

The Power of Story: The Effect of Linguistic Narration in Tourism Promotion on Intention to Visit Bali's Temples

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Abstract:

Balinese Hindu pilgrimage sites are well known for their historical and cultural richness that attract visitors all year around. This study investigated the effectiveness of promotional efforts and how the strength of narrative stories could impact on a visitor's intention to revisit Balinese Temples. It focused on Promotion as the Independent Variable (X), Intention to Revisit as the Dependent Variable (Y), and Narration as the Moderating Variable (Z). A quantitative research method using direct observation and in-depth interviews with the temple's caretakers, the Cultural Board Officer, and the local tour guides were conducted to discover the temples' history and current condition. An online survey was distributed to 250 respondents and the results were tabulated using the Smart PLS application to analyse the effects of promotion and narration to the intention to revisit. The results of this study showed that the promotion significantly influenced the intention to revisit with P-Value = 0.007, while showing an original sample value of 0.067 and a t-statistic of 0.126, the narration of the temples did not give substantial moderation. However, it is essential to integrate linguistic narration into promotion to boost the improvement of Bali's pilgrimage sites.

Keywords: Linguistic narration, Pilgrimage sites, Promotion, Intention to revisit, Tourism

INTRODUCTION

The promotion of Cultural Heritage Sites is aimed to strengthen cultural identity and boost the economy of the community (Sukanadi, et al., 2022; Ekasani, et al., 2022). Promotion is a broad marketing activity aimed at communicating a product's value to an audience to persuade them to buy. Narration, on the other hand, is a tool used within promotion; it's the art of telling a story to create a deeper emotional connection. Direct marketing as part of promotions has a positive impact on visitor decisions on interest in returning to tourist destinations. This is because the results of tourism promotion targets and products offered, as well as access to information obtained about these destinations are very good or clear, the creativity used in promoting tourism is very interesting (Khamilah & Andriani, 2025). Direct marketing is one of the promotional mixes and has a positive and significant influence on interest in returning to cultural tourism. Previous studies have identified how the promotion strongly influence the intention to revisit (Setegn & Japee, 2025; Rahjasa et al., 2023; Arianto et al., 2022).

However, how the narrative language within the promotion leverages the intention to revisit has received little attention from academics. Thus, the influence of promotion, which is moderated by narration, on the intention to revisit Bali's temples was necessarily urging. While traditional promotional methods, such as highlighting a destination's features and price, have been a long-standing practice (Setegn & Japee, 2025; Rahjasa et al., 2023), there is a growing recognition that they often fail to create the deep emotional connections and a sense of authenticity that modern travelers seek (Guo, 2024; Christine & Prinsloo, 2015; Lim et al., 2024). This failure represents a significant gap, as simply informing potential tourists is no longer sufficient to secure a high intention to visit. This study addresses this gap by investigating the specific role of linguistic narration—the deliberate use of storytelling and evocative language—as a more powerful and effective promotional tool. It posits that a destination's story is the key to inspiring travel and building a lasting relationship with the visitors. Therefore, this research focused on Promotion as the Independent Variable, Intention to Revisit as the Dependent Variable, and Narration as the Moderating Variable. Based on those variables, here are the formulated research problems: Does promotion have a significant effect on the intention to revisit? Does narration have a significant effect on the intention to revisit? How does narration moderate the relationship between promotion and the intention to revisit?

Bali, the "Island of the Gods," is renowned for its deeply embedded spirituality from ancient Hindu traditions and indigenous beliefs. This spiritual essence is spreading inside the pilgrimage sites, sacred spaces that draw devotees and seekers from across the globe. Parallel to this long-standing tradition of pilgrimage, a modern phenomenon has emerged: spiritual tourism. Research into this trend reveals a complex interplay between genuine spiritual seeking (Nautiyal et al., 2025; Şahin & Güzel, 2024), cultural commodification (Gurtner, 2016; Gaonkar & Sukthankar, 2025), and the evolving identity of Bali (Mihardja et al., 2023) as a premier global destination. A significant finding in the research on Balinese spiritual tourism is the blurring of lines between authentic cultural and religious practices and experiences curated for a tourist audience (Şahin & Güzel, 2024; Nautiyal et al., 2025). Bali's spiritual majestic temples are not mere architectural marvels but living centers of devotion and ceremony. Among the most significant temples are Pura Besakih, Pura Tirta Empul, Pura Luhur Uluwatu, Pura Tanah Lot, and Pura Ulun Danu Beratan.

Located on the sacred slopes of Mount Agung, Bali's highest volcano, Pura Besakih is the largest and holiest temple complex on the island. It is a sprawling sanctuary of over 80 individual temples, with Pura Penataran Agung as its central focus. Besakih is considered the "mother temple" of Bali, a place of paramount spiritual importance where the Hindu trinity of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva are venerated. Major ceremonies held here, such as the biannual Odalan festival, attract thousands of pilgrims for days of prayer and offerings (Wardekker et al., 2023). On the other part of the island, nestled in a lush valley, Tirta Empul is famed for its sacred spring and purification pools. The temple is a site of profound spiritual cleansing, where Balinese Hindus and visitors alike participate in the "*melukat*" ritual. This involves immersing oneself in the holy water that flows from a series of sculpted spouts, a symbolic act of washing away impurities and negative influences. The steady stream of devotees at Tirta Empul underscores the deep-seated belief in the healing and transformative power of its waters (Putri et al., 2024). Situated on a sheer cliff edge overlooking the Indian Ocean, Uluwatu Temple is one of Bali's six key spiritual pillars, the *Sad Kahyangan Jagat*. Dedicated to the sea gods, it is believed to guard the island from evil spirits approaching from the southwest. Beyond its spiritual significance, Uluwatu is famous for its stunning

sunsets and the traditional Kecak dance performances that are held daily, adding a cultural dimension to the visitor's experience (Wibawa et al., 2019). Another of Bali's iconic sea temples, Tanah Lot is perched on a rocky outcrop that becomes an island at high tide. This picturesque temple is dedicated to the guardian spirits of the sea and is a vital node in the chain of sea temples that are said to protect the island. Its stunning location and spiritual aura make it a popular site for both worship and photography, especially at sunset (Sanjaya et al., 2023). Floating serenely on the shores of Lake Bratan in the cool highlands of Bedugul, a temple dedicated to Dewi Danu, the goddess of the lake and rivers. Pura Ulun Danu Beratan holds immense significance for the island's agricultural prosperity, as it is the source of water for the intricate "subak" irrigation system. The temple's tranquil beauty and its vital role in sustaining life on the island make it a cherished pilgrimage destination (Mahardika, 2021). These temples are part of a larger sacred geography that includes the Sad Kahyangan Jagat, the six holiest temples of the world that are believed to maintain the spiritual balance of the island (Pranajaya et al., 2025).

The research hypothesized that promotion would have a significant positive effect on a customer's intention to revisit. Similarly, it was proposed that narration on its own would also positively influence the intention to revisit. Critically, this study posited that narration acted as a moderating variable, significantly strengthening the positive relationship between promotion and the intention to revisit, meaning the effect of a promotion was more powerful when accompanied by a compelling narrative. In the process of promoting a tourism destination, storytelling is playing an increasingly critical role as an important communication channel between brands and consumers. The expression of content also has an important impact on consumer behavior. Emotional appeals, especially storytelling, have been widely used in advertisements and are especially appealing in the communication (Cai et al., 2025). The objects of this quantitative research were the most well-known temples in Bali, such as are Pura Besakih, Pura Tirta Empul, Pura Luhur Uluwatu, Pura Tanah Lot, and Pura Ulun Danu Beratan. The selection of these temples was based on several considerations: 1) They held historical and cultural significance; 2) They had great potentials to be developed as tourist destinations; 3) They were the top priority for cultural promotion. A questionnaire was distributed to 250 respondents who had visited the temples in order to understand the role of narration in increasing the intention to revisit the temples. The respondents' experiences, perspectives, and expectations were collected through Google form, while the history and the stories of the temples were gathered through direct observation at the site as well as through in-depth interviews with the priests or the caretakers of the temples, the representatives of Bali Tourism Board and the local guides. The data were later tabulated and analyzed using the Smart PLS application. The research variables investigated were Promotion as the Independent Variable (X), Intention to Revisit as the Dependent Variable (Y), and Narration as the Moderating Variable (Z) which affects the relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

In recent decades, Bali has witnessed a surge in a distinct form of travel known as spiritual tourism. This differs from traditional religious pilgrimage, which is typically undertaken by adherents of a specific faith. Spiritual tourism, as research indicates, is often characterized by a more individualized and eclectic search for meaning, well-being, and personal transformation. Research on spiritual tourists in Bali reveals a variety of motivations. Many are seeking an escape from the stresses of modern lifestyles. They are drawn to Bali's reputation as a spiritual haven, a place to reconnect with themselves and nature. Activities such as yoga and meditation retreats, healing therapies, and participation in

purification rituals like “*melukat*” are central to this experience (Mantra et al., 2023). For some, the journey is a quest for self-discovery and a deeper understanding of Eastern philosophies. While many visitors are sincere in their spiritual seeking, the tourism industry has responded by packaging and sometimes simplifying complex rituals and philosophies for consumption. This has led to concerns about the commodification of culture, where sacred traditions are transformed into marketable products. Therefore, the objectives of this study are to analyze the effects of promotion on the intention to revisit and to discover how narration can moderate the relationship between promotion and the intention to revisit Bali’s temples

DISCUSSION

Designing the Outer Model

To generate a better understanding of the data testing process, a structural model was first designed as presented in Figure 1.

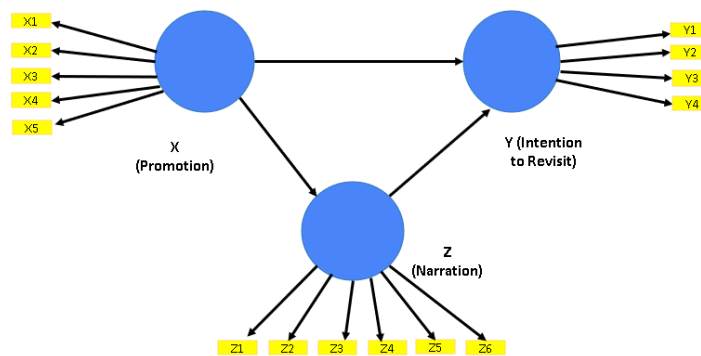


Figure 1. Structural Equation Model

Source: The research analysis

Validity and reliability testing of constructs can be conducted by designing a measurement model or outer model. A measurement testing was conducted to determine the ability of the research instrument to measure what it is supposed to measure, while a reliability testing was to assess the consistency of the measurement tool in measuring a concept.

Validity Testing with Convergent Validity

Validity testing was carried out using the evaluation of the measurement (outer) model, specifically by using convergent validity, where the loading factor for each construct must be greater than 0.70 for the target variables. Figure 2 showed the output of the measurement model or outer model using PLS 3.0.

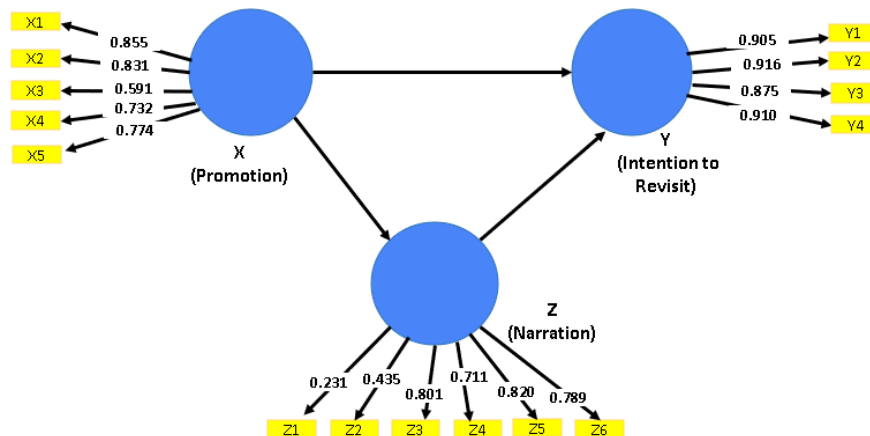


Figure 2. Outer Model
Source: The research analysis

The output indicated that indicators Z1 and Z2 had loading factors less than 0.50. Thus, they were considered invalid and must be removed from the model. Later, the PLS algorithm was recalculated to obtain new outer loadings, which explained the relationship between the latent variables and their indicators. The outer loadings after removing indicators Z1 and Z2 are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Final Outer Loading

| Var | X (Promotion) | Z (Narration) | Y (Intention to Revisit) | Notes |
|-----|------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|-----------|
| X1 | 0.855 | | | Valid |
| X2 | 0.831 | | | Valid |
| X3 | 0.591 | | | Valid |
| X4 | 0.732 | | | Valid |
| X5 | 0.774 | | | Valid |
| Z1 | | 0.231 | | Not Valid |
| Z2 | | 0.427 | | Not Valid |
| Z3 | | 0.801 | | Valid |
| Z4 | | 0.711 | | Valid |
| Z5 | | 0.820 | | Valid |
| Z6 | | 0.789 | | Valid |
| Y1 | | | 0.905 | Valid |
| Y2 | | | 0.916 | Valid |
| Y3 | | | 0.875 | Valid |
| Y4 | | | 0.910 | Valid |

Source: The research analysis

Validity Testing with Discriminant Validity

The next evaluation was to examine and compare the discriminant validity with the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE). The measurement model was assessed based on the cross-loading measurements with the constructs. If the correlation between the

construct and each of its indicators was greater than the correlation with other constructs, the latent construct indicators would be better than other constructs. If the value was higher than the correlation value among the constructs, then appropriate discriminant validity would be achieved (if AVE > 0.50). Based on the measurement results the AVE values (Table 2, column 2) for the three indicators were greater than 0.50, thus it can be stated that the 13 indicators in this study were valid.

Reliability Testing with Composite Reliability

When determining composite reliability, if the composite reliability value was > 0.70, the construct had high reliability or was reliable. If it was > 0.6, it was considered sufficiently reliable. The results of the reliability test with composite reliability (Table 2 column 3) showed all latent variables had composite reliability values >0.70, meaning that all independent latent variables were appropriate and suitable to be tested for their impact on the dependent latent variable.

Reliability Testing with Cronbach Alpha

In PLS, reliability testing was reinforced by Cronbach's alpha, where the consistency of each answer was tested. Cronbach's alpha was considered appropriate if $\alpha \geq 0.6$ and sufficient if $\alpha \geq 0.3$. The results of the Cronbach alpha measurements presented in Table 2 column 4 conclude that all variables are reliable.

Table 2. Measurement based on the AVE Criteria

| Column 1: Variables | Column 2: AVE Criteria | Column 3: Composite Reliability | Column 4: Cronbach Alpha |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| X (Promotion) | 0.561 | 0.852 | 0.831 |
| Y (Intention to Revisit) | 0.814 | 0.923 | 0.903 |
| Z (Narration) | 0.621 | 0.876 | 0.789 |

Source: the research analysis

Designing the Inner Model

The goodness of fit of the model was measured using the R-square of the dependent latent variable, with the same interpretation as regression. Q-Square predictive relevance for the structural model measured how well the observed values were generated by the model and its parameter estimates. An R-square value > 0 indicated that the model had predictive relevance, whereas if the R-square value ≤ 0 , it indicated that the model had low predictive relevance. Table 3 showed the results of the inner model measurement with PLS.

Table 3. R Square

| Variables | R Square |
|--------------------------|----------|
| Y (Intention to Revisit) | 0.578 |
| Z (Narration) | 0.386 |

Source: the research analysis

Table 3 showed that the R-Square value for variable Y was 0.578 and for variable Z was 0.386. This R-Square result could be interpreted as follows: the influence of the Promotion (X) explained 57.8% of the dependent latent variable, while the remaining 42.2% was explained by other variables outside the study. Similarly, the Promotion (X) is explained

by the independent latent variables at 38.6%, while the remainder was explained by other variables.

In hypothesis testing, the value analyzed was the t-statistic value generated from the PLS output, which was later compared to the t-table value. The PLS output represented the estimates of latent variables, which were linear aggregates of indicators. The testing criteria with a significance level (α) of 5% were determined as follows:

- a. If t-statistic > t-table, i.e., greater than 1.96, the hypothesis is accepted
- b. If t-statistic < t-table, i.e., less than 1.96, the hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis testing with PLS was conducted in two stages. Firstly, by directly calculating the effect of the independent latent variable on the dependent latent variable, and secondly, by calculating the effect of the independent latent variable on the dependent latent variable with the moderating effect of narration. The output from the PLS bootstrapping results for testing the research hypotheses H1 to H3 was as follows:

Furthermore, the evaluation of the structural model through PLS also emphasizes the importance of examining both the magnitude and significance of each path coefficient to ensure that the proposed theoretical relationships are empirically supported. By integrating both direct and moderated effects into the analysis, the model provides a more comprehensive understanding of how Promotion (X) influences Intention to Revisit (Y) and Narration (Z). This dual-stage assessment allows researchers to identify not only the strength of the primary relationships but also the extent to which the moderating variable enhances or weakens these effects. Consequently, the findings derived from the PLS output offer robust empirical evidence that supports the overall conceptual framework of the study, thereby reinforcing the reliability and validity of the structural model. Bootstrapping results for H1 to H3 are presented in Figure 3.

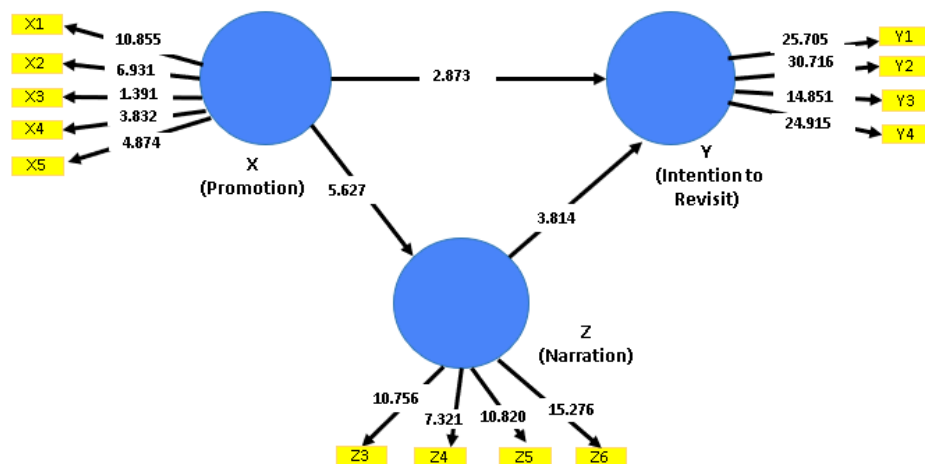


Figure 3. Bootstrapping Result for H1 to H3
Source: the research analysis

Test 1: The effect of Promotion to the Intention to Revisit

Table 4. Bootstrapping Hypothesis 1

| Var | Original sample (O) | Mean (M) | Deviation Standard (DEV) | T Statistics (O/DEV) | P Values |
|--------|------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|----------|
| X => Y | 0.351 | 0.351 | 0.157 | 2.873 | 0.007 |
| X => Z | 0.632 | 0.653 | 0.102 | 5.627 | 0.000 |
| Z => Y | 0.515 | 0.523 | 0.145 | 3.814 | 0.000 |

Source: the research analysis

The data in Table 4 shows bootstrapping hypothesis 1. The first hypothesis, which tested the relationship between Promotion (X) and Intention to Revisit (Y), showed an original sample value of 0.351 and a t-statistic of 2.873. The measurement results indicated that the t-statistic > t-table (significance level of 5% = 1.960), meaning that the first hypothesis in this study was accepted. From these data, it could be interpreted that the sample data for the independent latent variable (Promotion) successfully demonstrated a relationship with the dependent latent variable (Intention to Revisit). In other words, Promotion (X) has a significant positive influence on Intention to Revisit (Y) with P-Value = 0.007. This finding was related to how promotion strongly influenced the intention of the tourist to return (Hutasoit, Y. et al., 2025) and confirmed that promotion had a positive and significant effect simultaneously on tourists' interest in returning to the sites (Khamilah & Andriani, 2025). Promotion can also motivate the visitors to show their excitement and enthusiasm (Guo, 2024).

Test 2: The Effect of Promotion on the Narration

The second hypothesis, which tested the relationship between Promotion (X) and Narration (Z), showed an original sample value of 0.632 and a t-statistic of 5.627. The measurement results indicated that the t-statistic > t-table (significance level of 5% = 1.960), meaning that the second hypothesis in this study was accepted. From these data, it could be interpreted that the sample data for the independent latent variable (Promotion) successfully demonstrated a relationship with the dependent latent variable (Narration). In other words, Promotion (X) has a significant positive influence on Narration (Z) (P-Value = 0.000). This confirmed the previous studies that promotion could optimize marketing strategies and how narrative stories could leverage the effects (Setegn & Japee, 2025). It also agreed that promotional models can engage the visitors interaction and generate the intention to revisit (Cai et al., 2025).

Test 3: The Effect of Narration on the Intention to Revisit

The third hypothesis, which tested the relationship between Narration (Z) and Intention to Revisit (Y), showed an original sample value of 0.515 and a t-statistic of 3.814. The measurement results indicated that the t-statistic > t-table (significance level of 5% = 1.960), meaning that the third hypothesis in this study was accepted. From these data it could be interpreted that the sample data for the independent latent variable (Narration) successfully demonstrated a relationship with the dependent latent variable (Intention to Revisit). It can be said that Narration (Z) had a significant positive influence on Intention to Revisit (Y) with P-Value = 0.000. This finding corresponded to the previous researches (Zhang & Ramayah, 2024; Ko et al., 2022) that storytelling is getting increasing attention as one of the effective strategies for revitalizing the local festivals and even regional economies.

Test 4: The Effect of Intention to Revisit with Narration as a Moderating Variable

The bootstrapping results provide detailed information regarding the interaction term

between Promotion (X) and Narration (Z), which was constructed to assess the moderating effect within the structural model. Through this procedure, the model estimates the path coefficient of the interaction construct and evaluates its statistical significance based on the generated *t*-statistic and *p*-value. A significant interaction coefficient indicates that the moderation effect is present, meaning that Narration (Z) alters the strength or direction of the relationship between Promotion (X) and the dependent latent variable. Conversely, a non-significant coefficient suggests that the moderating variable does not produce a substantial influence on the primary relationship. By analyzing the confidence intervals, standard errors, and corresponding stability of the bootstrap estimates, the moderating effect can be interpreted with greater precision, thereby supporting a more rigorous validation of the structural model. Bootstrapping results for the X*Z Moderation Effect are presented in Figure 4.

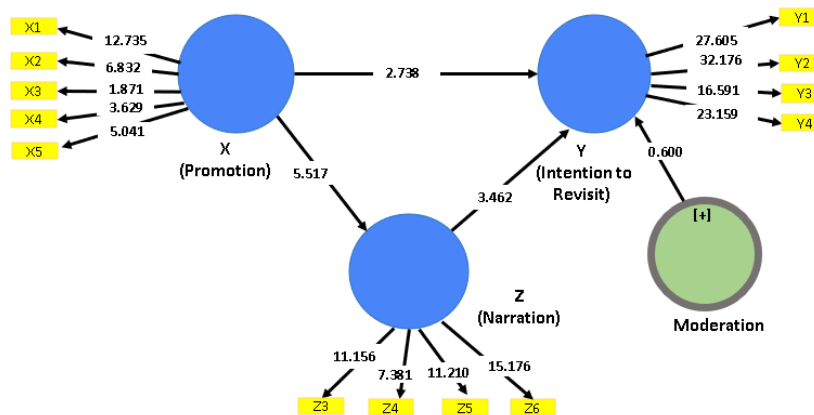


Figure 4. Bootstrapping Result for Moderating Effect X*Z
Source: The research analysis

Table 5. Bootstrapping Hypothesis 2

| Variable | Original Sample (O) | Mean (M) | Dev. Standard (DEV) | T Statistics (O/DEV) |
|-----------------------|------------------------|-------------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| Moderating effect X*Z | 0.067 | 0.027 | 0.126 | 0.600 |

Source: The research analysis

The data in Table 5 shows Bootstrapping Hypothesis 2. The fourth hypothesis tested the relationship between Promotion and Intention to Revisit with Narration as a moderating variable, showing an original sample value of 0.067 and a t-statistic of 0.126. The measurement results indicate that the t-statistic < t-table (significance level of 5% = 1.960), meaning that the fourth hypothesis in this study was rejected. These data showed that the Z variable (Narration) does not enhance the influence of X (Promotion) on Y (Intention to Revisit), or in other words, X*Z does not have a significant influence on Y with a negative relationship.

The analysis of the relationship between Promotion as the Independent Variable (X), Intention to Revisit as Dependent Variable (Y), and Narration as the Moderating Variable (Z), was grounded in tourism promotion theory and the principles of narrative stories in marketing. According to tourism promotion theory, the primary goal of promotion (e.g., advertising, sales promotions, social media campaigns) is to move a potential customer

through the AIDA model: Awareness, Interest, Desire, and Action (the initial visit) (Rahmawati & Rino, 2025; Tristanto & Hurriyati, 2023). Promotion can secure the first visit, however it does little to guarantee the loyalty required for a second or third. The memory of the *deal* fades, and without a deeper connection, there's no compelling reason to return when another destination offers a better experience.

On the other hand, narration or storytelling in marketing is the art of building a narrative around a product or destination (Zhang & Ramayah, 2024) which becomes the critical moderating variable. It is mainly about weaving a story that evokes emotion, creates meaning, and establishes an identity. Narration is a powerful moderator that amplifies the effectiveness of promotion on a tourist's intention to revisit. It achieves this by transforming a transactional promotional message into a meaningful, emotional connection that builds lasting loyalty (Cai et al., 2025). The visitors needs to be offered an equally compelling and structurally functional narrative, in which science and literature are seamlessly aligned (Kistler, 2025). Without effective narration, promotion's influence on repeat visits is weak; with it, that influence becomes significantly stronger. To strengthen the power of narration within the promotion, destination marketer should understand the needs and expectations of the potential visitors. Starting with a compelling hook to capture attention, and using the visitors' authentic testimonials will provide the evidence which is emotionally evoking. The authenticity of the visitors' experiences will encourage the others to have the same exciting experiences. Here, the word of mouth will determine the development of the tourism destinations in the future.

In tourism, narration can take many forms (Yu & Cheng, 2025). It can be in the form of a marketing campaign focusing on a local legend or cultural heritage; an influencer's authentic, day-by-day travel journal; user-generated content (reviews, vlogs) that tells a personal story of transformation or discovery; or the stories told by a local guide during a tour. Narration works by providing context, emotion, and authenticity, which are essential ingredients for building a memorable experience (Kistler, 2025). Thus, narration changes the strength of the relationship between promotion and the intention to revisit.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the research, it is concluded that the promotion has a significant influence in leveraging the intention to revisit. Nevertheless, the narration in the promotion does not give substantial moderation among the two variables. The central implication is that storytelling is the essential bridge between promotion and visitor loyalty. Simply promotion features is not enough; tourism marketers must tell a compelling narration to create an emotional connection that makes visitors want to return. In summary, the relationship between tourism promotion and a tourists' intention to revisit is conditional.

Promotion as a marketing activity is aimed at introducing the unique features of tourism destination. It can as well be used as an exchange of information, ideas, and emotions among visitors to influence perceptions. Similarly, promotion as information intended to drive individuals or organizations toward purchasing products or services. Promotion alone is a blunt instrument effective for acquisition but poor for retention (Zhang & Ramayah, 2024). Narration, as a part of promotion, is the crucial moderator that refines this instrument. By embedding promotional messages within authentic, emotional, and engaging stories, destinations transform a tourist's experience from a simple transaction into a meaningful chapter in their own life story (Cai et al., 2025). This narrative-driven connection is what ultimately fuels the powerful desire to return and continue the journey.

This study has no conflict of interest and receives no financial support or fundings from any institution. Future research could explore similar practices in different tourism contexts to deepen understanding of narration's role as tourism promotion tools. By integrating promotion with personalized advertising, marketing strategies can be optimized. Additionally, conducting similar researches, specifically in relation to emotionally evoked language, can improve communication and achieve tremendous success in the tourism industries.

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