relies on four distinct wings (focus, grab attention, engage and take action); when working together, they achieve remarkable outputs. In this context, we comprised a travel narrative concerning Zanzibar. To think focused, we attempted to understand readers' expectations and connect with them as individuals. In this sense, we expressed clear and pleasing phrases to impress characteristics of Zanzibar combining with readers' expectation (e.g., *close your eyes and imagine white sandy beach, turquoise sea, sparkling sun, greenly trees with tropic ısland*). To grab readers' attention, we tried to make visceral connection with readers. From this point, the content included informal languages (e.g. *Zanzibar is calling for you*) and visual items (e.g. *local bazaar and landscape pictures*). Also, we selected an impressive slogan: *"My heart is still there, Zanzibar!"*. To engage readers, we used social media

instruments. We introduced the story as a blog post and shared on social media. Moreover, the content included intergorative items to attract readers' attention (e.g. *What you can do on island?*). To take action, the author's experiences comprehensibly told clear, and entertaining (*e.g. If you want to take a step on a magical and exotic heaven, then grab your bikini, your camera and sun cream and fly to Zanzibar"*).

4.1. Measures

To test the above hypotheses, multi-item scales adapted from prior marketing studies for the measurement of the variables were used. Perceived esthetics, self-referencing, empathy, and behavioral intention were measured using 5-point Likert scales ranging from (1) "strongly disagree" to (5) "strongly agree". Narrative structure was assessed using 5-point Likert scale ranging from (1) "not at all" to (5) "very much so".

The Heuristics scale consisting of 11 items was modified from the study of Hasiao et. al., (2013) which comprises three dimensions namely; perceived esthetics (4), narrative structure (4), self-reference (3). Empathy was measured using four questions items from Escalas and Stern (2003). With regard to the behavioral intentions construct, 6 question items were drawn from Zeithaml et. al. (1996). For the purpose of eliminating flexibility in the questionnaire which would breed inconsistency and to ensure a shared understanding of the questions for each participant, the parallel-translation method is used. The suitability of the Turkish version of the questionnaires was then pre-tested by 20 graduate students. After confirming the questionnaire items, the questionnaires were distributed to the research sample.

4.2. Sampling

After designing and refining the questionnaire, data were collected through an online survey. Before answering the online questionnaire, participants were requested to read the travel narratives. The survey involved comprehension questions based on the content of the travel narrative to confirm that participants had indeed read the travel narrative and understood the Zanzibar' story. Over a two-week survey period, 170 anonymous responses were received. Because of the participants who know Zanzibar, 15 of 170 surveys were discarded. Thus, our sample for analysis consisted of 155 surveys. The genders of our participants are almost equal as 51,6% of respondents were males. A majority of the participants (65,2%) have at least university degree, and in addition 31,6% of the respondents have postgraduate or doctorate degree. Most participants were under 30 years of age with the 84,5%. Almost half (40,6 %) of the participants work at private sector, while the other majority of participants are students at 36,1%.

4.3. Data Analysis and Results

4.3.1. Measure validity and reliability

After data collection, the measures were subjected to a purification process to assess their reliability, discriminant validity, and convergent validity (Anderson et al., 1988; Fornell and Larcker, 1981). The measures were subjected to confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using AMOS. The resulting measurement model was found to fit the data reasonably well: $\chi^2_{(172)} = 329,996$, comparative fit index (CFI) = .917, incremental fit index (IFI) = .918, Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) = .90, $\chi^2/df = 1.919$, and root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.07. Also, the parsimonious normed fit index (PNFI) = .701, which is above the cutoff point of .70. In addition, all items loaded significantly on their respective constructs (with the lowest *t*-value being 2.50), providing support for convergent validity.

Table 2 reports the reliabilities of the multiple items along with variable correlations and descriptive statistics for the scales. Table 2 also demonstrates all reliability estimates, including coefficient alphas, average variance extracted (AVE) for each variable, and AMOS-based composite reliabilities. All values are well beyond or close to the threshold levels suggested by Fornell and Larcker (1981). Furthermore, as Fornell and Larcker (1981) also suggested, the squared root of AVE for each construct was greater than the latent factor correlations between pairs of constructs, suggesting discriminant validity. The conclusion is that the measures have adequate reliability and discriminant validity.

Table 2. Correlations and Descriptive Statistics

Variables		1	2	3	4	5	6
Perceived Esthetics	1	(.80)					
Narrative Structure	2	.65***	(.70)				
Self-reference	3	.37***	.45***	(.72)			
Empathy	4	.70***	.67***	.54***	(.78)		
Word and Mouth	5	.35***	.38***	.32***	.48***	(.82)	
Visit Intention	6	.17**	.20**	.26***	.33***	.66***	(.81)
Mean		3.9	3.9	3.4	3.8	3.8	3.5
S.dev.		.72	.53	.86	.80	.74	.86
Average Var. Ext. (AVE)		.65	.50	.52	.61	.68	.67
Composite reliability		.88	.80	.76	.86	.86	.86
Cronbach's α		.86	.74	.74	.85	.86	.86

$**p<.05$, $***p < .01$. *Note*: Numbers on diagonals indicate square root of *AVE*. No correlation is greater than the corresponding square root of *AVE*.

4.3.2. Hypotheses Testing

To test our hypotheses (i.e., H1, H2, H3, H4a and H4b), we performed a structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis using AMOS. Table 3 demonstrates the relationships among heuristics, empathy, and behavioral intentions. Table 3 shows that the conceptual model adequately fits the data. The incremental fit index and comparative fit index were .89. The ratio (χ^2/d.f.), the chi-square per degree of freedom, is 2.19, which is less than 5, suggesting a reasonable fit. The RMSEA is 0.08, very close to threshold level of .05. For the relationship between heuristics and empathy, we found that perceived esthetics ($\beta = .41\ p < .01$), narrative structure ($\beta = .42,\ p < .01$), and self-reference ($\beta = .20\ p < .01$) are positively related to empathy, supporting H1, H2 and H3. Regarding the role of empathy on behavioral intentions, we found that empathy is positively related to word and mouth ($\beta = .39\ p < .01$), and visit intention ($\beta = .58\ p < .01$), supporting H4a and H4b.

Table 3. Results of Hypotheses

Hypotheses	Path	Path coefficient	Result
H1	Perceived Esthetics → Empathy	.41***	**Supported**
H2	Narrative Structure → Empathy	.42***	**Supported**
H3	Self-reference→ Empathy	.20***	**Supported**
H4a	Empathy →Word and Mouth	.39***	**Supported**
H4b	Empathy → Visit Intention	.58***	**Supported**

$\chi2$/df=2.19, CFI: 0,89 IFI: 0,89, RMSEA: 0,08

Path coefficients are standardized. ***p < .01

5. Discussion and Implications

The present research contributes to the marketing literature by presenting a model of relationships among storytelling travel writing, heuristics, empathy and behavioral intentions. By highlighting the role of perceived esthetics, narrative structure, self-reference in influencing a well prepared travel narrative, this study provides a framework for researchers and marketers to visualize and understand how these factors evoke reader empathy. Also, we showed that empathy was found to generate positive emotional response and behavioral intentions toward travel destination and can be considered as a determinant of emotion in the research of marketing.

In this study, we demonstrated that the effects of perceived esthetics, narrative structure, and self-reference on empathy, which is consistent with study of Hsiao et. al. (2013). In this sense, it is said that travel narratives need to consider esthetics, narrative structure and relevance to readers. However, perceived esthetics and narrative structure

were found to have a stronger influence than self-reference on empathy. Here, it is seen that well-designed and attractive travel narratives attract reader interest more smoothly. Previous researches confirmed these findings (Hekkert, 2006; Lavie and Tractinsky, 2004; Delgadiilo and Escalas, 2004). In this context, travel companies should focus on how messages are presented to generate a specific style and overall visual effect that attract to readers. Companies should also continue conscious of the order of the events and plots to provision readers with an optimal impression of the destination. Furthermore, companies should attempt to coordinate their messages to evoke the reader's past experience. In this way, it can be provided emotional connection and enhanced the message's marketing effectiveness (Fog, et. al. 2005).

Specifically, while previous studies in the tourism management literature have noted the impact of several factors (customer famaliarity, national culture…) on behavioral intentions toward destination, most of those studies examined factors with theoretical (Ajzen, 1991), empirical (Zeithaml et.al. 1996) and experimental arguments (Rollins et. al., 2013). In this study, we enhanced the literature by showing that positive emotions which supported by empathy has influenced customers' behavioral intentions. In fact, people tend to share their feelings when they affected emotionally in an event (Aaker and Smith, 2011). For example, because of emotional tie between people, charitable organizations' storytelling has influence on donors' emotions and intentions (Merchant et. al. 2010). Moreover, emotions may influence hedonist consumption emotions and thus it might have impact on visit intention to destination. Such that, people's desires motivate them making an effort to achieve a certain goal (Aaker and Smith, 2011). In this regard, companies might use storytelling approach to arouse positive emotions in people about products and services, which may trigger empathy for developing behavior.

6.Conclusions, limitations and future research

Our results demonstrate that perceived esthetics, narrative structure and self-reference are the key components of storytelling in travel writing, and these components generate positive emotions for readers. Additionally, our results confirm that empathy helps people (1) to understand feelings of author, (2) to have emotional reactions, (3) to show behavioral consequences. Therefore storytelling approach can be used as a marketing tool in tourism companies and it may motivate consumers for behavioral intentions such as word-of-mouth and visit intention. However, some methodological limitations exist in this study. First, because of respondents' unwillingness to read the travel writing (5 pages), we couldn't get more questionnaires. Despite expecting more responses, we have only 155 respondents in our study; generally they are from private sector or students. Second, participants were self-selecting members of an online community and may not be representative of all consumers. The results and implications are restricted to the case studied. In this regard, further research should generalize our findings. For instance, it would be better if the responses come from a wide range of people from other cities or sectors. Because the city may effect on people's culture or perspective on traveling abroad. Third, this study only examined the influence of storytelling in travel writings. The influence on the different types of products can be discovered in the future.

References

Aaker, J., and Smith, A., (2010), The Dragonfly Effect, First Edition,. Jossey-Bass.

Abbey, G. P., (2010), Making sense of organizational change: a storytelling approach. Thesis (Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)). University of Bath.

Ajzen, I., (1991), The theory of planned behavior, Organizational Behaviorand Human Decsion Processes, 50, pp.179-211.

Akgün, A.E., Keskin, H., Cebecioğlu ,Y., Doğan, D. (2015), Antecedents and consequences of collective empathy in software development project teams, Information & Management, 52, pp. 247-259.

Anderson, J.C., Gerbing, D.W., (1988), Structural equation modeling in practice: a review and recommended two-step approach, Psychological Bulletin, 103, pp. 411-423.

Argo, J.J., Zhu, R.J. and Dahl, D.W. (2008), Fact or fiction: an investigation of empathy differences in response to emotional melodramatic entertainment, Journal of Consumer Research, 34(5), pp. 614-623.

Bamberg, M. (2010), Who am I? Narration and its contribution to self and identity, Theory & Psychology, 21(1), pp.1–22.

Barzaq, M., (2009), Integrating sequential thinking thought teaching stories in the curriculum, Action Research.Al. QCERD. Gaza.

Boyce, M.E. (1995), Collective centring and collective sense-making in the stories and storytelling of one organization, Organization Studies, 16(1), pp.107-137.

Bruner, J. (1990), Acts of Meaning, Harvard Business School Press, Cambridge, MA.

Chernev, A., Mick, D.G. and Johnson, M.D. (2003), When more is less and less is more: the role of ideal point availability and assortment in consumer choice, Journal of Consumer Research, 30(2), pp. 170-83.

Cronin Jr., J. J., Brady, M. K., and Hult, G. M. (2000), Assessing the effects of quality, value, and customer satisfaction on consumer behavioral ıntentions in service environments, Journal Of Retailing, 76(2), pp.193-218.

Delette , J. (1997) . Using storytelling to teach strategies , The Language resource 1, pp.4-25.

Delgadiilo, Y., and Escalas, J.E. (2004), Narrative word-of-mouth communication: exploring memory and attitude effects of consumer storytelling, Advances in Consumer Research, 31(1), pp. 186-92.

Eisenberg, N. and Strayer, J. (1987), Critical issues in the study of empathy, in Eisenberg, N. and Strayer, J. (Eds), Empathy and its Development, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 3-13.

Epley, N. and Gilovich, T. (2006), The anchoring-and-adjustment heuristic: why the adjustments are insufficient, Psychological Science, 17(4), pp. 311-318.

Escalas, J.E. (1998), Advertising narratives: what are they and how do they work?, in Stern, B. (Ed.), Representing Consumers: Voices, Views, and Visions, Routledge Press, New York, NY.

Escalas, J.,Stern, B. (2003), Sympathy and empathy: Emotional responses to advertising dramas, Journal of Consumer Research, 29(4), pp. 566-578.

Espelage, D.L., Gutgsell, E. W., and Gutgsell, J. M. (2004), Bullying in American Schools: A Social-Ecological Perspective on Prevention and Intervention, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Fog, K., Budtz, C., and Yakaboylu, B., (2005), Storytelling: Branding in Practice. First edition, Springer-Verlag Berlin Heidelberg.

Fornell, C., and Larcker, D. F. (1981), Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error, Journal of Marketing Research 18, pp. 39–51.

Freedberg, D. and Gallese, V. (2007), Motion, emotion and empathy in esthetic experience, TRENDS in Cognitive Sciences, 11(5), pp. 197-203.

Friedberg, R. (1994), Storytelling and cognitive therapy with children, Journal of Cognitive Psychotherapy, 8(3), pp.209-217.

Grisham, T. (2006), Metaphor, poetry, storytelling and cross-cultural leadership, Management Decision, 44(4), pp.486-503.

Hakansson, J. (2003), Exploring the phenomenon of empathy, Doctoral dissertation, Department of Psychology Stockholm University.

Hekkert, P. (2006), Design aesthetics: principles of pleasure in design, Psychology Science, 48(2), pp. 157-72.

Hoyer, W.D. and MacInnis, D.J. (2006), Consumer Behavior, Houghton Mifflin College Division, Boston, MA.

Hsiao, K-L., Lu, H-P., and Lan, W-C. (2013), The influence of the components of storytelling blogs on readers' travel intentions, Internet Research, 23(2), pp. 160-182.

http://www.zideate.com/definition/162/storytelling, "Definitions of storytelling in marketing", 13.03.2015.

Jensen, R. (1999), Dream society: How the coming shift from ınformation to ımagination will transform your business. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Kahneman, D. and Tversky, A. (1972), Subjective probability: a judgment of representativeness, Cognitive Psychology, 3(3), pp. 430-54.

Keshta, A. S. (2013), Using storytelling in teaching English in Palestinian schools: perceptions and difficulties, Education Journal, 2(2), pp. 16-26.

Lavie, T. and Tractinsky, N. (2004), Assessing dimensions of perceived visual aesthetics of web sites, International Journal of Human-Computer Studies, 60(3), pp. 269-98.

Leong, F.T. (2008), Encyclopedia of Counseling, Sage Publications.

McBane, D., (1995), Empathy and the salesperson: A multidimensional perspective, Psychology & Marketing, 12(4), pp.349-370.

McDrury, J., Alterio, M., (2002), Learning through storytellingin higher education, Sterling, VA: Kogan Page Limited.

McGregor, I., and Holmes, J. G. (1999), How storytelling shapes memory and impressions of relationship events over time, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 76(3), pp.403-419.

McLellan, H., (2006), Corporate storytelling perspectives, TheJournal for Quality and Participation, 29(1), pp.17-20.

McWhinney, W., and Battista, J. (1988), How remythologizing can revitalize organizations, Organizational Dynamics, 17(2), pp. 46-58.

Mead, G. H. (1934). Mind, self and society. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Merchant, A., Ford, J.B., and Sargeant, A. (2010), Charitable organizations' storytelling influence on donors' emotions and intentions, Journal of Business Research, 63(7), pp. 754-762.

Milman, A. and Pizam, A. (1995). The role of awareness and familiarity with a destination: The central Florida case. JTR, 33(3), 21-27.

Mitroff, I., Kilmann, R. H. (1975), Stories managers tell: A new tool for organizational problem solving, Management Review, 64(7), 18-28.

Mossberg, L. (2008), Extraordinary experiences through storytelling, Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism, 8(3), pp.195-210.

Polletta, F., Chen, P., Gardner, B. G., and Motes, A. (2011).,The sociology of storytelling, Annual Review of Sociology, 37, pp.109–130.

Rollins, B., Ramakrishnan, S., and Perri, M., (2013), An experimental examination of consumer attitudes, behavioral intentions, and information search behavior after viewing a predictive genetic test direct-to-consumer advertisement, International Journal of Pharmaceutical and Healthcare Marketing, 7(3), pp.285-295.

Slovic, P., Finucane, M.L., Peters, E. and MacGregor, D.G. (2007), The affect heuristic, European Journal of Operational Research, 177(3), pp. 1333-52.

Sole, D., and Wilson, D. (2002), Storytelling in organizations: The power and traps of using stories to share knowledge in organizations, LILA, Harvard, Graduate School of Education.

Sujan, M., Bettman, J.R. and Baumgartner, H. (1993), Influencing consumer judgments using autobiographical memories: a self-referencing perspective, Journal of Marketing Research, 30(4), pp. 422-436.

Sullivan H.S. (1953), The interpersonal theory of psychiatry. New York: Norton.

Triandis, H.C., (1980), Values, attitudes, and interpersonal behaviour, In M.M. Page (Ed.)Nebraska symposium motivation 1979, pp. 195-295, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Tversky, A. and Kahneman, D. (1974), Judgment under uncertainty: heuristics and biases, Science, 185(4157), pp. 1124-1131.

Wijetunge, P., (2012), Organizational storytelling as a method of tacit-knowledge transfer: Case study from a Sri Lankan university, The International Information & Library Review, 44(4),pp. 212-223.

Wu, C.Y., and Liu, H.Y. (2011), Storytelling for business blogging: a process on two path model, International Conference on e-Education, Entertainment and e-Management, Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, Bali, December pp.27-29.

ZeithamI, V.A., Berry, L.L., and Parasuraman, A., (1996), The behavioral consequences of service quality, Journal of Marketing, 60, pp.31-46.