

Research Paper 05

Narrative Destinations

Designing Places That Tell Coherent Stories

Abstract

Hospitality destinations are traditionally understood as collections of complementary facilities: hotels, restaurants, attractions, retail and leisure activities.

Guests rarely perceive them this way.

Instead, they experience a destination as one evolving story.

This paper introduces the concept of the **Narrative Destination**—a place where diverse hospitality elements contribute to a shared experiential identity rather than operating as independent attractions.

Key Question

What makes one destination memorable while another becomes merely convenient?

Many destinations provide excellent hotels.

Excellent restaurants.

Excellent attractions.

Excellent service.

Yet only a few create an experience that feels coherent from beginning to end.

Why?

Observation

Destinations are often assembled.

Rarely are they composed.

Individual hospitality assets may perform exceptionally well on their own.

Yet excellence at the level of individual components does not automatically create excellence at the level of the destination.

Guests remember destinations through continuity rather than accumulation.

The strongest memories emerge when experiences reinforce one another instead of competing for attention.

Discussion

Consider several completely different destinations.

A remote northern landscape.

A historic European city.

A Mediterranean coastline.

A wine region.

A mountain retreat.

Their identities are entirely different.

Yet the design challenge is remarkably similar.

How can accommodation, food, public space, local culture and daily activities contribute to one coherent experience?

The answer is not found in a specific historical theme or architectural style.

It lies in the relationships between experiences.

Narrative is independent of decoration.

Framework Insight

A Narrative Destination is not defined by its buildings.

Nor by its attractions.

It is defined by the continuity of experience it creates.

Identity emerges when individual hospitality elements become chapters within one larger story.

Implications

Narrative Hospitality therefore shifts the focus of destination development.

Instead of asking,

"Which facilities should be added?"

it asks,

"How does each new element strengthen the destination's overall narrative?"

Conclusion

Destinations become memorable not because they contain many experiences, but because those experiences belong to the same story.

Narrative transforms a collection of hospitality assets into a destination with identity.