Discovering Real-time Digital Inclusive Storytelling for Enhancing Place Branding Experience

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Abstract

Place branding and digital storytelling (DST) are a relatively new area of inquiry in the academic literature, and the role of digital stories in place branding literature is limited. This study first examines the importance of DST in place branding by introducing the concept of real-time digital inclusive stories. We use 45 semi-structured interviews with a place's residents to reveal the import of inclusive digital stories in place branding. Using inductive qualitative analysis, we propose a framework for place branding and inclusive digital stories. Study findings indicate that real-time digital inclusive storytelling plays an essential role in place branding. It does so by aligning a lively place individually with place archetypes. The study highlighted the value of stories, and resident's perspective communicated through digital channels in place branding. Furthermore, we contribute to the literature on place branding and DST by employing a grounded theory approach in our research. Utilization of the grounded theory approach aided our expanding the respective literature and positing research propositions for future scholars. We conclude by discussing the implications for theory and practice.

Keywords: Place branding, grounded theory approach, semi-structured interviews, digital inclusive stories

Introduction

Research on DST has increased owing to the aligned popularity of the digital leisure lifestyle. DST is a progressive form of storytelling. Unlike general stories, digital stories provide seemingly unforgettable, innovative, and meaningful experiences (Peter & Veechia, 2021). People browse relevant place-specific information through digital stories and align it with their leisure lifestyle (UNWTO, 2021). Most extant work on digital stories has investigated tourism, festival experience, and global tourism promotion (Skinner, 2021). However, because of rapid technology advancement and acceptance, users prefer browsing digital stories of places (Olson et al., 2021). Despite this phenomenon, minimal existing research has explored this realm. Developing a conceptual framework around this issue should assist scholars desirous of pursuing the topic and marketers focused on regenerating and re-creating branding of tourist places through storytelling. Researchers have highlighted place branding and experiences created through DST from a rational and functional perspective (Parsazadeh et al., 2020). Admittedly, experience forms an integral part of place branding and DST (Strijbosch et al., 2021). Nonetheless, the literature does not explain how to provide gratifying experiences to consumers through consumers' perusal of stories; such explanation could assist in fostering effective place branding. Through DST (DST) in place branding, consumers share experiences that heighten their connection to a place, thereby digitally communicating place meanings (Hudak, 2019). Research has revealed that stories amplify the imagination because consumers become involved emotionally (Walker et al., 2021). Also, to re-create experiences through stories, of paramount importance is understanding different types of consumers, content that creates immersive experiences, and requisite channels for communication to indite a narrative framework (Kemp et al., 2021). Scholars have also mentioned that in DST, memorable experiences lead to remembrance (Strijbosch et al., 2021) of a place. Additionally, most germane research has focused on place branding and DST *separately* by studying place branding from a branding (Skinner, 2021) or stakeholder (Jain et al., 2021) perspective and DST from an educational viewpoint (Robin, 2008) vis-à-vis understanding various meso-level mechanisms. Moreover, few qualitative studies have offered in-depth knowledge of how DST connects with place branding. The paucity of studies on these preceding constructs highlights the presence of a lacuna about empiricism focused on how to create experiential outcomes in place branding through DST. This literature gap led to the present undertaking. Our research aims to explore and comprehend the idiosyncrasies of storytelling in place branding that can induce experiential results that will rejuvenate the places. We investigate how residents of a place acquire knowledge about another place (heritage places and modern archetypes), generate opinions about the place, decide to visit the places, and contribute to place branding. An underlying inquiry of digital stories in place branding explores the role of a place inside a hero's journey. Our findings can guide place managers and brand marketers on initiatives that can regenerate, re-create and enhance the tourist sector's current business. This process will happen using a real-time digital inclusive place branding framework that corresponds with post-pandemic scenarios and consumer demand.

Literature review

Storytelling and place branding

Storytelling is an art where a storyteller confidently convinces the audience. Every story has a context, plot, and journey (Park et al., 2021). Prior studies have found that stories should connect well with and provide novel experiences for the audience (Kim & Moon, 2021). Places are unique and known for their versatility and critical characteristics (Merchant et al., 2010). The storytelling of places requires focusing on the uniqueness of a place and communication or its essential elements (Roth, 2021). Previous literature on place branding and storytelling is vast. Existing studies have given a detailed explanation of place

branding and the role of stories (Kemp et al., 2021). People often prefer to believe in place stories; discussions of past beliefs, unique histories, and cultural pursuits help a place grow. Moreover, a storyteller communicates the place's attractions and connects audiences with a story through storytelling (Guerra & Silva, 2022). Scholars have discussed the unique traits of audiences in place-specific stories (Nair & Yunis, 2021). Prior studies (Kim et al., 2021) have revealed that audiences prefer interactive stories where the narrative is convincing. Moreover, stories are expected to communicate unique place attributes and provide novel experiences (Mitchell & Clark, 2021). Although researchers have proffered a comprehensive explanation of the relevance of storytelling in place branding, attention to digital stories' involvement in place branding is sparse (Merchant et al., 2010).

Introduction to digital stories and place branding

The idea of stories and places is not new. Moreover, previous studies (Riva & Pilotti, 2021) have noted that stories play a crucial role in branding places. Although previous studies dictate the relevance of stories in place branding, the advent of the internet has raised disparities in storytelling and demanded an enhanced understanding of digital stories in places (Radder & Han, 2015). Pace branding concerns improving the brand of a place by using different combinations of the marketing mix. Such marketing interventions emphasize emotional, cultural, symbolic, and social connections with a place (Suh & Chow, 2021). Pedeliento & Kavaratzis (2019) mentioned that in branding, places are imaginary representations of networked social relations within society that are symbolically underlined through the emotions and culture of the people and their lives. Moreover, place branding aids in expanding, enhancing, rejuvenating, and improving places with outdated or negative images or identities (Skinner, 2021). However, several places are struggling to implement place branding effectively. There is a conflict of control over the place, conflict of interest among the people, inappropriate application of branding strategies, and a need for social sensitivity (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013). Perhaps part of the explanation for this dilemma is that most pertinent research has focused on single-place studies that do not necessarily afford generalization of the concepts and theories of place branding (Merchant et al., 2017).

The advent of Web 2.0 and the beginning of Web 3.0 marks an important epoch in the history of technological advancement. Consumers rely increasingly on shared stories of others on various social media platforms (Hay et al., 2021). In the context of place branding, residents of a place use social media to chronicle their own place stories (Hudak, 2019). Travel bloggers epitomize such individuals and can thus be considered significant stakeholders in the contribution of place branding (Skinner, 2021). Extant place branding literature is primarily grounded in the traditional sphere: places endorsed with massive advertising campaigns at a global level and storytelling and digital media minimally embraced. Researchers argue that place branding does not mean using promotion solely via campaigns but encompasses a viable strategy, continuity, and consistency (Kavaratzis, 2004). One possible promotional format to brand a place is DST. Web 2.0 led to the evolution of storytelling from a traditional to a digital perspective (Couldry, 2008). DST does more than offer a narrative. It regenerates place branding through constant co-creation of meanings about a place (Hudak, 2019) and personal interpretation of a place's physical, social, and symbolic aspects by focusing on hedonic benefits rather than utilitarian services (Stoica et al., 2021). The previous activities of a DST impact consumers (Hassan, 2016) are about various destinations, for example it has been shown to improve a place's positioning and encourage people to share their experiences in different digital spaces (Bassano et al., 2019). However, an obstacle marketers confront in positioning digital stories is significantly understanding their consumers' needs to impact their psychological, social, and mental aspects significantly. Research has stated that in DST, marketers tend to neglect temporal modality (Dawson & Sykes, 2018) (Yu & Chen, 2018). Plus, owing to the fast-moving environment, consumers are prone to ignore much of the content on the digital platform (Hay et al., 2021). Therefore, this inimical combination is detrimental to marketers. We seek to address this issue by discussing the relevance of digital stories in place branding.

Role of DST in the formation of place narratives

Storytelling plays a pivotal role in comprehending people and their social relationships (Merchant et al., 2010). People express their life events in the form of stories using various archetypes related to the products and services they consume (Woodside, 2008). Jung (1990) averred that archetypes offer relevant insights into collective unconscious thought (Merchant et al., 2017). The protagonist's expression in storytelling emotionally engages consumers and creates a sense-making moment through uncovering deep and tacit knowledge (Moin et al., 2020). Consumers relate to the content through self-experiencing, allowing brands to build and derive cultural meaning through the creation of narratives (Yueh & Zheng, 2019). Also, storytelling provides consumers with a sense of belonging (Hudak, 2019), which can be quickly disseminated through DST. Digital stories play a valuable role in presenting and discussing place narratives (Roth, 2021). Through a digital channel, digital stories showcase relevant place archetypes and create relevant discussion with the audience. Regular discussion on relevant topics helps develop essential place narratives. Lugmayr et al. (2016) promulgated four crucial components of DST that contribute to narrative formation. The first is context, which refers to the situation, space, and place-related modalities where the narrative occurs (e.g., television, advertising, festivals, education). In place branding, context becomes important when new technologies emerge and are facilitated by a digital intervention, such as DST, plotting a hero's journey in consumer stories (Moin et al., 2020). However, research falls short of comprehending the concept of "context" from a digital perspective. Therefore, we focus on how narratives are formed through DST.

The second is the course, which reflects the creation of knowledge. Palpably, consumers' interactions with one another are one of the core elements of the process. The third is content—the narration developed with the knowledge derived from the course. Notably, content is often contextualized with the plots of the storytelling. Researchers have argued that there is a clear

division between amateur and professional content, which creates dissonance in the sentimentality of the consumers (McWilliam & Bickle, 2017). We provide conceptual grounding on DST and the co-creation of narratives to address this gap. The fourth is the channel, which refers to the technology over which the content is disseminated. In DST, channels also involve the exchange of stories over digital platforms between consumers. From an ontological perspective, narratives may be understood as both realistic, portraying an objective world, and relativistic, producing reality (Hansen, 2004). This controversial divergence can be reconciled by viewing narratives as multiple units Sarbin, 1990) and integrating the DST components to establish a holistic narration about a place.

Relevance of experience in place branding developed through DST

Experience is the core outcome of place branding (Chirakranont & Sakdiyakorn, 2022). Accordingly, place experiences have been extensively investigated (Skinner, 2021). Pine & Gilmore (2021) laid the groundwork for elucidating the shift in paradigm from a "service economy" to an experience economy, in which unique and immersive experiences rather than the functionality of services are considered imperative for market survival. Education, entertainment, aesthetics, and escapism are four realms of experiences expressed over two domains—consumer engagement and connection—which constitute the heart of Pine and Gilmore's experience model (Chirakranont & Sakdiyakorn, 2022). Concerns have emerged when place branding offers experiential outcomes using DST. Recent studies have criticized the experience model: it lacks empirical reliability and validity, especially in highly experiential settings (Radder & Han, 2015). Earlier, Binkhorst & Den Dekker (2009) had also mentioned that the model was artificial and failed to deliver practical implications. Moreover, it seemingly fails to capture the nature of experiences when the physical and digital milieu are aligned (Mehmetoglu & Engen, 2011). Further, most experiences through DST include short-lived episodes; therefore, once the experience concludes, its representation in the memory (Strijbosch et al., 2021) fades. Given these issues above, we focused on understanding experiential outcomes and how they might be memorable and remain in consumers' memory for an extended period. This study reconceptualizes place branding using DST in a narrow sense. It does so by viewing it as a construct encompassing DST's 4-C framework (Radder & Han, 2015). Also, we used qualitative data to identify the process of experiential outcomes in place branding through a grounded theory approach. Moreover, using extant literature and collecting qualitative data, we propose propositions to extend the literature on place branding and align the relevance of DST in place branding.

Our proposed model (Figure 1) describes the prominence of digital stories in place branding. Although, the extant literature has initiated ample discussion on stories and places, there is much ambiguity when we dive into how digital stories and places impact consumer behavior (Lugmayr et al., 2016). As Olson et al. (2021) argue, the conversation on narratives is crucial in the digital realm and requires order and structure. Similarly, certain studies have also indicated that the 4C's are amicable in digital communications (Mitchell & Clark, 2021). However, scarce is known about digital stories and place branding. In our model we posit content, context, course, and channel in the realms of digital stories. Our treatise introduces the idea of real-time inclusive digital stories, which is relevant from the literature gap and evident from our data collection efforts.
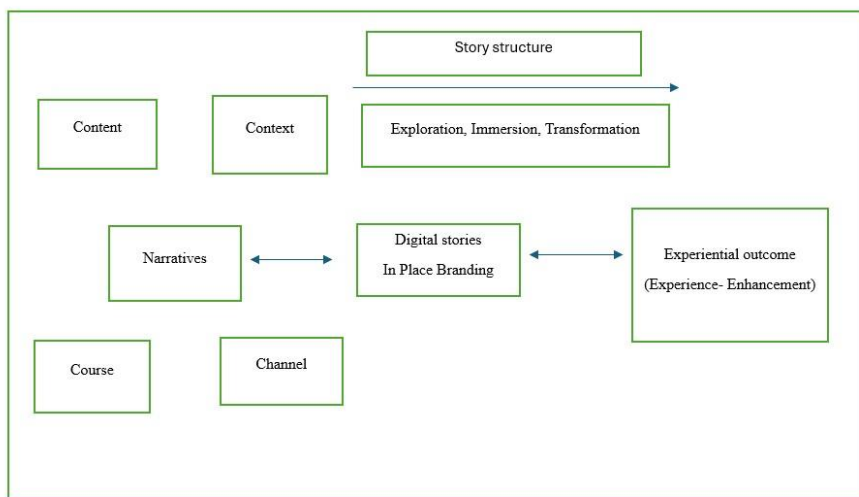

Figure 1. Proposed model on digital stories in place branding

Method

Participants and data collection

We employed semi-structured interviews when inquiring about the relevance of real-time inclusive digital stories in place branding. Before the interviews, we developed interviewee criteria. We included participants with a history of living in the city as residents, former residents, and tourists with a history of visiting the city. We utilized participants born and raised in India only (as our context is centric to traveling, so we restricted our participants within India). Following the screening of

participants, we proceeded with the interviews. We conducted the interviews in multiple sections, primarily questions focused on the relevance of stories in place branding.

Our interviews aimed to understand the relevance of story structure and narratives in place branding. At the beginning of our interviews, we asked participants to share their age, residence, and travel details. The approach elaborated below helped us connect better with the participants and derive improved responses. We conducted distant in-person interviews, in the mentioned locations from March 12, 2023, to August 7, 2023. However, India's pandemic and imposed restrictions led us to employ virtual and telephonic interviews. Moreover, including telephonic and virtual interviews allowed convenience and ease. All interviews were recorded with participant permission and then transcribed. Our research included interaction (Face to face interactions, telephonic interactions) with the residents. As a place, Kolkata has a diversified culture. Over the years, it has evolved in its heritage and modern architecture. Moreover, owing to the authentic culture and uniqueness of the place, UNESCO recently has given due accreditation to the place. Similarly, the place is famous for its stories and heritage. A total of forty interviews were conducted; the preferred language was English. Similarly, we developed a research guide and consensus form for ease of interviewing.

When collecting data from the field, we followed a convenience sampling technique: we approached participants according to our selection criteria. A certain number of participants were recruited at the targeted sites. However, we also utilized a purposive sampling technique during telephonic and virtual interviews, where participants were asked preliminary questions and selected according to the selection criteria. We terminated the data collection process once we reached saturation (Nair & Yunus, 2021) as the findings became redundant. For a detailed description of participants' demographics. Our interviews dealt with residents from several age groups and had a diversified group of residents and former residents. We were traveling to and within places, especially ones with historical heritage. As such, we used the perspectives of residents and former residents in our work.

Grounded theory approach

We followed a grounded theory approach. Using the grounded theory approach allowed us to examine a broader phenomenon rather than exploring research hypotheses (de Moraes Ocke et al., 2022). Moreover, understanding real-time digital inclusive stories and place branding is relatively new and demands constraint-free analysis (Park et al., 2021). Ferrari (2022) has discussed the relevance of digital stories in place branding. We further desired to extend knowledge of real-time digital inclusive stories in place branding. Because extant literature lacks an adequate understanding of the phenomenon, we followed a grounded theory approach (Bannerj, 2022).

Data analysis

The forty interviews with the residents were translated into English. The interviews were conducted in Bengali, Hindi, and English Non-English interviews were again transcribed into the local language for a back translation to ensure that meanings were accurate. The translation was conducted by an expert intimately conversant with all the languages of interest in our undertaking. However, the authors are also experienced in regional languages and English, which eventually expedited the process of translation. We analyzed the data through Nvivo and QDA (Kemp et al., 2021). The software is highly viable in analyzing qualitative texts and allowing researchers to understand the data's emerging patterns. It helped us formulate the word clouds and the data's broad themes. This software enabled us to upload the transcripts directly, identifying relevant patterns according to the emerged patterns we developed in our codebook. Our analysis followed a six-step process. First, translation of recordings and preliminary coding for a broad understanding of the data was conducted. That was followed by codebook formulation. The third and fourth steps entailed reading transcripts and coding and computing the reliability of the coded data, respectively. Further identification of the data was undertaken from external sources. One external research was employed to ensure the authentic coding process, and member check was done for reliability—step six involved an analysis of the identified themes. At the early stages of the investigation, two researchers cross-coded the interviews and prepared a codebook. We identified the themes suggested from the manual coding word clouds and then prepared our analysis. Once we completed the preceding process, we asked two external researchers to repeat our approach; we examined intercoder reliability through random cross-codes and finalized our themes. In the end, according to the developed themes and sub-themes, we prepared our analysis.

Results

Co-creation of narratives

Stories are an integral part of place creation. Our data revealed the importance of the relevance of real-time digital-inclusive stories in place branding. In this section, we discuss the importance of narratives. Our data further highlighted that place-specific narratives are co-created. As such, co-created narratives of places uncover the journey and transition of heritage places. Place narratives are dynamic. Therefore, certain narratives are developed in the past but evolve with an expectation of subsequently changing. We divided the co-creation of narratives into four sub-sections (Content, Course, Channel, Context). Adopting the 4-C framework, we intend to explain the role of co-created place narratives in place branding.

Content and channel

The content of a story plays an integral role in place branding. Our paper has covered heritage places and unconventional newly created place archetypes. Place archetypes analysis of the data disclosed that the projection of heritage archetypes and

fascinating stories established valuable connections with the audience. Residents (within the city) had different memories of the place, so their stories related to heritage archetypes strengthened the relationship between places and residents. As one participant (Female, 28) stated:"I was born and brought up in Kolkata; nowadays, I feel nostalgic when I see stories related to Victoria memorial hall.". The relevance of content in place-making stories was highly crucial, though respondents had personal preferences regarding content. However, the significance of a story's content could be highly acceptable to them. Moreover, they had solid choices for unconventional places and aligned stories. Participants also accepted the importance of non-traditional places. Stories about unconventional places were perceived to be inherently important; local culture and lifestyle projection generated interest among the residents and visitors. As one interviewee (Male, 25) asserted:"Real-time stories in place branding focus on places and discuss a place's importance and attributes." Integrating a people-centric approach is crucial in DST. Data analysis indicated that DST combined the relevance of people-centric and inclusive stories. Participants agreed that depicting local lifestyles, culture, and people's stories was imperative. They further felt obligated when they realized that their journeys were told to others:"When I see our culture, our places are branded through our lifestyle, journey; I feel obligated and develop greater connect with the places" (Female, 41). The importance of content was inherently crucial in place branding. People seemingly developed a better place through stories and word of mouth. They sensed that inclusion of people in content results in an improved place in which to connect. Moreover, better place connections led to the co-creation of places through narratives.

Context

Successful stories, communicated through digital networks, are known for their context. Similarly, the inclusion of digital stories increases access and reach. Indeed, our analysis revealed that in place branding, context played a crucial role. Which eventually enhances the place's credibility. Interviewees agreed that they enjoyed a place's journey as the context of a story. Respondents perceived that they preferred to know about places in place-specific stories. Data analysis uncovered residents liked knowing the evolution of places. As we focused on heritage places with interviewees, they were eager to share the development of heritage places. Often, interviewees mentioned fascination as the places were evolving. Supporting this perspective were the following two participants (Male, 19, and Female, 22, respectively): "I have seen a different Victoria memorial hall in my childhood days. However, in this digital era, the place has evolved better." "I have seen Sundarbans without any modern facilities. When I see the place is to be developed further, I feel great." When discussing stories of places, participants preferred communicating the journey of the place itself. Moreover, they chose to mention places as the hero of the story. Our respondents agreed that the context was of utmost importance in place-specific stories. However, they did not look for individuals' experiences in a context. They tended to prefer to idealize places as the context of place-specific stories. The preceding disquisition of the data analysis leads to the following research proposition:

> Proposition 1: Relevance of real-time digital inclusive stories is positively related to place branding and place credibility.

Course

As noted earlier, we adopted the Four-C framework to assist in explaining our analysis. Stories are another crucial part of this framework; they have particular relevance to the course. Concerning the course, data analysis revealed the plots and characters of the course. Additionally, the relevance of plots and characters in branding a place was demonstrated. Plots are a story's fundamentals. A strong plot provides the audience with a gateway to the place and develops a strong connection with the story. According to our interviewees, similar approaches are of utmost importance in place-specific stories. Place-specific plots should discuss the place, background of the place, and other attractions. Moreover, our participants admitted that the plot of a place-specific story helped develop a solid connection with the place.

> Proposition 2: Authentic digital sources derive greater credibility among the people as they prefer trusting stories generated from credible inputs and developed with enhanced place perceptions.

Channel

Participants agreed that they preferred browsing stories related to their favorite places. Travel influencers are very active on social media. As such, they discuss stories of places. Our interviewees agreed to prefer browsing places through Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. Data analysis also showed that people preferred YouTube and Instagram for visual appeal. Owing to the features of Instagram and YouTube, participants opted for watching videos through those two platforms. However, they also employed Facebook for such interaction. One interviewee (Male, 39) mentioned his proclivity for the latter two alternatives: Participants felt that online communities were a good source of digital stories, whether on Facebook or Instagram. They believed that such platforms were part of place-specific communities. Moreover, they regularly participated in those communities. Interviewees also perused relatable stories from the community members. They perceived that place communities played a crucial role in spreading place-related stories. As one participant (Female, 33) opined: "I like place communities; people share their own stories. Quite often, that initiates multiple discussion points, which help to know more about a place." Our discussion has highlighted the relevance of online communities in place-specific stories. Whether utilizing digital websites or online communities, these enablers offer unique stories of places; because the information dissemination is relatively credible

in the digital space, digital stories have a greater probability of being disseminated. Moreover, digital stories tend to create a strong connection with the audience.

Story structure

As we discussed the relevance of real-time digital inclusive stories, the crucial section of the story was revealed to be its structure. Participants stated that the story structure had a pivotal role in storytelling. Data analysis revealed that stories were crucial in place branding; however, their impact emerged in stages. Initially, audiences preferred exploring certain content; they were immersed and interacted only through story structure. Interviewees felt that branding was critical in the first few seconds of a digital story about a place that initiates interaction and thought transformation, as noted by the following participant (Male, 22): "The first few seconds or the introduction of a story is sufficient to give me an understanding; it creates the interest."
The above discussion highlighted the relevance of story structure. Participants also noted the importance of three components of a digital story's structure—exploration, immersion, and transformation—discussed below. Given the digital era, people have a predilection for purchasing technological upgrades. Such tools facilitate their exploration of places through digital networks. The development of place-specific communities and other social media activities related to place branding has resulted in this phenomenon. Interviewees noted the role of digital networks in exploration. They opined that they preferred browsing social media to enhance their knowledge about places. Digital exploration of places helped them augment learning about places. It also introduced participants to unknown place stories: "Browsing through digital networks is crucial. I have been introduced to place stories that increased my curiosity about places that I formerly knew nothing about" (Male, 21). Interactions played a crucial role in place-specific stories. Stories were the initial point of interactions. In a community, people come from diverse backgrounds. Stories from community mentors or members were beneficial to initiating discussions. Moreover, the depiction of real-life culture through stories was often relatable to the audience, which prompted interactions and transformed thoughts. Two participants (Female, 36, and Male, 40, respectively) highlighted this belief: "Regular interactions and knowing the journey of local people through communities certainly helped me know more about Kolkata and its surroundings." "Watching regular videos and knowing the stories of local people developed a keen fascinating love towards the heritage places, and I went to witness the heritage." Moreover, because digital networks tend to be pervasive, DST immersed audiences in places. Regular interactions and familiarity with local people's stories helped participants transform their thoughts about the places. Thus, we offer the following proposition:

Proposition 3: Communication of a place's local culture, lifestyle, and history increase credibility, hence establishing a better connection with the place.

Experiential outcome

This paper is focused chiefly on the role of DST in place branding. Interviewees mentioned that they required real-time digital inclusive stories to enhance comprehension of them and place connections. They opined that regular involvement in place-specific channels helped them augment familiarity with places. Further, they averred that strong affection towards places was never a single day but an evolutionary process. As such, they were transformed as they spent increased time in places. Moreover, constant evolution helped them connect well with a place. Participants also revealed that they tended to have certain preconceived notions about a place. Data analysis indicated that digital stories impacted individuals through affection, emotion, love, and belongingness. Such effect allowed people to relate to themselves and others through the stories and extend their understanding of places. Subsequently, they shared their opinions and stories within their digital network. This section discusses interviewees' involvement in DST vis-à-vis place branding, particularly the experiential impact of stories on them. Networked interactions, relatedness, and engagement. Our analysis manifested that people with affectionate perceptions randomly browsed place-specific stories. Though specific content was relevant to them, irrelevant content was unacceptable in other situations. Participants acknowledged that digital stories related to a city's nostalgia, culture, and festivals were especially memorable. Moreover, such stories helped them connect with the heritage and place archetypes, owing to the unique place connection. Interviewees, moreover, averred that heritage places in a city were prone to be indelibly etched in their memories. Participants' regular exposure to digital stories about their interests refreshed their memories of places. Actuating their memories through stories induced a sense of joyful retrospection. Such response is affirmed in the quotations below: "When I see content on Victoria Memorial Hall, I think of my childhood days and sometimes imagine how the place has changed; however, my love for it is the same" (Male, 34). Interviewees stated that cities with heritage and cultural history had prominent place archetypes. They opined that they had grown intellectually and emotionally through such historical archetypes and historical places. Observing those legacies refreshed their memories and affection towards the place through a video. Accordingly, interviewees felt that heritage was people-driven; therefore, newly developed place archetypes are compared with the old heritage. The preceding disquisition thus leads to the following proposition:

Proposition 4: Places not only represent an image replete with objects, artifacts, and intangible, but they engender strong emotions in individuals—both residents and tourists. So, the inclusion of digital stories through place branding positively affects residents' emotions, thus creating better co-creation within the places.

Conclusion

This paper has explored the role of digital stories in the creation of places and the branding of possible place avenues. Although the research is situated in India, However, similar scenarios are applicable in other regions. Primarily, the study describes the experiences of residents and their narratives of place heritage. We recommend future scholarship describe similar narratives from other regions of the world. For example, we can suggest future scholarship to bring narratives of digital stories from African regions. Particularly, the narratives of heritage places are recommended. Such discussions would allow global citizens to realise the importance of African culture and the possible untold heritage of places that emerged through digital stories. Ultimately, places are based on stories and historical narratives. Inclusive discussions through digital stories are recommended for the creation of places and preserving their heritage. Thus, this research recommends similar contextual narratives of residents across the globe and requests the relevance of digital stories in place creation.

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