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The role of cultural narratives in marketing handicraft products: Consumer behavior responses in Vietnam

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Abstract

This study explores the role of cultural narratives in influencing consumer behavior towards Vietnamese handicraft products, focusing on the mediating effect of narrative transportation. Using a quantitative approach and Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), data was collected from 358 respondents familiar with Vietnamese handicrafts. The findings indicate that cultural narratives significantly enhance narrative transportation, positively affecting consumers' attitudes toward the products. These attitudes, in turn, increase purchase intentions. However, cultural attachment did not directly affect narrative transportation, suggesting a need for further research into other influencing factors. The study provides valuable insights for marketers, highlighting the effectiveness of cultural storytelling in enhancing consumer engagement and driving purchase intentions. These findings contribute to the literature on cultural marketing and offer practical strategies for promoting culturally significant products in competitive markets.

Keywords: Cultural Narratives; Narrative Transportation; Cultural Attachment; Vietnamese Handicrafts; PLS-SEM

1. Introduction

In recent years, integrating cultural narratives into marketing strategies has gained traction to create deeper connections between products and consumers, especially in industries where tradition and heritage are valued. Handicraft products, known for their unique craftsmanship and cultural significance, are crucial in preserving cultural heritage, particularly in developing countries like Vietnam. These products, which include traditional textiles, pottery, and carvings, embody the rich cultural stories and values of the regions they originate from (Van Laer et al., 2014; Green & Brock, 2000).

Cultural narratives in marketing help differentiate handicraft products by providing consumers with stories highlighting the items' history, origin, and significance. This storytelling approach enables brands to create emotional bonds with consumers, enhancing perceived value and fostering a sense of cultural attachment (Escalas, 2007). In the Vietnamese context, where cultural pride and heritage play a significant role in consumer behavior, the effective use of cultural narratives can be a powerful tool in the marketing of handicraft products (Nguyen et al., 2021).

1.1. Research Problem

Despite the increasing utilization of cultural narratives in marketing, there remains a gap in understanding how these narratives influence consumer behavior, particularly in the context of handicrafts in Vietnam. Previous studies have highlighted the potential of narrative transportation—where consumers become immersed in a story—to influence attitudes and behavioral intentions (Green, 2008; Van Laer et al., 2014). However, limited research has explored the specific impact of cultural narratives on narrative transportation and subsequent consumer responses in the

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Vietnamese market. Addressing this gap is essential for understanding how brands can effectively leverage cultural stories to influence consumer decisions.

1.2. Research Objectives

This study aims to investigate the role of cultural narratives in shaping consumer responses toward handicraft products in Vietnam. Specifically, the research focuses on:

- Examining the impact of cultural narratives on narrative transportation and cultural attachment.
- Analyzing how narrative transportation affects consumer attitudes toward handicraft products.
- Exploring the relationship between consumer attitudes and their purchase intentions.

1.3. Research Questions

The key research questions addressed in this study include:

- How do cultural narratives influence the narrative transportation of consumers?
- What role does cultural attachment play in enhancing narrative transportation?
- How does narrative transportation affect consumer attitudes toward handicraft products?
- To what extent do consumer attitudes influence their purchase intentions for handicraft products?

1.4. Structure of the Paper

The paper is organized as follows: Section 2 reviews the existing literature on cultural narratives, narrative transportation, and consumer behavior. Section 3 outlines the research methodology, including data collection and analysis procedures. Section 4 presents the study's results, while Section 5 discusses the findings, implications, and limitations. Finally, Section 6 concludes with suggestions for future research directions.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Narrative Transportation Theory

Narrative transportation theory has become central to understanding how stories influence attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. Developed primarily through the works of Green and Brock (2000), this theory posits that narrative transportation occurs when individuals become immersed in a story to the extent that they temporarily lose awareness of their surroundings and experience a shift in beliefs and attitudes. According to Green and Brock (2000), transportation into a narrative is characterized by vivid mental imagery and emotional involvement, which makes the story feel more real to the receiver.

Narrative transportation is a unique form of persuasion because it engages the imagination and emotions of the audience, making them more receptive to the messages embedded within the story (Green, 2008; Van Laer et al., 2014). When consumers are transported into a story, they are likelier to adopt the attitudes and intentions promoted within that narrative. This effect has been extensively studied in various contexts, including advertising, movies, and branded storytelling, showing that a high level of narrative immersion can lead to positive brand perceptions and increased purchase intentions (Escalas, 2007).

The process of narrative transportation involves both cognitive and emotional components. Green and Brock (2002) emphasize that narrative transportation requires the reader or viewer to actively engage with the story, using imagination to visualize the narrative and empathy to connect with the characters. Van Laer et al. (2014) extend this understanding by proposing the Extended Transportation-Imagery Model (ETIM), which suggests that transportation is influenced by the narrative's quality and the individual's ability to engage with it. The ETIM identifies key antecedents of narrative transportation, such as story realism, character identification, and vivid imagery, which collectively enhance the consumer's experience of the story.

In the context of marketing, narrative transportation is particularly relevant as it helps explain how storytelling can create a deeper connection between brands and consumers. When consumers are transported by a brand's story, they are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward the brand and exhibit increased loyalty (Dessart, 2018). For handicraft products, where the cultural story is a key part of the product's identity, narrative transportation can transform a consumer's interaction with the product into a more meaningful experience. This not only influences their attitude towards the product but also strengthens their intention to purchase (Nguyen et al., 2021).

By understanding the mechanisms of narrative transportation, marketers can better design stories that resonate with their target audiences, making them more effective in changing attitudes and influencing behavior. As a result, narrative transportation theory provides a valuable framework for analyzing the effectiveness of cultural narratives in the marketing of handicraft products in Vietnam.

2.2. Cultural Narratives in Marketing

Cultural narratives have increasingly become a central element in modern marketing strategies, allowing brands to connect with consumers on a deeper, more emotional level. These narratives encompass the stories, symbols, and values that resonate with cultural identities and traditions, creating a sense of authenticity and heritage around the marketed products (Escalas, 2007). For products with deep cultural roots, such as handicrafts, the use of cultural narratives helps to differentiate them in the marketplace by conveying a story that goes beyond functional attributes (Nguyen et al., 2021; Fog et al., 2010).

The effectiveness of cultural narratives in marketing can be explained through their ability to evoke emotional responses and foster connections with consumers. According to Fog et al. (2010), storytelling allows consumers to feel part of a larger cultural heritage, which enhances brand identity and strengthens consumer loyalty. By engaging consumers with stories that reflect their own cultural values and traditions, brands can create a sense of belonging, making the product more meaningful and memorable (Green & Brock, 2000).

In the context of handicrafts, cultural narratives play a vital role in marketing efforts by highlighting the craftsmanship and cultural heritage associated with the products. Nguyen et al. (2021) found that Vietnamese consumers are particularly receptive to marketing that emphasizes the cultural significance of traditional products. This receptiveness is rooted in a strong sense of national pride and a desire to preserve local traditions. As such, cultural storytelling not only helps to convey the unique aspects of handicraft products but also positions them as carriers of cultural legacy (Van Laer et al., 2014).

Moreover, the use of cultural narratives has been shown to enhance the perceived value of products by creating a narrative-driven experience for consumers. This approach aligns with the principles of experiential marketing, where the focus is on delivering a rich, emotionally engaging experience rather than merely promoting functional benefits (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). By embedding cultural stories into marketing efforts, brands can transform the consumer's interaction with the product into a journey that is both emotionally and culturally significant (Escalas, 2007; Green et al., 2016).

2.3. Cultural Attachment

Cultural attachment refers to the emotional bond that individuals develop with cultural symbols, values, and traditions, often manifesting through products that represent these elements. This concept has been widely studied in the context of consumer behavior, where products associated with cultural heritage can evoke a sense of pride, nostalgia, and identity among consumers (Schwartz, 2006; Escalas, 2007). Cultural attachment is particularly relevant in marketing products like handicrafts, which inherently carry cultural significance and embody the traditions and stories of a specific community or region (Nguyen et al., 2021).

According to Schwartz (2006), cultural attachment arises when individuals perceive a product as a representation of their cultural background or values. This attachment can be triggered by products that reflect traditional craftsmanship, local materials, and cultural narratives that resonate with the consumer's sense of identity. For example, a traditional Vietnamese handicraft may invoke memories of family, local customs, or regional pride, thereby enhancing the consumer's emotional connection to the product (Nguyen et al., 2021).

Cultural attachment is also linked to the concept of self-congruity, which suggests that consumers are more likely to be attracted to products that align with their self-identity and cultural values (Escalas & Bettman, 2005). When a product aligns with a consumer's perception of their cultural identity, it creates a sense of congruence, leading to stronger emotional attachment and higher loyalty toward the brand (Aaker et al., 2010). This is particularly evident in markets where consumers have a strong sense of cultural heritage and prefer products that help them express their cultural values.

In the context of handicrafts, cultural attachment plays a crucial role in influencing purchase decisions. Studies have shown that consumers who feel a strong cultural attachment are more likely to perceive handicraft products as valuable, not merely for their functional qualities but for their ability to embody cultural stories and heritage (Escalas, 2007;

Lovett et al., 2013). This attachment often translates into a willingness to pay a premium price for products that represent cultural authenticity and preserve traditional practices (Nguyen et al., 2021).

Moreover, cultural attachment can enhance the effectiveness of marketing strategies that utilize storytelling and cultural narratives. When consumers feel culturally attached to a product, they are more likely to engage with its narrative, deepening their overall experience with the brand (Van Laer et al., 2014). For example, a handicraft product that highlights the cultural significance of a traditional weaving technique may resonate more strongly with consumers who have an attachment to that cultural practice, thereby influencing their attitudes and purchase intentions.

2.4. Attitude towards Product and Purchase Intention

Attitude towards a product is a key determinant of consumer behavior, reflecting the overall evaluation that a consumer holds toward a particular product or brand. According to Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), attitude is defined as a predisposition to respond favorably or unfavorably to an object, person, or event. In the context of marketing, a positive attitude toward a product often translates into a higher likelihood of purchase, making it a critical focus for marketers seeking to influence consumer behavior (Ajzen, 1991).

The link between attitude and purchase intention has been extensively studied, with the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) being one of the most widely used frameworks to understand this relationship (Ajzen, 1991). TPB posits that attitude toward behavior (in this case, purchasing a product), subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control contribute to an individual's intention to perform that behavior. Numerous studies have confirmed that a positive attitude towards a product leads to stronger purchase intentions, especially when consumers perceive the product as aligning with their values and preferences (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010).

In the context of handicraft products, the role of cultural narratives in shaping consumer attitudes is particularly significant. Cultural narratives can enhance the perceived value of a product by adding emotional and cultural significance, thus positively influencing attitudes (Nguyen et al., 2021; Escalas, 2007). When consumers perceive a product as embodying rich cultural stories, they are more likely to form favorable attitudes toward it, which can, in turn, increase their intention to purchase (Van Laer et al., 2014). For example, a traditional Vietnamese craft that tells a story about local artisans and cultural heritage may create a sense of pride and connection, fostering a positive attitude that drives purchase intention.

Purchase intention refers to the likelihood that a consumer will buy a product based on their attitudes, perceived value, and external influences (Dodds, Monroe, & Grewal, 1991). It is considered a key predictor of purchase behavior, making it an important focus for studies examining consumer responses to marketing strategies. Studies by Morwitz, Steckel, and Gupta (2007) emphasize that purchase intention is influenced by product attributes and the emotional resonance created through storytelling and narrative engagement.

This study examines the relationship between attitude toward handicraft products and purchase intention in the context of narrative transportation and cultural attachment. It is hypothesized that positive attitudes formed through engaging cultural narratives will significantly enhance consumers' intentions to purchase these products. This relationship underscores the importance of using cultural storytelling to influence consumer attitudes and behaviors in markets where cultural identity plays a crucial role (Nguyen et al., 2021).

2.5. Research Model and Hypotheses

Based on the theoretical framework and the review of relevant literature, this study proposes a research model to explore the impact of cultural narratives on consumer behavior in the context of Vietnamese handicraft products. The model examines the relationships between cultural narratives, narrative transportation, cultural attachment, attitude towards the product, and purchase intention.

The proposed research model is grounded in the Extended Transportation-Imagery Model (ETIM) (Van Laer et al., 2014), which suggests that narrative transportation mediates the effect of storytelling on consumer attitudes and behaviors. Additionally, cultural attachment is integrated into the model to capture the emotional bond consumers form with products that convey cultural values (Escalas & Bettman, 2005).

The following hypotheses are formulated based on the proposed model:

- H1: Cultural narratives have a positive impact on narrative transportation. This hypothesis posits that when consumers engage with cultural stories embedded in handicraft products, they are more likely to become mentally and emotionally immersed in the narrative (Green & Brock, 2000; Van Laer et al., 2014).
- H2: Cultural attachment positively influences narrative transportation. Consumers who feel a stronger connection to their cultural heritage are expected to experience a higher degree of immersion when engaging with cultural narratives (Escalas, 2007).
- H3: Narrative transportation has a positive impact on attitude towards the product. When consumers become immersed in a narrative, their attitudes toward the associated product are likely to improve, reflecting a stronger emotional engagement with the product (Green, 2008; Van Laer et al., 2014).
- H4: Cultural attachment positively influences attitude towards the product. Consumers who feel strongly attached to a product's cultural values are more likely to develop favorable attitudes toward it (Schwartz, 2006; Nguyen et al., 2021).
- H5: Attitude towards the product positively influences purchase intention. According to the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), a positive attitude toward a product increases consumers' likelihood of purchasing it (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010).

The proposed model provides a framework for examining cultural narratives' direct and indirect effects on consumer behavior. It explores how storytelling and cultural attachment shape consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions by mediating narrative transportation.

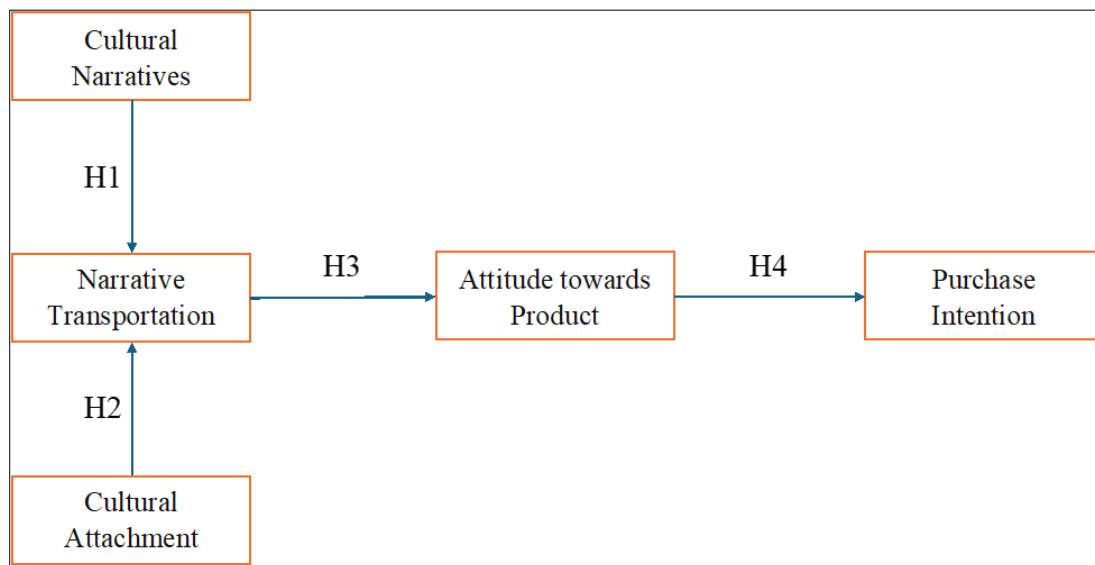


Figure 1 Research model

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study employs a quantitative research design to investigate the role of cultural narratives in shaping consumer attitudes and purchase intentions toward handicraft products in Vietnam. A cross-sectional survey method is adopted, allowing for the collection of data at a single point in time to analyze the relationships among the variables in the proposed research model (Creswell, 2014). The choice of a quantitative approach is driven by the need to statistically test the hypothesized relationships between cultural narratives, narrative transportation, cultural attachment, consumer attitudes, and purchase intention (Hair et al., 2016).

The study is based on a structured questionnaire that includes validated measurement scales for each construct, as identified in the literature review. The constructs include cultural narratives, narrative transportation, cultural attachment, attitude towards the product, and purchase intention. Each of these constructs is measured using multi-item Likert scales, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), to capture respondents' levels of agreement

with various statements (Likert, 1932). The survey targets consumers who are familiar with Vietnamese handicraft products, as these individuals are likely to have a meaningful understanding of the cultural stories associated with such products.

To analyze the data and test the research model, this study employs Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS software. PLS-SEM is suitable for this study as it allows for the examination of complex relationships between latent constructs while handling small to medium-sized samples (Hair et al., 2016; Henseler et al., 2015). It is also preferred for exploratory research where theory development and hypothesis testing are the primary objectives. PLS-SEM enables the evaluation of both the measurement model, which assesses the reliability and validity of the constructs, and the structural model, which tests the proposed relationships between the constructs (Hair et al., 2017).

The use of PLS-SEM aligns with the objectives of this study by allowing for the analysis of direct and indirect effects of cultural narratives on purchase intention through mediating variables such as narrative transportation and cultural attachment. This methodological approach ensures that the research provides robust insights into the factors influencing consumer behavior in the context of cultural storytelling for handicraft products.

3.2. Data Collection

This study used a structured online survey to collect data from consumers familiar with Vietnamese handicraft products. A non-probability convenience sampling method was adopted, targeting respondents through social media platforms and online groups related to handicrafts. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed, resulting in 358 valid responses for analysis. This sample size is considered adequate for PLS-SEM analysis, meeting the recommended ratio of 10 responses per indicator (Hair et al., 2016).

The survey instrument comprised two main sections. The first section gathered demographic information such as age, gender, and familiarity with handicraft products. The second section included multi-item Likert scale questions (ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) to measure the key constructs of the study, such as cultural narratives, narrative transportation, cultural attachment, attitude toward the product, and purchase intention.

Data collection was conducted over a period of four weeks. The survey link was shared via social media, email, and online forums, targeting individuals with a potential interest in Vietnamese cultural products. Incomplete responses and those showing patterns of straight-lining were removed, resulting in a clean and reliable dataset for subsequent analysis using PLS-SEM.

3.3. Measurement Scales

The measurement scales used in this study were adapted from previously validated sources to ensure reliability and validity. Each construct was measured using multi-item scales on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Cultural Narratives: This construct was measured using 4 items adapted from Van Laer et al. (2014) and Escalas (2007), focusing on the perceived authenticity and emotional engagement with the cultural stories associated with the product. Narrative Transportation: The scale for narrative transportation was adapted from Green and Brock (2000), comprising 5 items that assess the degree to which consumers feel immersed and engaged with the product's narrative. Cultural Attachment: This construct was measured with 4 items derived from Escalas and Bettman (2005), reflecting the emotional bond and connection consumers feel towards the cultural values embodied by the product. Attitude towards Product: The attitude scale was adapted from Dodds, Monroe, and Grewal (1991), using 3 items to measure the overall evaluation of the product. Purchase Intention: Purchase intention was measured using 4 items adapted from Ajzen (1991), capturing the likelihood and willingness of consumers to purchase the product.

A detailed list of the survey items for each construct is provided in the Appendix.

4. Data Analysis and Results

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

The study sample consisted of 358 respondents, with a slight majority of females (54.75%) over males (45.25%). Most participants held an undergraduate degree (45.53%), while 33.80% had a high school education, and 20.67% held a postgraduate degree. In terms of age, the majority were aged 18-24 years (37.15%), followed by those under 18 years (33.80%). Smaller proportions fell into older age groups, with 9.78% aged 25-34 and 7.54% aged 35-44.

Table 1 Sample characteristics (n=358)

	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	162	45.25%
Female	196	54.75%
Education		
High school	121	33.80%
Undergraduate degree	163	45.53%
Postgraduate degree	74	20.67%
Age		
Under 18 years	121	33.80%
18-24	133	37.15%
25-34	35	9.78%
35-44	27	7.54%
45-54	22	6.15%
55 and above	20	5.59%

4.2. Measurement Model Evaluation

The measurement model was evaluated using several criteria, including indicator reliability, internal consistency, and convergent validity. The reliability of individual indicators was assessed through outer loadings, with all items showing loadings above the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2016), indicating satisfactory indicator reliability (see Table 2).

Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR). All constructs achieved Cronbach's alpha values greater than 0.70, demonstrating acceptable reliability (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Composite reliability values also exceeded 0.70, indicating consistent internal reliability across all constructs (Hair et al., 2016).

Convergent validity was examined using the average variance extracted (AVE). All constructs had AVE values above 0.50, confirming that a substantial portion of variance in the indicators was captured by the latent constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). These results suggest that the measurement model meets the criteria for reliability and convergent validity, supporting the use of the constructs in further analysis.

Discriminant validity was evaluated using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio. All constructs satisfied the Fornell-Larcker criterion, with the square root of each construct's AVE being greater than its correlations with other constructs. The HTMT ratios were below the threshold of 0.85, indicating satisfactory discriminant validity (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015).

Table 2 Assessment of measurement model

Construct	Items	Outer loading	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_c)	AVE
Attitude towards Product (AtP)	AtP1	0.884	0.861	0.915	0.783
	AtP2	0.882			
	AtP3	0.888			

Cultural Attachment (CulAtta)	CulAtta1	0.788	0.882	0.914	0.726
	CulAtta2	0.845			
	CulAtta3	0.852			
	CulAtta4	0.918			
Cultural Narratives (CulNar)	CulNar1	0.816	0.883	0.919	0.738
	CulNar2	0.863			
	CulNar3	0.862			
	CulNar4	0.895			
Narrative Transportation (NarTran)	NarTran1	0.884	0.905	0.933	0.778
	NarTran2	0.877			
	NarTran3	0.889			
	NarTran4	0.877			
Purchase Intention (PurInt)	PurInt1	0.901	0.85	0.908	0.767
	PurInt2	0.829			
	PurInt3	0.895			

Table 3 The measurements' discriminant validity

HTMT Criterion	AtP	CulAtta	CulNar	NarTran	PurInt
AtP					
CulAtta	0.051				
CulNar	0.252	0.244			
NarTran	0.63	0.1	0.181		
PurInt	0.271	0.052	0.231	0.146	
Fornell-Larcker criterion	AtP	CulAtta	CulNar	NarTran	PurInt
AtP	0.885				
CulAtta	0.036	0.852			
CulNar	0.224	0.213	0.859		
NarTran	0.558	0.105	0.168	0.882	
PurInt	0.238	0.033	0.205	0.132	0.876

4.3. Structural Model Evaluation

The structural model was evaluated using path coefficients, R^2 values, and the significance of each hypothesized relationship. The analysis was conducted using the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach, which is well-suited for testing complex models with latent variables (Hair et al., 2016).

4.3.1. Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing

The path coefficients indicate the strength and direction of relationships between constructs. Table 4 presents the path analysis results, including path coefficients, standard deviations, t-values, and p-values. The results show that the path from narrative transportation to attitude towards the product ($\beta = 0.558$, $p < 0.001$) is significant, supporting H3. Similarly, cultural narratives positively influence narrative transportation ($\beta = 0.153$, $p < 0.01$), supporting H1.

However, the relationship between cultural attachment and narrative transportation ($\beta = 0.072$, $p = 0.234$) was not significant, indicating that H2 is not supported.

4.3.2. R^2 Values:

The R^2 values indicate the explanatory power of the model. The R^2 for attitude towards the product is 0.311, suggesting that 31.1% of the variance in attitude can be explained by narrative transportation. The R^2 for narrative transportation is 0.033, indicating that cultural narratives and cultural attachment together explain 3.3% of the variance. Lastly, the R^2 for purchase intention is 0.057, suggesting that 5.7% of the variance in purchase intention is explained by attitude towards the product. These R^2 values indicate a moderate explanatory power for the model.

Overall, the structural model demonstrates that narrative transportation plays a key mediating role in the relationship between cultural narratives and consumer attitudes. While cultural attachment was expected to influence narrative transportation, the data did not support this hypothesis, suggesting that other factors may play a more critical role in driving narrative immersion.

Table 4 Path analysis using maximum likelihood estimates

Path	Path coefficient	Standard deviation	T statistics	P values	Results
AtP -> PurInt	0.238	0.055	4.322	***	H4: Supported
CulAtta -> NarTran	0.072	0.060	1.191	0.234	H2: No Supported
CulNar -> NarTran	0.153	0.055	2.798	**	H1: Supported
NarTran -> AtP	0.558	0.042	13.160	***	H3: Supported

Table 5 R^2 values

	R^2
Attitude towards Product (AtP)	0.311
Narrative Transportation (NarTran)	0.033
Purchase Intention (PurInt)	0.057

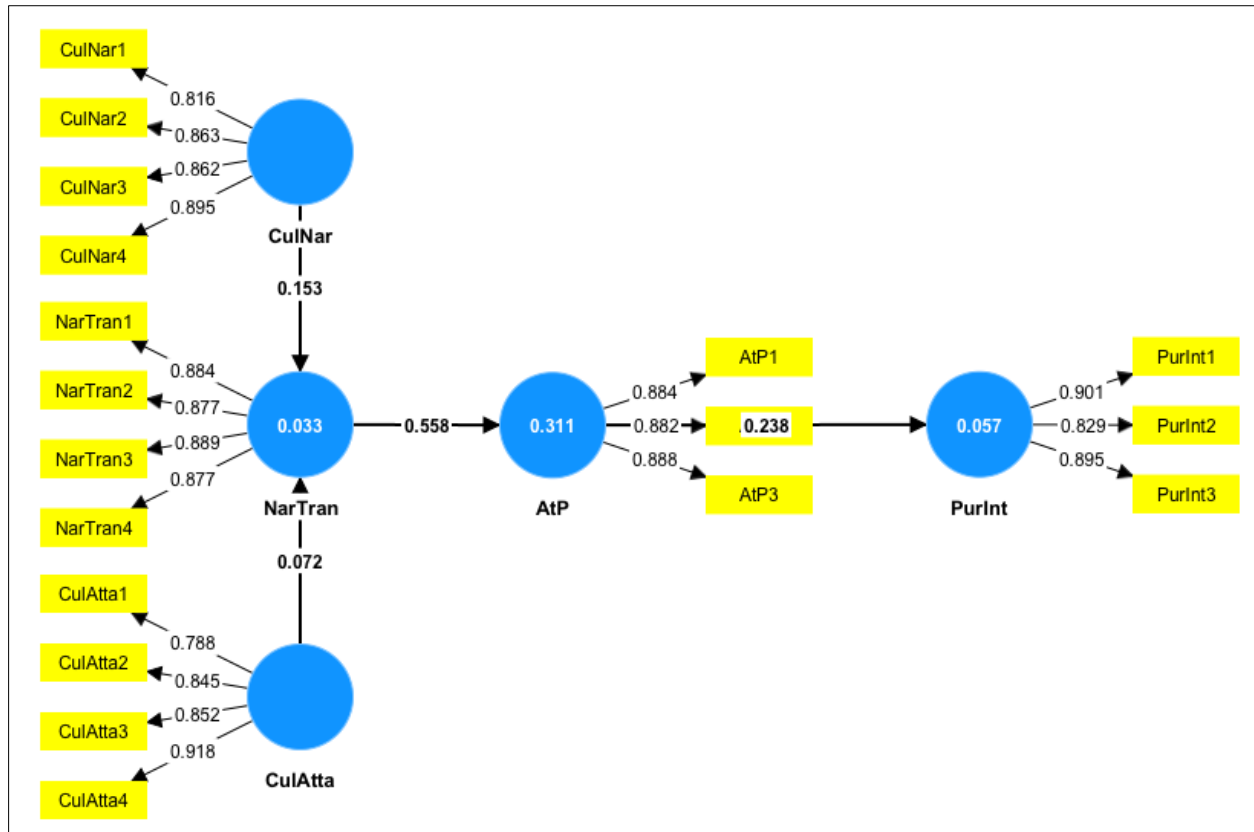


Figure 2 The results of hypothesis testing

5. Discussion

5.1. Interpretation of Results

The study highlights the importance of narrative transportation in shaping consumer attitudes and purchase intentions for Vietnamese handicraft products. Cultural narratives significantly impact narrative transportation ($\beta = 0.153$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that engaging stories enhance consumers' immersion, consistent with Green and Brock (2000).

Narrative transportation, in turn, positively affects attitudes towards the product ($\beta = 0.558$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that immersive storytelling leads to more favorable evaluations, as supported by Escalas (2007). However, the link between cultural attachment and narrative transportation was not significant ($\beta = 0.072$, $p = 0.234$), suggesting that attachment to cultural values does not necessarily enhance narrative engagement.

Attitudes toward the product significantly influence purchase intention ($\beta = 0.239$, $p < 0.01$), aligning with the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991). This suggests that positive attitudes fostered through cultural storytelling can enhance purchase intentions, making narrative engagement a valuable marketing tool.

5.2. Comparison with Previous Studies

The findings of this study align with and extend prior research on the role of narrative transportation in consumer behavior. Consistent with Green and Brock (2000), this study confirms that cultural narratives can effectively enhance narrative transportation, leading to more favorable consumer attitudes. This reinforces the importance of storytelling as a persuasive tool in marketing.

However, the non-significant relationship between cultural attachment and narrative transportation contrasts with earlier findings by Escalas and Bettman (2005), who suggested that cultural attachment could enhance narrative immersion. This discrepancy may be attributed to differences in product types or cultural contexts, suggesting that further research is needed to explore the role of cultural attachment in narrative engagement.

The positive relationship between attitudes and purchase intention is in line with the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), and similar to findings by Schiffman and Kanuk (2010). This consistency underscores the reliability of attitude as a predictor of consumer intentions, particularly in the context of culturally rich products like handicrafts.

Overall, this study contributes to the literature by emphasizing the mediating role of narrative transportation in the effectiveness of cultural narratives while highlighting the need for a more nuanced understanding of cultural attachment in different contexts.

5.3. Implications for Marketing Practices

The findings of this study offer several practical implications for marketers in the handicraft industry, particularly in leveraging cultural storytelling to enhance consumer engagement and drive purchase intentions.

First, the significant role of narrative transportation suggests that marketers should invest in creating engaging cultural stories that highlight the heritage and craftsmanship behind their products. By crafting narratives that transport consumers into the cultural context of handicrafts, brands can foster a deeper emotional connection, leading to more positive attitudes towards their products. This approach can be especially effective in digital marketing campaigns where storytelling can be delivered through rich media such as videos and social media posts.

Second, while cultural attachment alone may not directly increase narrative transportation, it remains an important factor for building brand loyalty among consumers who value cultural preservation. Marketers should continue to emphasize the cultural authenticity of their products, appealing to consumers' sense of pride and connection to cultural heritage. This can be achieved by highlighting the traditional techniques and local artisans involved in the creation of handicraft items.

Finally, the positive relationship between attitudes toward products and purchase intention emphasizes the importance of managing consumer perceptions. Marketers should ensure that the narrative elements align with the brand's values and the cultural themes that resonate with target consumers. Positive brand attitudes can be cultivated through consistent storytelling across marketing channels, ultimately translating into stronger purchase intentions.

Overall, this study suggests that cultural narratives are a powerful tool for differentiation in the competitive handicraft market, providing a way for brands to connect with consumers on a deeper level and encourage sustainable purchasing behavior.

6. Conclusion

6.1. Summary of Key Findings

This study investigates the role of cultural narratives in shaping consumer behavior towards Vietnamese handicraft products, focusing on the mediating effect of narrative transportation. The results show that cultural narratives significantly enhance narrative transportation, leading to more positive attitudes toward products. These attitudes, in turn, positively influence purchase intentions. However, cultural attachment does not directly affect narrative transportation, suggesting that its influence may operate through other mechanisms. Overall, the findings highlight the importance of narrative engagement in driving consumer perceptions and behavior.

6.2. Theoretical Contributions

This study makes several theoretical contributions. First, it extends the application of the Extended Transportation-Imagery Model (Van Laer et al., 2014) to the context of cultural products, demonstrating how cultural narratives can enhance consumer immersion in stories. Second, the research offers insights into the complex relationship between cultural attachment and narrative transportation, challenging the assumption that stronger cultural bonds always lead to deeper narrative engagement. This contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the factors that influence storytelling effectiveness in marketing. Lastly, by integrating cultural narratives and narrative transportation, this study enriches the literature on consumer behavior, particularly in the field of cultural and experiential marketing.

6.3. Practical Implications

The findings provide practical implications for marketers in the handicraft industry. To effectively engage consumers, brands should craft rich cultural stories that highlight the heritage and craftsmanship of their products, leveraging digital platforms to deliver these narratives. Emphasizing the authenticity and cultural significance of handicraft items

can foster positive consumer attitudes and increase purchase intentions. Additionally, while cultural attachment may not directly drive narrative immersion, it remains a valuable aspect for building brand loyalty, suggesting that marketers should continue to emphasize cultural heritage in their branding strategies.

6.4. Limitations and Future Research

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. The use of a convenience sample may limit the generalizability of the findings to the broader population of Vietnamese consumers. Future research could utilize a more diverse sampling method to validate these results. Additionally, the study focuses on a single cultural context—Vietnam—which may limit its applicability to other markets. Future research could explore the role of cultural narratives in different cultural settings to provide a more global perspective. Lastly, the non-significant effect of cultural attachment on narrative transportation suggests that further exploration of other mediating factors, such as storytelling quality or consumer personality traits, could provide deeper insights into the dynamics of narrative engagement.

Compliance with ethical standards

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Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

Statement of informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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