


Chapter 2

Collaborative Destination Storytelling: Navigating Impact Factors and Narrative Content in the Digital Era

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ABSTRACT

In the competitive tourism industry, digital brand storytelling has emerged as a powerful communication strategy. However, its application in community model destinations remains complex and underexplored. This chapter contributes by synthesizing fragmented literature into a structured overview of collaborative destination storytelling, focusing on the unique features of multi-stakeholder contexts. Based on a narrative literature review of over 80 references, it identifies key conceptual foundations, organizational impact factors, narrative elements, and stages of storytelling campaigns. The results highlight how emotional resonance, authenticity, and digital co-creation can enhance brand image and engagement, while also underscoring the need for coordination, consistency, and adaptive storytelling strategies. The chapter offers both a conceptual framework to support future research and practical guidance for destination branding in the digital era.

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INTRODUCTION

Collaborative Destination Storytelling: Relevance and Chapter Contribution

Developments such as digitalization, globalization, and high access to affordable mobility increase competition in the tourism industry. Thus, strengthening brands and image management to enhance the market position have become major tasks in destination marketing. Tourism organizations increasingly invest in marketing and destinations need to implement effective online communication. Although brand communication and information are relevant to all industries, they are of particular importance for experience-based products, such as travel destinations. As the quality of products and services can only partly be evaluated before the indeed consumption, tourism providers need to reduce the perceived purchase risk by communication. Since the arise of digital and social media, marketing communication is no longer viewed as a linear brand-consumer-process. Consumers intensively communicate and exchange messages among themselves and business marketing aims to influence these communication processes by a diversity of tools. Various researchers consider storytelling as an effective means for influencing communication processes, presenting experience products, informing consumers about brands, and creating tourism attractions (Hautz et al., 2014; Reitsamer & Brunner-Sperdin, 2017; Ryu et al., 2018b; Solomon et al., 2022; Zhang & Ramayah, 2024; Zhong et al., 2017).

The relevance of storytelling in marketing and communication is explained by various aspects. O`Gorman and Gillespie (2010, p. 660) for instance describe man as *homo narrans* and consider storytelling as a human naturalness. Various other researchers also describe narratives as the most ancient way of human communication. Since humans think story-based, they tend to understand stories better than arguments. Thus, stories as narratives also have a relevant impact on consumers. Stories impact consumers differently than traditional marketing content by engaging their emotions, which increases the likelihood of being remembered. Moreover, narrative content is less critically analysed than regular advertisement, because it mentally structures and brings together various elements towards a human need or goal. While traditional marketing communicates advertising messages and aims to call to action, storytelling supports brands to be considered as real, relevant and personal, which further leads to trust-building, brand uniqueness, brand loyalty as well as the creation of an emotional relationship between brand and target group. Prior studies also explain that stories, due to their positive impact on brand attitudes and perceived authenticity, increase purchase intentions. Narratives have been found to be especially useful for communicating intangible characteristics as they give consumers the chance to draw their own conclusions and connect scenarios to own

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