

How the Concepts of 'TellingStory' and 'LivingStory' Influence Tourist Destination Choice

Dr. Bekhouche Bilal ¹, Dr. Tahar abdessamia ²

¹ University of Chiekh larbi Tebessi, Tebessa, Algeria,

Email: bilal.bekhouche@univ-tebessa.dz

² University of Algeries 03, Algiers, Algeria,

Email: tahar.abdessamia@univ-alger3.dz

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Abstract

This article examines the impact of two distinct forms of narrative – 'TellingStory' and 'LivingStory' – on how tourists select their destinations. 'TellingStory' encompasses the narratives encountered before a trip, originating from marketing, media, and personal recommendations, which form initial impressions and generate interest. 'LivingStory,' conversely, represents the tourist's actual, personal experience during the visit, which can either reinforce or change the initial perceptions.

The research explores the dynamic interaction between these two narrative types. It emphasizes that while a compelling 'TellingStory' can attract visitors, the quality of the 'LivingStory' is crucial for their satisfaction, lasting memories, and subsequent travel choices, including repeat visits and recommendations. The study likely employs qualitative or mixed research methods to investigate how tourists engage with and are influenced by these narratives. Grasping this relationship is vital for those involved in destination marketing and management who aim to provide genuine and appealing experiences. The article enhances our understanding of the behavioral and psychological factors influencing destination selection, underscoring the significant power of both pre-trip narratives and on-site experiences in shaping travel decisions.

Key Points : TellingStory, LivingStory, Tourist Destination

1.Introduction

The concepts of **storytelling** and **storyliving** explore the act of sharing and experiencing both factual and fictional accounts. Narration, or telling stories, is a timeless communication method that emerged with language itself; storyliving offers a comparable experience from a distinct viewpoint. Stories are universal; no one exists without them. They're woven into every stage of human life and social interaction, whether for entertainment, education, or instilling values. Studies highlight stories as an exceptional communication tool because they effectively capture attention, boost recall, and foster personal meaning. Humans retain information more effectively when it's presented through a story, as it connects with them on intellectual, emotional, and even spiritual levels. **(Fatima Zohra, 2023)** . Within the realm of marketing, **storytelling** and **storyliving** represent a strategic shift towards employing narratives to influence target audience behavior, rather than relying solely on conventional brand or product argumentation. This methodology is gaining traction among brands as a novel means of achieving differentiation and enhancing product perception. Tourism entities have similarly acknowledged the profound importance of storytelling and living in both destination promotion and the amplification of tourist arrivals.

Given that emotional and experiential factors critically inform tourism consumption and destination selection, storytelling and story-living emerge as key strategies. These techniques endeavor to modify the behavioral patterns of prospective visitors through the dissemination of emotionally compelling narratives. Such stories facilitate the client's identification with and immersion into the tourist experience pre-arrival, often drawing upon the shared experiences of indigenous populations or prior visitors.

The central goal of this work is to delve into how **storytelling** and **story living** can be leveraged effectively within destination marketing. We aim to understand their power in promoting a location and inspiring travelers to discover all it has to offer. To fully answer this, we will clarify two vital questions: First, why are storytelling and story living so important as destination marketing and tourism communication techniques? Why should they truly be at the heart of any destination's marketing strategy? Second, what are the potential risks or drawbacks of using storytelling as a tool to promote tourist destinations? To guide our study, we've developed the following hypotheses: We believe that by placing the traveler at the core of the story, infused with emotion and authenticity, storytelling can indeed have a highly effective influence on promoting a tourist destination. Conversely, we hypothesize that the use of storytelling for tourism promotion could be counterproductive, potentially leading to a loss of credibility if the stories are seen as too seductive or perhaps overly realistic.

Our approach to answering the research questions involved building a theoretical understanding from various documentary resources that discuss the use of storytelling and story living in destination marketing. Complementing this, and due to the practical nature of our inquiry, we supported our theoretical insights with concrete examples. These examples highlight successful applications of storytelling and story living in promoting country tourism, specifically observed on platforms like Booking, Tripadvisor, and Airbnb.

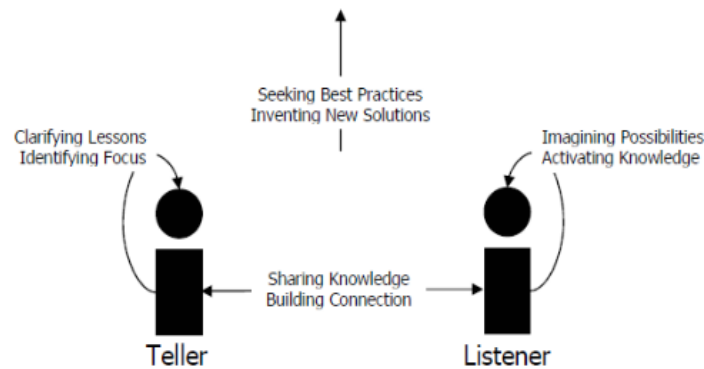
2. Overview of definitions

2.1. Storytelling

Storytelling can be defined as "Born with language itself, storytelling is an ancient and powerful communication technique. Across civilizations, it has served as a fundamental vehicle for sharing knowledge, instilling values, captivating audiences, educating minds, and ensuring the continuity of cultures. Narration, in essence, has woven the very fabric of human social connection." (**Fatima Zohra, 2023, p. 35**), As a brand content tool, storytelling in marketing crafts narratives, anecdotes, and experiences to effectively convey a message. Its power lies in its ability to influence audience behavior and fundamentally alter their perception of a brand or product.

Storytelling, a traditional method of sharing knowledge, wisdom, and culture, also plays a vital role in social movements by fostering agency, shaping identity, and inspiring action. It helps communities navigate challenges, explore alternative futures, and respond creatively to obstacles. Storytelling provides emotional motivation, frames experiences with purpose, and helps individuals manage uncertainty while maintaining continuity with the past. Ultimately, the identities of both storytellers and listeners are crucial in shaping the impact of stories (**Yanu Endar, Fall 2017, pp. 2-11**).

Figure 01: Story-Sharing Dynamics.



Source : (Doty, 2003)

According to the **Figure 01**" The image demonstrates that storytelling is not merely the transmission of information but a powerful tool for learning and creativity, helping to develop ideas and discover novel solutions through the dynamic exchange between the storyteller and the listener.

2.1.1. Using stories to promote destinations:

Research by Headstream reveals a strong preference among UK adults for authentic brand storytelling, with 79% favoring narratives featuring ordinary people and customers over celebrities. This highlights the public's desire for genuine, relatable experiences. Brands are generally seen as effective at this (64%), with humor being a welcome addition for 43%. Visual formats dominate, with videos leading, followed by photos and articles.

The impact of appealing brand stories is significant: 55% of consumers are more inclined to make a future purchase, 44% will share the story, and 15% might convert immediately. This underscores the power of real traveler stories to enrich a brand's narrative and create diverse, engaging content. In essence, brand storytelling in tourism involves crafting captivating narratives that highlight a destination's unique appeal and connect with audiences through personal accounts of places, cultures, and adventures. This strategy cultivates deep emotional bonds and motivates potential tourists to embark on their own journeys (Mina, 2024).

2.2. Storyliving ("People don't buy goods and services. They buy relations, stories, and magic." - Seth Godin.)

Actively engaging people and offering them an unforgettable experience is the best way to craft a narrative. Everyone seeks to highlight their own actions and see themselves reflected in them. Beyond the tools and services that could improve their lives, they hope to live new experiences that they can share with others. Thus, the narrative becomes an experience, and the consumer becomes the protagonist of a story they remember and, in turn, share. Living stories means creating stories that inspire and encourage direct participation. Stories are designed so that people can engage with them directly and embody the brand's values in their own experiences (marketing, 2022).

The concept of **storyliving** is about bringing your brand's narrative to life. Instead of simply sharing your achievements or goals, you create dynamic, interactive experiences that invite your audience to join you. This active involvement fosters a strong emotional connection, making them feel like a genuine part of your journey. In essence, **storyliving moves beyond passive storytelling to active demonstration**, and I see it as a powerful tool for building a more authentic personal brand. (Olesija, 2024).

In today's oversaturated digital world, fostering deep, authentic connections is more important than ever. Storyliving offers a way to achieve this by creating

- **Immersive engagement:** where audiences feel like participants rather than passive observers. It emphasizes

- **Authentic transparency:** sharing behind-the-scenes moments and emotions to build trust. Lastly, it strengthens

- **Connection by encouraging:** meaningful interactions, participation, and shared inspiration.

Also the **Storyliving** is defined as : "I'd argue that 'storytelling' doesn't quite fit. It's a cognitive tool from a different medium. Since this is a direct sensory experience, there's no 'teller' involved. True storytelling is the act of recounting or reenacting something that occurred previously to another person or thing...." (Ola, 2017).

2.2.1. Storyliving Essentials

Brand managers have a range of tools at their disposal for effective **Storyliving**, including: (**Rebeka Kulcsar, 2023**):

- **Engage Your Audience with Interactive Experiences:** To truly connect with consumers, develop interactive content that invites them to actively engage with your brand. This could involve gamified experiences, dynamic websites, or engaging social media challenges. The aim is to empower your audience to become co-creators of your brand's narrative. Consider a multi-platform treasure hunt (digital or physical). Participants would solve clues related to your brand's history, principles, or offerings to unlock special rewards or unique content. This approach not only fosters deep engagement but also encourages thorough exploration and learning about your brand.
- **Experiential Marketing: Bringing Brands to Life Immersively:** Design immersive brand experiences through pop-up stores, engaging events, or cutting-edge virtual reality campaigns. The goal is to allow consumers to truly "experience" your brand, forging powerful and lasting memories. Envision a virtual pop-up store or event accessible with VR headsets. This deep dive allows consumers to navigate your brand's universe, virtually interact with products, and even encounter digital brand ambassadors or characters. It's a groundbreaking approach to vitalize your brand within the digital landscape.
- **Build Your Brand Community:** Cultivate a strong sense of belonging among your audience. Encourage them to share their experiences and stories related to your brand; user-generated content is a powerful way to create a lively brand community. Imagine hosting an exclusive storytelling dinner party. Each dish could represent a chapter in your brand's history, inspiring guests to share similar personal experiences or brainstorm solutions for past challenges your brand faced.
- **Seamless Brand Storytelling:** The Power of Consistent Messaging To fully immerse your audience, your brand's narrative must remain consistent across every interaction point, whether online or in person. This unified approach strengthens the immersive appeal of your brand's story. Consider leveraging fictional characters or virtual brand ambassadors who interact with your audience through social media or chatbots. Their distinct personalities and backstories can significantly enhance your brand's online cohesion and offer a more personalized experience.

2.2.2. Storyliving Tourism Video Marketing" Live the Journey Before You Go":

The digital age, fueled by advancements in **VR and AR technologies**, has ushered in a new era of "storyliving." This innovative approach transforms viewers from passive spectators into active participants. It creates an immersive experience that makes the audience feel seen, involved, and integral to the narrative. (CIFFT, 2024).

Benefits of Storytelling in Tourism Video Marketing:

- Immersive experiences lead to **higher engagement** because they naturally captivate attention more effectively than passive content.
- They offer **personalized experiences**, allowing viewers to choose their own journey and making each interaction unique.
- A **stronger emotional connection** is fostered as viewers become "part of the story," deepening their ties to a destination.

2.3. Before Storyliving, Storytelling, and Storydoing:

The evolution of storytelling strategies has progressed from Storytelling to **Storydoing** and finally to **Storyliving**. **Storytelling** remains a fundamental element in creating unforgettable experiences, using engaging and emotional narratives to connect with audiences. With the emergence of **Storydoing communication** became interactive, allowing audiences to participate actively rather than just observe, making the experience more immersive and meaningful. **Storyliving** takes this a step further by transforming individuals into active participants who live the experience firsthand. This approach fosters deeper emotional and physical engagement, creating a stronger bond between the audience and the brand. The concept gained traction with the rise of virtual reality, and its popularity significantly increased when Disney launched its "**Storyliving by Disney**" project in 2022 (Bruno, Pedro, & Fernando, 2024).

2.4. Tourism Destination

Tourism Destination can be defined as: "A tourism destination is a place, with or without official borders, where visitors can stay overnight. It's essentially a collection of tourism-related products, services, activities, and experiences all in one spot. This makes it a fundamental unit for studying tourism. A destination involves many different people and organizations, and it can even connect with other destinations to form larger ones. Beyond its physical aspects, a destination also has an intangible image and identity, which can significantly impact how competitive it is in the market (UN Tourism, 2008).

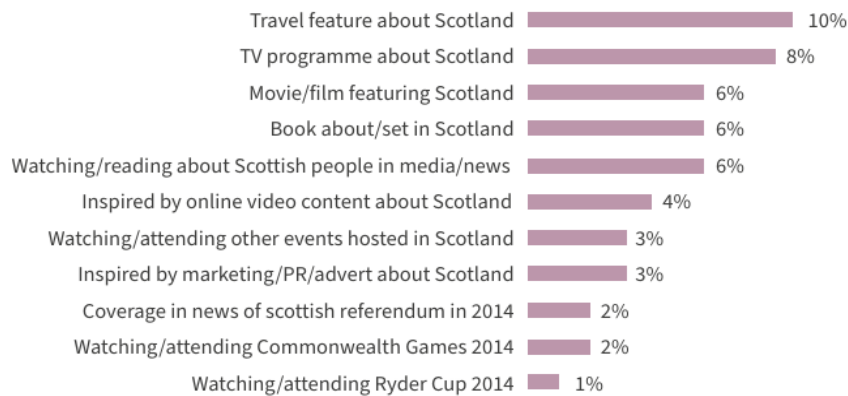
Tourism destinations are commonly defined as geographic regions offering various travel experiences. Goeldner and Ritchie emphasize the spatial aspect, while Framke provides a detailed view, highlighting landscapes, cultural features, and essential tourism services. Murphy also focuses on the spatial nature, whereas Seaton and Benett extend the definition to include intangible characteristics. The latter perspectives align more with economic geography and economics, broadening the approach to tourism destinations (Michal, 2016).

3. How do storytelling and storyliving affect tourism destinations?

In tourism and destination marketing, **storytelling** refers to crafting narratives to engage potential travelers and entice them to choose a particular destination. **Storyliving** takes this a step further: it's about enabling tourists to actively experience the story in reality, primarily through immersive experiences that foster deep engagement with the destination.

3.1. Key factors contributing to the effectiveness of storytelling as a communication method: Visitor Insights around Storytelling

-A travel feature on Scotland swayed 1 in 10 visitors. TV, film, and books also played a significant role in encouraging consideration, particularly among international visitors.



Source: (Insight Department, 2022)

It's clear that the way travelers plan and book their trips is complicated, with many different factors at play. However, one major inspiration for choosing **Scotland** as a destination comes from both literal and implied **stories**. Visitors are drawn to Scotland through its legends, history, films, and literature. These narratives act as catalysts, helping travelers decide on their itineraries, destinations, activities, and attractions—even inspiring visits to film locations **(Insight Department, 2022, p. 03)**.

3.1.1. The story carries deep emotional significance: Sharing a story about a destination—its hidden landscapes, breathtaking beauty, rich culture, and vibrant people—not only captivates listeners but also evokes deep emotions. Unlike a purely informative message, storytelling distinguishes itself through the emotions it conveys. A well-crafted narrative has the power to resonate with the audience, stirring the precise feelings that the brand aims to inspire.

3.1.2. Stories Are Easier to Remember: Strong emotions make a story more memorable, which is a key characteristic of storytelling. By engaging the senses and emotions, a story is more likely to be retained than a mere transmission of information or a descriptive advertisement highlighting a destination's features. In an era of information overload, where people are constantly bombarded with messages they struggle to process and retain, research suggests that storytelling—unlike raw data, figures, or quantitative analysis—serves as a powerful tool for capturing attention, creating meaning, and enhancing memory retention.

3.1.3. The Creativity of Storytelling: The impact and success of a destination's story rely on the creativity of its creators. Storytelling serves as a powerful tool for promoting a tourist destination, using imagination to bring its unique aspects to life and unveiling its hidden treasures through an engaging and inspiring narrative.

3.1.4. The Role of the Storyteller : The way a story is told is crucial to its effectiveness. Julie Jones O'Leary highlights that a story's power comes from the narrator's ability to deliver it compellingly. Studies show that meaning and understanding are created through the dynamic exchange between the storyteller and the audience, meaning the narration is just as important as the story's content **(Mathilde Bordet, 2015)**.

3.2. Key factors contributing to the effectiveness of storyliving as a communication method:

3.2.1. Virtual Tourism: "Adapting to a New Era of Tourism" Since the outbreak of COVID-19, businesses worldwide have faced significant challenges, with the travel industry being among the hardest hit. Border closures and restrictions on group gatherings have had a severe impact,

particularly on tour guides. If you're in the tourism sector, you're not alone—tourism accounts for 1 in 10 jobs globally, supporting 330 million jobs and contributing 10.3% of the world's GDP. As the world slowly recovers and industries adapt to the post-pandemic landscape, tourism is finding new ways to evolve .

360 Stories is at the forefront of this transformation, We're excited to offer an innovative **virtual touring experience**, transforming how both travelers and guides connect with destinations. This new form of tourism requires no physical contact, a significant advantage in today's world. Although "armchair tourism" has been around, it's seen a massive surge in recent months. This remote option provides an exhilarating way to discover the globe from your living room, serving as both immediate entertainment and a wellspring of inspiration for when travel restrictions lift.

3.2.2. Tour Guides Going Virtual: Many have embraced online experiences like virtual museum tours or zoo visits, but live interaction is often missing. Plus, there's little support for those who've lost their income. That's why 360 Stories introduced a new feature allowing tour guides to connect live with guests for interactive 360-degree experiences—helping you earn while doing what you love! With numerous destinations to explore, creating a virtual tour takes just 5 minutes and requires no advanced tech skills. Our intuitive platform combines 360-degree navigation with live video chatting, making it easy and engaging!

3.2.3. Advertise Your Experience: Many websites now provide tour guides with the chance to offer virtual travel experiences to prospective travelers, creating a new way to earn income. Platforms like AirBnB Online Experience, Viator, Get Your Guide, and others allow you to promote your services. As a tour guide, you can advertise on one or multiple platforms. Once guests register, you can share a unique link directing Seamlessly bring your audience to your Live Guided Tour within the 360 Stories platform, where you can then guide them through your selected destinations in real time. Leveraging the internet, you can host guests and generate income through this innovative approach to travel (Angela , 2020).

3.2.4. Start with Achievable Wins: Don't let the idea of a fully integrated AI system overwhelm you. Instead, focus on achieving impactful, small-scale victories that can make a big difference:

- **For all budgets:** Implement a chatbot to handle frequently asked questions. This frees up your staff to engage with guests on a deeper, more personal level.
- **For smaller hotels:** Use automated pre-arrival surveys to gather simple guest preferences, like needing extra towels or their favorite snacks. This small touch makes guests feel truly seen and valued.
- **For larger properties:** Leverage AI-powered recommendation engines to suggest local experiences tailored to guest preferences. This not only boosts guest satisfaction but can also increase revenue (Manos , 2024).

4. Experiencing Stories in VR: The Power of Storytelling and Storyliving

Storytelling in virtual reality (VR) hasn't yet achieved fully interactive narratives, often resembling scripted paths with predetermined outcomes. Like traditional storytelling, VR narratives can feel guided, with players exploring vast environments but finding the storytelling inefficient or unrewarding. The effort may outweigh the rewards or require prolonged engagement. Kaleidoscopic narratives, with scattered subplots, encourage passive participation, as seen in shows like 24 and Game of Thrones, where audiences piece together complex arcs. Innovations like "storyworlding"

and "storification" support discovery-based narratives, with storylines emerging organically from collaborative creation, making them integral to the participants' experience.

Storyliving in VR is a participatory drama where participants shape their experiences and narratives, rendering themselves as authors of personal stories. The emphasis is on the psychological engagement with the narrative, resulting in internalized experiences. Unlike minimally interactive storytelling, storyliving offers active, immersive, and open-ended experiences. It has been labeled as immersive or interactive journalism and a marketing tool, though these perceptions overlook future VR advancements. The external authorship in projects like *Clouds over Sidra* and *The Displaced* undermines true storyliving (Michael & Phillip, 2022).

In tourism, **storytelling** and **storyliving** are powerful tools that enhance visitor engagement and create memorable experiences. Here's how they differ and some notable examples of each:

5. Storytelling in Tourism

Storytelling involves narrating compelling tales about a destination's history, culture, or people to captivate and inform visitors.

Examples: (The Great Tapestry Scotland, 2019)

- **The Great Tapestry of Scotland:** This exhibit in Galashiels presents Scotland's history through 160 hand-stitched panels, offering visitors a visual and emotional journey through the nation's past.
- **Guided Tours with Narrative Elements:** Tour operators enhance experiences by sharing legends, local anecdotes, or historical events during tours, transforming factual information into engaging stories.
- **Destination Marketing Campaigns:** Countries like Abu Dhabi and Korea have launched campaigns such as "Your Extraordinary Story" and "Let Your Story Begin," inviting travelers to connect personally with the destination's narrative.

6. Storyliving in Tourism

Storyliving immerses travelers in interactive experiences where they become active participants in a narrative, often through technology or themed environments.

Examples: (Grand Tour of Catalonia, 2024)

- **Grand Tour of Catalonia:** An interactive video campaign allows viewers to choose different routes and endings, effectively placing them in the protagonist's shoes and letting them shape their journey through Catalonia.
- **Storyliving by Disney Communities:** Disney's residential projects, like *Cotino* in California, are designed to immerse residents in environments inspired by storytelling, blending daily living with thematic experiences.
- **Gamified Tourism Apps:** Some destinations employ apps that use gamification and augmented reality to let visitors engage with the locale's stories actively, turning sightseeing into an interactive adventure.

Both storytelling and storyliving enrich tourism by fostering deeper connections between travelers and destinations. While storytelling informs and captivates, storyliving engages and immerses, offering diverse ways to experience the world's wonders

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, the interplay between the concepts of "TellingStory" and "LivingStory" emerges as a significant, yet often subtle, force shaping tourist destination choice. While the curated narratives

and marketing efforts (the "TellingStory") initially capture attention and create aspirational desires, it is the anticipated and actual experience of the destination (the "LivingStory") that ultimately solidifies decisions and fosters lasting impressions.

Destinations that successfully bridge the gap between these two concepts, authentically delivering on the promises embedded in their narratives and empowering visitors to create their own meaningful experiences, are poised to cultivate stronger connections with tourists, encourage repeat visits, and foster positive word-of-mouth. Ultimately, understanding and strategically leveraging both the art of crafting compelling stories and the reality of delivering enriching lived experiences will be crucial for destinations seeking to thrive in an increasingly competitive global tourism landscape.

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