Storytelling and its psychological influence on tourism experiences: A scoping review

SORAIA GARCÊS

University of Madeira / Centre for Tourism, Sustainability and Well-being (CinTura) - Universidade do Algarve / OSEAN
Contacting author: soraiagarces@gmail.com

Keywords | Storytelling, Tourism experiences, Creative tourism, Psychological factors, Scoping review

Objectives | Tourists today seek more than a simple product when visiting a destination (Garcês et al, 2108). They are becoming consumers of experiences but also of stories within the destinations, and stories can become drivers for sustainable development (Tan, 2023). Storytelling is, a powerful tool that can lead to the development of memorable experiences bringing value to the destination (Pereira et al., 2020). It is also a creative "escape" that can be seen in creative tourism, by bringing imagination and creativity to the forefront of the tourism experiences (Pereira et al., 2020). Storytelling with its different elements can be a differentiator element of tourism products (Gonçalves et al., 2018) and can bring positive psychological outcomes for the tourism experience as a whole. This research aims to look into the published literature, with no time range selected, on what has been done regarding storytelling and its impact on tourism experiences, focusing on psychological variables, and thus discover advances and/or gaps to further improve this field.

Methodology | As a methodology, a scoping review was performed, following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews PRISMA-ScR (Tricco et al., 2018). This methodology allows analysis of outcomes from a body of knowledge and identifies gaps that may allow for future in-depth research (Tricco et al., 2018). Thus, the scoping review is applicable to provide an overview of available research and map the existing literature on a topic, which is aligned with this study's aim. As the search database, the Online Knowledge Library (b-on) was used. This Portuguese library comprises a wide range of publishers and scientific publications, including major ones such as SCOPUS and WOS. Due to the aim of this research "storytelling" and "tourism experiences" were the two search keywords used. Boolean operator AND was used to ensure the presence of both search keywords and the truncation symbol * was used to address words within the same family. These terms were searched on the paper's keywords, being one of the inclusion criteria. Other inclusion criteria included: a) papers in English; b) peer-review papers; c) journal articles; and d) integral texts

available. Beyond these, the scope of the papers must have had the search variables as a focus of the research or part of it. The first search found 77 results. An initial digital analysis by the database search tools showed 10 duplicates, which were automatically removed. Next, the application of criteria a), b), and c) led to the remaining 61 papers. Afterwards, another 10 duplicates were found and removed, and the application of criteria d) led to 44 papers. A manual analysis of abstracts and keywords led to the removal of 24 papers for not complying with the focus of the actual aim of this study; not being in the English language and existence of duplicates. The final sample is composed of 20 papers that were individually analysed.

Main Results and Contributions | In a preliminary analysis, it is possible to see that the relationship between storytelling and tourism experience in scientific publications is recent (2008 onwards). This shows that the interest in applying storytelling to tourism experiences is current. This is aligned with the development of an experiential economy that is translated to the new tourists' needs for more personal and in-depth experiences (Garcês et al., 2018). Simultaneously, stories can be important products to show authenticity to tourists and the essence of the destination, which is also a growing interest by tourists when seeking new destinations/experiences. The results also show that the majority of the studies are qualitative. Thus, allowing a better understanding of the experience, but lacking robust data to allow generalizations. While different destinations have their unique stories and experiences, research may be a key element to understanding which common (and different) elements exist and their impact on sustainable and creative practices. Overall, storytelling in the tourism experience looks intrinsically linked with the tourists': emotions, engagement, positive responses towards the destinations, and memorability and it also seems interconnected by co-creation processes between tourist and place. A small portion of the sample focuses on the study of the impact of storytelling on the tourism workers who take on these tasks. The results acknowledged that workers' emotions, personal interests, and involvement play a key role in their performance. The idea of authenticity also indicates that storytelling can be important in promoting a perception of the genuineness of the experience to the tourists. However, these overall results synthesis shows that the study of psychological variables is scarce in this topic, with only variables such as emotions and engagement standing out.

Limitations | As limitations for this study, while b-on is a widespread resource for scientific studies and includes databases such as SCOPUS and WOS, additional research directly made on these specific databases could have allowed for more findings. Furthermore, no time range was selected as part of the PRISMA Protocol, which could have allowed for a focus on a specific period. However, the aim of not selecting a timeframe was to ensure a wider "map" of the evolving literature on this topic. Also, it would have been important to advance this topic by developing

empirical research. This comes as a suggestion for a future study to understand the actual psychological factors that are linked and can influence the tourism experience through storytelling. By doing this, destinations could identify and develop new strategies that consider storytelling as a product and at the same time, as a technique to promote emotions, engagement, and authenticity to their experiences.

Conclusions | This study hopes to bring a better understanding of storytelling in tourism experiences but from a psychological perspective. Emotions and engagement/involvement are recurring positive psychological factors that have emerged as a link between storytelling and tourism experiences. Nonetheless, with this scoping review, there is clearly a lack of research beyond these two psychological variables, showing the need to further develop studies that look into the role of psychological variables in storytelling during tourism experiences. This new approach could allow us to better understand the influence of storytelling in tourism from a not-so-common perspective and open doors for new sustainable and creative practices that can have a positive psychological impact on the tourism stakeholders, and the experience as a whole.

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