American Journal of Tourism and Destination Studies (AJTDS)

VOLUME 1 ISSUE 1 (2026)



PUBLISHED BY
E-PALLI PUBLISHERS, DELAWARE, USA

American Journal of
Tourism and Destination Studies (AJTDS)
Volume 1 Issue 1, Year 2026
https://journals.e-palli.com/home/index.php/ajtds

The Sustainable Digital Storytelling Cycle: A Conceptual Framework of Tourist-Generated Narratives in Sustainable Destination Branding

Mr. Faslu Rahman[1*], Mr. Ankit Baral[1], Sadanandam Ariyaputhiri[2]

Article Information

Received: August 25, 2026
Accepted: November 09, 2026
Published: November 23, 2026

Keywords

Collective Destination Narrative, Destination Branding, Digital Storytelling, Regenerative Tourism, Tourist-Generated Content, Value Co-Creation

ABSTRACT

The concept of destination branding has been long considered as a managerial process where destination management organisations (DMOs) create a brand identity and disseminate it to the prospective visitors. This model has been undermined by the digital platforms, as tourists and residents are now publishing accounts of places that can reinforce, reinterpret, or contradict official representations. Research on digital storytelling, user-generated content (UGC), destination branding and destination branding, experiential marketing and sustainable tourism have developed in parallel, but not yet answered how individual tourist stories can be translated into collective destination meanings and how these meanings can influence expectations and behaviour related to sustainable tourism. This conceptual paper aims to fill that gap. It draws on purposeful literature selection and an integrative theory synthesis of the literature on destination branding, tourism storytelling, UGC, experience co-creation and sustainable and regenerative tourism to create a Sustainable Digital Storytelling Cycle. The framework is based on the narrative paradigm, experiential marketing and the experience economy, service-dominant logic and regenerative tourism, and outlines seven stages: authentic tourist experience, digital storytelling, collective destination narrative, sustainable brand identity, responsible tourist behaviour, community reinforcement and new authentic experiences, which loop back to the first stage. Seven propositions, with indicative indicators, are offered for empirical testing. The theoretical contribution is the specification of the mechanism of narrative aggregation between individual storytelling and the brand meaning at the destination level and the closing of the loop with the community reinforcement. The framework in practical terms, places the DMO in the position of enabling a narratable, sustainable experience rather than controlling messages. The concept of boundary and failure conditions are outlined, such as selective representation, algorithmic visibility, negative electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), overtourism and the commercialisation of community stories.

INTRODUCTION

Destination branding has traditionally been understood as an organisational process of creating and communicating a distinctive image of a place. Destination management organisations (DMOs), public authorities and their marketing partners develop positioning strategies and communicate them through campaigns, slogans and visual identities. Blain *et al.* (2005) described destination branding as a set of marketing activities that identify and differentiate a destination and consistently convey the expectation of a memorable travel experience associated with it, while Morgan *et al.* (2011) treated destination brands as reputational assets to be managed strategically. These perspectives capture the essentials of organised destination marketing but say little about how tourists, visitors and residents construct and share their own stories about a destination. This omission has become more consequential in digital media, where tourists write reviews, take photographs, make videos and post accounts that travel well beyond their own social circles. Earlier studies established the importance of social media in online travel information search (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010) and of online reviews in travel planning (Gretzel & Yoo, 2008); later work examined how reviews are judged credible (Filieri, 2016) and why tourists share experiences online (Munar & Jacobsen, 2014). These practices take place on platforms that shape how content is distributed and encountered (Gretzel *et al.*, 2015; Xiang *et al.*, 2017). Destination meaning therefore no longer emerges only from official campaigns; it also emerges, diffusely and unevenly, from public narration.

The limits of the traditional approach are more than a matter of an added channel. Brand-management models assume that the destination is the principal author of its brand, that brand meaning travels from the organisation to the consumer, and that consumer perceptions can be evaluated as responses to a planned stimulus (Keller, 1993; Kladou & Kehagias, 2014). Each assumption is strained when meaning is produced by thousands of uncoordinated narrators. Comparisons of projected and perceived images show persistent gaps between what destinations communicate and what visitors publish (Költringer & Dickinger, 2015; Marine-Roig & Ferrer-Rosell, 2018). Influencers, ranking algorithms and, more recently, generative artificial intelligence (AI) further reshape which images of a destination circulate (Bui *et al.*, 2024; Gretzel, 2022; Yu & Meng, 2026). A DMO can still invest in campaigns, but it cannot decide which

[1] Research Scholar, Department of Tourism Studies, Central University of Kerala, Kasaragod, India
[2] Assistant Professor, Department of Tourism Studies, Central University of Kerala, Kasaragod, India
[*] Corresponding author's e-mail: faslurahman.2302607009@cukerala.ac.in

visitor stories become visible, how they are combined or what expectations they set for the next visitor. Branding approaches that model only the planned message therefore leave a growing share of destination meaning unexplained.

This shift also raises questions that go beyond marketing communication. Destination narratives can draw attention to local culture, environmental fragility and relationships with host communities, but they can equally foreground spectacle, consumption and highly marketable representations. Regenerative tourism scholarship asks how tourism can contribute to the wellbeing of destinations understood as social-ecological systems (Bellato *et al.*, 2023), and the UN Tourism and United Nations Development Programme (2017) link tourism's contribution to sustainable development with socio-cultural authenticity and the fair distribution of benefits. Tourist-generated stories are one route through which such values and expectations become visible to other travellers. Yet the circulation of stories does not in itself guarantee responsible conduct, and social media exposure has also been associated with crowding and inappropriate visitor behaviour at popular sites (Siegel *et al.*, 2023).

Relevant research exists across several fields, but the relationships between them remain under-theorised. Destination branding studies have concentrated on identity, brand equity and reputation; UGC studies on credibility, information search and motives for sharing; and tourism storytelling studies on how narratives shape the interpretation of experiences and places (Chronis, 2005, 2012; Moscardo, 2020; Mossberg, 2008). Three specific relationships remain unexplained. First, the literature does not explain how narratives produced by different individuals combine into a recognisable collective meaning of a destination, rather than remaining a set of separate accounts. Second, it does not explain how such collective meaning becomes attached to a destination brand in a way that DMOs can influence but not control. Third, it does not explain whether, and under what conditions, sustainability-related values carried by these narratives translate into the expectations and behaviour of later visitors and into participation by residents. Each stream supplies part of the answer, but none specifies the mechanism that links the parts.

Understanding these relationships matters to several groups of actors. For DMOs, it determines whether investment should go into messages or into the experiences and conditions that generate credible stories. For tourism marketers, it clarifies when peer narratives outperform institutional content and when they do not (Hervás-Cortina *et al.*, 2026). For local communities, it identifies whether they are positioned as co-authors of the destination brand or as its backdrop (Hay *et al.*, 2022; Mlagada *et al.*, 2026). For sustainable destination development, it indicates whether digital storytelling can support stewardship or whether it is more likely to amplify demand at sites that are already under pressure.

This paper addresses these issues by developing a conceptual framework that links tourist experience, digital storytelling, collective destination meaning, sustainable brand identity and subsequent behaviour. It is guided by three research questions (RQs):

1. **RQ1.** How can tourist-generated digital storytelling be conceptualised as a process that helps constitute destination brand meaning, rather than merely communicating information about a destination?
2. **RQ2.** Through what mechanisms might individually produced narratives contribute to collective destination meanings and transmit behavioural expectations?
3. **RQ3.** Under what conditions might this process support sustainable destination development, and when might it reproduce exclusion, misrepresentation or unsustainable forms of tourism?

To address these questions, the paper develops the Sustainable Digital Storytelling Cycle, a seven-stage process framework informed by the narrative paradigm, experiential marketing and the experience economy, service-dominant logic and regenerative tourism scholarship. RQ1 is addressed by Stages 1 to 4 and Propositions 1 to 4, which explain how experience becomes narrative and narrative becomes brand meaning. RQ2 is addressed by Propositions 2, 3 and 5, which specify why peer narratives persuade, how individual accounts aggregate and how the resulting meaning conveys behavioural norms. RQ3 is addressed by Propositions 4 to 7, together with the boundary and failure conditions in Sections 4.5 and 4.6. The central contribution is to place these perspectives within a single feedback structure and to identify narrative aggregation as the mechanism that requires closest examination. The framework treats sustainability as a contingent outcome rather than an inherent property of digital storytelling: the same processes that can generate stewardship-oriented meanings can also amplify extractive or inequitable representations.

The Structure of the paper is organised as follows. Section 2 reviews the relevant literature, distinguishes the core constructs and identifies the unresolved relationships. Section 3 explains the approach used to develop the framework and its limitations. Section 4 presents the cycle, its propositions, its relationship to existing models, its boundary and failure conditions, and its implications. The final section summarises the contribution and its relevance for research and destination management.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Evolution of Destination Branding

Destination branding developed from the application of product and corporate branding principles to places. Early conceptualisations focused on the role of DMOs in creating a distinctive identity and communicating it to prospective visitors. Blain *et al.* (2005), for example, defined destination branding as a set of marketing activities that create identifying and differentiating brand elements and consistently convey the expectation of a memorable travel

experience associated with the destination. Morgan *et al.* (2011) later emphasised the strategic value of destination reputation, and Kladou and Kehagias (2014) assessed destination brand equity through awareness, image and loyalty. Promotion-oriented studies continue to find that awareness campaigns, digital platforms and social media influencers can motivate travel, although affordability conditions their effect (Ackon *et al.*, 2026). Together, these contributions laid the groundwork for understanding how destination brand value is created and maintained, largely from the perspective of the organisation that manages it.

The difficulty is that destinations are not products. Their meanings emerge through encounters among visitors, residents, businesses, institutions and the physical environment. DMOs can shape representations of a destination, but they do not control how a place is experienced or described. The result can be a gap between the image that is marketed and the image that people hold after experiencing the place, a gap that web content mining studies have documented by comparing DMO-projected and visitor-generated images (Költringer & Dickinger, 2015; Marine-Roig & Ferrer-Rosell, 2018).

Recent research has recognised this limitation. Hay *et al.* (2022) point to the role of internal stakeholders and argue that the meanings residents give to their own places, which traditional branding methods may not capture, are a legitimate branding resource. Their emphasis on resident stories broadens the definition of who contributes to destination identity. The implications are not limited to residents, however. Tourists also produce accounts that are published and that others use as a way of encountering the place before they arrive.

This distinction matters because consumers no longer only evaluate a brand; they also contribute to its public image. Brand-equity models (Keller, 1993; Kladou & Kehagias, 2014) explain how destinations are perceived and evaluated, but they are not designed to explain how visitors' narratives shape the meanings available to other travellers. The conceptual challenge for destination branding is therefore to explain how a brand forms when destination meaning is produced not by a single marketing authority but by many actors whose actions are not coordinated. Answering that question requires attention to digital storytelling and the circulation of tourist narratives.

Digital Storytelling and Tourist-Generated Narratives

Storytelling was a significant theme in tourism research before digital platforms became central to tourism communication. Mossberg (2007) linked the experiencescape, the stories surrounding an experience and visitors' responses, and Mossberg (2008) showed how storytelling can help produce extraordinary experiences. Moscardo (2020) later argued that stories can be used deliberately as a design tool for tourism experiences. These contributions indicate that the meaning of a tourism experience depends not only on what happens during an activity but also on the stories through which it is framed and remembered.

Chronis (2005, 2012) treated tourists as active participants in the construction of place narratives: visitors do not simply receive meanings from destinations but select and combine narrative resources to make sense of their experiences. Woodside (2010) highlighted the role of narrative thinking in consumer behaviour, providing a basis for understanding how brands become part of people's personal stories. Research on narrative transportation adds that audiences who are absorbed in a story are more likely to adopt the beliefs it implies (Green & Brock, 2000), which helps explain why travel narratives can shape expectations of a place.

Digital platforms extend these processes by allowing tourists to publish and circulate their stories beyond the place where an experience occurs. Reviews, photographs, videos and personal accounts are viewed by people who have never visited a destination and can shape their expectations and understanding of it. Studies in diverse settings show that social media has become a central channel through which tourism and hospitality businesses build brand value and reach audiences (Hossain *et al.*, 2025), and that the affordances of social media platforms shape how cognitive and affective destination images form (Liu *et al.*, 2024). Roy and Chakraborty (2024) argue that residents' inclusive, real-time digital storytelling can strengthen place branding, extending the discussion from stories crafted by tourism providers to stories told by people who live in a place.

The range of narrators has also widened. Social media influencers occupy a position between peer and promoter: their content can raise interest in sustainable destinations (Kilipiri *et al.*, 2023), but their commercial relationships blur the line between independent narration and paid communication (Gretzel, 2017). Generative AI adds a further category of content. Experimental studies show that AI-generated destination images can be judged authentic and can increase patronage intentions, particularly when they are not labelled (Bui *et al.*, 2024), whereas disclosing that content is AI-generated tends to reduce its perceived originality and travel intention (Li *et al.*, 2025). Comparative analyses find that AI-written travel narratives are readable but carry less emotional depth and fewer trust-building cues than human narratives (Saxena & Rishi, 2025), and recent reviews anticipate that algorithmically generated destination images will increasingly mediate how places are imagined (Yu & Meng, 2026). These developments matter for the present argument because they weaken the assumption that the narratives circulating about a destination are first-hand accounts of experience.

This development can be read in two ways. From one perspective, digital storytelling is another medium for delivering destination messages. From another, it redistributes narrative power, allowing tourists and residents to publish representations that differ from official branding. The readings are not mutually exclusive:

platforms carry organised marketing messages and also host independent accounts. The balance between these functions depends on who produces the content, how platforms distribute it and which stories audiences actually encounter.

One question, however, remains unresolved. Much existing work examines the production or interpretation of individual narratives. When many narratives circulate, a further question arises: how, if at all, do separate accounts combine into a recognisable understanding of a destination? A series of individual stories is not necessarily a collective narrative. Accounts can reinforce one another, offer competing interpretations or remain largely unrelated.

User-Generated Content and Collective Destination Meaning

User-generated content (UGC) has been established as an important source of information in travel search and decision-making. Xiang and Gretzel (2010) examined the role of social media in online travel information search, and Gretzel and Yoo (2008) studied the use and impact of online travel reviews. Subsequent research asked why travellers trust some content and not other content. Ayeh *et al.* (2013) examined the factors that shape travellers' willingness to use online reviews, and Filieri (2016) studied how consumers judge the trustworthiness of reviews. Together, these studies form the basis for understanding UGC as an input to travel decisions.

UGC is more than information, however. Tourists create content for reasons other than informing others about travel options. Munar and Jacobsen (2014) identified social motives for sharing tourism experiences, including self-presentation and social interaction. A review, photograph or travel story can therefore inform prospective visitors, express the author's identity and communicate an interpretation of the place at the same time.

UGC circulates through platforms, which adds complexity to how it is shared and retrieved. Gretzel *et al.* (2015) highlight the growing role of technology in tourism experience and communication, and Gretzel (2022) describes the dependence of contemporary destination management on data and platforms. Exposure to digital content is not equal: platform design, ranking and recommendation systems influence which content becomes visible, and major review platforms differ substantially in the content they surface (Xiang *et al.*, 2017). Generative AI recommenders add a further layer of selection; an analysis of repeated ChatGPT travel recommendations found that they reproduced a narrow canon of iconic sites and applied undisclosed selection criteria (Spennemann, 2026). The stories a prospective tourist encounters may therefore be a selective, rather than a complete, account of a destination.

The evidence on the influence of UGC is also less uniform than is often assumed, which matters for any model built on peer narrative. Negative electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) can trigger strong negative emotions and avoidance intentions, as shown after the Itaewon crowd crush in South Korea (Duong *et al.*, 2025), and negative reviews can reduce trust and booking intentions (Sparks & Browning, 2011). Some negative eWOM is itself value-driven: tourists with strong biospheric and altruistic values use it to criticise environmental degradation at island destinations (Nguyen, 2026). Review systems are also open to manipulation by businesses (Gössling *et al.*, 2018). In lesser-known destinations, where UGC is scarce, official destination-generated content has been found to shape destination image more strongly than UGC (Hervás-Cortina *et al.*, 2026). These studies complement the credibility research above by showing that peer narratives can damage as well as build destination meaning, and they contradict the assumption that peer content always dominates institutional content. A framework of tourist-generated narrative must therefore specify the conditions under which peer narratives matter, rather than assume that they always do.

Experiential Marketing and Value Co-Creation

Experiential marketing offers a useful starting point for discussing what makes tourism experiences personally meaningful. Schmitt (1999) argued that marketing should address the sensory, affective, cognitive and relational aspects of consumption, not only product features and benefits. Pine and Gilmore (1998, 1999) argued that experiences are a distinct type of economic offering and that memorable, personally meaningful experiences are central to value creation. In tourism, where consumption is closely tied to place, interaction and participation, these perspectives help explain how visitors value experiences beyond their functional benefits.

Tourism research has examined the qualities of memorable experiences. Tung and Ritchie (2011) identified affect, expectations, consequentiality and recollection as essential dimensions of memorable tourism experiences. Prebensen *et al.* (2013) examined how tourists' own resources contribute to value co-creation, and Campos *et al.* (2018) reviewed how the co-creation of tourist experiences has developed as a research construct. This body of work challenges the view that tourism value is created by providers and consumed by passive visitors. Its significance for the present framework is that tourists help produce the experiences they later narrate. What an experience means to them is shaped by their interactions, interpretations and personal involvement, and their stories are a way of articulating and communicating the value they found in a destination.

Sustainable and Regenerative Destination Development

Sustainable tourism scholarship has increasingly focused on the relationship between tourism activity and the long-term wellbeing of destinations and their communities. The World Tourism Organization and United Nations Development Programme (2017) placed tourism within the Sustainable Development Goals, emphasising its

developmental role and the need to account for its social, cultural and environmental impacts. The dominant logic of this agenda is one of balance and mitigation: tourism should meet present needs while limiting harm to environments and communities. Critics argue that, in practice, the sustainable tourism agenda has often been absorbed into growth-oriented development and has done too little to address environmental damage and social inequality (Bellato *et al.*, 2023).

Regenerative tourism takes a different starting point. Rather than minimising negative impacts, it asks how tourism can actively restore and strengthen the social and ecological systems on which destinations depend (Dredge, 2022). Bellato *et al.* (2023) propose a regenerative framework of design dimensions and practice principles, and a later review identifies community centrism, an ecological worldview that treats tourism as a living system, multi-stakeholder collaboration and net-positive effects as its core pillars (Iddawala & Lee, 2026). Bellato and Pollock (2025) caution that the concept is often reduced to slogans such as leaving a place better than it was found, and argue that it should centre place and its communities rather than tourism growth. Regenerative tourism also asks who sets the criteria for desirable outcomes and who is represented in decisions about destination development.

The distinction matters for the framework. Sustainable tourism supplies widely recognised criteria, such as environmental protection, cultural respect and fair benefit distribution, against which the content of destination narratives and the conduct of visitors can be judged (Stages 4 and 5). Regenerative tourism adds two elements that sustainable tourism treats less centrally: an orientation towards net-positive contribution, and an insistence that host communities are active agents in deciding what counts as a desirable outcome (Stages 6 and 7). In the cycle, therefore, sustainability defines the minimum standard against which narrative content is assessed, while regeneration defines the direction in which the feedback loop would need to move for successive rotations to improve, rather than merely maintain, a destination's condition. Community participation cannot be assumed, however. Studies of community-based tourism show that participation is related to the socio-economic sustainability of tourism, although the programmes intended to channel participation do not necessarily explain that relationship (Escamis & Hinlayagan, 2024), and that external investors, weak governance and limited respect for local culture can exclude residents from tourism development (Mlagada *et al.*, 2026).

Some links between these fields already exist. Hay *et al.* (2022) highlight resident narratives and more inclusive approaches to destination branding, Roy and Chakraborty (2024) connect inclusive digital storytelling with place branding, and Martínez García de Leaniz *et al.* (2025) show that communicating destination social responsibility on social media can prompt tourists to generate eWOM about it. These contributions establish the relevance of narrative participation, but the wider relationship between tourist-generated narratives, shared destination meanings and sustainability-related behaviour has not been specified. A framework that links these processes must answer two questions. First, how can sustainability-oriented meanings become visible in the narratives that tourists and other stakeholders create and circulate? Second, when do such meanings become more than symbolic expressions and actually affect expectations or practices? The second question is particularly important because destination narratives are embedded in commercial, institutional and technological contexts that favour some narratives over others. The framework presented here treats sustainability as a normative direction for destination development and recognises that the link between narrative circulation and substantive change requires empirical investigation.

Critical Synthesis and the Unresolved Theoretical Gap

The reviewed streams offer complementary insights, but the ways in which they relate to one another have not been made explicit. Four points of complementarity, tension and contradiction can be identified. First, destination branding research and UGC research address the same phenomenon, destination meaning, at different levels. Branding studies examine brand-level outcomes such as image and equity but treat visitor communication as a response to the brand, whereas UGC studies examine how individuals adopt content but rarely ask how adopted content adds up to brand meaning. Studies comparing projected and perceived images sit between the two and show that the levels diverge (Marine-Roig & Ferrer-Rosell, 2018), yet they describe the gap rather than explain how it forms. Second, storytelling and experience research explain why tourists have something to narrate, and UGC research explains why some narratives are believed; neither explains which narratives become visible, which is the concern of platform research (Spennemann, 2026; Xiang *et al.*, 2017). Third, the streams partly contradict one another on the authority of peer narratives. Credibility research generally finds peer content persuasive (Ayeh *et al.*, 2013; Filieri, 2016), but evidence from small destinations, from negative eWOM and from review manipulation shows that this authority is conditional and can work against sustainability goals (Duong *et al.*, 2025; Gössling *et al.*, 2018; Hervás-Cortina *et al.*, 2026). Fourth, sustainability and regenerative scholarship prescribe desirable social and ecological outcomes but leave the role of digital narratives largely implicit, while digital marketing research rarely asks whether the behaviour it stimulates is sustainable. Social-media-induced crowding illustrates the cost of this separation (Siegel *et al.*, 2023).

These relationships are easier to specify once the core concepts are distinguished. Digital storytelling, tourist-generated narratives, UGC, collective destination narratives and destination brand identity are related but not interchangeable, and the framework depends on keeping them apart. Table 1 sets out the distinctions used

in this paper. In brief, UGC refers to any content produced by users, whether narrative or not; tourist-generated narratives are the subset of UGC in which a visitor recounts an experience as a story; digital storytelling is the practice through which such narratives are composed and circulated on digital platforms; the collective destination narrative is the pattern of recurring meanings that emerges across many narratives; and destination brand identity is the set of meanings by which the destination comes to be known and which stakeholders recognise as characteristic of it.

Taken together, the central gap concerns the link between four processes: the creation of narratable experiences, their transmission through digital platforms, the formation of destination meaning from many individual narratives, and the possible influence of that meaning on sustainability-related expectations and behaviour. These processes are conceptually linked, but digital storytelling does not necessarily lead to collective meaning or sustainable outcomes. Earlier conceptual and empirical studies have examined pairs of these processes, such as experience and sharing (Munar & Jacobsen, 2014), sharing and credibility (Filieri, 2016), social media and destination image (Liu *et al.*, 2024), and resident stories and branding (Hay *et al.*, 2022). To the authors' knowledge, however, none has connected all four in a single explanatory sequence or specified the feedback from community response to future experience. This paper proposes the Sustainable Digital Storytelling Cycle to address that gap. Its contribution lies in specifying the potential links between tourist narratives, destination brand meaning, later visitor behaviour and community interaction, while recognising that the same processes can perpetuate inequalities or produce symbolic sustainability claims without substantive action. The approach used to develop the framework is explained in the next section.

Table 1: Conceptual distinctions among the core constructs

Construct	Working definition in this paper	Unit of analysis	Distinguished from	Stage in the cycle
User-generated content (UGC)	Any publicly available content created by users rather than by destination organisations, including ratings, reviews, photographs, videos and comments	Individual content item	Broader than narrative: a star rating is UGC but not a narrative	Stages 2 and 3 (raw material)
Tourist-generated narrative	UGC in which a visitor recounts a personal experience of a place, with a sequence of events, actors and an evaluation	Individual story	Narrower than UGC; authored by a visitor rather than by a resident, firm or AI system	Stage 2
Digital storytelling	The practice of composing, editing and circulating narratives through digital media and platforms	Communicative practice	A process rather than a product; can be performed by tourists, residents, DMOs, influencers or AI tools	Stage 2
Collective destination narrative	The recurrent motifs, images and evaluations that emerge across many narratives and are recognised as characterising the destination	Corpus of narratives (destination level)	Not the sum of individual stories: it exists only where accounts converge	Stage 3
Destination brand identity	The shared set of meanings by which a destination is known and differentiated, as recognised by visitors, residents and organisations	Destination	The planned identity is set by the DMO; here identity is co-constituted and may differ from the planned identity	Stage 4

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

This is a conceptual paper. A conceptual design suits the problem because the gap identified in Section 2 is explanatory: existing literatures provide parts of an explanation but not the mechanism that links them. Following Jaakkola (2020), the paper adopts a theory-synthesis design, which integrates previously separate perspectives into a new, higher-order account of a phenomenon, combined with elements of a model design, which specifies relationships among constructs in the form of propositions. Conceptual papers of this kind are judged by the clarity of their constructs, the logic of their arguments and the testability of their propositions rather than by empirical data (Gilson & Goldberg, 2015; MacInnis, 2011). Specifying a mechanism, its assumptions and its points of failure is a necessary step before measurement, because

measurement presupposes constructs and relationships that have not yet been defined.

Approach to Conceptual Development

We chose four theoretical perspectives because each addresses one aspect of the problem described in Section 2. The narrative paradigm concerns persuasion. Fisher (1984) suggested that people assess claims less on the basis of formal logic than on the basis of narrative rationality, that is, the coherence of a story and its fidelity to the audience's experience of how the world works. A first-person account from a fellow traveller may therefore be more convincing than an institutional message, which offers a theoretical reason for the influence of peer narratives documented in UGC research (Ayeh *et al.*, 2013; Filieri, 2016). Fisher did not discuss platform-curated consumer content, so the extension of narrative rationality to that setting is an assumption of this paper rather than an established result.

Experiential marketing and the experience economy concern production (Pine & Gilmore, 1998, 1999; Schmitt, 1999; Tung & Ritchie, 2011): memorable experiences are the raw material of stories. Service-dominant logic concerns authorship. Vargo and Lusch (2004, 2008) reconceived value as co-created through resource integration and determined by the beneficiary, and their later work located co-creation within institutions and shared norms (Vargo & Lusch, 2016), which suits the treatment of a collective narrative as a shared institutional arrangement of meaning. Regenerative tourism scholarship (Bellato *et al.*, 2023; Dredge, 2022) provides normative direction: stewardship, equitable benefit sharing and respect for socio-cultural integrity. It is prescriptive rather than explanatory. Sustainability is therefore not a product of the cycle's descriptive mechanisms; it is a direction in which those mechanisms can be steered.

The integration is more than juxtaposition, because each perspective answers a question that the others do not. The perspectives also conflict in three ways. First, the experience economy is producer-centred, whereas service-dominant logic is beneficiary-centred; in this framework the experience economy is used only to explain how narratable material is provided, not who determines its value. Second, the narrative paradigm assumes unmediated human judgement, whereas tourist narratives reach audiences through curated platform environments (Gretzel *et al.*, 2015); coherence and fidelity can therefore act only as filters on content that platforms have already made visible. Third, service-dominant logic

Table 2: Theoretical perspectives: assumptions, contributions and limitations

Perspective	Core assumption	What it explains in the cycle	Limitation for this problem	How the framework responds
Narrative paradigm (Fisher, 1984)	People judge claims by narrative coherence and fidelity rather than by formal logic	Why peer narratives can persuade more than institutional messages (Stages 2 and 5)	Developed for public moral argument; assumes unmediated audiences; silent on platforms, sponsorship and synthetic content	Coherence and fidelity treated as filters that operate after platform visibility; persuasive advantage made conditional (P2)
Experiential marketing and experience economy (Pine & Gilmore, 1998, 1999; Schmitt, 1999)	Memorable, multi-sensory experiences are a distinct source of value	What makes an experience narratable (Stage 1)	Producer-centred; treats experiences as staged offerings and tends to equate memorability with value	Used only for the supply of narratable material; the meaning of the experience is attributed to the tourist (P1)
Service-dominant logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008, 2016)	Value is co-created through resource integration and determined by the beneficiary; institutions coordinate co-creation	Who authors destination meaning and how recurrent motifs become shared norms (Stages 3, 6 and 7)	Normatively neutral; highly abstract; underplays power asymmetries among actors	Institutionalisation used as one of three aggregation sub-mechanisms; power handled through boundary and failure conditions (P3, P6)
Regenerative tourism (Bellato *et al.*, 2023; Dredge, 2022)	Tourism should make net-positive contributions to place-based social-ecological systems, with communities as active agents	The direction in which the cycle should move and the criteria for judging its content (Stages 4, 6 and 7)	Prescriptive rather than explanatory; still loosely defined and prone to superficial use (Bellato & Pollock, 2025)	Treated as a normative standard against which narrative content and outcomes are assessed, not as a mechanism (P4, P7)

is neutral about what is co-created, whereas regenerative scholarship is normatively committed; the sustainability orientation of the cycle is therefore an additional commitment and not a result of its descriptive apparatus. Table 2 summarises, for each perspective, its core assumption, the part of the cycle it explains, its principal limitation in this context and the way in which the framework responds to that limitation. The limitations matter as much as the contributions: each perspective is used only for the transition it can explain, and the weaknesses of each are handled either by another perspective or by the boundary and failure conditions set out in Sections 4.5 and 4.6.

Literature Selection and Integrative Synthesis

The literature base was assembled through purposive selection, which is appropriate when the aim is theory development rather than an exhaustive account of a field (Snyder, 2019; Torraco, 2005). Five bodies of tourism and marketing literature were examined: destination branding; tourism storytelling and narrative; UGC and eWOM; experiential marketing and value co-creation; and sustainable and regenerative tourism. These five literatures supplied the conceptual and empirical material reviewed in Section 2, and the four theoretical perspectives described in Section 3.2 supplied the explanatory logic used to connect them.

Sources were identified in three ways. First, foundational works in each literature were identified from the authors' knowledge of the field and from highly cited review articles. Second, searches were conducted in Google Scholar, Semantic Scholar and Crossref using combinations of terms such as "destination branding", "digital storytelling", "tourist-generated content", "user-generated content", "electronic word-of-mouth", "travel influencer", "generative AI", "value co-creation", "memorable tourism experience", "sustainable tourism" and "regenerative tourism". Third, backward and forward citation chaining was applied to the key papers identified. Sources were included if they (a) were peer-reviewed articles, scholarly books or chapters, or authoritative institutional reports; (b) addressed at least one of the five literatures; and (c) contributed a concept, mechanism or empirical finding relevant to at least one link in the proposed cycle. Sources were excluded if they addressed digital marketing without a tourism or place-branding application, or if they duplicated a contribution already represented by an earlier or more comprehensive source. Particular attention was given to work published between 2022 and 2026 on generative AI, influencers, platform visibility, negative eWOM and regenerative tourism, so that recent developments and competing evidence were represented. The final base comprises 70 sources: 32 published before 2015, 15 published between 2015 and 2021, and 23 published between 2022 and 2026.

The synthesis followed an integrative logic (Torraco, 2005) in three steps. First, each source was read for the concept, mechanism or finding it contributes and was coded against the link in the emerging cycle to which it related (for example, experience to narrative, or narrative to collective meaning). Second, for each literature the authors recorded what it sets out to establish, what it assumes without theorising and where its assumptions conflict with those of other literatures (Sections 2.6 and 3.2). Third, links for which no literature supplied a mechanism were identified as the points at which theoretical argument was required, and these became the propositions. The selection is not claimed to be a representative sample of the fields concerned, and the synthesis is interpretive rather than statistical.

Framework Development Procedure

The cycle was developed by tracing one chain of dependency through the reviewed literature: what makes an experience narratable (experiential marketing), how a narrative persuades (narrative paradigm), how individual accounts become shared meaning (credibility filtering, platform mediation and institutionalisation), what that meaning should carry (regenerative scholarship), how it may influence conduct and community relations (regenerative and resident-centred branding research), and how those relations regenerate experience (co-creation research). Each link became a stage, and each assumption on which a link relied became a proposition. The propositions are derived by theoretical argument from the cited work and are presented as conjectures; to make them testable, Section 4.2 specifies their conceptual boundaries and indicative indicators. They have not been tested, and no statistical or other empirical results are reported.

Methodological Limitations

Purposive selection carries the risk of missing relevant scholarship, and the selection rests on the authors' judgement. Theoretical integration gives the framework internal coherence but not evidence, and in the absence of empirical validation the framework cannot be used to describe how any destination actually operates. These limitations are discussed further in Section 4.8.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Development of the Sustainable Digital Storytelling Cycle

The principal conceptual outcome is the Sustainable Digital Storytelling Cycle (Figure 1), a seven-stage framework in which each stage supplies conditions for the next and the seventh feeds back into the first. Table 3 summarises each stage's theoretical anchor, assumed mechanism and proposition. The arrows in Figure 1 denote conditioning relationships rather than demonstrated causal effects: each stage is held to make the next more likely, not to determine it.

The conventional model of destination communication can be expressed as a linear transmission from the

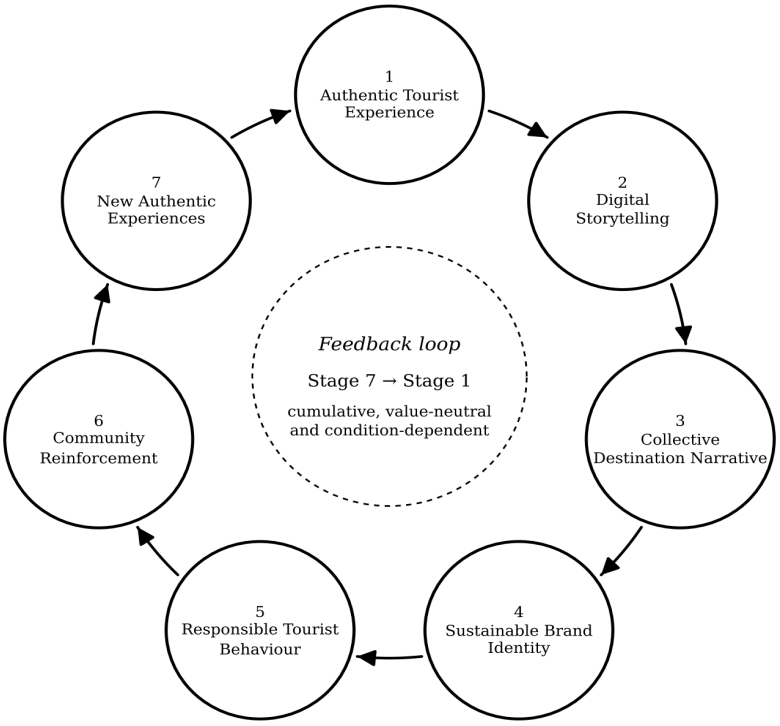

Figure 1: The Sustainable Digital Storytelling Cycle. Arrows denote conditioning relationships; the central loop denotes the feedback from Stage 7 to Stage 1.

destination, through official communication, to the tourist. The cycle is not the same chain with a new channel inserted. It reverses the direction of authorship and closes the sequence into a loop, and in doing so it changes three assumptions. The source of value shifts from the organisation to the tourist's lived and narrated experience. Authorship of the brand shifts from the DMO to a distributed set of narrators whose accounts coalesce into shared meaning. The basis of persuasion shifts from institutional authority towards narrative rationality (Fisher, 1984).

The most important structural feature of the framework is the closed loop. Communication and value creation become one recursive process, in which experiences produce stories, stories form shared meaning, shared meaning influences behaviour, behaviour affects community relations, and community relations produce new experiences to be narrated. Two feedback properties are proposed. The cycle is partly self-correcting, because credibility filters (Ayeh *et al.*, 2013; Filieri, 2016) tend to favour stories that are grounded in experience and resonate with audiences, which may limit the durability of inauthentic brand claims. It is also value-amplifying, because each rotation can reinforce the next, so that values that are salient at the brand-identity stage can become more deeply embedded over successive rotations. Both are properties of the mechanism, not of its content, so the cycle can amplify extraction as readily as stewardship (Section 4.6).

The distinctiveness of the cycle lies in how the four perspectives are made to depend on one another. Taken alone, each explains one transition. The experience economy explains why some encounters generate material worth recounting (Stage 1). The narrative paradigm explains why a recounted experience can persuade a stranger (Stage 2), but not which recounted experiences the stranger will see. Service-dominant logic explains how value is co-created and how recurring practices become institutionalised (Stages 3, 6 and 7), but it is indifferent to whether the institutionalised meaning is desirable. Regenerative tourism specifies which meanings are desirable (Stages 4, 6 and 7), but it offers no communicative mechanism by which they spread. The combination supplies what each lacks. The resulting mechanism can be described as narrative institutionalisation: experience-based stories that pass credibility and visibility filters recur, recurring motifs harden into a shared, institution-like understanding of what the destination is and how one should behave there, and that understanding shapes the experiences and conduct that generate the next round of stories. Two features distinguish this mechanism from existing models. First, the unit that carries the brand is the collective narrative, not the planned identity or the individual's perception. Second, the outcome of one rotation becomes an input into the next, so the framework predicts path dependence: a destination's narrative history constrains what can credibly be said about it later. This is what allows the cycle to explain both the gradual consolidation of a sustainable brand identity and the self-reinforcing spread of extractive narratives.

Table 3: Stages, theoretical anchors, assumed mechanisms and propositions of the Sustainable Digital Storytelling Cycle

Stage	Principal theoretical anchor	Assumed mechanism	Proposition
1. Authentic tourist experience	Experiential marketing; experience economy (Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Schmitt, 1999; Tung & Ritchie, 2011)	Consequential experience generates an impulse to recount	P1: Experiential depth is positively associated with narrative volume, richness and specificity
2. Digital storytelling	Narrative paradigm (Fisher, 1984); sharing motivations (Munar & Jacobsen, 2014)	Comparative persuasive advantage of coherent, faithful peer accounts	P2: Peer narratives influence expectations more than institutional messaging when coherent and faithful
3. Collective destination narrative	Credibility filtering (Ayeh *et al.*, 2013; Filieri, 2016); platform mediation (Gretzel *et al.*, 2015); institutionalisation (Vargo & Lusch, 2016)	Credibility filtering, platform visibility and motif recurrence aggregate accounts into shared meaning	P3: Convergence is conditional on credibility filtering, visibility mechanisms and recurrent motifs
4. Sustainable brand identity	Regenerative tourism (Bellato *et al.*, 2023; World Tourism Organization & United Nations Development Programme, 2017)	Shared meaning constitutes brand identity; values cannot be asserted into it	P4: Narrative sustainability content is a function of available experience and visible narrative, not of assertion
5. Responsible tourist behaviour	Narrative rationality and norm modelling (Bellato *et al.*, 2023; Fisher, 1984)	Peer-modelled descriptive and injunctive norms contribute to conduct	P5: Stewardship salience is positively associated with responsible conduct, attenuated by structural constraints
6. Community reinforcement	Resident place stories (Hay *et al.*, 2022; Roy & Chakraborty, 2024)	Perceived benefit and narrative access enable community participation	P6: Community participation is conditional on perceived benefit and narrative access
7. New authentic experiences	Co-creation (Campos *et al.*, 2018; Prebensen *et al.*, 2013)	Engaged communities and established identity regenerate narratable experience	P7: Successive rotations produce cumulative rather than merely repeated effects

The Seven Propositions

Each proposition is stated at its stage and is followed by its conceptual boundaries and possible indicators, which are summarised in Table 4. All propositions are testable conjectures, not findings.

Stage 1: Authentic tourist experience

The cycle begins with an encounter that is personally engaging and often co-created. Schmitt (1999) and Pine and Gilmore (1999) treat such experiences as a fundamental unit of contemporary value, Tung and Ritchie (2011) specify the qualities that make them memorable, and Prebensen *et al.* (2013) show that tourists invest their own resources in producing this value. Authenticity is used in the experiential sense (Wang, 1999): what matters is that the encounter is personally consequential to the visitor, not that it meets an external criterion of cultural genuineness. The assumed mechanism is motivational and expressive: consequential experience generates an impulse to recount.

Proposition 1. The experiential depth and personal consequentiality of a tourist encounter are positively associated with the volume, richness and specificity of the narratives the visitor subsequently produces and circulates.

Experiential depth and personal consequentiality are related but distinct. Experiential depth refers to the intensity and richness of the encounter while it occurs, that is, its affective, sensory, cognitive and relational engagement (Schmitt, 1999; Tung & Ritchie, 2011). Personal consequentiality refers to the significance the visitor attaches to the encounter afterwards, such as a perceived change in understanding, values or self-image (Tung & Ritchie, 2011). An experience can be intense but inconsequential, or quiet but personally significant. Depth can be measured with memorable tourism experience

measures administered during or shortly after the visit, and consequentiality with retrospective measures of perceived personal significance and change. Narrative outcomes can be measured by the number of posts per visitor (volume), their length and use of multiple media (richness), and their references to particular places, people and events (specificity).

Stage 2: Digital storytelling

The tourist turns the experience into a narrative and releases it into networked media, and authorship passes from institution to individual. Fisher (1984) explains why the narrative may persuade, since it can carry a coherence and fidelity that institutional messaging often lacks. Munar and Jacobsen (2014) identify social connection, altruism and self-expression as motivations and note the dominance of visual forms, and Chronis (2012) shows that the teller actively constructs rather than merely reports. The assumed mechanism is a comparative persuasive advantage under conditions of peer similarity.

Proposition 2. Where a tourist narrative and an institutional message address the same destination attribute, the tourist narrative exerts greater influence on prospective visitors' expectations to the extent that it is perceived as coherent and as faithful to the recipient's own understanding of comparable experience.

Proposition 2 is conditional. Peer narratives are expected to outweigh institutional messages when four conditions hold: the recipient perceives the narrator as similar to themselves; the attribute in question is experiential (for example, atmosphere, hospitality or crowding) rather than factual (for example, opening hours or prices); the narrative is not perceived as sponsored or synthetic; and the recipient is unfamiliar with the destination. Where these conditions are absent, as in small destinations with little UGC, institutional content may be more influential (Hervás-Cortina *et al.*, 2026), and disclosure of commercial or AI authorship is expected to reduce the peer advantage (Li *et al.*, 2025).

Stage 3: Collective destination narrative

Individual stories accumulate, interlink and begin to share motifs, images and evaluations. This aggregation, largely untheorised in the work reviewed in Section 2, turns scattered personal accounts into an emergent, collectively authored narrative of the place, and it is the mechanism on which the framework turns. Three sub-mechanisms are proposed. Credibility filtering (Ayeh *et al.*, 2013; Filieri, 2016) privileges stories that fellow travellers find trustworthy. Platform mediation determines which stories are encountered at all, since ranking and recommendation systems govern visibility (Gretzel *et al.*, 2015; Xiang *et al.*, 2017). Institutionalisation, in the sense elaborated by Vargo and Lusch (2016), consolidates recurrent motifs into shared norms of what the place is taken to be.

Proposition 3. The convergence of dispersed tourist narratives into a recognisable collective destination narrative is conditional on credibility filtering, platform visibility mechanisms and the presence of recurrent narrative motifs; where visibility is highly concentrated or motifs are absent, convergence is weak and the collective narrative remains fragmented.

Narrative convergence is identified when separate accounts, produced independently, come to share the same motifs, images and evaluations of a destination. In a corpus of tourist-generated content it can be measured by the concentration of topics or visual themes (for example, the share of content accounted for by the most frequent themes), by the similarity of themes across successive time windows, and by the overlap between visitor-generated and destination-generated themes (Költringer & Dickinger, 2015; Marine-Roig & Ferrer-Rosell, 2018). Convergence should be distinguished from volume: many posts on unrelated themes indicate fragmentation, not a collective narrative.

Stage 4: Sustainable brand identity

The collective narrative now functions as the brand: it is the shared meaning by which the destination is known. The regenerative agenda enters as normative direction, with Bellato *et al.* (2023) and the World Tourism Organization and the United Nations Development Programme (2017) supplying the values of stewardship, community benefit and socio-cultural respect that a sustainability-oriented identity would embody. A consequence of this structure is that a sustainable brand identity cannot be asserted by declaration. It exists only to the extent that the underlying experiences and circulating stories carry those values.

Proposition 4. The sustainability content of a destination's collective narrative is a function of the sustainability content of the experiences the destination makes available and of the narratives that achieve visibility, and cannot be durably established by institutional assertion alone.

The sustainability content of a collective narrative refers to the presence and prominence of themes that correspond to recognised sustainability criteria. Indicators include the share of narratives that refer to environmental care, cultural respect, local benefit or responsible conduct; the tone of those references; and whether they describe practices observed by the narrator or simply repeat promotional claims. Coding frames can be derived from the Sustainable Development Goal targets relevant to tourism (World Tourism Organization & United Nations Development Programme, 2017) and from regenerative principles (Bellato *et al.*, 2023). The proposition predicts that the gap between the sustainability content of DMO communication and that of visitor narratives widens when the underlying experiences do not support the claims being made.

Stage 5: Responsible tourist behavior

Brands prescribe as well as describe. A collective narrative in which stewardship, respect for community

and appreciation of place are salient communicates behavioural norms to prospective and arriving visitors, and stories that model particular conduct, told by credible peers, may exert a normative pull that abstract exhortation achieves less readily (Fisher, 1984). The regenerative expectation that visitors act as stewards (Bellato *et al.*, 2023) is thereby given a communicative mechanism. The claim is contributory, not determining: descriptive and injunctive norms conveyed through peer narrative (Cialdini *et al.*, 1990) are one influence on conduct among many, alongside price, regulation, infrastructure, enforcement and prior disposition.

Proposition 5. The salience of stewardship-oriented content within a destination's collective narrative is positively associated with responsible visitor conduct, with the association attenuated where regulatory, infrastructural or economic conditions impede such conduct.

Proposition 5 refers to responsible conduct, not to intentions. Responsible behavioural intentions are stated plans to act responsibly, whereas responsible tourist behaviour is conduct observed during the visit, such as compliance with site rules, waste behaviour, use of local services or avoidance of crowded times. The distinction matters because the gap between pro-environmental attitudes or intentions and actual behaviour is well documented in tourism and beyond (Juvan & Dolnicar, 2014; Sheeran & Webb, 2016). Peer narratives are expected to work mainly through descriptive norms (what others do) and injunctive norms (what others approve of) (Cialdini *et al.*, 1990). Studies that measure only intentions would therefore test a weaker version of the proposition; a full test requires behavioural or observational data.

Stage 6: Community reinforcement

Where visitor behaviour respects and materially benefits residents, communities may become more willing to participate in, endorse and enrich the destination's narrative. Hay *et al.* (2022) show that residents' own stories are a legitimate branding resource, and Roy and Chakraborty (2024) indicate that inclusive, resident-sourced digital storytelling can strengthen place branding. This stage allows the sustainability logic to close: a narrative that encourages responsible behaviour may earn community participation, which in turn deepens the narrative's authenticity and legitimacy. Two conditions are assumed. Communities must have the capability and access to narrate, which are unevenly distributed, and residents must experience benefit as such rather than have it asserted on their behalf. Where either fails, the stage breaks and the cycle does not close.

Proposition 6. Community participation in destination narration is conditional on residents' perceived benefit from tourism and on their effective access to the means of narration; in the absence of either, narrative authorship concentrates among visitors and commercial actors and the cycle's regenerative potential is not realised.

Perceived community benefit can be measured through residents' assessments of tourism's economic, social and cultural benefits, the share of tourism income retained locally and residents' perceived influence over tourism decisions. Effective access to digital storytelling refers to more than device ownership: it includes connectivity, digital skills, language, time and the visibility that residents' content achieves on the platforms visitors use (Minghetti & Buhalis, 2010). Indicators include the proportion of destination-related content authored by residents, the presence of community-led storytelling initiatives and residents' self-reported confidence in publishing about their place. Evidence that external investors and weak governance can exclude residents from tourism development (Mlagada *et al.*, 2026) suggests that both conditions frequently fail in practice.

Stage 7: New authentic experiences

Reinforced communities and an established sustainability-oriented identity are held to generate fresh, distinctive experiences that are themselves worth narrating, and the cycle returns to Stage 1. Each rotation may deepen authenticity, strengthen community benefit and refine the sustainability content of the collective narrative, but this is a conjecture about the cycle's dynamics, not an observed property.

Proposition 7. Successive rotations of the cycle produce cumulative rather than merely repeated effects, such that the sustainability content of a destination's collective narrative at a given time is a function of its content in prior periods; this cumulative property is the framework's most distinctive and least established claim.

The cumulative mechanism works through the carry-over of content between rotations. Narratives published in one period remain searchable and continue to shape the expectations of visitors in later periods; visitors whose expectations were formed by those narratives tend to seek, experience and recount similar things; and the resulting narratives reinforce the motifs that attracted them. Cumulative effects can be distinguished from repeated effects by comparing successive periods: a cumulative effect exists if the sustainability content of narratives in one period predicts that content in the next, after controlling for current conditions at the destination. Possible indicators include the persistence of sustainability themes across yearly corpora, the growth of community-authored content over time, and trends in observed visitor conduct and resident attitudes. Longitudinal designs are required to examine this proposition (Section 4.8).

Table 4: Conceptual boundaries, indicative indicators and suggested designs for the seven propositions

Prop.	Key constructs and boundaries	Indicative indicators	Suggested designs	RQ addressed
P1	Experiential depth (intensity during the encounter) versus personal consequentiality (significance afterwards)	Memorable tourism experience measures; perceived personal significance; posts per visitor, length, media types and specificity of references	Visitor survey linked to visitors' public content; panel studies	RQ1
P2	Peer versus institutional message on the same attribute; conditional on similarity, experiential attribute, non-sponsored content and unfamiliarity	Perceived coherence and fidelity; perceived source similarity; change in expectations	Online experiments manipulating source, sponsorship and AI disclosure	RQ1, RQ2
P3	Convergence versus volume; credibility filtering, platform visibility and motif recurrence	Concentration of topics or visual themes; similarity across time windows; overlap of visitor and DMO themes; concentration of visibility among top accounts	Computational content analysis; netnography	RQ1, RQ2
P4	Sustainability content of visitor narratives versus institutional claims	Share and tone of sustainability themes; observed versus repeated claims; gap between DMO and visitor themes	Comparative content analysis of DMO and visitor corpora	RQ1, RQ3
P5	Actual conduct versus intentions; descriptive and injunctive norms; structural constraints	Observed compliance, waste behaviour, timing of visits, local spending; intentions measured separately	Field experiments; observation; quasi-experiments	RQ2, RQ3
P6	Perceived community benefit; effective access to narration (skills, connectivity, visibility)	Residents' benefit perceptions; local retention of income; share of resident-authored content; community storytelling initiatives	Resident surveys; community case studies	RQ3
P7	Cumulative versus repeated effects; carry-over of content between rotations	Persistence of sustainability themes across periods; growth of community-authored content; trends in visitor conduct and resident attitudes	Longitudinal case studies; time-series content analysis	RQ3

Theoretical Contributions

The framework makes four theoretical contributions. First, it specifies narrative aggregation as the missing link between micro-level storytelling and destination-level brand meaning. Credibility mechanisms identified in UGC research (Ayeh *et al.*, 2013; Filieri, 2016; Gretzel & Yoo, 2008; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010) are repositioned as filters that determine which individual stories become part of a shared narrative, and they are combined with platform visibility and institutionalisation to provide a candidate explanation of how individual adoption produces collective meaning.

Second, the framework extends destination branding theory by shifting its theoretical centre from message design to condition design. When the brand is substantially constituted by a collective narrative, strategy concerns the experiences and community relationships that generate particular stories more than the delivery of a pre-set identity. This builds on the resident-centred insights of Hay *et al.* (2022), adds visitors as co-authors, and offers an explanation for the gaps between projected and perceived images documented in earlier work (Marine-Roig & Ferrer-Rosell, 2018).

Third, it extends experiential marketing and value co-creation research beyond intra-personal outcomes such as satisfaction and memory, following the chain from experience to public narration and brand constitution, and so connects co-creation research with storytelling

research. Fourth, it supplies a communicative mechanism that regenerative tourism theory lacks, places community reinforcement inside the branding process rather than outside it and, just as importantly, sets out the conditions under which this mechanism would fail to support sustainable and regenerative outcomes.

Two qualifications limit these claims. Whether this integration is absent from the wider literature could be established only through a systematic review, so the claim reflects the authors' best knowledge. In addition, the framework does not claim a paradigm shift in the strict sense, which would require an incommensurable predecessor to be replaced. The weaker and more defensible reading is that tourist-generated storytelling complements rather than invalidates earlier models, since institutional and tourist-generated communication coexist.

Relationship with Existing Scholarship

The novelty of the framework should not be overstated, because stage-based and cyclical models are well established in tourism and marketing. The tourism area life cycle (Butler, 1980), customer-based brand equity (Keller, 1993), value co-creation process models (Payne *et al.*, 2008) and resident-centred place-branding frameworks (Hay *et al.*, 2022; Roy & Chakraborty, 2024) all describe sequenced relationships. Table 5 compares the cycle with these models on five dimensions: what moves through the model, who drives it, the direction of influence, what makes it recursive and how sustainability is treated. Three differences follow. Unlike the life cycle model, the cycle is communicative rather than developmental, and its recursion runs through meaning rather than visitor numbers or infrastructure. Unlike co-creation process models, it does not end with value realised in a single encounter but extends to shared public meaning, later visitor conduct and community relations. Unlike brand-equity chains, its causal direction runs from consumer narration to brand constitution rather than from brand stimulus to consumer response. The framework does not compete with Hay *et al.* (2022) and Roy and Chakraborty (2024) but generalises their insight that resident narration is a branding resource, placing it at Stage 6 within a loop that also includes visitor narration and sustainability outcomes. The cost of this generality is less detail about community agency, which those studies examine more closely. These comparisons rest on the authors' reading of the models concerned and should be treated as provisional.

Table 5: Comparison of the Sustainable Digital Storytelling Cycle with existing sequential models

Model	What moves through the model	Main driver	Direction of influence	Source of recursion	Treatment of sustainability
Tourism area life cycle (Butler, 1980)	Visitor numbers and infrastructure	Market demand and development	Destination development over time	Stages of development, followed by rejuvenation or decline	Implicit (carrying capacity)
Customer-based brand equity (Keller, 1993)	Brand knowledge	Firm or DMO marketing	Brand stimulus to consumer response	None (linear)	Not addressed
Value co-creation process (Payne *et al.*, 2008)	Value in use	Interaction between provider and customer	Two-way, within the provider-customer encounter	Relationship learning within the dyad	Not addressed
Resident place-story branding (Hay *et al.*, 2022; Roy & Chakraborty, 2024)	Resident narratives	Residents and place managers	Resident narration to place brand	Not specified	Implicit in inclusion
Sustainable Digital Storytelling Cycle (this paper)	Tourist and resident narratives and the collective meaning they form	Distributed narrators, filtered by credibility and platforms	Narration to brand constitution, to behaviour, to community, to new experience	Community reinforcement feeding new experiences; cumulative narrative history	Explicit normative direction with stated failure conditions

Competing Interpretations and Boundary Conditions

Three competing interpretations deserve attention. The channel interpretation holds that tourist-generated storytelling is simply another influential channel that DMOs can incorporate into conventional brand management without changing their approach. It is

consistent with much of the same evidence, and the argument against it in Section 4.1 does not rest on evidence that discriminates between the two readings. The intermediation interpretation holds that authority has been delegated not to tourists but to platforms, which rank and recommend narratives and so create the appearance of a public voice (Gretzel *et al.*, 2015; Spennemann, 2026). The selection interpretation holds that destinations with richer experiential endowments simply have more satisfied visitors and more favourable narration, so that apparent narration effects reflect underlying destination quality.

The boundary conditions follow from the framework's assumptions. It assumes high levels of digital access and engagement and applies only weakly where access or digital literacy is low (Minghetti & Buhalis, 2010). It assumes platform ecologies in which peer content achieves meaningful visibility, and it will operate differently on visually driven, algorithmically ranked platforms than on review platforms based on aggregated ratings (Xiang *et al.*, 2017). It assumes community capability and agency, which are prerequisites for Stage 6 and are likely to vary with the political and economic governance of destinations. It assumes destinations that are experientially and narratively rich. Finally, it assumes that recipients read peer narratives as genuinely peer-produced, an assumption weakened by commercial sponsorship, influencer partnerships, AI-generated content and reputational manipulation (Bui *et al.*, 2024; Gössling *et al.*, 2018). These are conditions of applicability rather than minor qualifications: the framework models a specific communicative configuration, not a general theory of destination branding.

Failure Conditions and Sustainability Implications

The integrity of the framework depends on its ability to state when it fails. Digital storytelling is a process, and the process is neutral as to what passes through it; digital storytelling is therefore not inherently sustainable or regenerative. The mechanisms (aggregation, norm modelling and community reinforcement) are distinct from the outcomes (regenerative or extractive) that they produce under particular conditions. Four failure conditions are specified.

Value inversion occurs when dominant narratives centre on accumulation, transgression or spectacle. The same amplifying structure then embeds extractive practices as predictably as it would embed stewardship, producing narrative-driven overtourism: a narrative that makes a site highly desirable can generate traffic that erodes the qualities being promoted, while Stages 2 to 4 reinforce the pattern (Siegel *et al.*, 2023). Representational distortion occurs when narration and platform mediation select what circulates. A collective narrative can form around an image that residents do not recognise, and staged or commodified provision may then follow the narrative (Cohen, 1988). Negative eWOM after a single incident can likewise come to dominate a destination's narrative out of proportion to its typical conditions (Duong *et al.*, 2025).

Narrative capture occurs when visibility is concentrated among commercial intermediaries, sponsored creators, AI-generated content or a small segment of highly connected visitors. The collective narrative is then not truly collective, and the apparent distribution of authorship is in fact a shift of authority from public institutions to platforms and influencers rather than to tourists and residents. Community exclusion occurs when residents lack access to the means of narration or do not benefit from tourism (Mlagada *et al.*, 2026). Stage 6 then cannot operate, and the loop becomes an open chain from experience to storytelling to brand identity: a more participatory form of promotion with no regenerative property.

These failure conditions are part of the framework rather than exceptions to it. Each identifies a point of intervention and a diagnostic question that a destination can ask of itself, so that narrative content becomes an object of management and not only of description.

Practical and Policy Implications

For DMOs, the framework implies a shift from message controller to narrative enabler. Rather than replacing visitors' and residents' stories, a DMO would focus on creating memorable and sustainable experiences (Stage 1), reducing barriers to visitor storytelling (Stage 2), and supporting the credibility and visibility of visitor and resident narratives (Stages 3 and 6). Measures of success would shift from message reach to the diversity and sustainability of circulating narratives and to who is heard. A DMO that promotes demand-generating stories without regard to community benefit and carrying capacity risks accelerating the degradation it seeks to prevent.

For tourism marketers, highly polished brand content may be outcompeted by peer accounts, because credibility filters favour perceived authenticity (Ayeh *et al.*, 2013; Filieri, 2016). Marketers are therefore better placed to create situations worth narrating and to help visitors and residents tell their own stories. Facilitating narration is not the same as producing it: by the logic of the framework, undisclosed sponsorship or synthetic content would undermine the credibility conditions on which the cycle depends. Influencer partnerships and AI-generated material should therefore be disclosed and used to complement rather than imitate visitor narratives (Li *et al.*, 2025; Saxena & Rishi, 2025).

For policymakers, destination communication is a potential instrument of sustainable development as well as of economic promotion. Commitments expressed by the World Tourism Organization and United Nations Development Programme (2017) could be supported through cultural programming, community storytelling initiatives and engagement with platforms, provided that narrative content does influence behaviour at Stage 5. Where regulatory or infrastructural conditions hinder responsible conduct, however, narrative interventions will have limited effect, and equitable access to narration

becomes a legitimate policy goal in its own right.

For host communities, the framework positions residents not as the backdrop to the destination brand but as its co-authors (Hay *et al.*, 2022; Roy & Chakraborty, 2024), which justifies investment in inclusive storytelling capacity. It also recognises refusal: because participation is how the cycle closes, refusal or contestation by residents is a form of agency. The risk that community stories will be appropriated as marketing content is real; the framework makes this risk visible but does not resolve it. For sustainable tourism practitioners, the cycle can serve as a diagnostic tool: audit dominant narratives for regenerative or extractive elements, locate the weakest stage and target intervention there. Each failure condition corresponds to a question. Do the values carried by the story match those the destination seeks? Would residents recognise the place being described? Who is heard and who is not? Do residents benefit? The framework identifies leverage points but cannot guarantee that intervention at these points will succeed.

Limitations and Future Research

The limitations are substantial and follow from the form of the framework. It is a theoretical argument; none of its seven propositions has been tested empirically, and the relationships in Figure 1 are conditioning relationships, not measured effects. The literature base is purposive rather than systematic, and the framework extends theories from other fields, such as Fisher's (1984) account of narrative rationality in public moral argument and the staging logic of the experience economy, on the assumption that these extensions hold for platform-mediated tourism communication. Authenticity is used in an experiential sense (Wang, 1999), and the wider debate on authenticity in tourism is not adjudicated here. The seven-stage structure divides processes that are in practice simultaneous and overlapping, trading fidelity for tractability. Platforms, power and community agency are recognised as boundary or failure conditions but are not theorised; a fuller account would draw on platform governance and the political economy of tourism. Finally, the framework was not developed with reference to a particular destination, so its applicability across destination types, governance regimes and cultural settings is unknown.

Five priorities for future research follow. First, the aggregation mechanism at Stage 3 should be investigated directly: how, and under what conditions, do individual stories converge into recognisable collective motifs, and how can convergence be measured? Computational analysis of large longitudinal corpora of tourist-generated content, combined with netnographic work, would allow Proposition 3 and the intermediation interpretation to be tested. Second, Propositions 1, 2 and 4 can be examined through experimental and quasi-experimental designs, for example by varying narrative coherence, fidelity, sponsorship disclosure and AI authorship to establish when peer narratives outperform institutional messages in forming expectations. Third, Proposition 5 requires field research that separates narrative influence from regulatory, infrastructural and price effects, preferably observing behaviour rather than relying on reported intentions. Fourth, Propositions 6 and 7 call for community-focused and longitudinal case studies that follow destinations through several rotations. Such studies should record failure as well as success, particularly whether community benefit improves or declines as a narrative grows stronger. Comparative designs across destinations with contrasting platform ecologies, digital access and governance capacity would help to clarify boundary conditions and to test the selection interpretation. Fifth, governance and ethical questions require direct empirical attention: how sponsorship and AI-generated content can be used to manipulate narratives, how community stories are commercialised, how visibility differs across social groups, and how destinations can govern narratives without appropriating them.

Because the cycle is recursive, cross-sectional designs will struggle to separate its stages, and the most informative evidence will come from observing the same destination over time. This is demanding, and the framework is best read as a research agenda rather than as a description that current evidence supports.

CONCLUSION

This paper set out to explain how tourist-generated digital narratives shape destination brand meaning and, through it, sustainability-related behaviour and community participation. Destination branding theory developed in a communicative environment in which an organisation could reasonably create an identity and share it with an audience. Tourist-generated digital content has made that account incomplete, because much of the meaning through which places are known is now produced by tourists and residents outside any institution's control. The Sustainable Digital Storytelling Cycle responds by specifying the mechanism: experience becomes narrative, narratives aggregate into collective destination meaning, that meaning forms a sustainability-oriented brand identity that conveys behavioural norms, and responsible conduct may earn community reinforcement that renews narratable experience.

The main theoretical contribution is the specification of narrative aggregation and community feedback as the links that connect individual storytelling to destination-level brand meaning and sustainable outcomes. This extends destination branding literature in three ways: it relocates the source of value from the organisation to visitors' lived and narrated experience, it treats authorship of the brand as distributed among visitors and residents, and it explains persuasion through narrative rationality rather than institutional authority. It also places community participation and responsible tourist behaviour inside the branding process. A destination whose narratives do not lead to responsible conduct, or whose residents neither benefit from tourism nor take part in narration, cannot

sustain a credible sustainable brand identity, however it is promoted. For researchers, the seven propositions and their indicators offer a testable agenda, with the aggregation mechanism and the cumulative effect of successive rotations as priorities. For destination managers, the framework suggests that the most effective route to a sustainable brand lies less in what is said about a destination than in the experiences, community relationships and conditions for narration that determine what visitors and residents will say about it.

Declaration of Generative AI Use

Claude (Anthropic) was used to assist with language editing, grammatical corrections, including checking the bibliographic details of added sources. All AI-assisted text was reviewed and validated by the authors, who take full responsibility for the content of the manuscript.

REFERENCES

Ackon, J., Anderson, A. N., & Hagan, E. (2026). Domestic tourism participation: The role of destination awareness and promotion. *American Journal of Tourism and Hospitality, 4*(1), 22–33. https://doi.org/10.54536/ajth.v4i1.6175

Ayeh, J. K., Au, N., & Law, R. (2013). "Do we believe in TripAdvisor?" Examining credibility perceptions and online travelers' attitude toward using user-generated content. *Journal of Travel Research, 52*(4), 437–452. https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287512475217

Bellato, L., Frantzeskaki, N., & Nygaard, C. A. (2023). Regenerative tourism: A conceptual framework leveraging theory and practice. *Tourism Geographies, 25*(4), 1026–1046. https://doi.org/10.1080/14616688.2022.2044376

Bellato, L., & Pollock, A. (2025). Regenerative tourism: A state-of-the-art review. *Tourism Geographies, 27*(3–4), 558–567. https://doi.org/10.1080/14616688.2023.2294366

Blain, C., Levy, S. E., & Ritchie, J. R. B. (2005). Destination branding: Insights and practices from destination management organizations. *Journal of Travel Research, 43*(4), 328–338. https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287505274646

Bui, H. T., Filimonau, V., & Sezerel, H. (2024). AI-thenticity: Exploring the effect of perceived authenticity of AI-generated visual content on tourist patronage intentions. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management, 34*, Article 100956. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2024.100956

Butler, R. W. (1980). The concept of a tourist area cycle of evolution: Implications for management of resources. *The Canadian Geographer, 24*(1), 5–12. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1541-0064.1980.tb00970.x

Campos, A. C., Mendes, J., Oom do Valle, P., & Scott, N. (2018). Co-creation of tourist experiences: A literature review. *Current Issues in Tourism, 21*(4), 369–400. https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2015.1081158

Chronis, A. (2005). Coconstructing heritage at the Gettysburg storyscape. *Annals of Tourism Research, 32*(2), 386–406. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2004.07.009

Chronis, A. (2012). Tourists as story-builders: Narrative construction at a heritage museum. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing, 29*(5), 444–459. https://doi.org/10.1080/10548408.2012.691395

Cialdini, R. B., Reno, R. R., & Kallgren, C. A. (1990). A focus theory of normative conduct: Recycling the concept of norms to reduce littering in public places. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 58*(6), 1015–1026. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.58.6.1015

Cohen, E. (1988). Authenticity and commoditization in tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research, 15*(3), 371–386. https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383(88)90028-X

Dredge, D. (2022). Regenerative tourism: Transforming mindsets, systems and practices. *Journal of Tourism Futures, 8*(3), 269–281. https://doi.org/10.1108/JTF-01-2022-0015

Duong, L. H., Kong, Y.-Q., Olya, H., Lee, C.-K., & Girish, V. G. (2025). Echoes of tragedy: How negative social media shapes tourist emotions and avoidance intensions? A multi-methods approach. *Tourism Management, 108*, Article 105122. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2024.105122

Escamis, J. E., & Hinlayagan, K. R. (2024). Community-based tourism implementation as mediator on the relationship between community participation and socio-economic sustainability of tourism. *American Journal of Tourism and Hospitality, 2*(1), 93–104. https://doi.org/10.54536/ajth.v2i1.3629

Filieri, R. (2016). What makes an online consumer review trustworthy? *Annals of Tourism Research, 58*, 46–64. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2015.12.019

Fisher, W. R. (1984). Narration as a human communication paradigm: The case of public moral argument. *Communication Monographs, 51*(1), 1–22. https://doi.org/10.1080/03637758409390180

Gilson, L. L., & Goldberg, C. B. (2015). Editors' comment: So, what is a conceptual paper? *Group & Organization Management, 40*(2), 127–130. https://doi.org/10.1177/1059601115576425

Gössling, S., Hall, C. M., & Andersson, A.-C. (2018). The manager's dilemma: A conceptualization of online review manipulation strategies. *Current Issues in Tourism, 21*(5), 484–503. https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2015.1127337

Green, M. C., & Brock, T. C. (2000). The role of transportation in the persuasiveness of public narratives. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 79*(5), 701–721. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.79.5.701

Gretzel, U. (2017). Influencer marketing in travel and tourism. In M. Sigala & U. Gretzel (Eds.), *Advances in social media for travel, tourism and hospitality: New perspectives, practice and cases* (pp. 147–156). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315565736-13

Gretzel, U. (2022). The Smart DMO: A new step in the digital transformation of destination management organizations. *European Journal of Tourism Research, 30*, Article 3002. https://doi.org/10.54055/ejtr.v30i.2589

Gretzel, U., Sigala, M., Xiang, Z., & Koo, C. (2015). Smart tourism: Foundations and developments. *Electronic Markets, 25*(3), 179–188. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12525-015-0196-8

Gretzel, U., & Yoo, K. H. (2008). Use and impact of online travel reviews. In P. O'Connor, W. Höpken, & U. Gretzel (Eds.), *Information and communication technologies in tourism 2008* (pp. 35–46). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-211-77280-5_4

Hay, N. A., Chien, P. M., & Ruhanen, L. (2022). Tell me your story: Branding destinations through residents' (place) stories. *Journal of Vacation Marketing, 28*(3), 319–334. https://doi.org/10.1177/13567667211060567

Hervás-Cortina, C.-M., Ruiz-Molina, M.-E., Gil-Saura, I., & Bordian, M. (2026). How social media content shapes destination image and eWOM: The moderating role of personality in lesser-known tourism destinations. *Journal of Theoretical and Applied Electronic Commerce Research, 21*(6), Article 164. https://doi.org/10.3390/jtaer21060164

Hossain, M. S., Sheikh, P., & Islam, P. (2025). The role of social media marketing in the tourism and hospitality industry: A study on Bangladesh. *American Journal of Tourism and Hospitality, 3*(1), 14–23. https://doi.org/10.54536/ajth.v3i1.4082

Iddawala, J., & Lee, D. (2026). Regenerative tourism: Context and conceptualisations. *Tourism Planning & Development, 23*(2), 185–215. https://doi.org/10.1080/21568316.2025.2527614

Jaakkola, E. (2020). Designing conceptual articles: Four approaches. *AMS Review, 10*(1–2), 18–26. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13162-020-00161-0

Juvan, E., & Dolnicar, S. (2014). The attitude–behaviour gap in sustainable tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research, 48*, 76–95. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2014.05.012

Keller, K. L. (1993). Conceptualizing, measuring, and managing customer-based brand equity. *Journal of Marketing, 57*(1), 1–22. https://doi.org/10.1177/002224299305700101

Kilipiri, E., Papaioannou, E., & Kotzaivazoglou, I. (2023). Social media and influencer marketing for promoting sustainable tourism destinations: The Instagram case. *Sustainability, 15*(8), Article 6374. https://doi.org/10.3390/su15086374

Kladou, S., & Kehagias, J. (2014). Assessing destination brand equity: An integrated approach. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management, 3*(1), 2–10. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2013.11.002

Költringer, C., & Dickinger, A. (2015). Analyzing destination branding and image from online sources: A web content mining approach. *Journal of Business Research, 68*(9), 1836–1843. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2015.01.011

Li, C., Cao, Q., Hua, S., & Tao, C.-W. (2025). When AI takes the wheel: The effectiveness of AI versus human-generated content in tourism marketing. *Journal of Vacation Marketing. Advance online publication.* https://doi.org/10.1177/13567667251393512

Liu, J., Wang, C., & Zhang, T. (2024). Exploring social media affordances in tourist destination image formation: A study on China's rural tourism destination. *Tourism Management, 101*, Article 104843. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2023.104843

MacInnis, D. J. (2011). A framework for conceptual contributions in marketing. *Journal of Marketing, 75*(4), 136–154. https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.75.4.136

Marine-Roig, E., & Ferrer-Rosell, B. (2018). Measuring the gap between projected and perceived destination images of Catalonia using compositional analysis. *Tourism Management, 68*, 236–249. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2018.03.020

Martínez García de Leaniz, P., Herrero, Á., & García de los Salmones, M. M. (2025). Communicating destination social responsibility through social media: The roles of tourists' social engagement, citizenship behaviors, and emotions. *Journal of Travel Research, 64*(4), 929–949. https://doi.org/10.1177/00472875231225390

Minghetti, V., & Buhalis, D. (2010). Digital divide in tourism. *Journal of Travel Research, 49*(3), 267–281. https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287509346843

Mlagada, F. K., Neequaye, K., & Anderson, A. N. (2026). Community involvement in tourism development: The setbacks and drawbacks. *American Journal of Tourism and Hospitality, 4*(1), 77–86. https://doi.org/10.54536/ajth.v4i1.4848

Morgan, N., Pritchard, A., & Pride, R. (Eds.). (2011). *Destination brands: Managing place reputation* (3rd ed.). Butterworth-Heinemann.

Moscardo, G. (2020). Stories and design in tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research, 83*, Article 102950. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2020.102950

Mossberg, L. (2007). A marketing approach to the tourist experience. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism, 7*(1), 59–74. https://doi.org/10.1080/15022250701231915

Mossberg, L. (2008). Extraordinary experiences through storytelling. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism, 8*(3), 195–210. https://doi.org/10.1080/15022250802532443

Munar, A. M., & Jacobsen, J. K. S. (2014). Motivations for sharing tourism experiences through social media. *Tourism Management, 43*, 46–54. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2014.01.012

Nguyen, L. P. (2026). Value-driven environmental advocacy in tourism: Understanding the drivers of negative eWOM among tourists visiting island destinations. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Insights, 9*(2), 747–766. https://doi.org/10.1108/JHTI-05-2025-0637

Payne, A. F., Storbacka, K., & Frow, P. (2008). Managing

the co-creation of value. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 36*(1), 83–96. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-007-0070-0

Pine, B. J., II, & Gilmore, J. H. (1998). Welcome to the experience economy. *Harvard Business Review, 76*(4), 97–105.

Pine, B. J., II, & Gilmore, J. H. (1999). *The experience economy: Work is theatre & every business a stage*. Harvard Business School Press.

Prebensen, N. K., Vittersø, J., & Dahl, T. I. (2013). Value co-creation significance of tourist resources. *Annals of Tourism Research, 42*, 240–261. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2013.01.012

Roy, G., & Chakraborty, A. (2024). Discovering real-time digital inclusive storytelling for enhancing place branding experience. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure, 13*(1), 51–58.

Saxena, A., & Rishi, B. (2025). AI and human collaboration in tourism: A framework for scalable, authentic, and engaging content. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research, 30*(9), 1226–1244. https://doi.org/10.1080/10941665.2025.2486033

Schmitt, B. (1999). Experiential marketing. *Journal of Marketing Management, 15*(1–3), 53–67. https://doi.org/10.1362/026725799784870496

Sheeran, P., & Webb, T. L. (2016). The intention–behavior gap. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass, 10*(9), 503–518. https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12265

Siegel, L. A., Tussyadiah, I., & Scarles, C. (2023). Exploring behaviors of social media-induced tourists and the use of behavioral interventions as salient destination response strategy. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management, 27*, Article 100765. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2023.100765

Snyder, H. (2019). Literature review as a research methodology: An overview and guidelines. *Journal of Business Research, 104*, 333–339. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.07.039

Sparks, B. A., & Browning, V. (2011). The impact of online reviews on hotel booking intentions and perception of trust. *Tourism Management, 32*(6), 1310–1323. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2010.12.011

Spennemann, D. H. R. (2026). Assumptions and undeclared selection criteria: The usefulness of generative AI as a travel recommender system. *Administrative Sciences, 16*(6), Article 252. https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci16060252

Torraco, R. J. (2005). Writing integrative literature reviews: Guidelines and examples. *Human Resource Development Review, 4*(3), 356–367. https://doi.org/10.1177/1534484305278283

Tung, V. W. S., & Ritchie, J. R. B. (2011). Exploring the essence of memorable tourism experiences. *Annals of Tourism Research, 38*(4), 1367–1386. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2011.03.009

Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2004). Evolving to a new dominant logic for marketing. *Journal of Marketing, 68*(1), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.68.1.1.24036

Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2008). Service-dominant logic: Continuing the evolution. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 36*(1), 1–10. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-007-0069-6

Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2016). Institutions and axioms: An extension and update of service-dominant logic. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 44*(1), 5–23. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-015-0456-3

Wang, N. (1999). Rethinking authenticity in tourism experience. *Annals of Tourism Research, 26*(2), 349–370. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-7383(98)00103-0

Woodside, A. G. (2010). Brand-consumer storytelling theory and research: Introduction to a Psychology & Marketing special issue. *Psychology & Marketing, 27*(6), 531–540. https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.20342

World Tourism Organization & United Nations Development Programme. (2017). *Tourism and the Sustainable Development Goals – Journey to 2030*. https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284419401

Xiang, Z., Du, Q., Ma, Y., & Fan, W. (2017). A comparative analysis of major online review platforms: Implications for social media analytics in hospitality and tourism. *Tourism Management, 58*, 51–65. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2016.10.001

Xiang, Z., & Gretzel, U. (2010). Role of social media in online travel information search. *Tourism Management, 31*(2), 179–188. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2009.02.016

Yu, J., & Meng, T. (2026). Image generative AI in tourism: Trends, impacts, and future research directions. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research, 50*(2), 288–301. https://doi.org/10.1177/10963480251324676