

What Makes a Good Tourist Guide Narrative?

A Comparative Study of AI-Generated and Human-Generated Tour Scripts for Inbound Tourism

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Abstract

This study examines what constitutes a good tourist guide narrative by comparing tour scripts generated by generative AI with those created by experienced guides. As part of a demonstration project, we developed a method for generating English tour scripts for novice guides using generative AI with tourism information from reliable sources. The generated scripts were evaluated in terms of script preparation efficiency, expert assessment, and field trials with inbound tourists. The results showed that generative AI reduced script preparation time by approximately 89% compared with experienced guides, while the first AI-generated script achieved approximately 87% of the average expert-evaluation score of scripts created by experienced guides. However, stronger constraints introduced to improve factual reliability reduced misinformation but also decreased information richness and narrative quality. A qualitative comparison further suggested that experienced guides regarded tour scripts not merely as fixed texts for information delivery, but as flexible frameworks for interaction with tourists. These findings suggest that a good tourist guide narrative involves three interrelated dimensions: reliability, narrative quality, and interactivity. Generative AI can provide an effective foundation for novice guides, but its successful use requires balancing factual reliability with engaging storytelling and adaptation to tourists' interests and responses.

Keywords: Inbound Tourism, Generative AI, Tour Guide Narratives

1. Introduction

In recent years, advancements in Large Language Models (LLMs) have made high-quality natural language generation possible, and generative AI is being utilized in a wide range of fields, including software development, document creation, and education. In the tourism sector as well, there are high expectations for its application in providing multilingual information and supporting tour guides. On the other hand, in Japan, as the number of inbound tourists increases, shortage of multilingual inbound tour guides has become a significant challenge. In regional cities in particular, the shortage of personnel capable of handling foreign languages is becoming increasingly severe, compounded by an aging guide population and a lack of successors.

Tour guides are required not only to possess knowledge of the region's history, culture, industries, and natural environment, but also to have the ability to flexibly tailor their explanations to the interests and backgrounds of tourists. Consequently, training tour guides takes a long time, and it is not easy in a short period of time.

Previous studies have emphasized that tour guiding involves not only the transmission of factual information but also communicative and interactional roles and storytelling [Cohen, 1985; Bessiere and Ahn, 2021]. Recent studies have also begun to explore the application of large language models and generative AI to tourism information provision and tour guidance [Wei et al., 2024; Kameyama et al., 2025]. Aytekin et al. (2025) examined the effect of tour guides' storytelling performance on tourist satisfaction, while Kusumah and Andrianto (2023) investigated storytelling techniques used by tour guides to create memorable visitor experiences. These studies are closely related to the motivation for our research. However, our study takes a different perspective by focusing on how

AI-generated tour scripts differ from those created by experienced human guides at the narrative and interactional levels.

This paper presents an overview and the results of the "Demonstration Project to Strengthen the Training of Inbound Tourism Guides Using Generative AI" (hereinafter referred to as "this demonstration project"), which was conducted in Hirosaki City, Aomori Prefecture, as part of the Japan Tourism Agency's Reiwa 7 "Demonstration Project for Regional Revitalization through the Promotion of Tourism DX (Generative AI Utilization Model)." Furthermore, based on the insights gained through this demonstration project, this paper offers a discussion from the perspectives of intellectual property and standardization regarding the societal implementation of generative AI.

2. Background of the Demonstration Project

Located in western Aomori Prefecture, Hirosaki City is a leading tourist destination in the Tohoku region, boasting natural scenery throughout the four seasons, including the cherry blossoms at Hirosaki Castle, as well as historical and cultural resources. It is particularly known as one of Japan's premier cherry blossom viewing spots, attracting approximately 2 million visitors annually during the "Hirosaki Cherry Blossom Festival."

At the same time, Hirosaki City faces challenges such as an aging tourism guide workforce, a shortage of successors, a lack of multilingual staff, and rising training costs. While the city has previously established the "Hirosaki Guide School" to train tourism guides, it has not been easy to share the tacit knowledge of experienced guides in a way that beginners can effectively utilize.

In this demonstration project, generative AI was utilized to automatically generate multilingual tour scripts (scripts for

tour guides to read aloud), with the aim of supporting the training of tour guides and improving operational efficiency. The project sought to reduce the burden of training tour guides while building a sustainable training model. Consequently, the goal was to expand the local pool of tour guides, improve the quality of the tourism experience, and ultimately enhance tourist satisfaction.

3. Overview of the Demonstration Project

In this demonstration project, a system was developed to automatically generate tour scripts using generative AI, and a model to support the training of tour guides was tested in Hirosaki City. By generating tour scripts based on reliable information from local governments and tourism magazines, an environment was established that enables the efficient creation of standardized tour scripts incorporating the expertise of experienced guides.

In addition, we conducted quality assessments of the generated scripts by independent experts with professional tour-guiding experience and conducted field tests targeting inbound tourists to verify their effectiveness.

The demonstration project consisted of the following four initiatives.

Initiative 1: Creating tour scripts using generative AI

Initiative 2: Comparison of time required to create tour scripts using generative AI versus experienced guides

Initiative 3: Expert quality assessment of tour scripts created by generative AI

Initiative 4: Field trial led by novice guides using the tour scripts, followed by evaluation via a questionnaire survey

3.1 Creating Tour Scripts Using Generative AI (Initiative 1)

In tourist guidance, tour scripts that summarize the content to be explained at each sightseeing spot are effective. However, creating them manually requires a great deal of time and effort. Furthermore, it is not easy for novice guides to structure explanations that take into account local knowledge and the interests of tourists.

In this initiative, by using generative AI to create tour scripts in both Japanese and English, we significantly reduced the time required for creation while also aiming to cut ongoing operational costs. On the other hand, generative AI may include content that differs from the facts (hallucinations). Therefore, in this initiative, the information sources available to the generative AI were limited to tourism information data published and provided by Hirosaki City and data from Rurubu, a commercially published Japanese travel guide. Furthermore, by including instructions in the prompts to have the generative AI re-verify the content, and by having a human perform a final check, we minimized the generation of misinformation.

System development and testing were carried out according to the following procedure.

Step 1: Prepare the tourism information data provided by Hirosaki City and the Rurubu data as reference materials for the generative AI.

Step 2: Design a prompt for generating a tour script.

Step 3: Create the first draft of the tour script using generative AI.

Step 4: Conduct the first pilot test with novice guides and conduct a survey to both the guides and tourists.

Step 5: Compare the AI-generated tour script with the one created by experienced guides, and have experts evaluate both.

Step 6: Refine the prompts based on the insights gained from Steps 4 and 5.

Step 7: Create the second version of the tour script using the improved generative AI.

Step 8: Conduct the second pilot test and evaluate the effectiveness of the improvements.

Step 9: Verify the effectiveness of this method

In actual operation, the plan is for local government employees, DMO staff, or even the tour guides themselves to use the improved generative AI to create tour scripts for use on-site. In this initiative, ChatGPT was used as the generative AI engine. We did not perform any retraining or fine-tuning of the LLM itself; instead, we generated tour scripts through prompt design and in-context learning. Users can add instructions interactively using the same interface as standard ChatGPT

3.2 Prompt Design and Tour Script Generation

As mentioned earlier, the validation was conducted in three stages: Step 3 (creation of the first draft of the tour script), Step 6 (refinement of the prompts based on the pilot test and expert evaluation), and Step 7 (creation of the second draft of the tour script).

In creating the first version of the tour script, we gave same instructions to both the generative AI and experienced guides, then compared the results.

On the other hand, when creating the second version of the tour script, we revised the prompt to generate a generic tour script that is not dependent on individual tourists. After generating a standard tour script, users can easily tailor the content to the target tourist or situation by providing additional instructions in natural language, such as “Please add a description of the photo spot.”

Furthermore, to suppress hallucinations by the generative AI, we explicitly incorporated into the prompt the instruction: “Do not output any content not found in the input materials or specified sources unless its accuracy can be verified.” Figure 1 shows a tour script generated by generative AI as the first version.

Welcome to Hirosaki! This city is famous for its apples, its beautiful cherry blossoms, and its charming Western-style buildings. Today, we'll take a relaxing walk through the city and experience Japan's history and culture from the Meiji to the Showa period. Hirosaki flourished as a castle town during the Edo period, and after the Meiji Restoration, it developed into a center of education and culture. Many foreign teachers and architects came here in those days, and that's why you can still find so many beautiful Western-style buildings today. Today, we'll focus on these historic Western-style buildings and the charming streets that local people have carefully preserved for generations. At the end of the tour, you'll also get to experience Hirosaki's traditional "Neputa" culture—one of the highlights of this region. Is everyone ready? Great! Let's head to our first stop—the Hirosaki City Tourist Center.

Figure 1: First Draft of the Tour Script Generated by Generative AI

3.3 Comparison with Tour Scripts Produced by Experienced Guides

To examine the characteristics of AI-generated tour scripts, we compared the AI-generated script with scripts prepared by three experienced tour guides. The guides were given the same basic information about the tourists and the tour and were asked to prepare a tour script. Among the three human-generated scripts, the script that received the highest evaluation from the tourism experts was used for qualitative comparison with the AI-generated script.

A notable difference was observed in how the AI and the experienced guide conceptualized a "tour script." The AI-generated script was primarily structured as a continuous narrative delivered by the guide. It provided factual and contextual information about Hirosaki and its tourist attractions in a relatively organized and self-contained form. In contrast, the experienced guide spontaneously constructed the script as an interaction between the guide and the tourists. The guide asked tourists about practical matters, such as their previous experience visiting Japan, their reasons for choosing the tour, and whether they were comfortable with walking, and incorporated the anticipated responses into the subsequent tour narrative. Importantly, these interactions were not merely conversational additions. Information elicited from the tourists was used to shape subsequent explanations and, in some cases, to adapt the conduct of the tour itself. For example, the tourists' reason for choosing the Western-style architecture tour was used to motivate a subsequent explanation of why such buildings exist in Hirosaki, while a question about walking ability was directly related to the proposed itinerary. Thus, interaction functioned as a means of adapting both the narrative and the tour to the tourists.

This comparison, however, should be interpreted with caution. The two scripts were not produced under strictly identical linguistic and presentational conditions. The experienced guide prepared the script in Japanese and spontaneously chose to represent it as a dialogue between the guide and the tourists, whereas the AI-generated script was produced in Japanese and English as a narrative to be delivered by the guide. The observed difference therefore

cannot be taken as evidence that human-generated tour scripts are inherently more interactive than AI-generated ones.

Nevertheless, the experienced guide's spontaneous choice of a dialogue format is itself noteworthy. Although asked to prepare a "tour script," the guide did not treat the task simply as the preparation of a text containing information to be delivered. Instead, the script anticipated tourists' responses, interests, physical conditions, and other situational factors and incorporated them into the unfolding tour narrative. This suggests that, from the perspective of an experienced guide, a tour script may function less as a fixed text to be delivered and more as a flexible framework for interaction.

The qualitative comparison therefore points to a potentially important distinction between information provision and professional tour guiding. Factual accuracy, fluency, and information coverage are clearly important components of a tour script, but they may not be sufficient to characterize a good tourist guide narrative. Interaction enables the guide to elicit tourists' interests and reactions and to adapt subsequent explanations accordingly. In this sense, the quality of a tourist guide narrative may depend not only on what information is presented, but also on how tourists are positioned within the narrative, and how the narrative can unfold through interaction.

4. Evaluation

In this demonstration project, the developed generative AI system was evaluated from three perspectives: Initiative 2: Comparison of tour script creation between generative AI and experienced guides; Initiative 3: Expert quality evaluation of tour scripts created by generative AI; and Initiative 4: Field trials conducted by novice guides using the tour scripts and questionnaire evaluations by inbound tourists.

4.1 Evaluation of Work Efficiency (Initiative 2)

We compared the time required for the four stages—gathering local information, creating tour scripts, translation, and content verification—between script creation using generative AI and manual creation by experienced guides. The results showed that while the average work time for three experienced guides was 673 minutes, using generative AI took only 75 minutes, achieving an approximately 89% reduction in work time. Significant efficiency gains were particularly evident in the collection of local information and translation. Meanwhile, in the second pilot test, although generation time increased slightly due to stricter generation conditions implemented to suppress hallucinations, the time required for content verification decreased, resulting in an overall work time comparable to that of the first pilot test.

4.2 Expert Quality Evaluation (Initiative 3)

Three experienced tour guides conducted an expert evaluation comparing the AI-generated tour scripts with those created by three other experienced tour guides. The evaluation compared the scripts based on multiple criteria,

	Generative AI, 1 st Trial	Expert Guide ①	Expert Guide ②	Expert Guide ③	Generative AI, 2 nd Trial
Accuracy	8	7	8	11	8
Naturalness of Expression	9	10	13	12	8
Clarity	11	9	12	12	8
Storytelling	9	8	11	11	7
Practicality	9	8	12	12	8
Guide-like Quality	7	8	13	14	8
Versatility	12	8	11	11	9
Ability to Engage Inbound Tourists	9	11	13	12	7
Appropriateness of Experience Description	10	11	13	13	11
Promotion of Cultural Understanding	10	8	12	11	9
Total Score	94	88	118	119	83

Table 1. Expert Quality Assessment of Tour Scripts Created by Generative AI and Those Created by Experienced Guides

including accuracy, naturalness, storytelling, practicality, and authenticity as a tour guide.

The results showed that the AI-generated scripts did not consistently match the quality of those created by experienced guides. By refining the prompts to address the hallucinations identified in the first pilot test, the amount of misinformation was significantly reduced in the second pilot test. However, the volume of information and narrative quality also declined, demonstrating the difficulty of balancing accuracy and expressiveness. The specific evaluation results are shown in Table 1. Each number in Table 1 represents the total of the scores (out of 5) given by three experts (experienced guides who are independent from the tour script writer).

As a result of refining the prompts to reduce the hallucinations observed in the initial pilot test, misinformation was significantly reduced in the second version. However, the overall expert evaluation score decreased from 94 for the first version to 83 for the second, mainly due to reductions in the amount of information and narrative quality.

This result suggests that increasing factual reliability does not necessarily improve the overall quality of a tourist guide narrative. A highly constrained script may be more reliable, but excessive restriction can reduce the amount of contextual information and narrative richness that make a tour engaging. The results therefore indicate a tension between factual reliability and narrative expressiveness, and suggest that both dimensions need to be considered when designing AI-assisted tour scripts.

4.3 Evaluation Through Field Trial (Initiative 4)

To evaluate the practicality of tour scripts generated by generative AI, two pilot tests were conducted in Hirosaki City using novice tour guides. The first pilot test was conducted in November 2025, during which novice guides conducted guided tours in English for inbound tourists using the first version of the AI-generated tour script. The

second pilot test was conducted in January 2026 using a second version of the script generated with improved prompts; for comparison, two experienced guides also conducted guided tours in English. Figure 2 shows a guided tour during the pilot test. Table 2 shows the tourists and guides who participated in the pilot tests.



Figure 2. Guided tour during the pilot test

Based on the results of a post-tour questionnaire surveys of inbound tourists who participated in guided tours, and expert evaluations in Initiative 3, it was confirmed that even novice guides can provide tourism guidance of a certain quality by utilizing tour scripts generated by AI. On the other hand, experts pointed out that “while the information is accurate, the narratives and interactivity with tourists are lacking,” making it clear that the system cannot fully replace the experience and conversational skills that experienced guides have cultivated over many years.

Furthermore, in a questionnaire survey of novice guides conducted at the same time as the survey of inbound tourists, respondents noted that “if we understand the characteristics of generative AI and verify the accuracy of the content before using it, it can help streamline our work as guides.” On the other hand, she also pointed out the need for a system that can continuously update the latest local information, such as store details and business hours. In a post-tour survey, the tours led by novice guides also

First Pilot Test (Nov. 22 and 23)			Second Pilot Test (Jan. 10 and 11)		
Inbound Tourist		5	Inbound Tourist		8
22	1 Thai and 1 Korean		10	1 Chinese, 1 Italian, 2 Korean and 1 Thai	
23	1 Chinese and 2 Russian		11	1 Chinese, 1 Italian and 1 Singaporean	
Novice Guide		6	Novice Guide		6
22	4		10	6 4 of them also participated in the first pilot test	
23	5		11	2	
			Experienced Guide		2
					(Both have experience guiding in Hirosaki)

Table 2. Tourists and Guides Participating in the Pilot Tests

Note: The total number of novice guides in each pilot test represents unique individuals; some guides participated on multiple days. Therefore, the totals may differ from the sum of the daily counts.

received generally high ratings. It was confirmed that generative AI is not intended to replace tour guides but is effective as a tool to support the training of novice guides and the creation of tour scripts. The detailed survey results (numbers) are shown in Table 3.

5. Discussion: What Makes a Good Tourist Guide Narrative?

Generative AI was able to produce well-organized tour scripts efficiently, reducing the time required for script preparation by approximately 89%. The first AI-generated script also achieved a relatively high score in the expert evaluation. These results demonstrate that generative AI can effectively support tour script preparation, particularly for novice guides.

However, the comparison between the first and second AI-generated scripts revealed an important limitation. Refining

the prompt to suppress hallucinations reduced misinformation but also decreased the amount of information and narrative richness, resulting in a lower overall expert-evaluation score. This suggests that improving factual reliability does not necessarily improve the overall quality of a tourist guide narrative. While accuracy is essential, excessive constraints may produce narratives that are reliable but less informative or engaging.

The qualitative comparison with scripts prepared by experienced guides provides another perspective. As discussed in Section 3.2, the experienced guide did not regard a tour script simply as a fixed text containing information to be delivered. Instead, the script anticipated interaction with tourists, allowing their interests, backgrounds, responses, and physical conditions to influence subsequent explanations and even the conduct of the tour. Although the AI-generated and human-generated scripts were not produced under strictly identical

Dates	November 22		November 23				January 10				January 11		
Foreign Tourists	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨	⑩	⑪	⑫	⑬
Was the guidance easy to understand?	5	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	3	5
Was the content of the tour interesting?	4	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	4	5	3	5
Were the guide’s words and expressions natural?	4	4	4	4	5	4	5	4	4	4	5	3	5
Were the explanations of culture and history helpful?	5	5	4	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	3	5
Would you recommend this guide to others?	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	3	5
Total Score	23	23	33	24	24	23	25	24	24	23	35	15	25
Was the flow (order) of the explanations easy to follow?						5	5	4	5	5	5	4	5
Was the amount of information provided by the guide just right?						5	5	4	4	5	5	3	5
Were there any topics in the explanation itself that piqued your interest?						4	5	4	5	5	5	3	5
Did you want to learn more about the content of the explanation?													
Was the guide’s speaking style easy to understand?						5	5	4	4	5	5	4	5
Was the guide approachable?						5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Total Score						24	25	21	23	25	25	29	25
Guide Type	Novice	Novice	Novice	Novice	Novice	Experienced	Experienced	Novice	Novice	Novice	Experienced	Novice	Novice

Table 3. Results of the Post-Tour Questionnaire Survey of Inbound Tourists

conditions, this observation suggests that professional tour guiding involves more than the transmission of predetermined information.

Based on these findings, three interrelated dimensions can be identified as important components of a good tourist guide narrative: reliability, narrative quality, and interactivity. Reliability concerns factual accuracy and trustworthiness; narrative quality concerns how information is selected and presented to stimulate tourists' interest and facilitate cultural understanding; and interactivity concerns the ability to adapt explanations to tourists' interests and reactions through communication.

These dimensions need to be appropriately balanced. As shown by the second AI-generated script, improving reliability through stronger constraints may reduce narrative richness, while highly standardized scripts may limit adaptation to individual tourists. A good tourist guide narrative should therefore be understood not as a finished text, but as a flexible communicative framework that combines reliable information, storytelling, and interaction. The remaining challenge is to design AI-assisted tour scripts that support this interactive and adaptive nature of professional tour guiding.

6. Challenges for Social Implementation

This demonstration project confirmed that utilizing generative AI can reduce the time required to create tour scripts for tour guides by approximately 89 percent, and that even novice guides can provide tour guidance of a certain quality. However, in order to implement generative AI as an actual service in society, consideration is necessary not only from a technical perspective but also from the perspectives of intellectual property, data governance, and standardization.

First and foremost is the management of the data referenced by generative AI. In this demonstration project, we used tourism information provided by Hirosaki City and tourist guidebooks accessed under contract as input data. Since the quality of generative AI depends heavily on the input data, it is crucial to clarify the rights associated with the available data and operate under appropriate licenses.

Next is the reliability of the information output by generative AI. In tourism guides, it is unacceptable to provide tourists with misinformation regarding history or culture. In this demonstration project, we confirmed that we could significantly reduce hallucinations by limiting the reference information and incorporating the constraint "Do not output content not listed in the reference materials" into the prompt. However, it also became clear that this resulted in a trade-off, with a reduction in the volume of information and narrative richness. Going forward, a key challenge will be how to balance accuracy and expressiveness. Furthermore, tourism information includes frequently updated details such as store information, prices, and business hours. Therefore, the process does not end once the system is built; reference data must be continuously updated, and a mechanism to manage the update history. In fact, although this project used only public data, instances were still identified where operating hours and explanatory content differed across sources, which led to inaccuracies in the generative AI's output. It is believed that the concept of "provenance", recording not only the generative AI's

output but also which sources were referenced during generation, will become increasingly important in the future.

The insights gained from this demonstration project are expected to be applicable not only to the tourism sector but also to other fields, such as guided tours at museums and cultural facilities, the creation of educational materials, and information dissemination by local governments. To achieve this, it is essential to standardize the use of generative AI, including prompts, reference data, and generation history. Properly recording input data and generation conditions will improve reproducibility and explainability, leading to the establishment of an environment where generative AI can be used with confidence.

7. Conclusion

This study examined the potential and limitations of generative AI for supporting the preparation of tour scripts through a pilot test conducted in Hirosaki City. The results showed that generative AI substantially reduced the time required for script preparation while enabling novice guides to provide tourism guidance of a certain quality. At the same time, the comparison with scripts prepared by experienced guides and the expert evaluations revealed that factual accuracy and efficient information provision alone are not sufficient to constitute a good tourist guide narrative.

The findings suggest that a good tourist guide narrative involves three interrelated dimensions: reliability, narrative quality, and interactivity. A good narrative should therefore be regarded not simply as a fixed text to be delivered, but as a flexible communicative framework through which reliable information, storytelling, and interaction can be combined and adapted to individual tourists and situations. From this perspective, generative AI should not be regarded as a replacement for experienced tour guides, but rather as a tool that provides novice guides and local tourism professionals with a reliable foundation for preparing and adapting their own narratives.

Future work should focus not only on improving the factual reliability of AI-generated content, but also on developing methods that support storytelling, interaction, and adaptation during actual tourist guidance. In addition, the prompts, reference data, generation conditions, and verification processes examined in this study can be organized as metadata for AI-assisted language-resource management. Recording such information, including the provenance of reference data, will contribute to improving reproducibility, explainability, and reliability and may also provide useful insights for ongoing standardization efforts concerning AI-assisted language-resource creation and management.

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