



The impact of storytelling as a tool for tour guides on the tourist experience: Intangible Cultural heritage as a moderating variable

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates how storytelling serves as an indispensable tool for tour guides in improving the whole experience of tourists, through the examination of the role that intangible cultural heritage plays. The researchers used a random sampling approach, and surveyed 432 tourists in the city of Luxor, Egypt. Out of these, 389 responses were found to be valid. The data collected was thoroughly analyzed using Smart-PLS v.22. The results obviously highlight that successful storytelling includes main elements such as, for example, engaging plot structure, fascinating delivery, an excellent awareness of the audience, robust creativity, and powerful messaging, remarkably enhances the tourist experience. Besides, the valuable intangible cultural heritage of Luxor significantly enriches the narratives presented by guides, strengthening the positive aspects of their storytelling. Luxor is distinguished with its various cultural heritage, apparent in traditions such as the annual *moulid* of Sheikh Aboul-Haggag, the martial art of *tahtib*, and diverse traditional crafts, offers rich content to the tour guides to offer tourists more engaging and genuine experiences. To sum up, the study underlines the significant that intangible cultural heritage plays in improving the positive association between storytelling practiced by tour guides and satisfaction of tourists. Thus, it highlights that tour guides should constantly refine their storytelling skills and dynamically use the various aspects of cultural heritage into their narratives to ensure the tourist engagement and enhance the whole quality of the tourist experience.

KEYWORDS

Storytelling, Tourist Experience, Tour guides, Cultural Heritage.

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أثر السرد القصصي كأداة للمرشدين السياحيين على تجربة السائح: التراث الثقافي غير المادي كمتغير مُعدّل

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الملخص

تطرح هذه الدراسة تساؤلاً يهدف لمعرفة كيف أن السرد القصصي أداة لا غنى عنها يستخدمها المرشدون السياحيون لتحسين التجربة السياحية بشكل شامل، وذلك من خلال دراسة الدور الذي يلعبه التراث الثقافي غير المادي. وقد استخدم الباحثون أسلوب العينة العشوائية، حيث شمل الاستطلاع 432 سائحاً في مدينة الأقصر، مصر، وتبين أن 389 استجابة منها صالحة للتحليل. تم تحليل البيانات التي تم جمعها بدقة باستخدام برنامج Smart-PLS الإصدار 22.

تُظهر النتائج بوضوح أن السرد القصصي الناجح يتضمن عناصر رئيسية مثل بناء حبكة مشوقة، وأسلوب تقديم جذاب، ووعي عالٍ بجمهور المستمعين، وإبداع قوي، ورسائل ذات تأثير فعال، وكل ذلك يسهم بشكل ملحوظ في تعزيز تجربة السائح. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، فإن التراث الثقافي غير المادي الثري في مدينة الأقصر يُثري بشكل كبير السرد المقدم من قبل المرشدين، مما يعزز الجوانب الإيجابية لسردهم القصصي. وتتميز الأقصر بتنوع تراثها الثقافي، الذي يظهر في تقاليد مثل المولد السنوي للشيخ أبو الحجاج، وفن التحطيب، والحرف اليدوية التقليدية المتنوعة، مما يوفر محتوى غنياً للمرشدين السياحيين يمكنهم من خلاله تقديم تجارب أكثر تفاعلاً وأصالة للسياح.

وبالتالي، فإن الدراسة تؤكد على الأهمية الكبيرة التي يلعبها التراث الثقافي غير المادي في تعزيز العلاقة الإيجابية بين السرد القصصي الذي يقدمه المرشدون السياحيون ورضا السائحين. وعليه، توصي الدراسة بضرورة أن يطور المرشدون السياحيون مهاراتهم في السرد بشكل مستمر، وأن يدمجوا الجوانب المتنوعة من التراث الثقافي في رواياتهم، لضمان تفاعل السياح وتحسين جودة التجربة السياحية بشكل عام.

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Introduction:

Tourism is a multifaceted industry that necessitates the cooperation of various stakeholders. To achieve successful tourism performance in destinations, each party needs to fulfill its roles and responsibilities to the best of its ability, particularly given that the tourism industry is people-oriented, which requires diverse skills to provide optimal service (Kapa et al., 2022). Among the important roles in the tourism sector are those of frontline employees, such as tour guides (Al-Romeedy & Singh, 2025).

The performance of a tour guide is not only the factor that influences the success of an organized tour, but it also plays a significant role in shaping the image of the tourism industry (Kapa et al., 2022). The role of tour guides in enhancing tourist experiences is often overlooked. Many tourists may feel dissatisfied with their experience because the information provided by tour guides is less engaging or fails to meet their expectations (Pusparani et al., 2025). Even though the quality of communication between tour guides and tourists plays a crucial role in creating a memorable and satisfying tourist experience (Pusparani et al., 2025), achieving this requires the tour guide's preparedness through the skills and tools that aid them in performing their duties (Al-Romeedy & Hussein, 2025).

Research Problem:

Despite the increasing recognition of the importance of storytelling as one of the tools of tour guides in enhancing the attractiveness of destinations and creating memorable experiences, a comprehensive understanding of how storytelling presented by tour guides affects the tourist experience remains under-explored, particularly in the context of cultural heritage. While studies indicate the pivotal role of narrative in bringing historical and cultural sites to life and connecting visitors to the past (Karacaoğlu, 2024), the precise role of cultural heritage itself as a moderating factor in this relationship remains insufficiently clear. Consequently, there is a need for a deeper understanding of how tour guides' storytelling interacts with the nature and characteristics of the cultural heritage presented, and whether this interaction modifies the strength and impact of the narrative on various aspects of the tourist experience. Exploring this dynamic can provide valuable insights into how to improve tour guiding practices to maximize the value of cultural heritage and enhance richer and more meaningful tourist experiences. Accordingly, the research problem is defined by the following main question:

How does the storytelling presented by tour guides affect the tourist experience, and what role does cultural heritage play as a moderating variable in this relationship?

Research Objectives:

To identify the dimensions of storytelling as a tool for tour guides.

- To identify the dimensions of the tourist experience.
- To explore the role of cultural heritage in enriching the content of storytelling among tour guides.
- To measure the relationship between cultural heritage and the tourist experience.
- To measure the impact of storytelling on the tourist experience.

- To explore the role of culture in the relationship between the dimensions of tour guides' storytelling and the dimensions of the tourist experience.

This may give guides a more accurate perception of their role and encourage them to use more effective strategies to increase the quality of the tourist experience. This research contributes to the tourism literature by proposing mechanisms to develop the performance of tourist guides in tourist destinations, especially cultural ones, by exploring the role of storytelling in enhancing tourists' experiences, by analyzing the dimensions of cultural heritage as a modifying variable that plays a role in the relationship between the independent variable (storytelling as a tool for tourist guides) and the dependent variable (tourist experience).

Theoretical Framework:

Storytelling as a tour guide's role:

Tour guides play multifaceted roles during a journey, acting as informers, instructors, motivators, ambassadors, and leaders. The European Federation of Tourist Guide Associations (EFTGA) defines a tour guide as someone who leads visitors in their chosen language, interpreting the cultural and natural heritage of an area, and who typically possesses area-specific qualifications. Tour guides are also referred to by various titles in different contexts and publications. These include "tourist guides," "step-on guides," "city guides," "interpreters," and, in some instances, "tour leaders" or "tour managers."

The role of tour guides has been described by various authors, highlighting their function as "information givers," "mentors" (Cohen, 1985), "mediators" (de Kadt, 1979; Pearce, 1982), "culture brokers" (McKean, 1976), and "middlemen" (van de Berghe, 1980). Zhang and Chow (2004) compiled a summary of these diverse roles, which has been expanded and is presented below.

Roles	Authors	Year
Actor	Holloway	1981
Ambassador	Holloway	1981
Buffer	Schmidt, Pearce	1979, 1982, 1998
Caretaker	Fine and Speer	1985
Catalyst	Holloway	1981
Cultural Broker	Holloway	1976, 1981
Educator	Holloway	1981, 1993
Information Giver	Holloway	1981
Intermediary	Schmidt, Ryan and Dewar	1979, 1995
Interpreter	Tidlen	1957
Leader	Cohen, Geva and Goldman	1985, 1991
Manager	Pond	1993
Mediator	Schmidt, Holloway, Cohen	1979, 1981, 1985
Mentor	Cohen	1985
Organizer	Hughes, Pearce	1991, 1982
Pathfinder	Cohen	1985
Path breaker	Cohen	1985
Salesperson	Fine and Speer, Gronroos	1985, 1978
Shaman	Schmidt	1979

Teacher	Holloway, Pearce, Fine and Speer, 1981, 1982, 1985, Mancini 2001
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Table 1: Roles of tour guides according to authors (adopted from Zhang and Chow, 2004)

Tour guides are often seen as “information givers,” “fountains of knowledge,” “teachers,” “instructors,” motivators who initiate tourists into new experiences, ambassadors for their country, entertainers, catalysts for the group, confident shepherds, and supportive figures, as well as group leaders and disciplinarians (Pereira, 2015). This view of a tour guide’s role is widely accepted, particularly in many oriental destinations where culture and heritage are key tourism products.

Guides are expected to be information disseminators (Holloway, 1981), with the primary responsibility of selecting, interpreting, and providing commentary on sights (Cohen, 1985; Schmidt, 1979). Tour guides must interpret attractions, both animate and inanimate, within their relevant context. According to Mancini (2001), a tour guide leads people on short sightseeing tours. Cohen (1985) emphasizes that tour guides should possess a high level of professional skill and in-depth knowledge of local culture. Pond (1993) suggests that a guide’s role includes public relations, encapsulating the essence of a place and acting as a window into a site, region, or country. Drawing on these definitions, tour guides assist visitors and coordinate activities at the destination (Huang et al., 2010).

Within the tourism industry, tour guides are considered ‘frontline’ workers who directly interact with visitors and influence their perception of a destination (Andelkovic et al., 2022). Consequently, they lead and communicate with the groups they accompany. Their responsibilities include organizing and monitoring itineraries, coordinating with service providers, and offering insightful commentary. A knowledgeable tour guide enhances the visitor’s experience and fosters a friendly atmosphere throughout the journey (Weiler & Walker, 2014). Tourists often rely heavily on their tour guide for information and assistance. Such a relationship inherently requires trust and mutual understanding. The role of a tour guide is, therefore, crucial to the tourist experience.

As intermediaries between destinations and visitors, professional tour guides are essential for business development and enhancing the destination’s image (Huang et al., 2010; Pereira, 2015). The competitive nature of the tourism industry necessitates the continuous development of tour guide skills. Tour guides are supposed to sharpen their skills continuously. One essential skill that gained due attention in recent literature is storytelling. (Chronis, 2012; Penrose, 2020; Leong et al., 2024).

The Power of Storytelling in Tourism Interpretation

Tour guides act as significant cultural mediators who employ storytelling to interpret both tangible and intangible heritage in ways that connect with various groups of audiences (Holloway, 1981; Cohen, 1985). Storytelling can be envisaged as a strategic tool that links tourists with destinations through profound narratives that evoke powerful feelings (Doyle, 2018). Storytelling, especially as one of the earliest forms of communications, is fundamentally established in human societies. Storytelling was conventionally used to deliver moral principles, history, and crucial knowledge from generation to another (McCabe & Foster, 2006; Gensler, 2020). The global appeal of storytelling is clear in it being able to engage individuals in terms of intellectual,

physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects (Sole & Wilson, 2002), using the inherent human interest in mythology, heroic figures and distinctive events (Simmons, 2002). In tourism, storytelling plays a central role in transforming static information into dynamic experiences. Each guided tour becomes a form of live performance, uniquely shaped by its audience and the site's cultural context (Holloway, 1981). As such, storytelling enhances the visitor's sense of connection and immersion, allowing historical narratives to become personally meaningful. The increasing demand for personalized and memorable experiences—driven by the rise of the experience economy and advances in digital technology—has elevated the importance of storytelling within tourism (Bryon, 2012).

Despite the long-standing presence of tour guides, academic literature has largely overlooked their storytelling competencies (Lin et al., 2017; Kim et al., 2020). As visitor preferences evolve, there is a pressing need to recognize storytelling as a critical interpretive and experiential skill within the guide's professional repertoire.

Storytelling also holds significant value in marketing. It is among the most effective forms of communication, especially in conveying the emotional and symbolic dimensions of products, services, and destinations (Ferraro, 2016; Gamil, 2017). Marketing theory suggests that narratives help consumers understand brand benefits more effectively than factual content alone. In tourism branding, storytelling establishes emotional ties with tourists, which in turn develops loyalty and improves destination image. The increasing use of information and communication technologies has also maximized the impact of stories on decisions taken by travelers (Youssef et al., 2019).

Also, storytelling helps co-create tourism experiences, where meaning is formed by means of interaction shared by tourists, guides, as well as local communities (Campos et al., 2023). In this regard, storytelling evolves into a collaborative practice that improves entertainment, learning, authenticity as well as emotional satisfaction. Literature implies that stories become more outstanding and influential when they include sensory elements (images, sound, and even smell) that strengthens the tourist's sensory experience and buttress emotional engagement (Mossberg, 2008; Hsiao et al., 2013).

Stories also impact word-of-mouth and social sharing, since stories tend to be more relevant and simpler to recall than discrete facts. Residents themselves can become storytellers who can reinforce the appeal to the destination through the experiences they witnessed (Hsiao et al., 2013; Yavuz et al., 2016). This capacity to develop and share personal connections with place enhances the role storytelling plays in branding the destination and its positioning (Yavuz, et al., 2016).

Remarkably, storytelling provides a significant means to explain and maintain cultural heritage. By means of stories, intangible heritage aspects, including rituals, beliefs, and established practices, can be conveyed in approachable and engaging ways. This both improves tourist understanding and strengthens respect for cultural diversity and identity (Roque, 2022). In heritage tourism, storytelling supports the development of place identity for both residents and tourists, and provides multiple perspectives on historical narratives, helping destinations attract broader and more diverse audiences (Yavuz et al., 2016).

In sum, storytelling serves dual functions in tourism: it enriches the visitor experience by creating immersive, meaningful encounters, and it offers a strategic advantage for destination branding and heritage preservation. As the tourism industry continues to evolve toward experience-centered models, investing in storytelling as a core competency for tour guides is increasingly essential.

Forms of Storytelling used in interpreting cultural heritage:

In her study of the use of Oral Storytelling Performance in interpreting cultural heritage for school children, Nabil (2021) explored five different forms of storytelling. These are as follows:

1. Storytelling-based guided tours:

Forms of storytelling used in heritage interpretation differ. Tours often seek to create a connection with the past, aiming to evoke in visitors an emotional response to the location and its former inhabitants. However, as Butcher-Youngmans (1993) notes, the narration, typically relying on an oral script, must avoid 'romanticizing' historical events or 'idealizing' the place and its people. Accuracy in storytelling, rather than exaggeration, leads to a more powerful impression on the audience and a more authentic experience (Nabil, 2021).

2. Oral Storytelling:

Museums not only utilize storytelling as an interpretive technique but are, in essence, storytellers themselves. As Bedford (2001) notes, storytelling is integral to museum work, as museums exist because individuals or groups believed a story was worth preserving and sharing across generations. Storytelling is widely employed in many museums and historic sites as an interpretive method to help audiences re-imagine historical events and the key figures that shaped them.

3. Demonstration:

This technique features costumed curators performing authentic historical tasks like plowing, baking, or sewing. They may work silently or use first- or third-person interpretation, incorporating storytelling, audience interaction, and questions and answers (Butcher-Youngmans 1993; Nabil, 2021).

4. Role Play:

Role players, using first-person interpretation, reenact real past residents' lives based on historical records like letters, diaries, and photos (Nabil, 2021).

5. Living History Performance:

This method employs plays performed by interpreters or actors to depict the history of the house and its residents (Butcher-Youngmans 1993; Nabil, 2021)

Storytelling of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Luxor:

Aspects of Intangible Cultural Heritage can be seen in Luxor including the performance of *Tahtib* art, social practices such as the birth of Aboul-Haggag

- 1. Thebes as a creation place of the universe.**
- 2. Birth (*moulid*) of Sufi Sheikh Aboul-Haggag.**
- 3. Martial Arts inherited from ancient Egyptians (*Tahtib*).**
- 4. Dates.**
- 5. Traditional crafts.**

1. Thebes as a Creation Place of the Universe:

In ancient Egypt, four locales introduced four myths explaining the creation of the universe: Memphis, Heliopolis, Hermopolis, and Thebes. In Hermopolis, four gods

and four female couplets were thought of as creators of the universe, including Amun. In Thebes, the uniqueness of Amun as a creator was extolled by the Theban priests in the New Kingdom. Amun was praised as the one who transcends all other deities in his being 'beyond the sky and deeper than the underworld'. His mystery is contained in his name - since his essence is imperceptible, he cannot be called by any term that hence at his inner nature come on and saw the name Amen has underlying notion of hiddenness and probably best translates as 'the one who conceals himself'. His identity is so sacred that no other God knows his true name. The Leiden hymn shows him 'too great to inquire into and too powerful to know' (Hart, 1990).

2. Birth (*moulid*) of Sufi Sheikh Abu al-Haggag:

The *moulid* Sidi Yussef Abu al-Haggag is celebrated during the Arabic month of *Shaaban*, the month that precedes the month of *Ramadan* directly. Throughout the event, celebrations include *Tahtib* (a traditional martial art) competitions for men, carnival rides for children, and pilgrimages to the Abu al-Haggag Mosque. Sufi *zikr* (a religious observance, whose essential is the repeated utterance of "Allah", or one of the names of Allah (McPherson, 1941)), and horse racing. The *moulid's* final day culminates with the *dora*, a parade (otherwise known as *zeffa*: a procession).

The *mirmah* (horse race) is an Arab folk tradition rooted in horsemanship, predominantly practiced in the villages of Upper Egypt. It represents a key example of equestrian traditions and skills within the region. Typically, the *mirmah* is organized during social and religious festivals, notably those celebrating saints' birthdays (*moulids*). The *mirmah* reflects the rich cultural heritage associated with the customs and traditions of Upper Egyptian society and underscores the significant cultural and social role of horsemanship in the lives of its people (Savner, 2024). The *mirmah* associated with Abul al-Haggag takes place on the second day of the *moulid*. On this day, attendees gather in a large open space to observe displays of equestrian prowess. Riders exhibit their steeds' speed and agility by racing across a long open area, with both horse and rider appearing to relish the exhilaration of the gallop (Elwatannews, 2023).

The *moulid* concludes on its third and final day with the *dora*, which follows the *layla kebira*. The parade features costumed camels, groups of young men proudly carrying sticks, and decorated vehicles known as "boats" — a feature it shares only with the *moulid* of Sidi AbdulRahim el-Qenawi. The procession ends with devotees carrying shrines dedicated to various saints. Egyptologists hold that the boat was adapted by Islam, as an integral part of this *zeffa*, from the procession of Pharaonic times (McPherson, 1941). This practice was perhaps inherited from the annual Opet Festival in which Amun's bark — along with those of Mut, Knosou as well as the King, journeyed from the temple to Karnak to Luxor temple (Darnell, 2010). The Opet Festival became a major religious celebration of Thebes during the Eighteenth Dynasty, with its earliest attestations dating to the time of Hatshepsut (Lacau and Chevrier 1977).

3. Martial Arts inherited from ancient Egyptians (*Tahtib*).

Tahtib was enlisted on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2022 (UNESCO, 2022). Stick-fighting in ancient Egypt is attested as early as the Pyramid Texts, which suggest—through spells 324 and 469, for example

(Faulkner, 1969)—that it was integrated into ceremonial and dance-related contexts (Piccione, 1999).

While there are no known depictions of Egyptian kings engaging in stick-fighting, several sticks were discovered in the tomb of Tutankhamun (Carter & Mace, 1923). Although modern fencing is commonly believed to have originated in Spain in A.D. 1471, applying a broader definition of fencing to ancient Egyptian practices suggests that a structured, sportive form of the activity existed by the New Kingdom and possibly as early as the Old Kingdom. Unlike European fencing or Japanese kendo—both of which evolved from sword-based combat—Egyptian sportive fencing appears to have originated from the use of clubs and mace warfare (Piccione, 1999).

Stick and club fighting, often tied to religious ceremonies, persisted throughout much of Egyptian history. New Kingdom evidence indicates that fencing was a formalized and regulated practice at the time. However, texts from the Late Period and Ptolemaic era suggest that in later periods, combat may have resembled large-scale melees, with hundreds of participants striking one another with sticks in chaotic free-for-all encounters (Herodotus, 63.3).

Beyond its martial applications, stick-fighting carried symbolic and ritualistic significance. One textual reference describes it as part of a medical incantation to heal Horus from ailments affecting his scalp (Piccione, 1999). Additionally, in the Eighteenth Dynasty tomb of Kheruef (TT 192), fencing is depicted as one of the communal activities during Amenhotep III's sed-festival (De Vries, 1960). These fencing scenes are specifically linked to the ritual of erecting the *Djed* pillar, a ceremony symbolizing the resurrection of Ptah-Sokar-Osiris (Wente, 1969).

Both ancient Egyptian stick-fighting and modern-day *tahtib* involve refereeing. Inscriptions in the tomb of Kheruef indicate the use of specific terms, such as “hit” and “hit twice” (Decker & Herb, 1994). A resident of Quft described modern *tahtib* as follows:

“Tahtib begins with a handshake using the stick instead of a traditional hand greeting, without which the game cannot start. Both players hold the stick from the lower end, with the older player delivering the opening strikes, which the other player then responds to. The game may last for one minute or more.” (Akhbarelyom, 2023).

4. Date Palms:

The city and villages of Luxor are renowned for industries related to palm trees, with one of the most famous being the production of multi-purpose plates. In 2022, UNESCO included these crafts in the list of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Nowadays, there are 13 palm species that belong to 8 genera in Egypt. Only three of these species were known in ancient Egypt: *Phoenix Dactylifera* (Date-palm), *Hyphaene Thebaica* (Dom-palm), and *Medemia Argun*. Palm trees grow naturally or are cultivated in all coastal and inland desert regions as well as the Nile Valley and Delta (Amer & Zahran, 1999; Baum, 1962). Representation of palm trees are evident in the New Kingdom tombs in ancient Egypt.

The symbolism of palm fronds is rooted in Egyptian mind since ancient time through to modern times. According to UNESCO, a rich cultural heritage, born from the ancient historical connection between the Arab region and date palms, has been passed down through generations. Present-day communities, groups, and individuals in date palm-growing regions maintain related practices, knowledge, and skills,

including the cultivation and care of the date palm tree and the use of its parts (leaves, fronds, and fibres) in traditional crafts and social rituals.

Almost every part of a palm tree is usable. Date fruits, either fresh or dried, is edible. Baskets and hats are made from palm fronds. During their celebration of Easter Day, Christians in Egypt also use palm fronds to make crosses, and bracelets.

5. Handmade Crafts:

Luxor is the home for several handmade crafts both in organized manner (workshops) and individual. Luxor is known for its many tourist industries and crafts, the most important of which are hand weaving (*farka*), mats, palm branches, pottery, ceramics, wood carving, alabaster, Nubian crafts, and other industries whose products are not marketed to the tourist market, such as the oil industry, and sheep wool spinning. The raw materials necessary for these industries are available, such as the clay that is extracted from the Luxor canals, which are about 1,000 km long, and the palm branches, which - according to 2010 data - reached 200,282 palm trees (Hussein, 2011).

One of the most important of these industries is the alabaster industry, which is inherited by generations of families working in it and whose roots go back to the Pharaonic era. According to the Luxor Center for Studies, Dialogue and Development, the number of alabaster factories is about 80 factories, and 130 small workshops produce more than 1,000 pieces per week (Al-Masry Al-Youm, 2022).

Two types of clay industries are produced in Luxor: ceramic and pottery, both already known in ancient Egypt. Recently, a pottery school aiming at preserving and enhancing the pottery and faience industries in Luxor was opened. Besides, the Nubian House was founded in 2008, and it aims at manufacturing products and handicrafts that represent Nubian heritage, including pottery, carpets, kilim, beads, palm fronds weaving, "*firka*" fabric, and *henna* drawing (Masson et al., 2010).

The Tourist Experience

Pine & Gilmore (2011) emphasized that a distinctive and memorable experience possesses several characteristics, including having a unique character that creates a unified story that captivates the customer. In addition, it involves the availability of positive cues that reinforce favorable impressions of the tourist experience. To ensure the integrity of the tourist experience, any negative cues must be eliminated. Furthermore, it is essential to ensure the active participation of customers in the experience, while fostering emotional engagement, which guarantees lasting impressions in the memory of tourists. It is also necessary to provide authenticity and genuineness in the elements presented. Effective tourist experiences are often built around a cohesive story that captivates the tourist and makes them a part of the narrative (Aho, 2001).

Table 2: Conceptual Framework of the Tourism Experience

Types of Tourist Experience	Focus / Content	Reference
Tourism Well-being	It focuses on how tourism experiences contribute to the tourist's physical, mental, emotional, and social well-being. It is not just about enjoyment	(Kim & Chen 2021)

	but about feeling better and achieving personal growth.	
Digitally Augmented Tourism Experience	It involves the integration of digital technologies such as Augmented Reality (AR), Virtual Reality (VR), and mobile applications to enhance the tourist experience before, during, and after the trip.	(Tussyadiah & Griffin, 2020)
Sustainability in Tourism Experience	It focuses on designing and delivering tourism experiences that are environmentally, socially, and economically responsible, with consideration for the impact of tourism on local communities and the environment.	(Farmaki, 2020)
Co-created Tourism Experience	Tourists interacting with locals helps create an immersive tourist experience	(Campos, et. al, 2021)
Sensory Tourism Experience	It focuses on engaging the tourist's five senses—sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch—to create immersive and memorable experiences.	(Krishna & Knasko, 2020)
Emotional Tourism Experience	Evoking emotions such as joy, surprise, and excitement creates a distinctive tourist experience and achieves tourist satisfaction.	(Hosany, 2020)
Authentic Tourism Experience	Tourists increasingly seek authentic and uncontrived experiences that allow them to engage with local culture and lifestyle in a genuine way.	(Wang & Xu, 2020)
Digital Transformative Tourism Experience	It combines personal transformation and digital technology, using digital tools to facilitate personal growth and deep learning during travel.	(Jamal & Wilson, 2020)
Flow-Based Tourism Experience	Design tourism activities in a way that achieves full immersion for the tourists, and then full entertainment.	(Prayag, et, al, 2020)

Escapism

The concept of escapism in the context of the tourist experience refers to the motivation or desire to temporarily distance oneself from daily routines, pressures, and problems, and to immerse oneself in a different environment or experience (Chylińska, 2022; Frochot & Lenglet, 2025; Gulowsen & Steen Jacobsen, 2024; Naparin, 2025; Cohen, 2010; Crompton, 1979). Woolfe (2022) argues that escaping from everyday life is one of the primary motivations for tourism, and that vacations and travel are viewed as a means of reorganizing identity and changing routines. added to the desire to change routines, the desire to experience different identities or roles while traveling, and the alleviation of time pressure. Escapism may be seen as an opportunity to relax from the (mental and physical) stresses of a demanding reality

(Pearce, 2005). Gulowsen et al. (2024) argue that escapist motivations vary according to the tourism style. Kim & Chen (2021) also emphasized that successfully escaping from pressures leads to increased trip satisfaction and the enhancement of positive memory. An immersive tourist experience cannot be achieved without considering the tourist's need for escapism, creating different environments, providing recreational and immersive activities, and minimizing reminders of daily life (Ankit Raj et al., 2024).

Entertainment

Bates, & Ferri (2010) argues that activities designed for the purpose of entertainment, education, and education and presented to others through a demonstration of those skills, can be called entertainment, Auger, et al. adds that it is a series of activities that allow individuals to temporarily withdraw from life pressures, and then attain pleasure and relaxation by refreshing mental and physical activity. From another perspective, Obata, et al, (2020) emphasized that entertainment is the result of a variety of sensory stimuli that are specially designed to create a positive mood through feelings of joy, satisfaction, and excitement, thus creating an unforgettable tourist experience.

It is worth noting that recreation, and leisure activities, their availability and variety are a critical consideration in the attractiveness of a tourist destination and its ability to satisfy the needs of tourists (Gowreesunkar, & Sotiriades, 2015). Not only that, but leisure activities in tourist destinations play a significant role in realizing tourist satisfaction, repeating the visit, and then recommending the destination to other tourists (Panduputri & Novani, 2021).

The educational dimension can be considered as one of the dimensions of the tourist experience, related to the active participation of the guest who absorbs events, aiming to increase knowledge or acquire new skills (Şeker & Unur, 2022). In the context of intangible cultural heritage tourism, the experience of local customs is implicitly recognized as part of the educational dimension of the tourist experience (Chen et al., 2020). Mehmetoglu & Engen (2011) suggest that the educational dimension influences visitor satisfaction in different tourist settings, and find it important in contexts such as museums where learning is a primary motivation. The importance of the educational dimension in the context of the tourist experience varies according to the age group of tourists (Joo et al., 2023), and this certainly does not diminish the role that the educational dimension plays in enhancing their experience and memory retention within tourist contexts (Brzovska, 2018).

Aesthetic

In the context of the Pine and Gilmore experience model, it refers to the dimension that focuses on creating an enjoyable and attractive sensory experience through design, environment, and overall appearance. It relates to how the place or experience appears, and focuses on creating a positive sensory impression for customers by paying attention to visual, auditory, tactile, and even olfactory and gustatory details in the design of the experience. It can also be characterized by passive participation and immersion, where customers are immersed in sensory environments and their interpretation of the physical surroundings (Şeke & ,Unur, 2022). Legrand and Nielsen (2018) suggest that "Aesthetic" includes enjoying natural landscapes, the pleasure of discovering new food, or delight in attentive service, highlighting its role

in creating a positive mood and well-being. "Aesthetic" is a subjective process of sensory stimulation through aesthetic qualities, leading to cognitive judgments and emotions associated with beauty. The aesthetics of a destination are determined by comparing the perceived difference between the tourist's original environment and the destination, and identifying factors such as site characteristics, scope, maintenance, compatibility, perceived age, and form (Gulertekin & Temizkan, 2023).

Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Tour guides should not only satisfy tourists (Bowie & Chang, 2005), but they should also positively influence and change their attitudes and behaviors, and stimulate their learning. However, the role of tour guides in creating a positive framework of conditions for tourist experiences ("the plot of the story") (Rickly-Boyd, 2009) and thus learning (Kolb, 1984). The positive image of tour guide performance is not only positively and significantly related to tourist satisfaction, but it is also one of the factors that determine customer loyalty to the destination (Kapa, et al., 2022). (Tour guides, as one of the most prominent key players in the tourism industry, are the bridge and mediator between destinations and guests. In this regard, tour guides play many roles in addition to their personal and professional competencies. One of these roles is storytelling to achieve a meaningful tourist experience. The tour guide must share captivating stories that inspire learning (Lim & Aylett, 2007). Furthermore, the guide's communication skills increase positive interaction with tourists (Blyablina, 2015). In addition, the authenticity of the site is influenced by the interaction between tour guides and the narrative. This means that a highly experienced tour guide can use storytelling more effectively to create a sense of realism at the site (Leong et al., 2024). Undoubtedly, many tourists are keen to learn and participate actively (Mossberg, 2008). Storytelling has been recognized as a powerful tool for enhancing the appeal and excitement of historical events. Thus, storytelling enhances the sense of authenticity and connection by sharing stories about the cultural and historical significance of the site, thereby deepening the relationship between the visitor and the specific site (Doyle & Kelliher, 2023). Through skillful storytelling, tour guides inform tourists about historical events and cultural heritage, and they can bring historical events to life, inspire, move, and entertain them at the same time. Heritage attractions often possess a distinctive narrative that can be transformed into captivating experiences that capture the imagination of visitor (Oh, & Lee, 2014). The historical narrative of these sites often embodies the social and historical life of the local community, thus evoking a strong sense of place identity (Beever, 2021). Narratives, also referred to as myths, play an important role in preserving culture (Beever, 2021). Tour guiding is of paramount importance in the heritage experience, as it involves the implementation of an educational activity aimed at conveying the value of heritage by revealing its significance, a process commonly referred to as interpretation (Weng & Bao 2020; Al-Romeedy et al., 2025).

Based on the foregoing, the following hypotheses can be derived:

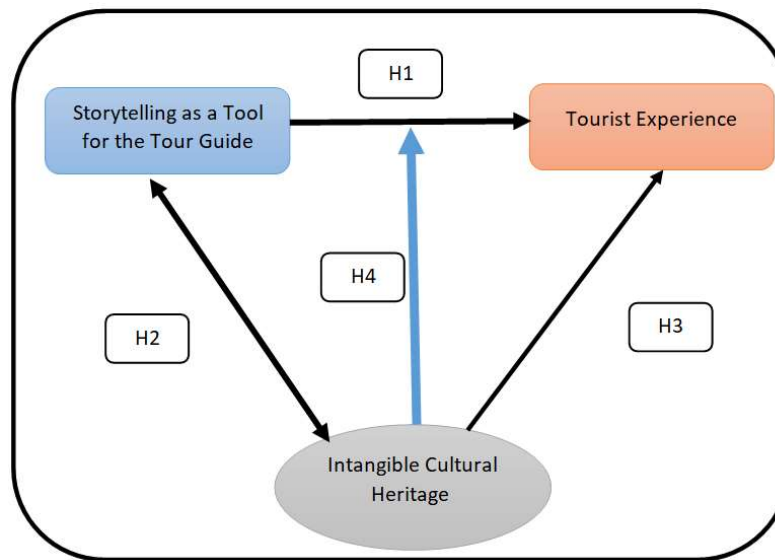
H1: Storytelling as a Tool for the Tour Guide influences tourists' experiences.

H2: Storytelling as a Tool for the Tour Guide influences Cultural Heritage.

H3: Cultural Heritage influences tourist's experience

H4: Storytelling as a Tool for the Tour Guide influences tourists' experiences through Cultural Heritage.

Research Model



Source: Developed by the Researchers

Methods

Research Variables and Their Measurement

Independent Variable: Narrative as a tool for the tour guide. It is measured through four dimensions: plot construction, narrative delivery, audience understanding and impact, creativity and originality.

Dependent Variable: Tourist experience. It is measured through four dimensions: escape, entertainment, aesthetics, and learning.

Moderating Variable: Intangible Cultural Heritage of Luxor City. It is addressed through five examples: Thebes as a creation place of the universe, the *moulid* (birth celebration) of Sufi Sheikh Aboul-Haggag, martial arts inherited from ancient Egyptians (*Tahtib*), dates, and traditional crafts.

Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative research design aimed at measuring and analyzing the relationships between narrative as a tool for tour guides (as the independent variable), intangible cultural heritage (as the moderating variable), and the tourist experience (as the dependent variable). The research is descriptive and causal in nature, seeking to determine the extent to which narrative as a tool for tour guides influences tourist experiences, while considering intangible cultural heritage as a moderator in this relationship. Data collected using a questionnaire distributed to tourists visiting Luxor City.

Study Population and Sample

The current study population consists of all tourists visiting Luxor City during the research period. This includes tourists participating in tourism activities involving tour guides and having direct interactions with tour guides during their visit. A random sampling method was employed to select the research sample units. The sample size comprised (432) tourists, and (389) valid questionnaires were collected for statistical analysis, representing a 90% response rate. The sample was selected using specific criteria, such as tourists who participated in tours lasting at least two days and had

direct interactions with tour guides. Purposive sampling was also employed to ensure that the selected respondents were tourists with direct experience with tour guides and relevant experiences related to the research topic. Selected tourists for the sample had to meet specific criteria, such as interacting with a tour guide during their visit and having experiences relevant to the research topic.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the questionnaires will be analyzed using "Smart PLS" analysis techniques. This allows for testing the relationships between variables and modeling the complex relationships among independent, moderating, and dependent variables. Before conducting further analysis, the collected data will be tested to verify the validity and reliability of the research instruments (the questionnaire). The "Bootstrapping" technique will be used to test the significance of the direct, indirect, and moderating effects of narrative as a tool for the tour guide on tourist experiences.

Result and Discussion

Result

Table 3. Respondent Characteristics

Respondent Characteristics	Total	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	241	62%
Femal	148	40%
Age		
18- 25 years	101	26%
26- 35 years	140	36%
36- 45 years	88	22%
46 years and above	60	15%
Education		
High School	63	16%
Bachelor s	274	70%
Master s Degree and above	52	14%
Frequency of Visit		
Frist time	209	54%
1-2 times	125	32%
More than 2 times	55	14%

Source: Date processed by the researchers

Table 3 illustrates the distribution of respondents' characteristics based on gender, age, education, and visit frequency. The majority of respondents were male (62%), which may reflect the salience of the survey topic or a higher male engagement within the study demographic. The largest age group was between 26 and 35 years old (36%), which is typical of individuals actively engaged socially, professionally, or educationally. The most substantial educational attainment level was a Bachelor's degree (70%), indicating a relatively educated population. Regarding visit frequency, 46% of respondents visited Luxor City once or twice, suggesting that many individuals return after their initial visit but are not yet frequent tourists, with a balance between first-time and more frequent visitors (30% each).

Table 4 Convergent Validity Test Results

Indicator	Loading Factor
Storytelling	
Plot Construction	
The guide's story about the Karnak Temple was well-organized and easy to follow.	0.642
The guide effectively built suspense and excitement throughout the narrative.	0.762
The story had a clear beginning, middle, and end, creating a satisfying experience.	0.787
The guide's narrative flowed smoothly and logically, making the information easy to digest.	0.693
The guide skillfully connected different elements of the story to create a cohesive whole.	0.729
Narrative Delivery	
The guide spoke clearly and with appropriate enthusiasm, making the story engaging.	0.649
The guide used effective gestures and facial expressions to enhance the storytelling.	0.812
The pacing of the story was well-managed, keeping my attention throughout	0.808
The guide's voice modulation and intonation added depth and emotion to the story	0.831
The guide maintained good eye contact and interacted effectively with the group	0.630
Audience Understanding and Adaptation	
The guide tailored the story to the interests and knowledge level of the group.	0.632
The guide answered questions thoroughly and patiently, demonstrating good understanding.	0.849
The guide checked for understanding and ensured everyone was engaged in the story.	0.653
The guide effectively addressed diverse backgrounds and perspectives within the group.	0.648
The guide simplified complex information when necessary, ensuring clarity for all.	0.653
Creativity and Imagination	
The guide used vivid language and imagery to bring the ancient Egyptian world to life.	0.721
The guide incorporated interesting details and anecdotes that made the story unique.	0.731
The guide's storytelling sparked my curiosity and made me want to learn more about ancient Egypt.	0.723
The guide's use of metaphors and analogies enhanced my understanding of the historical context.	0.729
The guide's storytelling style was original and captivating.	0.703
Purpose and Impact	
The guide's story effectively conveyed the significance and history of the Luxor Temple.	0.740
The guide's storytelling created a memorable and enriching experience.	0.672

The guide's story helped me connect with the ancient Egyptian culture on a deeper level.	0.651
The guide's presentation inspired me to appreciate the cultural heritage of Luxor.	0.661
The guide's storytelling fostered a sense of awe and wonder about the ancient world.	0.644

As evident in Table (4), all standardized loading coefficients for the narrative storytelling scale exceeded the required reliability values, indicating the quality of the loading coefficients for the narrative storytelling scale. Consequently, the scale is capable of measuring what it was designed to measure. The factor loading values range between 0.630 and 0.845, demonstrating the contribution of each indicator to the constructs being measured. Higher factor loading values suggest better validity for each indicator.

Table 5 Convergent Validity Test Results

Indicator	Loading Factor
Intangible Cultural Heritage	
Thebes as a creation place of the universe Birth	
During my visit to Luxor, I learned about the ancient beliefs linking Thebes to the creation of the universe and the origin of life.	0.691
I think that understanding the ancient beliefs about Thebes as the place of creation enriches my experience in exploring the archaeological sites in Luxor.	0.662
I believe that the spiritual and formative significance of Thebes in ancient Egyptian civilization deserves more attention in tourist presentations.	0.682
(mawlid) of Sufi Sheikh Aboul-Haggag	
During my visit to Luxor, I was aware of the annual celebrations for the Mawlid of the Sufi Sheikh Aboul-Haggag.	0.649
During my visit to Luxor, I encountered celebrations for the Mawlid of the Sufi Sheikh Aboul-Haggag or heard about his significance.	0.653
I find the unique blend of ancient history and Islamic spirituality in Luxor to be interesting.	0.709
Martial Arts inherited from ancient Egyptians (Tahtib)	
I saw performances of the Tahtib art during my stay in Luxor	0.640
I am aware of the origins of the Tahtib art and its cultural significance in preserving Egyptian identity.	0.642
I believe that integrating Tahtib performances into tourist activities adds value to the visitor experience.	0.842
Dates	
I tasted the famous local types of dates in Luxor.	0.639
I am interested in local products and their food traditions in Luxor.	0.792
I think highlighting the importance of dates can enrich the visitor experience in Luxor.	0.661
Traditional crafts	
I saw or purchased some traditional handicrafts made in Luxor.	0.891
I appreciate the role of traditional handicrafts in preserving the cultural identity of Luxor.	0.772
I believe that supporting local artisans through tourism contributes to the sustainability of these crafts.	0.851

As evident in Table (5), all standardized loading coefficients for the intangible cultural heritage scale in Luxor City exceeded the required reliability values, indicating the quality of the loading coefficients for the narrative storytelling scale. Consequently, the scale is capable of measuring what it was designed to measure. The factor loading values range between 0.639 and 0.891, demonstrating the contribution of each indicator to the constructs being measured. Higher factor loading values suggest better validity for each indicator.

Table 6 Convergent Validity Test Results

Indicator	Loading Factor
Tourism Experience	
Entertainment	
The entertainment activities offered in Luxor were enjoyable and contributed to having a pleasant time.	0.653
The interesting stories shared by the tour guide added a unique entertaining element to the tour.	0.644
Esthetic	
The natural landscapes and architectural design of the sites in Luxor	0.658
The tour guide's storytelling helped me appreciate the aesthetics and artistic details of the sites.	0.661
Educational	
I learned a lot about the history and civilization of Luxor from the information provided by the tour guide and his stories.	0.699
The information provided by the tour guide was clear, easy to understand, and related to the stories he narrated.	0.692
Escapist	
The tour guide's stories helped me immerse myself in the past and feel detached from the present reality.	0.703
The tour guide's storytelling created an atmosphere of imagination and adventure that made me forget the pressures of daily life.	0.722

As evident in Table (6), all standardized loading coefficients for the tourism experience scale exceeded the required reliability values, indicating the quality of the loading coefficients for the narrative storytelling scale. Consequently, the scale is capable of measuring what it was designed to measure. The factor loading values range between 0.644 and 0.722, demonstrating the contribution of each indicator to the constructs being measured. Higher factor loading values suggest better validity for each indicator.

Table7 Reliability Test Results

Construct	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Storytelling	0.903	0.704
Intangible Cultural Heritage	0.889	0.732
Tourism Experience	0.839	0.739

Table (7) presents the reliability test results for three constructs: Storytelling, Intangible Cultural Heritage, and Tourism Experience. The Composite Reliability (CR) values range from 0.839 to 0.903, and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values range from 0.704 to 0.739, indicating that these constructs demonstrate good reliability and construct quality.

Table 8 Determination Coefficient (R^2) Test Results

Dependent Variable	R^2	Description
Tourism Experience	0.427	Moderate
Intangible Cultural Heritage	0.309	Moderate

Table 8 presents The R^2 value for the tourism experience indicates that 42.7% of the variance in the tourist experience can be explained by narrative storytelling and intangible cultural heritage. The R^2 value for intangible cultural heritage shows that 30.9% of the variance in the components of intangible cultural heritage can be explained by the tour guide's use of narrative storytelling.

Table 9 Direct Effect Test Results

Relationship	Path Coefficient	t-statistic	P-Value	Description
Storytelling → Tourism Experience	0.352	3.970	0.00	Significant
Storytelling → Intangible Cultural Heritage	0.501	5.201	0.00	Significant
Intangible Cultural Heritage → Tourism Experience	0.404	4.112	0.00	Significant

Table 9 presents the direct effect test results between Storytelling, Intangible Cultural Heritage, and Tourism Experience, where all relationships exhibited statistically significant path coefficients (p -value < 0.05).

Table 10 Indirect Effect Test Results

Relationship	Path Coefficient	t-statistic	P-Value	Description
Intangible Cultural Heritage → Tourism Experience	0.281	3.132	0.001	Significant

Table 10 presents the indirect effect results, examining the impact of Storytelling on Tourism Experience through Intangible Cultural Heritage. The indirect effect value is 0.281, with a t-statistic of 3.132 and a p-value of 0.001, indicating that this indirect effect is statistically significant.

Discussion

The relationship between storytelling and tourism experience shows a positive and statistically significant path coefficient ($p < 0.05$). This indicates that the better the storytelling performed by tour guides in Luxor City, the more positive the tourism experience perceived by tourists. This finding aligns with the study by Leong et al. (2024), which emphasized that narrative storytelling enhances tour guide interaction

with tourists, consequently leading to a more favorable perceived experience, particularly when the content of the storytelling is relevant to the destination.

Furthermore, plot construction in narrative storytelling is a key component that enhances the interaction between the guide and the tourist. Plot construction as a core component of storytelling is provided in the intangible cultural heritage of the city of Luxor, for example “Thebes as a creation place of the universe's birth”, which immerses tourists and strengthens their relationship with the tourist destination, by arousing their emotions as a normal consequence of plot construction that ensures the logical sequence of storytelling, which is consistent with the study (Blom, & Beckhaus, 2005) of the need to evoke the emotions of tourists.

Although the intangible cultural heritage ensures the authenticity of tourist guides' storytelling, the provision of the required environment to evoke tourists' emotions and thus encourage them to participate and interact depends on the abilities and skills of the guides and the extent to which they can employ the elements of storytelling, which leads to an immersive tourist experience, which is consistent with the study conducted by Kusumah & Andrianto (2023) that emphasizes the important role of tourist guides in creating storytelling that satisfies the needs of tourists.

The study also found that the city of Luxor is enriched with exceptional intangible cultural heritage, as well as its unique tangible cultural heritage, and this rich variety of heritage enhances the tools of tour guides in creating immersive, distinctive and memorable tourist experiences, and the various intangible cultural heritage provides positive opportunities for tourists to interact with the host community and participate in local people in their events and celebrations, such as the “moulid” of Sufi Sheikh Aboul-Haggag.” This wealth and variety also strengthens the bond between tourists and the host community, which is in line with Wasela, K. (2023).

Recommendations:

1. Providing a supportive environment for heritage-inspired storytelling by encouraging collaboration and networking among cultural heritage institutions and tourism service suppliers (guides, travel agencies, bazars, etc.). This includes making available resources such as inscriptions/engravings, explanatory panels/signboards, and brochures/booklets that support tour guides and complement their storytelling.
2. Entities responsible for training tour guides must prioritize equipping guides with the skills to transform heritage information into vivid and interactive stories. This training should also deepen their understanding of intangible heritage (including customs, traditions, arts, crafts, music, and folk tales) and cover tailoring narratives to suit diverse tourist segments, while consistently preserving the element of authenticity in their storytelling.

Limitations and future studies:

While the findings of this study offer valuable insights into the impact of storytelling as a tool for tour guides on enhancing the tourism experience, and the role of cultural heritage in strengthening this relationship, one limitation concerns the generalizability of the results. The study focused on a specific context or destination (Luxor City), which may limit the extent to which the findings can be applied to other destinations. Future research could investigate the impact of narrative storytelling as a tool for tour

guides on enhancing the tourism experience across different types of destinations, such as urban, rural, or natural environments, to explore potential variations in the effectiveness of these strategies.

Another limitation is the reliance on self-reported measures to assess tourists' perceptions of narrative storytelling. While self-report measures provide insights into subjective experiences, future research could employ more objective measures to complement and validate the findings, such as observational studies or interviews to assess the actual impact of tour guides' narrative storytelling on the tourism experience. Furthermore, the respondents had experienced storytelling from different tour guides. This implies that variations in tour guides' style and technique may affect the effectiveness of storytelling. Future studies can take this into consideration when designing research instruments.

Conclusions:

This study demonstrates that storytelling by tour guides plays a significant role in enhancing the overall tourist experience, particularly when embedded in culturally rich and emotionally meaningful narratives. Well-structured storytelling, featuring elements such as plot construction, narrative delivery, creativity, audience adaptation, and intended impact, deepens tourists' emotional engagement, increases satisfaction, and transforms routine visits into meaningful, memorable experiences.

Significantly, the findings show the moderating role of intangible cultural heritage, which not only enhances the content of the narratives but also strengthens the relationship between storytelling and tourist experience. The intangible cultural heritage of Luxor City provides a wealth of authentic material that enhances the tools available to tour guides. By integrating local traditions and historical depth into their storytelling, guides can deliver more immersive and participatory experiences.

Events such as the *moulid* of Sufi Sheikh Aboul-Haggag offer opportunities for tourists to engage directly with local communities, fostering cultural exchange and deeper connection. The incorporation of themes like "Thebes as the creation place of the universe's birth" helps construct a spiritually and historically grounded narrative that reinforces place attachment. Furthermore, interactive experiences such as participating in ancient Egyptian martial arts (*Tahtib*) enhance the entertainment aspect of the tourism experience, while involvement in traditional crafts allows tourists to develop new skills, enriching the educational dimension of their journey.

To wrap up, tour guides should be encouraged to expand their use of storytelling rooted in local cultural heritage and develop the necessary skills to present such narratives effectively. This does not only support destination distinction and tourist satisfaction but also contributes to the preservation and appreciation of intangible cultural heritage.

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