

5 Beyond the Destination: Storytelling as a Tool for Experiential Marketing

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The objectives of this chapter are to:

- ☐ Emphasise the transition of destination marketing to the experiential perspective,
- ☐ Highlight the role of storytelling in destination marketing,
- ☐ Connect destination storytelling to the experiential marketing approach,
- ☐ Showcase stories that differentiate the tourism destination,
- ☐ Discuss the case of *Sagres Fortress*, Algarve, Portugal.

Introduction

Demand for meaningful, authentic and memorable tourism experiences continues as a major trend in the global tourism market (Amaro et al., 2023), increasing the pressure on destinations to facilitate them to visitors (Kim et al., 2019). As competition between destinations grows, the need for differentiation is higher than ever (Evren & Kozak, 2018). This differentiation derives from the experiential propositions based on destination values which are communicated to markets, as well as the stories told to tourists during on-site experiences (Ben Youssef et al., 2018). Not only are experiences playing a major role as pull factors to destinations, but also so are the stories intertwined with them (Moscardo, 2020).

Storytelling is currently recognised as a marketing tool for destinations to develop their branding strategy, promote their image, personality, uniqueness and authenticity, as well as communicate to tourists the experiences they can live during their stay (Zhang & Ramayah, 2024). Additionally, innovative digital technologies, such as Augmented and Virtual Reality (AR/VR), are seen to present a great potential for sharing destination stories with visitors by emphasising communities' values and heritage, however aligned with the benefit of personalization