

**ROZPRÁVANIE PRÍBEHOV – STORYTELLING – AKO NÁSTROJ
MARKETINGOVEJ KOMUNIKÁCIE V OBLASTI CESTOVNÉHO
RUCHU**

**STORYTELLING METHOD AS A MARKETING COMMUNICATION
TOOL IN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY**

Pregledni znanstveni članak

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Abstract

In today's rapid era of globalisation and internationalisation, it is necessary to respond to new challenges and to introduce new methods, products and trends if individual sectors (not only) of the economy want to maintain or improve their position on the domestic and foreign market and increase their ability to compete economically with others. In our view, it is the introduction of new, creative methods that is one of the ways to increase the attractiveness of the product on offer. A compelling method in this context is storytelling.

In our article, we concluded that this method is an effective way of increasing customer interest. Storytelling conveys a purpose, a goal, stories can engage the listener and arouse attention and curiosity. In tourism, it is not enough to have a product or a destination. The story gives the offer a certain context, a reason for customers to buy your product or use your service. The aim of our paper is to characterise the storytelling method as a marketing communication tool in tourism. In order to reach relevant conclusions, we used the method of analysis, synthesis, literature study, exemplification and generalisation.

Key words: tourism, tourist guide, marketing communication, storytelling.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a dynamically developing sector of the economy. In the current global process of creating interconnected communication, economic, cultural and informational links, it is important for tourism to respond to changing conditions and "move with the times." Every industry is trying to find new ways to attract the target customer and thus maintain its place in the market and increase its attractiveness and competitiveness.

Increasing the attractiveness of the services and products offered is also possible through the method of storytelling. People have always liked to tell stories. They have become an important part of our everyday communication. However, stories do not only have one role - to entertain; stories can become a strong asset (not only) in the tourism industry, and if implemented effectively, they can support a business in many ways - improving customer loyalty, captivating the target consumer, creating a strong marketing strategy and thus increasing profits, etc.

2. TOURISM

Tourism is characterised by Gúčík (2006) as a complex of activities designed to meet the needs of people to travel outside their permanent residence in their leisure time. Persons participating in tourism seek relaxation, want to explore new places, cultures, and countries, want to have fun, play sports, etc. The author Šambronská (2012, p. 26) states that there are several definitions of tourism; all of them share the common characteristic that tourism is based on "a temporary change of the participant's stay, often in leisure time, for the purpose of regeneration of mental and physical strength, exploration, etc."

Participants in tourism travel to a specific destination, which is also called a **destination**. According to Palatkova (2011), destinations are parts of a whole and compete with each other. Gúčík (2010) defines a destination as a product offering a complex of services. Destinations do not offer all services but only those that customers are interested in. Destinations compete with each other, and it is up to each destination to choose which way of promotion it chooses.

Šambronská (2019) states that several factors influence tourists when choosing a destination. According to the author, trends in tourism in the future will be influenced by, among other things, authenticity, which the author sees as a requirement from tourists who will be interested in real knowledge, not "artificial" experiences.

In the context of destinations, it is also important to mention **destination trends**. The author Šambronská (2019) distinguishes the following:

- the focus is on the **experience**,
- the environment is at the forefront of interest - favouring eco-friendly approaches and also an interest in 'unspoilt' nature,
- tourism participants want to experience **something new**.

Every area, every country, and every territory can become a destination for customers. As mentioned above, destinations compete with each other. In this competition, the **attractiveness of the destination** is an important factor. A destination is more attractive when it offers more distinct features and services than other destinations (Gúčik, 2006). Modica (2015) states that an attractive tourist destination offers natural, artistic and cultural places - both tangible and intangible. As an example, the author cites the environment of the sea, museums, weather, **myths and legends**.

3. MARKETING COMMUNICATION

Horváthová (2012) includes among the main objectives of marketing communication the collection of market data in terms of requirements, lifestyle, priorities and motives for purchase, the acquisition of information about the competitive environment and the exchange of the acquired data between firms and the market environment. Communication is an integral part of management and marketing. According to Horváthová (2012, p. 25), the **basic types of communication** include:

- informational,
- motivational,
- communication focused on solving work tasks,
- communication focused on obtaining information,
- purposeful feedback.

Marketing communication is defined by Přikrylová et al. (2019) as communication whose essence is the transfer of information between the seller and the buyer. The essence of marketing communication, according to Přikrylová et al. (2019, p. 45) "product policy, pricing, distribution channels and communication." Part of marketing communication is the tools of **the communication mix** - these are communication methods and means that serve to promote and present businesses, the destination (in tourism), etc. The authors consider direct marketing to be an essential tool of marketing communication. A characteristic feature of direct marketing is a personal approach and low costs. It is based on establishing contact with potential visitors by sending them information, e.g. about the selected destination and interesting price offers. Personal communication is based on, e.g. buzz marketing. Through it, positive or negative **emotions** are spread, and this type of marketing creates a buzz, stimulates conversation, and spreads personal recommendations (Gúčik, 2018). The authors Marčeková and Kondeková (2014) add that the name is not established in the Slovak language; according to them, it is "one of the most powerful tools of marketing communication because the information from a family member or acquaintance is easier and more memorable and persuasive in the long term than recommendations from the company itself" (Marčeková and Kondeková, 2014, p. 118).

Přikrylová et al. (2019) characterise marketing as one of the functions of a firm that is responsible for finding the most appropriate way to satisfy customer needs. Customer and target market orientation is directly related to **the marketing mix**, which is referred to by the acronym 4P: *product, price, place and promotion*. Robert F. Lauterborn is the author of the so-called C approach, which, based on the 4P model, looks at a product as customer value, price as customer cost, place of sale as a convenience, and promotion as communications:

From the customer's point of view, customer value (**product**) is a means to satisfy needs. According to Přikrylova et al. (2019), it means for a company to understand the value perceived by the customer and to offer them a P - product.

Price is something that the customer has to invest in order to receive the product. The authors include here all the costs that are associated with the purchase. For a firm, price means the item that is specified in the contract.

Purchasing convenience represents all the activities that are directed from the producer towards the buyer. The customer perceives the place as a convenience for the purchase. For the firm, it means delivery (e.g. for e-shops, the possibility to deliver the goods in the evening, which gives the firm an advantage over competitors) (Přikrylová et al., 2019).

Advertising is also an important part of marketing communication, which serves as a presentation and promotion of certain goods or services. The main objective of advertising is to inform customers about the product (Kotler et al., 2007).

Every marketing communication should have specific information content. The essence of **content marketing**, according to the authors Přikrylová et al. (2019), focuses on creating and communicating certain content to potential recipients. This form is intended to emphasise the position of the company and the brand in the market, and the content should also be relevant and interesting for the target group. Přikrylová et al. (2019) distinguish four areas of content marketing:

1. entertainment - content should evoke emotional reactions and thus raise awareness of products and brands (e.g. communication through videos),
2. inspiration - (most often) through celebrities, various forums and reviews, the customer is inspired to buy a particular product,
3. education - this component mainly stimulates the rational side of the customer's thinking - through reports, articles or books,
4. persuasion - using webinars, videos, or a list of product features to convince the customer to buy the product.

According to Horváthová (2012, p. 38), the era of globalisation has brought the following new trends in marketing communication: "the blurring of boundaries, increasing individualisation, increasing education of the population in the field of marketing, the existence of a large number of comparable products, shortening product life cycles, fragmentation of the media landscape, the growing weight of public opinion."

Přikrylová et al. (2019) in their publication emphasise the need to introduce new ways of marketing communication. The authors state that marketing communication is currently trying to personalise, automate and thus get closer to the specific needs of individuals or companies. The authors consider **emotions** to be a central theme; they are becoming a significant tool

to capture the attention of customers, as it is known that information that evokes emotions is better remembered. In our opinion, one of the options that can be introduced into marketing communication is **the storytelling method**.

4. TOURIST GUIDE

Authors Novacká et al. (1996) characterise the person of a tour guide as someone who is able to operate in the practice of domestic and foreign tourism. His/her main task is to present a certain tourism product directly in the field in personal contact with the customer. A tour guide can only accompany customers on the basis of an authorisation or licence.

Šambronská (2019) emphasises that the guide should have not only professional knowledge but also communication and language skills to captivate the audience. Uher et al. (2013, pp. 53-54) distinguish the following categories of tour guides:

1. "tourism guide - technical guide, expert guide, delegate, hunting guide, other (e.g. guaranteed route guide, eco-guide, etc.),
2. local (local guide),
3. guide to a cultural and historical monument,
4. mountain guide,
5. guide to an accessible cave."

According to Uher et al., the main characteristics and qualities that a tourist guide should have. (2013) include a sense of organisation, good orientation skills, promptness, interest in travel, exploring new countries and last but not least, the authors also include the ability to communicate, to be able to capture the attention of the audience and convey expert information in an engaging way, thus providing a memorable **experience**. According to Uher et al. (2013), tourists are more interested in **stories** from people's lives than in information about objects.

5. STORYTELLING

One of the oldest ways of communication is **storytelling**. This method is a linguistic and educational activity. Storytelling allows sharing

experiences and emotions with others (Mařková, 2010a). Another angle looks at storytelling as a virtual experience that allows listeners to imagine a given sequence of events and then share the emotions that the story has evoked in us (Mládková, 2012). It is the various stories, be they myths, legends, tales of gods, heroes, etc., that form part of any culture and add value to (not only) tourism (Boniface et al., 2012).

People have always liked to listen to stories. If a story captivates us, "touches us", we can remember its content more easily. Through stories, we can share experiences and emotions with others (Mařková, 2010a). The method of storytelling can be characterised as an interactive form of transmitting stories. The interaction takes place in the direction from the storyteller towards the audience. **Storytelling in the field of marketing communication** is undoubtedly one of the most creative methods. The involvement of creativity in storytelling evokes a sense of belonging in the audience. Thanks to this method, it is possible to convey "dry" facts in an interesting way (Mařková, 2010b).

"Storytelling - is an interactive form of story delivery, where the interaction is mostly live, through verbal transmission between the storyteller and the audience" (Terpitková, 2012, p. 5). Among the main elements

a story should contain, the author Terpitková (2012) includes characters, a plot and a central idea.

Storytelling is, in our opinion, an interesting and proven method of communication and has the following **functions**: capturing attention, conveying memorable information, and inspiring credibility. Storytelling has formed an integral part of people's lives since the earliest times. It is one of the oldest ways of communication, through which we can share experiences and emotions with others (Mařková, 2010a in Slobodová, 2022a). According to the author Mařková (2010b), stories help to understand "raw facts" because it is stories that give them a concrete meaning. Another perspective characterises storytelling as an interactive form of a shared narrative. It is an art form based on storytelling and the use of elements of non-verbal communication - gestures and movements (Pavlovská, 2011). Storytelling is an interactive method of story delivery. The interaction takes place primarily through verbal expression between the storyteller and the audience. The main elements of storytelling include the characters, the plot and the idea of

the story. The method cannot be applied without the storyteller and the audience (Terpitková, 2012).

The author Pavlovská (2011) distinguishes two types of storytelling:

1. **oral storytelling**: this type is characterised by the author as an improvisational type of art. The storyteller tells a story, and his listeners imagine it in their imagination. In this way, each participant in the audience "co-creates" the story.

2. **Digital storytelling**: the essence of this form of storytelling is the sharing of a story on the internet.

The author Korez-Vide (2017) sees the condition for the **success of the marketing** of a destination in the development and promotion of the brand. Development and promotion should also include **new creative methods**, to which **storytelling** definitely belongs. When creativity is involved in storytelling, a sense of belonging is created in the audience. Stories can inspire, captivate and present the tourism product. The author sees storytelling as a strategic marketing tool in supporting brand development, as well as an important tool for regional development. According to Korez-Vide (2017), engaging audiences in storytelling promotes a positive relationship not only between the storyteller and the audience but also in relation to the audience's attitude towards a particular place within the tourism industry. As the author Vysekalová (2007) says, the involvement of emotions, which undoubtedly arise during storytelling, increases customer motivation; it also increases interest in the product, service, and place and undoubtedly increases interest in discovering other cultural attractions.

An excellent example of how to use storytelling in tourism is the Republic of Slovenia, which in 2013 launched the project "Slovenian Tourism Stories" through the Slovenian Tourist Board. The aim of this project was to analyse the situation in the field of storytelling in Slovenia, to develop the so-called "Slovenian tourism storytelling pyramid", and to encourage all stakeholders to use the storytelling method as a marketing communication tool in order to increase the competitiveness of tourism products and destinations. The communication of historical facts through stories can also be encountered in the Slovak Republic, in the city of Prešov, in the children's playground at the Eperia Shopping mall, where visitors can read, for example, the story of the origin of the name of the city of Prešov.

Another example is the guiding activity in the framework of the regular event - Discovering Prešov, where various stories related to cultural and historical monuments are also used (Slobodová, 2022b).

SUMMARY

The sector of the economy - entrepreneurship - offers a wide range of activities and offerings where continuous development and the introduction of new methods are needed. The promotion of products, services or destinations is the responsibility of marketing communication. Its task is to find the best way to satisfy the needs and requirements of the customer. It is therefore important not only to look for the 'old, established' ways but also to introduce new ways of promotion. Nowadays, capturing the customer's attention through emotions and experiences is at the forefront. One of the methods that can be used to increase the attractiveness of the services or products offered is the method of storytelling. It is the stories that have accompanied mankind since time immemorial, and today's customers are more likely to be interested in a story from people's lives than in the raw facts about a subject. Thanks to stories, we can share the emotions and experiences that are at the forefront of the target customers' minds. We, like many other authors, consider storytelling to be a creative and effective tool for tourism marketing communication. Through stories, we can introduce one culture to another, encourage visitors to visit again and increase their interest in a place.

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