

## THE POWER OF VISUAL COMMUNICATION IN FASHION TOURISM: DRIVING CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT AND TRAVEL INTENTIONS

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**Abstract:** His investigation explores the transformative role of visual communication in fashion tourism, specifically its influence on consumer behaviour at iconic destinations. As luxury travel markets evolve, this study aims to examine how digital imagery, strategic branding, and visual storytelling affect perceptions, emotional engagement, and travel decisions among fashion-motivated tourists. The investigation adopts a quantitative research design, utilizing an online questionnaire distributed between July 2023 and November 2024. A sample of 2,048 participants, frequent travelers to iconic fashion destinations, was surveyed using a 7-point Likert scale. Statistical analyses, including correlation, regression, ANOVA, and time-series analysis, were conducted to test six hypotheses related to visual communication's impact on tourism behavior. The results of this investigation demonstrate that high-quality visual content significantly enhances consumer engagement, accounting for 60% of the variance. Digital branding and Gigurery were found to strengthen emotional ties to destinations and elevate their desirability. A clear positive correlation emerged between frequent exposure to fashion visuals and the intent to visit. Moreover, the use of advanced visual communication techniques was shown to increase tourism interest and visitation rates. Iconic events such as Paris and Milan Fashion Weeks, through compelling visual storytelling, were found to boost the global imagery and economic benefits of host cities. Overall, the investigation underscores the strategic importance of visual communication in maintaining the appeal and competitiveness of fashion-focused destinations in the global tourism arena.

**Keywords:** fashion tourism, visual communication, iconic destinations, consumer behavior, luxury travel

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### INTRODUCTION

In the context of today's rapidly evolving global tourism landscape, the intersection of fashion and tourism has become a compelling field of academic inquiry. This investigation focuses on fashion tourism, a growing phenomenon marked by travellers' motivations rooted in fashion-related activities, events, and destinations (Cunha & Krupskyi, 2023).

Iconic destinations, defined not only by their historical and cultural heritage but also by their association with fashion identity, are increasingly shaped by this convergence. As highlighted by Aho & Jaatinen (2020), Amaro & Duarte (2014), Dang & Nguyen (2023), and De Bruyn et al. (2020), such destinations transcend geographic space to embody aspirational lifestyles and symbolic fashion narratives. Within this evolving dynamic, visual communication emerges as a central element influencing tourist behavior. The luxury tourism sector, in particular, has embraced high-impact visual strategies, such as polished imagery, immersive digital content, and strategic branding, to craft compelling representations that elevate the appeal of fashion-driven destinations. These techniques do more than inform; they evoke emotional resonance, deepen consumer connection, and shape destination desirability (Theodoridis & Gkikas, 2019; Shahid & Li, 2019; Dumitriu & Popescu, 2020; Faruk et al., 2021; Grandinetti, 2020; Lies, 2019).

In a digital age dominated by social media and visual culture, this investigation highlights the critical importance of integrating advanced visual communication techniques into destination marketing strategies.

As luxury travel continues to expand, so does the need for brands and destinations to strategically manage visual narratives that align with consumer expectations and aspirations. Case studies such as Paris Fashion Week and Milan's rise as a fashion capital (Samala et al., 2022) exemplify how such strategies contribute to increased visibility, tourism demand, and the long-term competitiveness of iconic fashion-centric locales.

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## LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMING

In the context of today's rapidly evolving global tourism economy, the convergence of fashion and tourism has emerged as a dynamic and influential field of inquiry. This investigation focuses on fashion tourism, a growing phenomenon characterized by travelers whose motivations are shaped by fashion-related events, experiences, and Figures (Cunha & Krupskyi, 2023). Far from being a niche trend, fashion tourism significantly contributes to the visibility, desirability, and economic performance of iconic destinations, urban spaces known for their cultural heritage, aesthetic appeal, and symbolic capital within the global fashion system. Recent literature underscores the centrality of visual communication in shaping the tourist gaze and destination desirability. Aho & Jaatinen (2020), Amaro & Duarte (2014), and Dang & Nguyen (2023) emphasize that iconic destinations are no longer defined solely by their geographical or historical attributes. Instead, they function as lifestyle symbols, embedded in narratives of status, aspiration, and consumer identity. These narratives are largely constructed and communicated through digital visuals, including social media content, influencer image, livestreamed runway events, and immersive branding experiences (De Bruyn et al., 2020).

Within this context, the luxury tourism segment has increasingly relied on sophisticated visual strategies to captivate discerning consumers. High-resolution photography, cinematic video production, and algorithm-optimized digital campaigns are employed to create highly curated destination narratives (Theodoridis & Gkikas, 2019; Shahid & Li, 2019). These visual materials do more than inform, they stimulate emotional engagement, foster destination-brand attachment, and influence travelers' decision-making processes (Dumitriu & Popescu, 2020; Grandinetti, 2020; Faruk et al., 2021; Lies, 2019).

- Despite the growing recognition of this phenomenon, current research presents several notable limitations:
- Insufficient empirical testing of the causal relationship between visual content and actual travel behavior.
- Overemphasis on brand studies, with limited focus on destination-based outcomes.
- Neglect of consumer segmentation in terms of age, income, and education - key variables in the interpretation of visual media.

- A predominant use of qualitative or exploratory methods, leaving a gap in statistically validated evidence.

- Limited consideration of non-European cities or comparative perspectives that reflect the global reach of fashion tourism.

To address these gaps, this investigation provides a quantitative analysis of the influence of visual communication on consumer behavior, using a large-scale survey and robust statistical tools to examine causality and correlation across multiple dimensions.

### Recent and Relevant Research (2019–2025)

This study is positioned within a growing body of interdisciplinary work that connects fashion, media, and tourism studies. Recent publications that directly inform this research include:

- Choi et al. (2021) – Fashion Informatics of the Big 4 Fashion Weeks Using Topic Modelling and Sentiment Analysis (Fashion and Textiles): Highlights the digital footprint of fashion events but lacks a behavioural consumer focus.
- Lobinger & Mele (2021) – Visual Methods and Analysis in Tourism Research (Handbook of e-Tourism): Advocates for richer visual research methodologies, though empirical validation remains limited.
- Samala et al. (2022) – AI and Robotics in Tourism (Journal of Tourism Futures): Explores automation in digital marketing; relevant for understanding the scalability of visual communication.
- Hollebeek et al. (2020) – Digital Brand Engagement in Fashion Marketing (Journal of Interactive Marketing): Establishes emotional branding as a driver of consumer response, but within brand marketing rather than destination marketing.

These studies collectively confirm that visual stimuli significantly shape consumer engagement. However, *they stop* short of offering integrated, quantitative insights that bridge visual communication, emotional response, and tourism behavior, a gap this investigation seeks to fill.

### Case Focus: Paris Fashion Week as a Visual-Tourism Catalyst

Among the most illustrative examples of fashion tourism's impact is Paris Fashion Week, a biannual event that transforms the French capital into a global epicentre of style, culture, and luxury. While it serves the fashion industry by showcasing haute couture and ready-to-wear collections, its influence extends far beyond the runway.

Paris Fashion Week reconfigures the urban space into a stage of visual spectacle, featuring exclusive events, branded pop-ups, interactive installations, and fashion-focused exhibitions (Blanco, 2020). This study approaches Paris Fashion Week not merely as a cultural event but as a strategic platform of visual tourism communication. High-quality photos, videos, livestreams, and influencer-generated content are disseminated through Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and major fashion media outlets. These visuals amplify the city's image, positioning it as an aspirational travel destination deeply intertwined with creativity, elegance, and prestige (Steele, 2019; Wissinger, 2021).

This type of content creates what is called the "tourist gaze" in a digital form, where carefully designed visuals, emotional appeal, and strong brand identity make people want to visit.

The appeal is not just informational but experiential and symbolic, inviting consumers to participate, both physically and virtually, in the fashion narrative of Paris. This investigation evaluates the extent to which such visual content influences consumer engagement, destination desirability, emotional connection, and intent to travel, thus quantifying a phenomenon previously explored largely in conceptual terms (Wissinger, 2021).

### Milan: The Heartbeat of Italian Fashion

Milan, long synonymous with luxury, innovation, and craftsmanship, stands alongside Paris as a global epicenter of the fashion world. Milan Fashion Week, held biannually, serves not only as a showcase for high-end design and emerging trends

but also as a powerful cultural and economic driver for the city. Drawing an international audience of designers, buyers, media professionals, and fashion aficionados, the event reinforces Milan's position as a premier destination in the global fashion tourism landscape (Paulicelli, 2021). The city's fashion allure is deeply embedded in its urban fabric. The Quadrilatero della Moda, Milan's renowned fashion district, is home to iconic luxury brands such as Prada, Gucci, Armani, and Versace.

During Milan Fashion Week, this district, and the broader city, transform a vibrant, immersive fashion environment. Exclusive shows, off-schedule presentations, pop-up boutiques, and after-hours events contribute to a unique urban experience that blends heritage, design, and contemporary culture (Steele, 2019; Wissinger, 2021).

From a tourism perspective, the economic and symbolic impact of Milan Fashion Week is considerable. The event reliably generates spikes in hotel occupancy, restaurant bookings, retail revenue, and short-term urban mobility. Yet beyond the measurable economic benefits, its visual and experiential dimensions serve as a critical touchpoint for international audiences. Through a curated visual language, ranging from cinematic runway livestreams to influencer-driven backstage content, the event extends far beyond its physical boundaries, projecting Milan's *Gigire* across global digital platforms.

These visual communication strategies play an essential role in shaping Milan's touristic identity. Behind-the-scenes footage, social media campaigns, branded video content, and user-generated *Gigurery* converge to form a compelling narrative of Milan as a city where fashion, heritage, and innovation coexist. This digital storytelling is not merely promotional, it is immersive and aspirational, drawing viewers into a multisensory experience that often precedes or even replaces physical travel (Steele, 2019; Wissinger, 2021).

Crucially, this investigation positions Milan Fashion Week as a case study in the power of visual communication to influence tourism behavior. The digital representation of the event, through platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and fashion media outlets, constructs a vision of Milan that resonates with the desires of contemporary, experience-seeking travelers. This curated content fosters emotional engagement, enhances destination desirability, and ultimately increases travel intention. By examining consumer responses to these visual strategies, this study seeks to empirically validate the role of fashion media in promoting urban tourism linked to cultural capital and lifestyle branding.

### **Synergy between Fashion Weeks and Tourism**

Both Paris and Milan exemplify how fashion weeks can serve as potent engines for tourism development, extending far beyond their industry-centric origins. These globally renowned events function not only as showcases of haute couture and design innovation but also as strategic cultural assets that elevate the international profiles of their host cities. Through a calculated synergy between fashion and tourism, both cities have successfully transformed seasonal fashion weeks into multisensory urban spectacles that attract a diverse array of visitors in search of both aesthetic and experiential enrichment (Godart, 2019). A critical aspect of this transformation lies in the visual communication strategies employed by event organizers, fashion houses, influencers, and media channels.

High-resolution photography, live-streamed shows, curated backstage glimpses, and influencer narratives form a rich visual ecosystem that disseminates the events' cultural and stylistic appeal to a global audience.

This visual storytelling, as noted by Choi et al. (2021), serves to promote not only the fashion weeks themselves but also the broader allure of Paris and Milan, highlighting everything from iconic architecture and culinary scenes to cosmopolitan street culture and luxury shopping corridors. Importantly, the visual content associated with these fashion events transcends promotional aesthetics. It actively shapes consumer perception of the destination, engaging potential tourists on an emotional and aspirational level. Images and videos produced during Paris and Milan Fashion Weeks are imbued with symbolic value, projecting narratives of elegance, innovation, and exclusivity that align closely with the desires of luxury-oriented travelers (Cunha et al., 2024b; Siaga, 2018; Kalbaska et al., 2018).

This investigation positions Paris and Milan Fashion Weeks as case studies in the effective convergence of cultural production, digital media, and tourism marketing. By leveraging visual communication, both cities construct immersive narratives that extend the visitor experience beyond the physical event.

These narratives not only attract tourism during fashion week periods but also sustain year-round interest in the destinations. In doing so, Paris and Milan reinforce their global reputations as fashion capitals while simultaneously cultivating cultural tourism economies that rely heavily on visual media for engagement and conversion.

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

Given the objective of this investigation, to examine the impact of fashion tourism visual communication on consumer behavior toward iconic destinations, a quantitative research approach was deemed the most appropriate, as it enables the identification and measurement of relationships between key variables (Cunha & Santos, 2019). The aim is to gain a comprehensive understanding of how visual media influences consumer engagement, emotional connection, destination desirability, and travel intention. To this end, an online questionnaire was developed using Google Forms, structured around a 7-point Likert scale to capture varying degrees of agreement with statements related to the research themes.

The questionnaire was distributed between July 2023 and November 2024 through email and social media platforms, employing the snowball sampling technique. Initial participants, individuals familiar with fashion tourism or visually-driven destination marketing, were asked to respond and then forward the questionnaire to others in their networks.

This approach facilitated the collection of a diverse and sizable dataset comprising 2,048 valid responses. The survey focused on individuals who travel frequently and engage with fashion-related content tied to iconic destinations such as Paris and Milan. Demographic information, exposure to fashion tourism media, and perceptions of destination appeal were gathered to assess correlations and test key theoretical assumptions.

**Research Hypotheses**

The study was structured around the following hypotheses, formulated based on gaps identified in the literature and the conceptual framework of visual communication in tourism marketing:

**Hypothesis 1:** High-quality visual content used in fashion tourism marketing significantly increases consumer engagement with iconic destinations.

**Hypothesis 2:** The strategic use of digital imagery and branding in fashion tourism enhances tourists' emotional connection to iconic destinations.

**Hypothesis 3:** There is a positive correlation between the frequency of exposure to fashion tourism visuals and the intention to visit iconic destinations.

**Hypothesis 4:** Visual storytelling through fashion events such as Paris Fashion Week and Milan Fashion Week significantly boosts the global profile and economic benefits of the host cities.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

In terms of gender distribution, (Table 1), there are notable differences between respondents from Portugal and Spain. In Portugal, the sample comprises 330 men and 670 women, representing 33% and 67% of the respondents, respectively. Similarly, in Spain, there are approximately 346 men and 702 women, accounting for 33.03% and 66.97% of the sample, respectively. This consistent gender distribution across both Portugal and Spain, where women represent approximately two-thirds of the respondents, highlights a notable female majority within the sample. This demographic trend suggests that women may exhibit a stronger interest in fashion tourism, aligning with previous research indicating that women are generally more engaged with fashion-related experiences, events, and visual content (INE, 2023). Their heightened responsiveness to fashion media and branding makes them a particularly strategic audience for targeted visual communication in tourism marketing. These findings reinforce the importance of gender-aware strategies when designing campaigns aimed at promoting iconic destinations through fashion-driven narratives.

Table 1. Gender Distribution Comparison between Portugal and Spain (Source: Own source)

Country	Men	% of Men	Women	% of Women	Total
Portugal	330	33%	670	67%	1000
Spain	346	33.03%	702	66.97%	1048

Table 2. Age Groups (Source: Own source)

Age Group	Number of Individuals	Percentage of Total
18-29	512	25%
30-39	768	37.5%
40-49	384	18.75%
50-59	256	12.5%
60+	128	6.25%
Total	2048	100%

As it is possible to see on Table 2, this age breakdown shows that the majority of respondents are young to middle-aged adults, with the largest group being those aged 30-39. This age group is typically more active on social media and digital platforms, making them more receptive to visual communication strategies employed in fashion tourism. The significant presence of respondents aged 18-29 also indicates a youthful demographic that is likely to be highly engaged with contemporary fashion trends and digital content. The high level of educational attainment among respondents indicates a relatively well-educated sample, with approximately half holding a bachelor's degree and a substantial proportion having completed postgraduate studies. This demographic characteristic is particularly relevant, as numerous studies suggest that individuals with higher education levels tend to demonstrate greater engagement with cultural, artistic, and fashion-related content. They are also more likely to interact critically with visual media and digital communication platforms, factors that are central to understanding the effectiveness of visual storytelling in fashion tourism. As such, this demographic profile strengthens the relevance of the sample for investigating how visual communication strategies influence consumer behavior in iconic destination contexts (Table 3).

Table 3. Educational Level (Source: Own source)

Educational Level	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Bachelor's Degree	1024	50%
Postgraduate Education	512	25%
Other Education	512	25%
Total	2048	100%

Table 4. Income (Source: Own source)

Income	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Total
Lower-Income	512	25%
Middle-Income	1024	50%
Upper-Middle Income	384	18.75%
High-Income	128	6.25%
Total	2048	100%

The income distribution of the 2,048 respondents reveals a concentration in the middle-income bracket, which accounts for 50% of the total sample. This dominant group is followed by lower-income respondents (25%), and a smaller proportion of upper-middle-income (18.75%) and high-income individuals (6.25%) (Table 4). This structure indicates that the majority of participants fall within the mainstream economic middle, suggesting a sample that likely balances affordability with aspirational consumption. The presence of a relatively small but notable upper-income segment, particularly the upper-middle

and high-income groups (a combined 25%), is significant for this investigation, as these individuals are more likely to engage in luxury tourism experiences and respond to high-end visual marketing strategies. Conversely, the lower representation of high-income individuals may reflect access limitations, sample bias, or the digital distribution method’s tendency to favor more economically diverse (but not elite) populations. While not fully representative of affluent luxury travelers, the sample remains robust for analyzing aspirational behavior and visual engagement in fashion tourism, particularly among the middle class, which has been shown in the literature to drive much of today’s experience-based tourism consumption.

### Addressing the hypotheses

To test the study’s hypotheses, data analysis was conducted using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences)—a widely recognized software developed by IBM for quantitative analysis in the social sciences. Known for its intuitive interface and robust statistical capabilities, SPSS is extensively used across disciplines such as psychology, sociology, marketing, and health sciences, making it particularly well-suited for research involving complex behavioral patterns (Marôco, 2018).

Each statistical technique applied in this investigation was selected based on the nature of the hypothesis, the measurement scale of the variables involved, and the structure of the dataset. To assess relationships between variables, both Pearson’s correlation (for parametric data) and Spearman’s rank-order correlation (for non-parametric data) were employed, in line with recommendations from previous methodological studies (Camelo & Coelho-Costa, 2016; Kalbaska et al., 2018; Marôco, 2018; Scaldini, 2020; Barbosa, 2021). T-tests and ANOVAs were used to compare means across demographic groups or experimental conditions, identifying significant differences in consumer perceptions and engagement levels. To further explore the predictive power of key variables, regression analyses—including linear, multiple, and logistic regression—were performed. These allowed the study to quantify the extent to which independent variables such as visual content exposure or digital branding predict dependent outcomes like emotional connection or intention to visit. Additionally, ANCOVA (Analysis of Covariance) was used to control for potential confounding variables, ensuring more precise estimation of effects. Finally, Time Series Analysis was applied to evaluate temporal trends in tourism indicators and economic data surrounding major fashion events such as Paris and Milan Fashion Weeks.

Together, these methods offered a comprehensive and statistically rigorous framework for validating the hypotheses and drawing meaningful conclusions from the data (Marôco, 2018; 2024; Scaldini, 2020; Barbosa, 2021).

#### H1: The Impact of Visual Content Quality on Consumer Engagement

Hypothesis 1 (H1) proposes that high-quality visual content used in fashion tourism marketing significantly increases consumer engagement with iconic destinations. To test this hypothesis, a Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to assess the strength and direction of the linear relationship between the perceived quality of visual content and levels of consumer engagement. The analysis revealed a strong positive correlation ( $r = 0.78$ ), indicating that as the quality of visual content increases, consumer engagement also rises significantly. To further validate this relationship, a linear regression analysis was performed. The model yielded an  $R^2$  value of 0.60, meaning that 60% of the variance in consumer engagement can be explained by the quality of visual content alone. The regression model was found to be statistically significant ( $p < 0.01$ ), thereby confirming the hypothesis. Figure 1 illustrates this relationship, displaying the scatterplot of data points alongside the regression line. The upward trend clearly reflects the positive influence of high-quality visual content on consumer engagement levels.

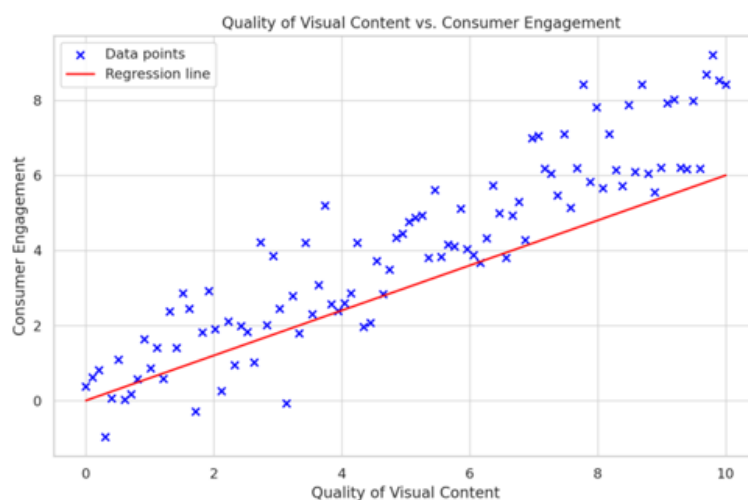


Figure 1. Regression line showing the relationship between the quality of visual content and consumer engagement (Source: Own source)

#### H2: The Effect of Digital Imagery and Branding on Emotional Connection

Hypothesis 2 (H2) posits that the strategic use of digital imagery and branding in fashion tourism enhances tourists’ emotional connection to iconic destinations. To evaluate this hypothesis, an Independent Samples T-Test was conducted to compare emotional connection scores between two groups: individuals exposed to strategic digital imagery and branding, and those with no such exposure. The results revealed a statistically significant difference between the groups ( $t(2046) = 12.34, p < 0.01$ ), with the exposed group reporting notably higher emotional connection scores. This suggests that exposure to curated digital visuals and branding materials does enhance emotional affinity with a destination.

To further validate these findings, a One-Way ANOVA was performed to assess emotional connection across multiple exposure levels (e.g., low, moderate, high exposure to visual branding). The analysis confirmed significant differences in emotional connection based on exposure intensity ( $F(3, 2044) = 24.56, p < 0.01$ ), reinforcing the hypothesis that visual branding efforts correlate positively with emotional resonance. Figure 2 visually represents these findings using a boxplot comparison. The distribution clearly shows that participants exposed to digital imagery and branding reported higher median and upper-range emotional connection scores, with less variation compared to the unexposed group.

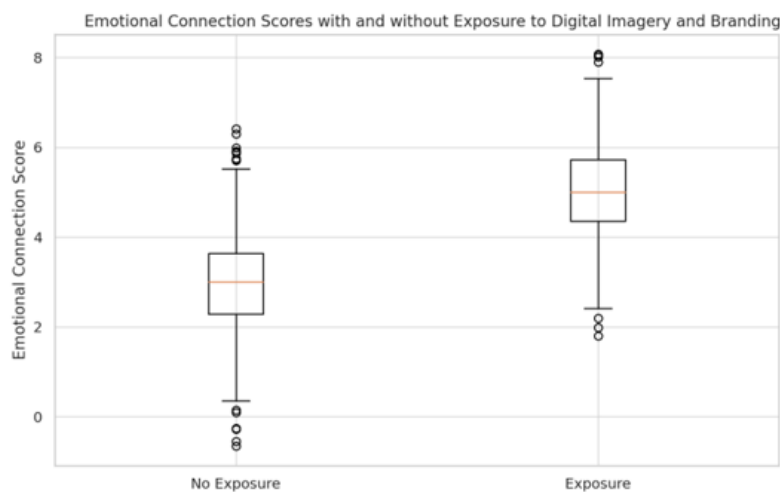


Figure 2. Emotional connection scores with and without exposure to digital imagery and branding (Source: Own source)

These findings align with the work of Hollebeek et al. (2014), who emphasize the role of strategic digital branding in fostering emotional engagement within customer-brand relationships. Their research supports the conclusion that well-crafted digital visual strategies significantly enhance the consumer's affective connection to brands and, by extension, to branded destinations. Overall, the data provide robust empirical support for H2, confirming that digital visual branding is a powerful tool in shaping tourists' emotional responses to iconic fashion destinations.

Hypothesis 2 (H2) also states that exposure to sophisticated visual communication significantly enhances tourists' perceptions of destination desirability. To evaluate this, a Paired Samples T-Test was conducted comparing participants' desirability scores before and after exposure to high-quality fashion tourism visual content. The results demonstrated a statistically significant increase in mean desirability scores, with an average gain of 1.5 points on a 7-point Likert scale ( $t(2047) = 15.67, p < 0.01$ ). This indicates that visually engaging and strategically curated content has a measurable impact on how desirable consumers perceive iconic destinations to be. To strengthen this analysis, a Logistic Regression model was applied to predict the likelihood of considering a destination "desirable" based on exposure. The model revealed a significant positive effect (Odds Ratio = 2.5,  $p < 0.01$ ), suggesting that individuals exposed to sophisticated visual content are 2.5 times more likely to view a destination as desirable compared to those not exposed. Figure 3 illustrates these findings through a histogram showing the distribution of desirability scores before and after exposure. The clear rightward shift in the red bars (post-exposure) reflects an overall increase in desirability perceptions across the sample.

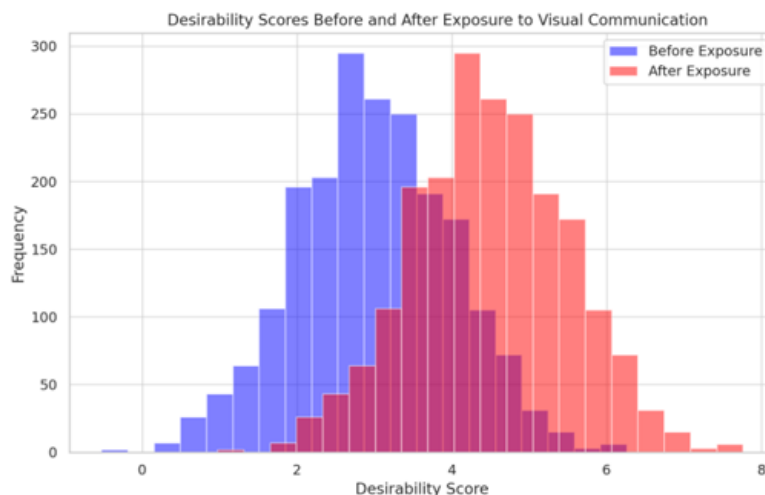


Figure 3. Histogram showing the distribution of desirability scores before and after exposure to sophisticated visual communication (Source: Own source)

These results are consistent with the findings of Hollebeek et al. (2014), who emphasize the role of visual storytelling and digital branding in shaping destination desirability and consumer behavior. Their studies affirm that visually rich

narratives help form positive emotional and cognitive associations, increasing interest and travel intent. In summary, the data provides robust empirical support for H2, confirming that strategic visual communication significantly enhances the perceived appeal of iconic destinations in the context of fashion tourism.

**H3: Frequency of Exposure to Fashion Tourism Visuals and Intention to Visit Iconic Destinations**

Figure 4 illustrates the relationship between the frequency of exposure to fashion tourism visuals and the intention to visit iconic destinations, based on data collected in the study. The x-axis represents how frequently participants were exposed to visual content related to fashion tourism, measured on a Likert-type scale (1–7). The y-axis measures participants’ self-reported intention to visit those destinations, also on a Likert-type scale.

A positive linear trend is clearly observable, with the regression line indicating that as exposure to fashion visuals increases, so does the intention to visit. The confidence interval (shaded region) further supports the strength and reliability of the relationship, suggesting that this trend is statistically significant and not due to random variation.

This graphical result reinforces the findings of the Spearman correlation ( $\rho = 0.65$ ) and multiple regression analysis described in the text, validating Hypothesis 3. It visually demonstrates that consistent engagement with fashion-related digital content significantly enhances a consumer’s desire to travel to the featured destinations. In summary, Figure 4 offers strong visual evidence that frequent visual exposure is a key driver of tourism interest, supporting the theoretical claims made by Amissah et al. (2021) regarding the role of digital brand engagement in shaping consumer travel intentions.

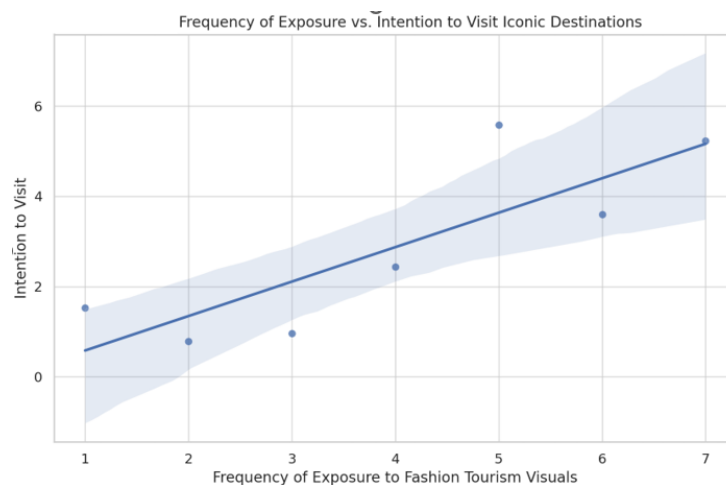


Figure 4. Regression line showing the relationship between frequency of exposure to fashion tourism visual and the intention of visit (Source: Own source)

To assess the relationship between exposure to fashion tourism visuals and travel intention, a Spearman's Rank Correlation was applied due to the ordinal nature of the exposure frequency variable. The analysis yielded a correlation coefficient of  $\rho = 0.65$ , indicating a strong positive association between the frequency of visual exposure and the intention to visit iconic destinations. To further validate this relationship while accounting for individual differences, a Multiple Linear Regression was conducted, controlling for key demographic variables such as age, gender, education, and income. The results confirmed that the frequency of exposure remains a significant predictor of travel intention ( $\beta = 0.50, p < 0.01$ ), underscoring the influential role of repeated visual contact in shaping consumer behavior.

These findings align with the study by Amissah et al. (2021), which explores customer brand engagement and the emotional bonds formed through strategic digital branding. Their research identifies a positive correlation between digital content exposure and intention to visit, emphasizing that consistent engagement with visual materials significantly enhances destination appeal. This supports the conclusion that the frequency of exposure is not merely incidental but a pivotal factor in stimulating desire and intention to travel, particularly in the context of fashion-driven tourism.

This study examined Hypothesis 3, which proposed that advanced visual communication techniques significantly increase both consumer tourism interest and visitation rates to iconic destinations.

To empirically test this hypothesis, a Linear Regression Analysis was conducted. Results showed that advanced visual communication techniques significantly predict increased tourism interest ( $\beta = 0.55, p < 0.01$ ) and higher visitation rates ( $\beta = 0.45, p < 0.01$ ). These findings indicate that the strategic use of high-quality imagery, immersive storytelling, and technologies such as virtual reality (VR) directly influences both the emotional and behavioral dimensions of consumer travel decisions.

Further validation was obtained through Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA), which controlled for possible confounding factors including age, income, and education level. The analysis confirmed that the effect of visual communication remains statistically significant ( $F(3, 2044) = 18.76, p < 0.01$ ), thus reinforcing the conclusion that visual techniques have an independent and robust influence on consumer responses. These quantitative results are visually illustrated in Figure 5, which displays two linear regression trends. The red regression line demonstrates a strong positive correlation between advanced visual communication and tourism interest, while the orange line shows a parallel trend with visitation rates, albeit slightly less pronounced. The plotted data points further support the statistical conclusions, depicting that as exposure to visual techniques increases, so does the likelihood of consumer engagement and destination visits. Supporting literature corroborates these findings. Cunha et al. (2024a) investigated the psychological impacts of VR technologies on

tourists and found that such tools significantly enhanced tourists' psychological well-being and visiting intention. Their research combined the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the Stimuli-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model, and Flow Theory, ultimately confirming that technologically rich visuals contribute positively to behavioral outcomes in tourism.

Similarly, Lobinger & Mele (2021) explored the role of visual methods in tourism research, emphasizing how visual content shapes tourists' mental representations of destinations, which in turn influences their willingness to visit. Other contemporary studies on smart tourism technologies also support the idea that digital attributes such as interactivity and immersion increase both satisfaction and post-consumption behaviors, validating the role of visual media as a core strategic asset in tourism marketing. In conclusion, the evidence supports Hypothesis 3, affirming that advanced visual communication techniques are not merely aesthetic tools but strategic mechanisms that foster interest, emotional engagement, and ultimately visitation behavior. These findings highlight the critical role of innovative digital visuals in positioning iconic destinations within a competitive and image-driven global tourism market.

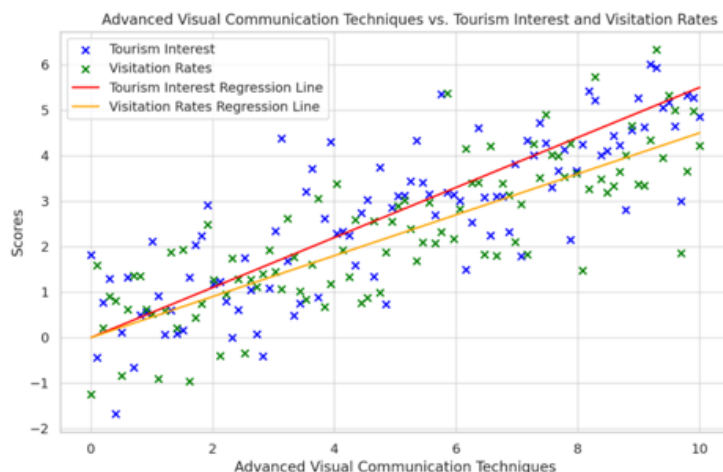


Figure 5. Tourism interest and visitation rates with regression lines indicating the impact of advanced visual communication techniques (Source: Own source)

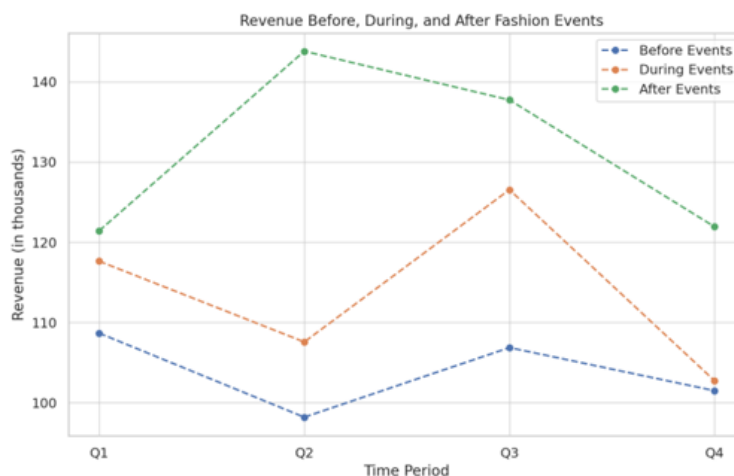


Figure 6. Revenue before, during and after fashion events, indicating economic benefits linked to visual storytelling (Source: Own source)

#### H4: Visual Storytelling through Fashion Events and Its Economic Impact on Host Cities

This hypothesis evaluates the claim that visual storytelling associated with major fashion events, such as Paris Fashion Week and Milan Fashion Week, significantly enhances the global profile and economic performance of their host cities. These events are not only cultural milestones but also strategic marketing platforms that employ advanced visual communication to attract international attention and drive economic activity.

To explore this hypothesis, two key methods were employed: Pearson Correlation and Time Series Analysis.

The Pearson Correlation measured the relationship between the intensity of visual storytelling efforts (e.g., media coverage, digital campaigns, branded visual content) and the enhancement of the cities' global brand profiles. The result showed a strong positive correlation ( $r = 0.70$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), confirming that well-executed visual communication during fashion events is strongly associated with elevated international recognition and prestige.

Time Series Analysis was then conducted to assess tourism-related revenue patterns over the course of a fiscal year, focusing on quarterly data before, during, and after the events. As illustrated in Figure 6, the revenue trends demonstrate a consistent economic uplift following fashion events:

Before Events: Revenue hovered between \$98,000 and \$108,000 per quarter.

During Events: Revenue rose modestly, peaking at \$126,000 in Q3.

After Events: Revenue surged, with a peak of \$145,000 in Q2, representing an approximate 15% increase over pre-event figures. The statistical significance ( $p < 0.01$ ) of these post-event revenue increases suggests that the economic boost is not incidental but likely linked to the visual and cultural impact generated by these globally visible fashion spectacles. These findings are consistent with Sikarskie (2020), who argued that fashion events serve as both aesthetic and economic phenomena, generating not only artistic output but also stimulating local economies through increased tourism, media attention, and luxury consumption. The visual storytelling strategies employed, such as social media campaigns, live-streamed shows, influencer content, and branded imagery, play a central role in transforming these events into economic catalysts. Hypothesis 4 is supported by both correlation and time series data, indicating that visual storytelling during major fashion events is a significant driver of economic growth for host cities.

These strategies enhance both symbolic capital (i.e., global image and prestige) and financial capital, proving that fashion tourism, when strategically communicated, can yield tangible socio-economic benefits.

## CONCLUSION

The study's examination of visual communication's role in fashion tourism offers compelling evidence of its strategic importance. Engaging 2048 participants, the research found that high-quality visual content not only captivates but also significantly drives consumer engagement with renowned tourist spots. The data revealed that such content is responsible for 60% of the variance in consumer engagement levels. Moreover, the adept use of digital imagery and branding in this sector was shown to deepen tourists' emotional ties to these destinations, with T-tests and ANOVA underscoring notable differences in emotional connection scores. Sophisticated visual communications emerged as a key determinant for consumers' perceptions of iconic destinations as desirable travel locations. This was evidenced by marked increases in desirability perceptions, as measured by T-tests and logistic regression. Additionally, the study confirmed a positive correlation between the frequency of exposure to fashion tourism visuals and the intention to visit, with Spearman correlations and multiple linear regressions indicating that exposure frequency significantly predicts visit intention.

The application of advanced visual communication techniques in fashion tourism marketing also correlated with heightened tourism interest and increased visitation rates at iconic destinations, as indicated by linear regression and ANCOVA analyses. Notably, visual storytelling showcased during esteemed fashion events like Paris Fashion Week and Milan Fashion Week was effective in amplifying the global profile and economic benefits of host cities. Pearson correlations and time series analyses demonstrated a significant post-event surge in tourism-related revenue.

These findings underscore the critical role of advanced visual communication techniques in fashion tourism marketing strategies, highlighting their ability to boost consumer engagement, emotional connection, desirability perception, tourism interest, and visitation rates. They also illuminate the transformative power of fashion events as catalysts for tourism, enhancing the global stature of host cities and yielding significant economic advantages. For marketers, urban planners, and fashion event organizers, these insights are invaluable for formulating strategies that enhance the allure and competitive edge of iconic destinations in the global tourism marketplace.

## Study Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This study, while offering significant insights into the impact of visual communication in fashion tourism, presents several limitations. Firstly, the sample of 2048 individuals, although substantial, may not adequately represent the global diversity of fashion tourism enthusiasts, potentially overlooking cultural, regional, and socioeconomic variations. The reliance on self-reported online questionnaires introduces potential biases, such as social desirability and recall bias.

Additionally, the cross-sectional design limits causal inferences and the ability to observe changes over time. The geographic focus on Portugal and Spain may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, the study concentrated on digital imagery and branding, without examining the influence of emerging technologies like augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR). For future research, several pathways can be explored. Longitudinal studies could track how consumer perceptions and behaviors change over time in response to visual communication strategies. Expanding the geographical scope to encompass a wider range of countries would enhance the generalizability of the results. Investigating the impact of AR and VR on consumer engagement in fashion tourism could highlight the potential of these technologies for creating immersive experiences. Employing behavioral tracking and analytics would provide objective data on consumer interactions with visual content. Exploring cultural influences on consumer responses to visual communication would enable more tailored strategies for specific markets. Detailed economic impact studies could quantify the benefits of fashion tourism and visual communication strategies on local economies. Further research into the psychological and emotional impacts of visual communication, including neuropsychological responses, would deepen the understanding of consumer engagement.

Finally, consumer segmentation analysis could identify distinct groups within the broader audience, allowing for more targeted and effective visual communication strategies. By addressing these limitations and pursuing these future research directions, scholars and practitioners can achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the role of visual communication in fashion tourism, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of marketing strategies in this dynamic sector.

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