The Effect of Tour Guides' Storytelling Performances on Tour Satisfaction: An Application on Tourists Visiting the Ancient City of Ephesus[*]

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Abstract

Storytelling can be employed as an effective method to increase tour satisfaction with its emotional interaction and imagination-stimulating features. For visitors, the destination can become more understandable and memorable. One of the fundamental phenomena in the tourism industry is the tour satisfaction experienced by the guests. The study aims to reveal the effect of the storytelling performance of tour guides on tour satisfaction. It was implemented in the Ephesus Ancient City in the Selçuk district of İzmir Province, Türkiye. 25 local tourists were interviewed. The data were subjected to content analysis. Open and latent content coding was applied and five main themes-subthemes were created. According to the results, storytelling performance positively affects tour satisfaction experienced by tourists. It was concluded that storytelling plays a critical role regarding the attractiveness of the destination and that the gestures and facial expressions used during the narration increase the memorability of the stories. It is advised that guides should pay special attention to this skill and the theoretical courses that candidates may require in the sector should be reviewed in the curriculum of universities.

Keywords: *Tourist Guidance, Story, Storytelling, Tour Satisfaction, Ephesus Ancient City*

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1. Introduction

Tour guides are individuals who lead tourists in the language they choose, translate the cultural and natural heritage of the region they are in, and are equipped with the tools accepted by the appropriate administration of the region they are in (Köroğlu, 2013). They are individuals authorized by the travel agency to provide information, explanation, direction, and advice during the trip. In their role as an introductory tour guide, they should provide remarkable and realistic information about each destination included in the tour route (Özbek & İskender, 2021). Tour guides, who train themselves to fully introduce a country and express its touristic and local riches, have a significant impact on tourists visiting the country (Arat & Bulut, 2019). They also play a weighty role in shaping tourists' experiences in a destination (Huang, Hsu & Chang, 2010).

Tourism destinations are making an intensive effort to improve their service quality and offer unique experiences by keeping up with the ever-changing demands and expectations of tourists. Tourists combine the satisfaction they experience in the destinations they visit with cognitive and emotional elements and transfer their knowledge, experience and traditions to others through storytelling (Kemerci & Karaca, 2024). The use of stories in the marketing and presentation of products play an essential role in the formation of the destination image, marketing and attractiveness, especially in terms of tourism. While the tour guide is a good ambassador and leader in their tours, he also plays the role of a good storyteller (Ayaz et al., 2022). With this narrative technique, the guide establishes a connection/communication between the tourist and the visited place (in the consumption of places by tourists) and takes a direct role in the experience and consumption of that place by tourists (Çınar & Toksöz, 2020). Tour guides, among the most fundamental employees in the tourism sector, have a very major role in tourist satisfaction (Arslan & Tanrısevdi, 2022).

One of the most vital phenomena in the tourism sector is undoubtedly tourist satisfaction. Satisfaction undoubtedly depends on certain variables such as the attitudes, behaviors and qualifications of those who provide the presentation as well as the service components (Kara & Demir, 2021). People make purchases from the basic products and supporting side products in the tourism sector. From the moment they set foot in the destination, the tourist who comes under the protection of the tour guide expects a quality foreign language level and communication skills. If the tour guide meets this expectation, the satisfaction rate of the tourist in the destination they choose will increase (Arat & Bulut, 2019). Many empirical studies have shown that the tour guide is responsible for ensuring satisfaction, and therefore their role is very momentous (Chang, 2006). Heung, 2008; Huang, Hsu & Chang, 2010; Raikkonen & Honkanen, 2013; Chang, 2014; Kuo et al., 2016; Hansen & Mossberg 2017; Kuo et al., 2018; Cheng et al., 2019). Raikkonen and Honkanen (2013) accept in their studies that there is a linear relationship between tour satisfaction and the roles of the tour guide. Accordingly, storytelling will lead to a richer and more memorable experience in determining the satisfaction that will occur (Cao, 2019). Storytelling can be used as an effective method in determining tour satisfaction with its features of emotional interaction and stimulating imagination. In addition, storytelling has the potential to create a more impressive and memorable experience by enriching and enlivening the process of a tourist learning about a destination (Cao, 2019).

A talented tour guide can transform a simple tour into a fascinating and enriching journey with the stories he tells. Tour guides can greatly increase visitor satisfaction by weaving stories into their presentations and create unforgettable experiences that leave a lasting positive impression. The aim of this study is to determine the effect of storytelling in tour guides on tour satisfaction. Within the scope of this purpose, interviews were conducted with 25 local tourists who visited the Ancient City of Ephesus. The obtained data was tested with content analysis. Recommendations were made to the relevant persons/institutions/organizations in line with the obtained data. Moreover, this study primarily aims to contribute to the practical field of the profession by examining the storytelling performances of tour guides. When the relevant literature was examined, it was observed that a limited number of studies were conducted on these topics and it was thought that these concepts should be investigated more

comprehensively. In this context, this study is original research and is prominent for the literature. This study provides insights for scholars in a theoretical sense. In a practical context, it provides substantial contributions for guides, guide candidates, educational institutions that train guides and other stakeholders in the tourism industry.

2. Storytelling

Stories are one of the notable parts of human culture that has existed for centuries. Many explanations can be made regarding the definition of a story. For example, a story is "a short prose genre that usually talks about events that have happened or are possible to happen". A story is defined as "a literary genre that talks about real or imagined events". In addition, TDK describes stories as a cultural value and a good communication tool that attracts and increases the interest of people of all ages, ensures the sustainability of events in the transfer to generations (TDK, 2025). Stories, in essence, convey information and values, encourage understanding and empathy, and enable the creation of fun and emotional moments. On the other hand, stories play a prominent role in the formation of destination image, marketing and attractiveness, especially in terms of tourism, in the marketing and presentation of products. While the tour guide is a good ambassador and leader in his tours, he is also a good storyteller (Ayaz et al., 2022).

Personalizing tourism experiences and enhancing visitors' perceptions of the destination are increasingly associated with storytelling in modern tourism literature (Wang, 1999). Storytelling is not only for the purpose of informing but is also considered as a process of establishing emotional bonds, making sense of experiences, and effectively conveying the cultural heritage of the destination. In this context, focusing on the theoretical foundations of the concept of storytelling and its development in the literature will provide a deeper understanding of its potential to increase tour satisfaction (Tribe & Snaith, 1998).

On the other hand, storytelling is as old as the invention of writing and has been around since then as "a means of connecting events and deciding what is influential" (Sax, 2006: 166.). In the time of Aristotle, Socrates and Plato, storytelling was studied from two perspectives: Mimesis, "the artistic imitation of reality" and Diegesis, "the way the story is told or shown to the audience" (Lugmayr et al., 2017). In a detailed study on serious storytelling, they define the storytelling process as the act of representing reality or imitating people or events in the real world (mimesis), while emphasizing the engaging effect that the storyteller or narrator creates on the audience (diegesis). Indeed, Bernard (2022) reinforced this two-way approach by defining a story as "a narrative of an event or series of events designed to capture the audience's attention." Storytelling has long been used to convey and present information, probably due to the characteristics of narratives. Indeed, empirical studies have concluded that information emerges more clearly in a narrative form in which events and objects are explained in relation to each other and therefore is more understandable and memorable for the audience (Dusold, 2008).

Moscardo (2020) believes that stories have become a central component to tourism practice, especially in tourist experience design. In terms of tour guiding, storytelling has already become vital. That is to say, in order for the tour guide to capture the attention throughout the tour and achieve the engagement of the guests, to supply a deeper understanding and appreciation of the visited area, to turn the tour into a memorable experience and to attain an emotional bond to the destination and the guests, storytelling is of great importance. As for the topic, many authors agree that storytelling in tourism often involves direct or indirect interactions where the value in terms of meaning is linked to shared forms of recognition, for example, what is said and how this is connected to what is felt, perceived and experienced (Bryon, 2012; Chronis, 2015; Mossberg, Hanefors, & Hansen, 2018). According to Cláudias et al. (2023), the idea of using storytelling as a co-creative tool to boost visitor engagement and make an experience memorable has been proposed. Baker (2022) indicates that storytelling is a truly effective way to keep audiences interested. In line with the current desire for immersive travel experiences, Leong et al. (2024) stress that storytelling not

only improves visitor engagement but also strengthens the emotional and cognitive bond between tourists and the destination.

3. Tour Satisfaction

Tourism satisfaction is a complex concept that is shaped by the combination of various factors (Petrick, 2004). After purchasing a product or service, the measure of satisfaction with it is related to the expectation in the mind before making the purchase and the extent to which the purchased product or service provides benefits after the purchase process is completed. The intensity of the benefit imagined before the purchase and the extent of the benefit realized after the purchase causes customer satisfaction or negative dissatisfaction. In other words, customer satisfaction can be expressed as the extent to which the purchased product or service meets the expectation before the purchase (Zengin & Ulema, 2015; as cited in: Arat T. & Bulut H., 2019).

Factors such as service quality, price-performance relationship, destination attractiveness and personal expectations play a noteworthy role in determining tourists' satisfaction with their travel experiences (Mckercher & Du Cros, 2002). Therefore, tourism businesses and destination managers are constantly striving to increase tourist satisfaction. The measurement of tourist satisfaction is an eminent issue for researchers and industry professionals (Wang et al., 2017). Methods such as surveys, customer feedback, online platforms, and social media analysis help to objectively assess tourist satisfaction (Petrick, 2004). These measurements provide destination managers and businesses with the information needed to increase customer satisfaction and improve service quality. Consequently, tourist satisfaction is of critical importance to the tourism industry (Oliver, 2010).

Satisfied tourists enhance the reputation of the destination, increase the likelihood of repeat visits, and contribute to the local economy (Mckercher & Du Cros, 2002). Therefore, tourism businesses and destination managers should continuously develop and implement strategies to increase tourist satisfaction (Petrick, 2004). Stumpf et al. (2020) indicate that generally, high overall satisfaction with the stay in a tourist destination leads to destination loyalty and increases the likelihood of the same destination being revisited. The satisfaction of visitors in tourist destinations represents one of the crucial factors of destination sustainability and competitiveness.

The tourism industry is gaining increasing importance worldwide with serious factors such as economic growth and cultural interaction (Mckercher & Du Cros, 2002). In this context, tourist satisfaction is considered a critical factor for the success and sustainability of destinations (Wang, Li & Kim, 2017). The sense of satisfaction that tourists get from their travel experiences can increase the reputation of the destination and affect the number of future visitors (Oliver, 2010). Similarly, Stumpf et al. (2020) report that a higher level of tourist satisfaction leads to higher tourist loyalty to destinations and, furthermore, increases revisits. For these reasons, tour satisfaction has a very weighty place.

4. Storytelling and Tour Satisfaction

Storytelling notably increases tour satisfaction by creating memorable, engaging, and emotionally resonant experiences for tourists. By transforming simple information into engaging narratives, storytelling helps tourists connect more deeply with the culture, history, and unique identity of the destination. Previous research emphasizes the role of storytelling in shaping tourists' perceptions and experiences. For instance, Cao (2019) concluded that storytelling enriches and improves the tourist experience. While tour guides convey historical and mythological narratives with a fictional landscape reflecting the physical space; the use of elements such as an aesthetically impressive, understandable language, an engaging but far from excessive and attractive narrator voice as a means of transmission offers a powerful method. This approach goes beyond enriching the tourist experience and creates lasting

memories, deepens the experience of the place and gives the relevant place a unique identity. Similar to the former researcher, Wong (2001) concluded that effective storytelling makes tourist experiences more appealing and engaging, essentially increasing tour satisfaction, and that when tour guides create powerful narratives while conveying the historical, cultural and symbolic significance of the places visited, they not only attract the attention of visitors but also enable them to establish emotional ties with the destination, and emphasized that such a narrative approach integrates the experience and makes it more meaningful and permanent. In addition to them, Huang, Hsu and Chang (2010) emphasized that storytelling, applied in a qualified manner, contributes to the enrichment of the tourist experience and allows tourists to have a deeper understanding and appreciation of the cultural and historical dimensions of the destination.

On the other side, satisfaction refers to the level of satisfaction that visitors get from their experiences, and this satisfaction is affected by many factors. Tribe and Snaith (1998) concluded that storytelling plays an essential part in enabling tourists to establish emotional connections with the places they visit and to make their experiences more meaningful. Huang, Hsu and Chang (2010) emphasized that when tour guides effectively convey the historical and cultural context of the destination, tourists develop a deeper understanding of these places, while also enriching their tour experiences by increasing their interaction with the guide, and that storytelling has a positive effect on tourist satisfaction as a critical element that not only attracts tourists' attention, but also makes their experiences more memorable and increases their overall satisfaction levels. Tour guides act as a bridge between the destination and the tourists and are largely responsible for the overall impression and satisfaction with the tour services. A large part of this satisfaction is due to the storytelling skills of the guides (Ap & Wong, 2000). Geva and Goldman (1991) emphasized that the storytelling performance of the tour guides is an important feature for the success of tour satisfaction. Similarly, Mossberg (1995) stated that after a tourist has chosen a destination and a tour, the storytelling ability of the tour guide is seen as a considerable factor affecting tour satisfaction. Based on the information given above, it may be clearly seen that there is a significant relationship between the storytelling and the tour satisfaction. The interpretative abilities of the tour guide also have a significant impact on narrative and tour enjoyment. A tourist's experience involves more than just going to a location; it also involves how they interpret their surroundings. The idea of "interpretation" explains this meaning-making process (Tilden, 1977). Visitors can deepen their understanding, form emotional connections, and enhance their experiences in places with cultural and natural heritage through the deliberate narrative process of interpretation (Ham, 1992). According to Weiler and Black (2003), tour guides' storytelling performance is a significant factor in tour satisfaction, viewing guiding as a multifaceted interpretive activity that mediates visitors' meaning of their experiences as well as a process of transferring information. In this situation, guides take on the responsibilities of an interpretative narrator setting the scene with their stories, an educator imparting knowledge, and an entertainer maintaining audience engagement.

5. Methodology

Universe sample, data collection, and analysis of data headings are explained in this section.

5.1. Universe-Sample

The study aims to determine the effect of tour guides' storytelling performances on tour satisfaction. Storytelling allows visitors to establish an emotional bond with historical and cultural places, while providing a balance between entertainment and education. Furthermore, it deepens cultural understanding by increasing tourists' participation and interaction, creates lasting memories and keeps the attention level high during the visit. This study focuses on analyzing from a scientific perspective as to how storytelling enriches the tourist experience and through which mechanisms it increases tourist satisfaction. The research involved the local tourists visiting the Ancient City of Ephesus. It is located

within the borders of Selçuk District of İzmir Province, Türkiye (İzmir Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism, 2025). The universe of the research consists of tourists visiting the Ancient City of Ephesus. The main reason why the Ancient City of Ephesus was chosen as the study area is that the destination has a wide storytelling area. Random sampling method was used in the research; data were collected through interview technique with tourists visiting the Ancient City of Ephesus. The study includes a qualitative methodology. Qualitative research focuses on the diverse and profound nature of individual characteristics unique to humans. That is to say, qualitative research argues that depth and originality of knowledge are more critical than generalizations, centers on in-depth and specific data obtained from smaller study groups rather than large samples (Baltacı, 2019). To put it clearly, qualitative research utilizes qualitative data collection methods such as observation, interviews, and document analysis, and follows a qualitative process to reveal perceptions and events in a realistic and holistic manner in a natural setting. In other words, qualitative research is an approach that prioritizes investigating and understanding social phenomena within their context, with an approach based on theory formation (Yıldırım, 1999). For qualitative research, the sample representing the universe is determined by continuing the interview until repeated responses are received (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008). In this regard, the presence of repeated expressions in the obtained data indicated that data saturation has been reached. Therefore, 25 local tourists were interviewed in the study.

5.2. Data Collection

The interview questions were prepared by reviewing the literature and obtaining expert opinions. The tourists participating in the study were coded as P1, P2, P3 … and P25. Before the application, a permission was attained. After retrieving it, the interviews were conducted face-to-face between 20.02.2025 and 10.03.2025, which lasted an average of 15 minutes.

As aforementioned before, qualitative method was adopted in this study. What is more, an approach based on the principles of validity and reliability of Lincoln and Guba (1985) was applied in order to ensure the reliability and validity of the data collection and analysis process. While forming the interview questions, the studies by Kaya and Ünlüönen (2021) and by Çınar and Toksöz (2020) were made use of. In addition, interview questions were formed in line with the expert opinions obtained from three academician tour guides with authorized cards. The tourists agreed to be interviewed were asked about their volunteer status and the interviews were conducted after their consent was obtained. The answers were written by the researchers on the interview forms prepared for each participant. In this context, the interview questions directed to the tourists are as follows:

1. Do you think that the information provided by the tour guide increased your interest in the history and culture of the places you visited? What do you think caused this increase in interest?

2. How did the stories told by the tour guide shape your experiences and perceptions throughout the tour? How do you think the stories told contributed to your daily experiences?

3. Did the visual materials and narrative style used by the tour guide help you better understand the atmosphere and characteristics of the place? In what ways do you think these materials caught your attention?

4. How did the stories told by the tour guide affect your most distinct memories about the place after the tour? Which story or piece of information stuck in your mind the most?

5. Did the stories told by the tour guide about the local people of the place you visited help you better understand the cultural structure and social life of that place? What do you think these stories mean to you?

6. How effective were the humorous and appealing narrations given by the tour guide in making the tour enjoyable and fun? How do you think these narratives enriched your tour experience?

7. Did the tour guide's legends or mythological stories about the place add a mystical or enchanting dimension to your visit? How do you think these stories affected you?

8. Did the tour guide's sharing of his personal experiences and memories about the place help you to establish a deeper connection with the place you visited? How do you think these sharings affected your experience?

9. How successful was the tour guide's narrative language and style in keeping people interested in the history and culture of the place you visited? How do you think this language and style appealed to you?

10. How effective were the tour guide's narratives, establishing connections between the past and present of the place, in helping you understand the evolution and importance of the place? What kind of perspective do you think these narratives gave you?

5.3. Analysis of Data

When carrying out this study, qualitative research method was employed. Accordingly, the data obtained as a result of interviews with tourists was subjected to content analysis. Open and latent content coding was done and five main themes and sub-themes were created with expert opinions.

6. Findings

This section includes the findings obtained by examining the obtained data. In this context, the gender, age, marital status and education status of the tourists were primarily taken into account. The relevant information is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Features of Participants

Demographic Characteristics of Participants (n:25)		Frequency	%
Gender	Male	7	28
	Female	18	72
Age	18-22	6	24
	23-27	14	56
	28-32	4	16
	33-37	1	4
Marital Status	Single	21	84
	Married	4	16
Education	High School	2	8
	Bachelor's Degree	17	68
	Master's Degree	6	24

The demographic distribution of the participants was examined according to Table 1. Accordingly, it is seen that 18 of the 25 participants were female and 7 were male. As the age ranges were examined, it was determined that the majority were between the ages of 18-22 (6), 23-27 (14). As for the marital status, it was determined that 21 tourists were single and 4 were married. Finally, when the educational status of the participants was considered, it was seen that the highest participation rate was made up of undergraduate graduates with a rate of 68%. Then came those with a postgraduate degree with a share of 24%.

Figure 1: Word Cloud Pattern

Followingly, a Word Cloud Pattern was obtained in order to determine the most frequently used concepts in the data set obtained as a result of the interviews. As shown in Figure 1, the most frequently used concepts are provided, attract, story, guide, Ephesus, which are words suitable for the main purpose of the research. In line with this result, it can be considered that the interviews were carried out in accordance with the purpose of the research. When the basic frequencies of the concepts highlighted in the Word Cloud pattern in Figure 1 are examined, it is seen that the frequency of "provided" is 52, the frequency of "attract" is 28, the frequency of "story" is 25, the frequency of "guide" is 22 and the frequency of "Ephesus" is 21. The relevant concepts take the first six places in this frequency table.

According to Table 2, the most frequently used frequency in the study is the sub-theme of the effect of the style of narration under the theme of visual material and the effect of the style of narration. The frequency value of this sub-theme was measured as n: 52 (%16.40). It can be said that the main factors affecting tour satisfaction are the performances and narration activities of the tour guides among the reasons for this theme being high. On the other hand, the fact that the sub-theme of the story on daily experiences and perceptions, which is the sub-theme of the experience and perception shaping, has the lowest usage rate with a frequency of 8, that is, 2.52%, may suggest that the information and interpretations conveyed by tour guides do not have much equivalent by tourists today.

Table 2. Main Themes, Sub-Themes and Frequency Analysis

Main Themes	Sub-Themes	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Historical and Cultural Information	The information provided by the guide increases interest	25	7.89
	Factors that increase interest	26	8.20
	Connections between the past and present of the place	26	8.20
Shaping Experience and Perception	The impact of the stories told by the guide on experiences and perceptions	13	4.10
	Contributions of stories to everyday experiences	8	2.52
	The effect of stories told on memories	31	9.78
Visual Material and Narrative Style	The role of visual materials in understanding the atmosphere of a place	9	2.84
	Remarkable aspects of the materials	11	3.47
	The effect of narrative style	52	16.40
Cultural and Social Understanding	Contribution of stories about local people understanding cultural structure	23	7.26
	The meaning and importance of these stories	12	3.79
	The impact of the guide sharing his/her personal experiences	20	6.31
Entertainment and Mystical Experiences	The role of humorous and interesting narrations in making the tour enjoyable	19	5.99
	Mystical effect of legends and mythological stories	8.22	5.99
	The success of the guide's narrative language and style in keeping the interest alive	34	10.73

Data analysis continued with frequency analysis of the relationships between the sub-themes and the findings are presented in Figure 2. According to Figure 2, it was revealed that the style of narration activity sub-theme was the sub-theme that interacted the most with the other sub-themes with 52 frequencies. The sub-theme of the guide's narration language and style's success in keeping the interest alive was the second sub-theme that received the most interaction with 34 frequencies. On the contrary, the sub-themes that interacted the least was the sub-theme of the stories' contribution to daily experiences with eight frequencies.
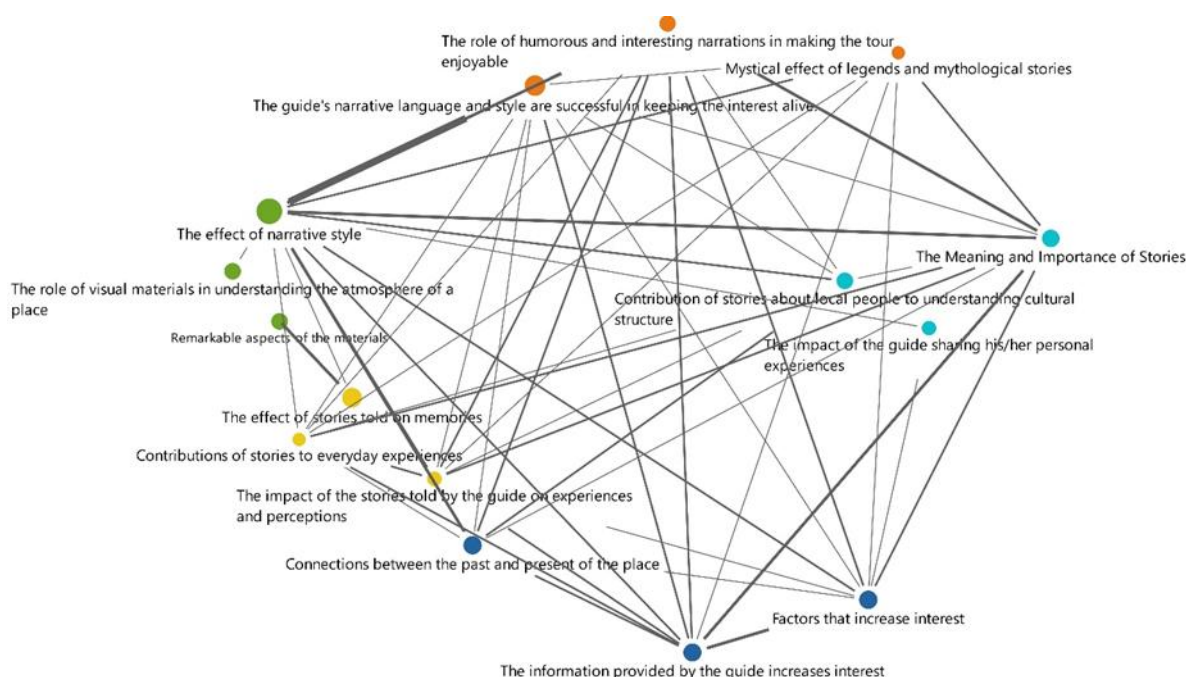

Figure 2: Map of Sub-themes' Relationships with Each Other

After presenting the data in detail with tables, the findings about the themes and sub-themes determined as a result of the in-depth analysis of these data are given below.

6.1. Historical and Cultural Information

Sub-themes related to this theme were identified based on the codes. These codes, along with sample interview quotes and their frequencies, are detailed in Table 3. The codes were derived from the responses to the interview questions, and a few examples from these responses are presented below.

Table 3. Sub-themes, Codes, Quotes and Frequencies Regarding Historical and Cultural Information Theme

Sub-Themes	Codes	Quotes	Frequency (f)
The impact of the stories told by the guide on experiences and perceptions	The Impact of Storytelling	"The stories the guide told came to life in my mind descriptively.", "The stories the guide told deepened my experiences and perceptions throughout the tour."	5
	Emotional Bonding	"The stories told by the guide helped me establish an emotional connection with the places.", "The stories told create a connection between us and the past."	2
	Emotional Impact	"I was moved", "The stories told changed my emotional state and shaped my hope for humanity in a positive way."	2
Contributions of stories to everyday experiences	Gaining a New Perspective	"It helped me broaden my perspective during the trip and in my daily life", "It helped me get to know the ancient city of Ephesus better and created a different perspective for the trips I would participate in later." "	3
	Contribution to Personal Experience	"It didn't really add much to my day-to-day experience."	1
The effect of stories told on memories	The Past-Present Connection	"It provides a connection between us and the past.", "The oldest examples of mosaics we use today became examples and I had the opportunity to compare them with the present.", "It made sense of the differences between the past and the present and that their cultural value is unchanging and permanent.", "The comparative explanation led me to make an inference.", "It helped me blend the past and the present.", "It contributed a lot to establishing a context for the transitions between periods."	9
	Historical Information Acquisition	"My interest in historical elements increased", "Learning by traveling is more effective", "It helped me gain historical knowledge", "It was nice to learn the history of the place."	4
	Cultural Level Development	"I think there have been improvements in my own cultural level."	1
	The Evolution and Importance of Space	"The guide's explanations, establishing connections between the past and present of the place, were very effective in helping me understand the evolution and importance of the place.", "I was able to grasp the importance of the historical site and the events that took place."	2

In the sub-theme of increasing interest in the information given by the guide, the participated tourists stated that the information given by the guides increased their general knowledge and they answered that they learned new information. For example, Participant 22 declared that "*Yes, I think so because when we go to a place you do not know, having a guide with you informing you about the history and culture of that place is of course a great thing.*" In the sub-theme of elements that increase interest, tourists mentioned that they saw the effectiveness of the narration of the guides, their style and the attractiveness of the stories as elements

that increase interest. For example, Participant 25 said that "*With various stories, it connects us more to that history and that destination. Since it associated it with examples from daily life and connected it to our culture, I noticed that my interest increased without getting bored.*" Finally, in the sub-theme of connections between the past and present of the place, it was determined that most tourists could not make many connections between the future and the present, but it was seen that some tourists did. For example, participant 24 replied that "*The narrations of the guide by establishing connections between the past and present of the place were quite effective in my understanding of the evolution and importance of the place.* "These narratives allowed me to see how historical events and changes are related to the present day and provided a more comprehensive and deeper perspective on the place."

6.2. Shaping Experience and Perception

Sub-themes related to shaping experience and perception were identified using the recognized codes. These codes, as well as the sample interview quotes and their frequencies, are supplied in Table 4. The codes were derived from the responses to the interview questions, and a few examples are given below.

Table 4. Sub-themes, Codes, Quotes and Frequencies Regarding Shaping Experience and Perception Theme

Sub-Themes	Codes	Quotes	Frequency (f)
The impact of the stories told by the guide on experiences and perceptions	The Impact of Storytelling	"The stories the guide told came to life in my mind descriptively.", "The stories the guide told deepened my experiences and perceptions throughout the tour."	5
	Emotional Bonding	"The stories told by the guide helped me establish an emotional connection with the places.", "The stories told create a connection between us and the past."	2
	Emotional Impact	"I was moved", "The stories told changed my emotional state and shaped my hope for humanity in a positive way."	2
Contributions of stories to everyday experiences	Gaining a New Perspective	" It helped me to broaden my perspective during the trip and in my daily life. "It helped me get to know the ancient city of Ephesus better and created a different perspective for the trips I would participate in later."	3
	Contribution to Personal Experience	"It didn't really add much to my day-to-day experience."	1
The effect of stories told on memories	Memories That Stay in Mind	"The ancient city of Ephesus has a clear visual place in my mind. The library in the city is the place I remember the most.", "Mythological stories always have a clear place in my mind."	8
	Empathy and Imagination	"Stories help us empathize or reflect our imagination.", "In our visualization. It was quite effective in terms of visualization."	2
	Surprise/Disbelief	"I was very surprised; I could hardly believe some of the production techniques or mythological events."	1

In the sub-theme of the effect of the stories told by the guides on experiences and perceptions, tourists gave answers indicating that the storytelling activities of the guides changed their perceptions. For example, Participant 19 said that "*I had come back empty-handed before, but when the guide explained it, it made sense.*" In the sub-theme of the contributions of stories to daily experiences, tourists mentioned that they made inferences from the stories told and that they would use this information or share it with others. For example, Participant 9 answered, "*It had a great effect on me gaining perspective. I can now approach my daily life experiences from different dimensions.*" Finally, in the sub-theme of the effect of the stories told on

memorable memories, tourists mentioned that the stories they heard left a mark on them and their interest increased. For example, Participant 24 answered as "*The stories told by the guide helped me establish an emotional bond with the places. The events told and the experiences of the people helped me see the places not only as physical structures but also as places full of emotional and historical memories.*"

6.3. Visual Material and Narrative Style

Sub-themes related to visual material and narrative style were identified using the specified codes. These codes, sample interview quotes and their frequencies, are given in Table 5. The codes were derived from the responses to the interview questions.

Table 5. Sub-themes, Codes, Quotes and Frequencies Regarding Visual Material and Narrative Style Theme

Sub-Themes	Codes	Quotes	Frequency (f)
The role of visual materials in understanding the atmosphere of a place	Visual Information Acquisition	"I learned about how the mosaics in the ancient city of Ephesus were made at that time and it caught my attention.", "I think it was effective in understanding it in three dimensions thanks to the visual materials."	4
	Imagination and Description	"Yes, because it enabled me to integrate my own imagination with visual materials", "The portability of the materials and their timely use helped me support my description and imagination"	3
	Memorability of Materials	"Since the elements explained by the guide do not always come to mind, the fact that it was supported by visuals allowed it to remain in my memory and the information about that visual came to my mind immediately when I saw that visual somewhere else."	2
Remarkable aspects of the materials	Material Presentation	"It was a nice detail that he showed us an old 20 TL bill and said that it had the Temple of Hadrian on it.", "Our guide did not carry any materials but he provided information via our WhatsApp group after the tour."	4
	Audio Materials	"Thanks to the headsets I used, I could hear everything being said even though I was in the background and I obtained all the information.", "Yes, it helps us understand better. The visual and auditory aspects caught my attention."	2
	Use of Photographs/ Images	"Old photographs and paintings helped me understand how places looked in the past and how they changed over time.", "Yes, it was great that the paintings were vivid and related to the place being described."	2
The effect of narrative style	Language and Style of Expression	"The guide's excellent use of gestures and facial expressions helped us stay in the moment.", "The guide's role-playing presentation presented more distinct features of that place to me.", "It made me feel like someone who had actually lived there."	10

In the sub-theme of the role of visual materials in understanding the atmosphere of the place, it has been seen that the materials and narrative style used by tour guides are effective in informing the tourists. For example, participant 12 believed that "*The things used as visual materials can usually be the features of the place. The guide's request for us to pay attention to a symbol or sign makes the story even more vivid.*" In the sub-theme of the effect of narration style, they stated that the effectiveness of the tour guides' storytelling style had a positive effect on the tourists' tour satisfaction. For example, 24 reflected that "*The humorous and interesting narrations made by the guide during the tour were very effective in making the tour enjoyable and fun. These narrations enriched my tour experience and made it more memorable and pleasant.*"

6.4. Cultural and Social Understanding

Sub-themes related to the theme cultural and social understanding were determined using the identified codes. These codes, along with sample interview quotes and their frequencies, are detailed in Table 6. The codes were derived based on the responses to the interview questions and can be found in the table.

Table 6. Sub-themes, Codes, Quotes and Frequencies Regarding Cultural and Social Understanding Theme

Sub-Themes	Codes	Quotes	Frequency (f)
Contribution of stories about local people understanding cultural structure	Local People's Lifestyle	" Thanks to these stories, I understood the social structure of the ancient city of Ephesus.", "I was saddened to learn about the attitude of the people of the period towards women."	7
	Understanding of Cultural Structure	"There wasn't much information shared about the cultural structure and local people. "Yes, it was a nice experience to learn about cultural values."	5
The meaning and importance of these stories	The Importance of Cultural Values	"What the guide told us was very effective in terms of the cultural values that the local people had maintained in the past", "It made us understand once again that every place, every country has its own unique living environment, style and unique cultural heritage."	2
	Empathy Bonding	"Of course, these stories help you connect with the past and empathize."	1
The impact of the guide sharing his/her personal experiences	The Guide's Personal Experiences	"The guide's sharing of his experiences caught my attention during the tour I attended.", "I felt a deeper connection to the area because telling stories about things that had happened before made me feel like I had experienced them myself.	7
	Positive/Negative Bias	" If the guide experienced a negative situation, we inevitably approached it with prejudice; if it was a positive feeling, we experienced a positive perspective towards that situation, even though we had not yet gained any experience with it."	1
	The Contribution of Realism	"The tour became more realistic thanks to the topics the guide shared his own experiences."	1

In the sub-theme of the contribution of stories about local people to understanding the cultural structure, tourists mentioned that they could empathize with the local people or the previous cultures that lived in that destination in the stories told. For example, participant 9 reported, "*The culture, religion and language of the people living there helped me gain knowledge in every aspect.*" On the other hand, in the sub-theme of the meaning and importance of stories, the guests expressed that they were happy with the stories shared by the tour guides, the excitement of the tourists to learn new information and the meanings that lay in the stories. For example, Participant 16 indicated that "*Thanks to the stories told by the guide, I had the opportunity to relate past events to daily life, and stories help me understand what people go through.*"

6.5. Entertainment and Mystical Experiences

Subthemes related to entertainment and mystical experiences were identified using the identified codes. These codes, along with sample interview quotes and their frequencies, are detailed in Table 7.

Table 7. Sub-themes, Codes, Quotes and Frequencies Regarding Entertainment and Mystical Experiences Theme

Sub-Themes	Codes	Quotes	Frequency (f)
The role of humorous and interesting narrations in making the tour enjoyable	Humorous Narration	"Our guide captured the tour's attention with his humor, and everyone listened to him." "He had a very effective humorous narrative, and we enjoyed listening and learned from him." His humorous approach, which appealed to everyone, kept the group dynamic.	13
	Enjoying the Tour	"It was good." "It was fun." "It was very entertaining and intriguing." "It was very effective. It was very entertaining." "We enjoyed the tour."	5
Mystical effect of legends and mythological stories	Mystical/ Fascinating Effect	"Legends and mythological stories are my favorite parts.", "They expanded my imagination. At the same time, they made me think about whether such experiences are possible."	6
	Interest in Legend and Mythology	"I can say that it did not affect me much because my area of interest is different myths.", "I learned mythological stories here that I had not heard before."	3
The success of the guide's narrative language and style in keeping the interest alive	Successful Narrative Language and Style	"It was definitely very effective. We were very pleased with the tour thanks to the guide's narration.", "Our guide's diction and oratory were very good. He always made himself heard.	10
	Keeping Interest Alive	"It prevented my attention from drifting elsewhere," "These explanations both directed my attention to the guide during the tour and eliminated the act of forgetting thanks to the stories."	2

In the sub-theme of the role of humorous and intriguing narrations in the enjoyable tour, most participants stated that the humorous language and engaging descriptions used by the guide to spice up his narrations affected the enjoyable tour. For example, Participant 19 responded that "*I think she was very successful. The fact that she narrated with an accent and spoke fluently, when necessary, made me think that she used her narration skills effectively.*" In the sub-theme of the guide's narrative language and style's success in keeping the interest alive, the tourists who participated in the research stated that it was fundamental for them that the guide did not make the narrative monotonous and added color to it and that it kept their interest constantly alive. For example, Participant 24 said that "*The language and style used by the tour guide were very successful in keeping the interest in the history and culture of the place we visited alive. This language and style made the information understandable and kept the level of attention and interest high throughout the tour.*"

7. Discussion and Conclusion

This research aims to reveal the effect of tour guides' storytelling performance on their tour satisfaction. As a result of this research, it was concluded that tour guides' storytelling performance has an effect on tour satisfaction. According to research findings, it has been observed that tour guides narrating impressive and gripping stories have managed to attract the attention of tourists, including them in the tour. In the research by Weiler and Walker (2014), it was concluded that tour guides who help guides understand how they shape the visitors' experience with what they say and do, and in this context, guides who allow visitors to develop appreciation, thoughtfulness and awareness through storytelling contribute positively to tour satisfaction, and this increases the tourists' enjoyment of the tour and their general satisfaction. The aforementioned study and this study overlap in this respect.

Another result is that tour guides mentioned that the stories they tell about the destination are not only to provide information to tourists but also make the tour entertaining and unforgettable with their narrative performances. It was also concluded that the guides make the tours more engrossing by using different types of stories, such as local folk tales, legends, and anecdotes. Kaya and Ünlüönen (2021) revealed that storytelling plays an eminent role in the transfer of cultural heritage. Moreover, it emphasizes the importance of incorporating cultural and historical narratives into tourism experiences in order to make destinations more attractive and unforgettable for tourists, which is one of the results of the study by Choi (2016). This overlaps with the importance of storytelling performance reached as a result of the research.

In addition, just telling stories is never enough to positively affect tour satisfaction. Guides' stories should be relevant and accurate, and they should also present them well. Guides should animate stories using their tone of voice, body language, and gestures, and it has been concluded that keeping tourists' attention alive with their humorous skills positively affects tour satisfaction. This result shows that body language and gestures play a vital role in storytelling effectiveness, as revealed by Kartalkanat and Göksun (2020). Gestures, facial expressions, and hand movements are consistent with the conclusion that they will make it easier for tourists to understand and remember the story.

Storytelling is one of the most substantial factors that positively affects tour satisfaction, and guides can build trust between tourists and guides through the stories they tell, which is another path to satisfaction. Jebbouri et al. (2022) examined how destination image formation influenced by storytelling leads to tourist trust and satisfaction. The findings from a study conducted in China show that a positive narrative about cultural heritage by a tour guide can promote tourism development by mediating between satisfaction and trust return. The result revealed by Jebbouri et al. (2022) is similar to the result revealed by this research that tourists who leave the tour satisfied internalize and adopt the destination thanks to storytelling and leave the tour satisfied.

İskender (2021) investigated the effect of the narration levels of tour guides on the tour satisfaction. As a result of this research, it was concluded that the narration levels of tour guides greatly affected the satisfaction level of tourists from the tour (tour satisfaction). In the study conducted by Kılıçlar and Çevrimkaya (2019), it was determined that the professional competence of the guides positively and significantly affected the satisfaction of the tourists. The results reached by the aforementioned researchers are consistent with the results of this study that storytelling affects tour satisfaction.

This study offers both theoretical and practical implications. For example, the findings obtained are similar to many studies in the literature. In this regard, this study supports the existing body of literature and provides a positive contribution by confirming them in this context.

On the other hand, the most critical stakeholders of this study are tour guides and guide candidates. In this context, it should be kept in mind that the storytelling performances of tour guides will make serious contributions to the tour performance of the guests because convincing narratives will transport the guests to different times and places and make the tour more than an ordinary tour trip. In addition, stories will fascinate the guests by evoking emotions and curiosity and will allow them to experience.

Stories have become an integral part of the overall tour experience and will create lasting memories for guests. These memories often have the power and potential to influence future travel decisions and recommendations to others. In addition, storytelling will help guests understand the historical, cultural and social significance of the places they visit. Therefore, this skill should be given special attention. The first recommendation based on the results of the study is that tour guides should conceive the importance of storytelling on tours. In addition, active guides and guide candidates should make a special effort to develop these valuable skills.

Tour guides should know the group profile well to increase their storytelling performances and their guests' tour satisfaction. Furthermore, they should offer personalized stories according to age, nationality, socio-economic status and interests. The guide should enrich the narration with short and absorbing

stories about the local culture and people and ensure that tourists have an enjoyable experience by using a cheerful and humorous style. In addition, tourists' attention can be attracted even more by using creative narration methods and visual materials.

Playing a critical role in the recognition of the destination, tour guides should improve themselves in terms of storytelling as they may have great possibility to increase tour satisfaction of the guests with these stories in their tours.

Apart from the tour guides, it is advised that sharing storytelling-themed information on the websites of travel agencies, in social media posts about the destination and in promotional brochures may affect the satisfaction of tourists before and after the tour.

Another suggestion falls to the institutions that provide tourism guidance education such as universities. Theoretical courses that tour guide candidates may encounter in the sector should be reviewed in the curriculum of the universities that provide training, and practical courses should be included where tour guide candidates can improve themselves for the sector and opportunities should be provided for them to gain competence. Moreover, tourism faculties and science and literature faculties can work in cooperation to help candidates obtain information about story and storytelling. Increasing their competence in presenting information and narrating stories will ensure that well-equipped tour guides are brought to the sector.

This study suggests that upcoming research may take a few points into consideration. For instance, during this study, a literature review was conducted to collect data and it was determined that the literature on the relationship between storytelling in tour guides and tour satisfaction was quite limited. A suggestion that can be made for future studies in line with this study is that academic studies should be conducted on the relationship between tour satisfaction levels and tour guide storytelling by considering different tourist groups (third age, young groups, business groups, etc.). Another suggestion that can be made is to conduct more studies on other destinations in Türkiye that contain unique stories, similar to the ancient city of Ephesus, which constitutes the universe of this study. Moreover, future research may attempt to carry out studies including international guests rather than the locals.

Just like in every study, there are some limitations in this study. Initially, the sample is limited to local tourists who visited the ancient city of Ephesus. Accordingly, it would not be right to generalize the results to a distinct region or the entire country. Future studies can focus on other regions and apply their studies to other destinations. Moreover, similar studies can be applied onto local and foreign tourists. On the other hand, qualitative research technique was used in this research on storytelling and tour satisfaction variables. For future studies, it is recommended to obtain more comprehensive data using quantitative research technique and to contribute to the literature. In addition, alike studies can explore these variables from the perspective of tour guides.

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