

SUSTAINABILITY IN TOURISM

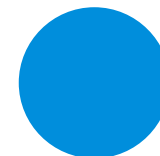


Digital Story DOING in Local Tourism

ERASMUS+ PARTNERSHIP PROJECT OF BULGARIA, SPAIN, BELGIUM, ITALY AND AUSTRIA 2021-2023



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CONTENT

- Introduction
- Communication and marketing
- Storydoing tips
- Element of sustainability
- Additional reading of the topic



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INTRODUCTION

Tourism businesses in rural areas face many constraints, in many circumstances worsened by their reduced size and their location. A recent debate on “rural entrepreneurship” suggests that one of the best opportunities to develop rural areas is linked with rural tourism, since its principles are related to the creation of jobs and income in the rural space and can also help to increase the perception of value of endogenous resources and products. For such advocated sustainability to be achieved, on the one hand, it is essential that the communication by the rural tourism venture is able to transmit its essence and its respective values, as well as the product and experiences made available to tourists. On the other hand, through efficient communication, these enterprises could attract the tourists that bring more benefits to the region.

The idea of sustainable tourism is often incorrectly considered a “type” of tourism, but from the responsible tourism point of view sustainability applies to every type of tourism and to every sector within this broad field: transportation, accommodation, catering, interactions, and other travel-related activities that have an effect on the **environment, society, or economy**.

As proven by many national surveys, contemporary tourists are interested in the impact generated by their holidays and care for more sustainable choices in terms of tourist products and destinations they want to experience. In addition, they are more and more inclined towards experiencing, learning and participating, they are not exclusively interested in buying the tourist product, but also in buying the **stories behind the product**. In this sense, **storytelling** can be a tool for sustainable tourism promotion.

Creative storytelling can therefore help to develop unique narratives that engage the customers creating a sense of community and belonging, transforming followers in promoters and inspiring them to be part in this creative process.

Communication and marketing

The evaluation of the quality level of hospitality and services in the hotel and catering sector is normally based on aspects concerning comfort, cleanliness, the relationship between quality and price. In an approach based on the principles and good practices of sustainability and responsible tourism, the indicators and criteria change completely. Certainly the aspects already mentioned above remain important, however many others are added. Customers appreciate this information and in this way a twofold result is obtained: the quality of the service is raised and the service is linked to the principles and good practices of sustainability, the enhancement of traditions, typicality and authenticity; the benefit for local producers; customer involvement in correct and positive choices. Consequently, tourism and its integration into the rural product can be very much part of developing employment opportunities, increasing local prosperity, conservation, and maintenance of the environment, celebrating cultural assets and generally ensuring a greater spread in terms of who can benefit (economically, socially, and culturally).

The adoption of good sustainability, environmental, social, cultural, economic practices must be adequately communicated. Customers, guests must be made aware of the choices made by their hosts; they will certainly appreciate them and often feel involved in these choices, knowing that they have somehow influenced them with their orientations and, now, that they have accepted them. Marketing messages can focus on empowering consumers' own capacities for change in order to be more effective! To understand the market needs and to customize sustainability messages you should remember that even if customers care for sustainability, it does not mean they will act differently; that sustainability values and actions differentiate a product; that knowing the attitudes of your market segments allows to tailor sustainability messages accordingly. Some of the main purposes of sustainability communication are to make consumers aware of the availability of sustainable travel products, to inform consumers of how these offerings meet their needs and comply with sustainability criteria, and, ultimately, to stimulate pro-sustainable purchases.



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STORYDOING TIPS

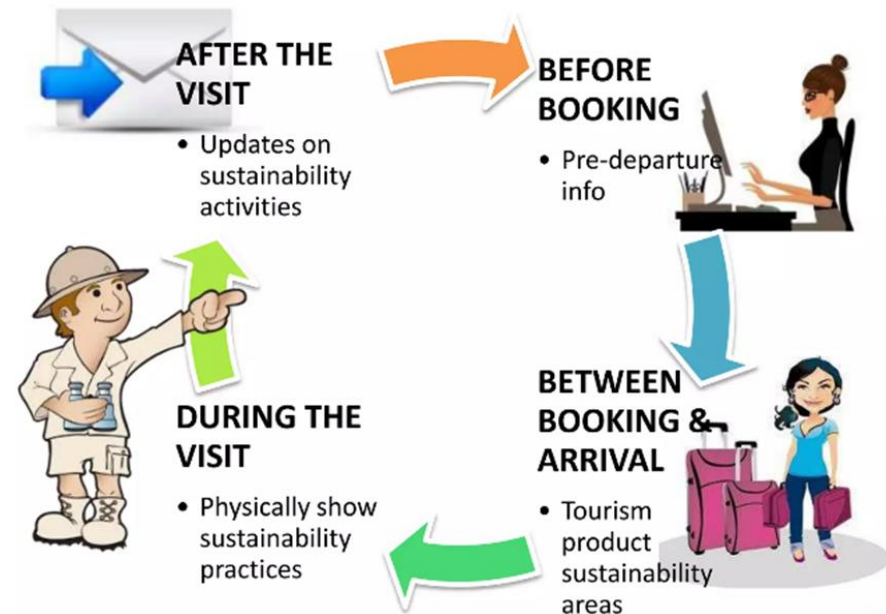
When choosing which narratives to develop, you should keep in mind that the content that you produce should:

1. generate **interest** -> A positive and motivating choice of language has the effect that readers also feel encouraged to contribute to more sustainable action. It is important not to make customers feel guilty, but to encourage and empower them to do their part.

2. be **distinctive** as to differentiate your content from others -> many tourism operators stress their efforts in terms of sustainability, be specific and unique!

3. be **authentic** and related to what visitors will actually find -> frequently used terms such as "exotic" or even "authentic" should be used in a way that is true to the content. The same applies to pictures, especially because pictorial representations emphasize a message. Avoid stereotypes that negatively impact the local communities.

Timing is also crucial. Choose the right time to communicate your messages!



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ELEMENT OF SUSTAINABILITY

- There are several topics that you can stress in your communication. A first group includes good practices and actions concerning environmental sustainability:
- use of renewable energy sources (wind, solar etc)
- actions for reducing the consumption of energy (management of air conditioned and heating, led, photocells, sensors)
- actions for reducing the consumption of water (flow reducers in taps, water recycling and reusing, towels management)
- actions for reducing food waste (smart management of the buffet, doggy bag..)
- use of biodegradable products for cleaning, hygiene and courtesy service
- progressive elimination of plastic
- separate waste collection
- organic food products
- dispenser and no single dose

Another group is based on social and cultural sustainability principles:

- local suppliers for food products (mainly typical products, PDO, PGI, Slow Food presidia); origin of products and ingredients indicated food product from fair trade
- local cuisine indicated in the menu, recipes available for customers



ADDITIONAL READING ON THE TOPIC

- **María Lúcia Pato and Ana Sofia Duque, Sustainability Communication in Rural Tourism: Website Content Analysis, in Viseu Dão Lafões Region (Portugal)**
- **Futouris and Global Communication Experts, Guidelines for sustainable tourism communication**
- **Marketing sustainable tourism: the role of value orientation, well-being and credibility**



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PARTNERSHIP PROJECT

Digital Story Doing in Local Tourism is a transnational project that brings together 6 partners from 5 European countries (Bulgaria, Spain, Italy, Belgium and Austria) with different specializations.

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www.storydoers.eu

