Narrations and Imaginaries in Tourism

Narrative practices as basis for travel & tourism

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Tourism as complex phenomenon is studied interdisciplinary:

- Economics and Management
- Geography
- Anthropology
- Political Sciences
- Cultural Studies
- History
- Art History and Architecture
To establish and understand what narratives are and how they differ from stories and tales.

Delve into the process of narrative production.

Understand the contemporary links between narratives and tourism.
What is a narrative:

Narrative is a system of stories brought together to provide a coherent view of the world.

Narratives consist of:

**DATA** (What is told – The Stories)

and

**PATTERN** (How stories are (not) told)

Acquiring pattern: upbringing, culture, education and experience.
Slavimo Beograd!
A narrative is a system of stories with shared themes, participants and events.

Open ended system

System of stories more then the $\Sigma$ of stories contained

„Systemness“ that allows adding more stories
Types of narratives:

PERSONAL

MASTER

LOCAL
Personal Narratives:

Narratives that define us what are we today and what motivates individual behaviors in a systematic manner.

They are the collection of stories that we tell to ourselves and others about who we are, what life trajectories we project and what constitutes elements of our personal agenda.
Master Narratives:
(social or meta narratives)

Operate on the level of large groups of people

Very long lasting – decades, centuries, millennia

Deeply rooted society/culture/language

Shape comprehension & motivate actions, often with considerable impact

Provide interpretative framework and inspire activity
Master Narratives:  
(social or meta narratives)

AMERICAN DREAM  
CAPITALISM/SOCIALISM  
MODERNISM  
CHRISTIANITY

Collections of past and ongoing stories, systematically and hierarchically ordered that give meaning to many incomprehensible actions that happen every day
DEATH TOLL UP TO 200 MILLION – 50% OF EUROPE
Master Narratives: (social or meta narratives)

Master Narratives stood the test of time and became integrative part of culture of large groups of people.

Master narratives are essential in communication strategies and form basis for many tourism products and practices that we will explore here today.

(WTO estimate: 300-330 million pilgrims annually)
Master Narratives

Set of stories that help people make sense of the world, while also understanding how people make sense of stories.

Creation stories (origine and direction)
Fables (moral values and ethical behaviour)

Normative, cohesive, didactic.
Local Narratives:

Systems of stories about events in specific spatial and temporal context.

Local narratives provide a link for consuming master narratives in contemporary practices, places and circumstances. They construct a setting in which individuals connect their particular-personal narratives with master narratives.
Local Narratives:

Vertical integration

Master Narrative (Culture/Language)

↓

Local Narrative (Time and Space/Place)

↓

Personal Narrative (Experience → Story)

EXAMPLE?
Narratives – true or false or does it matter?

Facts do not suffice, they need interpretative framework.

Narratives as filters: what gets in and what stays out.

What stories to accept and incorporate into a larger system of stories that make our world understandable and which to reject as false, incoherent and hence unfit for incorporation into a narrative.

Truthfulness ≠ including/excluding factor

We incorporate false stories into our daily lives constantly, as much as we reject truthful ones.
Narratives as filters
Narratives as filters
Narratives – static or mobile?

Movies
Art and Museum Exhibitions
Fairs and Expos
Cards & Maps
Video Games & Animation
Photographs (INSTAGRAM)
Video and Postcards
Websites and Blogs
Guidebooks & Brochures
Coffee-table books and Magazines
Literature
Official documents and policies
News, quasi-science and academic articles
Narrative approach to communication and reasoning

Humans are story telling animals

Reasoning

Narrative Paradigm
- Made of Stories
- Easy
- Community-based

Rational World Paradigm
- Made of Logical Correlations
- Hard
- Education-based
Narrative approach to communication and reasoning

Why are so many decisions structured in narrative approach:

1) High exposure to people, places, objects and practices that transmit narrations

&

2) Limited access to education → critical thinking.
Narratives as discourses

How do we become immersed in narratives and metanarratives?

By socialization – we grow up in certain pre-existing network of stories, values and conceptions that we, after we leave the comfort of the family home, start firming in school system and then further – all around us.

In literature, movies and travel we start reproducing them.

Narratives are discursively made.
VIDEO:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7uuWOfwkSgl
VIDEO:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j9IFMtNrvvQ
Narratives in Tourism

Why study narratives in tourism:

Tourism is narrative experience, it sells narratible experience.

Tourism is more than just the journey/time spent on the destination.

It is a social phenomenon, and as such it has wider impact.
Narratives in Tourism

Pre – Travel Narratives
(basis for expectations)

On the Destination Narratives
(experience of and on the actual travel)

Post – travel Narratives
(what remains and how it is used)
Pre – Travel Narratives

What motivates you to travel and choose a specific destination?
Morocco 2017

BBC World Service
October 9 at 11:38am

Facial tattoos "like a code" for the proud Amazigh women of Morocco.

The Amazigh Women of Morocco
They were "like a code, a secret message between Amazigh"

National Geographic
ADVENTURE
ČEZ peščeno morje SAHARE

 Colourful portraits of women with traditional Amazigh tattoos and landscapes of Morocco.
Morocco 2017 – how did I get there

ONLY LOVERS LEFT ALIVE 2013
Detroit vs Tangier

Boredom
Dull

Thrill
Exciting
William S. Burroughs:

“Tangier is one of the few places left in the world where, so long as you don’t proceed to robbery, violence, or some form of crude, antisocial behavior, you can do exactly what you want.”
Tony explores the "Interzone", where artists like Burroughs, Bowles, and the Rolling Stones sought escape from Western moral prohibitions and the possibilities of great empty spaces. Does that "anything goes" attitude still exist?

"Thank you for getting lost with Anthony Bourdain all season."
Oriental narrative

Old and potent narrative that imagines lands, peoples and values beyond the West

Oriental is:
- Mysterious
- Sensual
- Lust
- Pleasurable
- Passive
- Liberating
- Thrilling
- Wise

Morocco (and the whole North Africa) is considered part of Orient, as much as other parts of Asia and Africa.

This is why it was Morocco where bored to death stylish, rich, artistic, flamboyant vampires of Jarmusch go to make total break from busy, ordered and utterly tired life in the West.
English patient (1996)
VIDEO:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q8GMo0i49fg
"Basically India is what you make of it and what you want it to be."

"India is not a place you simply and clinically ‘see’; it’s a total experience, an assault on the senses, a place you’ll never forget."

"There is possibly no other country where religion is so inextricably intertwined with every aspect of life."

"It’s not an easy country to handle, and more than a few visitors are only too happy to finally get on an aircraft and fly away and the most experienced travellers find themselves at the end of their tempers at some point in India. Yet, it’s all worth it."

Lonely Planet India: A Travel Survival Kit
Change of Narratives

19th Century Bali

Dutch colonials

Antropologists

Tourism industry

Bali 1930s
Pre – Travel Narratives

Many of them coming from colonial time.

Different from the narrative – Hard to attract clients
(think of contemporary art museum in Kavos, Corfu, Greece)

Authentic: pre – travel narrative > what happens on site
(„Experience real...“ vs „Real is only what is in my preunderstanding“)

Know the master narrative!
Pre – Travel Narratives

Master narrative -> Pre-Travel narrative -> Perceived authenticity -> Satisfaction

"Why are there no kangaroos hopping around Sydney city? I'm most disappointed."

Australia = Kangaroos -> I love kangaroos and I look forward to seeing them in Australia. Sidney is Australia -> No kangaroos on the streets of Sidney -> Not Satisfied at all.
Egypt:
- Pharaonic period
- Ancient Royalty
- Tombs
- Piramids

Jerusalem:
- Origin of Religions
- Ancient times

East Africa:
- Wild animals
- Tribal life
- Landscapes
Who constructs narratives of the destination?

1) Actors within the destination:
   a) Systematically
   b) Contingently

2) Discourses from broader power-relations (colonial heritage, pop culture, policies and documents, etc.)

3) Travellers
Pre – travel Narratives: universal or local?

Not Monolithic, differ between societies, cultures and groups.
Pre – travel Narratives: firm and soft

Firm – well established, hard to change, deeply embedded.

Soft – Conflicting or non existing, open to interpretation, still made.
Pre - travel Narratives: conclusion

Master Narrative (Culture/Language)

Pre - Travel Narrative (Experience → Story)

Imaginaries

KNOW YOUR PRE-TRAVEL NARRATIVE!

WORK WITH THEM NOT AGAINST THEM

Satisfacion

Dissatisfaction
On the Destination Narratives

What awaits at the destination? **NEW Stories**

Fellow Tourists and Locals
Food
Weather
Material and immaterial culture
(Postcards, music, guided tours, etc)

These are the stories that **compete** for meaning with the pre-travel narratives.
Who are narrative brokers on the destination?

Formal: Tour agents, Travel Guides, Tourism event organizers, booklets and brochures, natural and cultural heritage (interpretations).

Informal: Fellow tourists (backpacker case), non-tourism professionals (drivers, waiters, friends, etc.).

Circumstances of travel
(type of travel, company, guided or not, with friend (local) or not).
Who are narrative brokers on the destination?

Bhutan

North Korea
On the Destination Narratives: tourists as narration creators – 1 STEP

**Sensations** (humid, fresh, relaxing, thrilling, boring)

**Experience**

**Personal narration** (Like it, don’t like it, pleased, disappointed)
On the Destination Narratives: tourists as narration creators – II STEP

Personal narrative

Public Narrative
On the Destination Narratives: tourists as narration creators – II STEP

From personal to public narrative – selective process:

**Things left away** (embarrassments, fear, shame, anger, other limitations).

**Things added after** (elements of surprise, action).

STEP I is always more complex than STEP II
On the Destination Narratives: active vs passive tourists

Pre – travel narratives give shape to the journey, but travellers do not blindly repeat it. Rather, they have **agency and personalize the master narratives** and make them their own.

This is where the strange component from the destination is combined with the familiar from the pre – travel narrative.

Everyone is different – pre and on-D narratives are seen through past understandings, personality, knowledge base, and other factors.
On the Destination Narratives: tourists as narration creators – II STEP

From personal to public narrative – selective process, but also culturally sensitive.

Dirt – Filth: the lack of cleanness. For someone it might be the worst nightmare and for someone else a proof of authenticity and (imagined) belonging.

Travellers tend to dress as filthily as they like, as this, too, is part of the travellers´ identity. Rarely would they dress in the same way back home. The neocolonial attitude seems to be, "This is only India/Nepal anyway". Indians and Nepalis do appreciate it when they come across someone wearing clean clothes, and they wonder why so many travellers insist on looking so undignified. Travellers, for their part, still expect to be treated with respect. Behaving according to norms and values of the travellers´ universe, they don´t care if this is offensive to the natives.
Destination narratives are crafted differently depending on the framework of travel – business or pleasure, solo, couples, families, backpack or luxury, overland or flights.
VIDEO:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8e1OEqrdlxY
Post – Travel Narratives

Pre-Travel Narratives + experiences on the destination = post-travel narratives

Equation is never a clean cut.

Things added or taken out - narrative tellable that (always) fits the desired outlook of a travel in social sense.
Post – Travel Narratives

Demographics
(noisy city center: stag do-ers and retirement gift package)

Different travel audience: friends, family, business, solo.

Experiencing → Remembering → Narrating

Never fixed narratives (things might be added/taken out years after travel)
More time passes – Narratives start looking more alike. Paris was fabulous, Kenya was fresh and NYC was fun.

More time passes – Narratives lose the distinctiveness and start resembling the master narratives on the destination.
When we see an object for the first time, the soul – unaccustomed [to this view] – at first enlarges. This makes for a painful pleasure, a sense of overflowing, which moves the soul and draws a voluptuous tear from us. Through this operation, our soul enlarges and is, without knowing it, no longer capable of this first sensation. Man believes to have lost something, but actually he has won something. What he loses in sensuality, he gains in inner growth.

Goethe, J.W. von - Reisen.

It is precisely because of this inner growth that we produce personal travel narratives. Thank you!