



STORYTELLING IN PROMOTING RURAL TOURISM

GABRIELA POPESCU, TIBERIU IANCU, RAMONA MARIANA CIOLAC*, TABITA ADAMOV, LUMINIȚA PÎRVULESCU, IULIANA MERCE, FLORIN DANIEL MILITARU, IASMINA IOSIM*

Banat University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine "King Mihai I of Romania"

Abstract: *Storytelling in tourism is a successful tool in promotion and refers to the art of telling captivating stories about destinations, experiences or cultures, to attract and involve potential tourists.. This review synthesizes research on participatory digital storytelling platforms and their role in co-creating place branding with rural tourism communities to address gaps in understanding collaborative identity construction and sustainable tourism development. n by capturing attention and generating emotions.*

• Introduction

In recent years, the field of digital storytelling has progressed from rudimentary multimedia narratives to sophisticated participatory platforms, which empower local communities to engage actively in the processes of destination branding and heritage promotion.

• Material and method

The paper presents itself as a literature review on the role of storytelling in enhancing cultural experience in rural tourism, the use of storytelling as a marketing tool in rural tourism, the impact of storytelling on local economy and community development in rural tourism, encompassing diverse geographical contexts and methodological approaches. The studies collectively explore the multifaceted role of storytelling in enriching cultural experiences, marketing rural destinations and promoting economic and social benefits for local communities. The methodologies range from qualitative case studies and ethnographic research to systematic literature reviews and analyses of digital platforms, reflecting interdisciplinary perspectives from cultural heritage, marketing and community development. This comparative analysis contributes to the research questions by synthesizing evidence on the effectiveness, challenges and innovations of storytelling in the context of rural tourism worldwide.

• Results and discussions

Research into participatory digital storytelling platforms and their function in the co-creation of place branding alongside rural tourism communities has emerged as a significant domain of scholarly inquiry, attributable to the escalating relevance of cultural heritage and community involvement in the advancement of sustainable tourism development.

This section maps the research landscape of the literature on Participatory digital storytelling platforms and their role in co-creating place branding with rural tourism communities. The reviewed studies encompass diverse geographic contexts including Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America, employing qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches. Many emphasize community empowerment, digital innovation, and cultural heritage integration within rural tourism branding. This comparative analysis addresses key research questions by synthesizing insights on platform functionalities, stakeholder engagement, narrative strategies, governance models, and impact outcomes, thereby illuminating the mechanisms and challenges of participatory digital storytelling in rural tourism development.

TRADITIONAL MARKETING IN RURAL TOURISM	VS.	STORYTELLING IN RURAL TOURISM
Sells a tourist product/service The goal is to sell: accommodation, meals, facilities, discounts.	 OBJECTIVE	Creates an emotional connection The goal is to create a memorable experience and an authentic bond.
Focus on features and benefits It promotes facilities, prices, location, amenities.	 FOCUS	Focus on stories and experiences It promotes people, traditions, places, emotions and authentic experiences.
Direct and informational message "Double room 150 lei/night" "Breakfast included"	 TYPE OF MESSAGE	Narrative and emotional message "Mornings begin with the smell of warm bread and the sound of roosters in the village."
Tourist = customer A commercial relationship, focused on the transaction.	 RELATIONSHIP WITH TOURIST	Tourist = participant in the story A relationship based on trust, involvement and belonging.
Traditional marketing tools Ads, leaflets, brochures, websites with offers, promotions, tourism fairs.	 MARKETING TOOLS	Story-based tools Online stories, social media, blogs, videos, testimonials, experiences.
Product-focused content Rooms, facilities, prices, packages, special offers.	 PROMOTED CONTENT	Story and place-focused content Traditions, gastronomy, people, history, crafts, village life.
Short-term effect Grabs attention and generates quick bookings.	 EFFECT ON TOURIST	Long-term effect Creates loyalty, recommendations and the desire to return.
Differentiation through price and offers It competes by discounts and attractive packages.	 DIFFERENTIATION	Differentiation through authenticity Each place has its own story, which cannot be copied.
Example of message "Guesthouse with Wi-Fi, free parking and 10% discount."	 MESSAGE EXAMPLE	Example of message "Here we don't just offer a place to stay, we invite you to live village life."

• Conclusions

Agrotourism is one of the most suitable forms for experiential learning because it: involves direct participation, offers authenticity, creates emotional connections, transforms the tourist into an active participant.