

Creating and Harnessing Visitor Stories for Destination Marketing

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Lets meet some interesting characters.



- Bronx Zoo's Egyptian Cobra
- Went missing in March 2011
- Signed up to twitter a few days later to tell her story

"Got a bagel at H and H Bagels on the upper west side. When I ordered I said. "I'll have the snakes on a PLAIN." He did not laugh. Tough crowd".

"On top of the Empire State Building! All the people look like little mice down there. Delicious little mice."

- Then various companies joined in

"Cushy and warm! RT @HiltonNewYork @bronxzoozcobra Do you have a place to stay in NYC tonight? We can offer you the Penthouse sssuite".

"Just regurgitated my iPhone. Oh, it's sso on now."

- Huge increase in visitation to the Bronx Zoo & many of the places she tweeted about

Bunny



- Bunny got left behind at the Adare Manor hotel in Limerick, Ireland
- Staff started a facebook page sharing Bunny's holiday story
- They wanted to find who Bunny belonged to & reunite them
- Instead they got famous with lots of new business from people wanting to go the place where the bunny had such a great holiday
- Also got lots of copycats

The Two Bellmen

- Marriott made a short film about two bellmen and their adventures in a Marriott hotel helping to solve a guest mystery
- Meant to be an online ad – now it has sequels and themed packages and huge increases in sales
- On youtube -<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZOgteFrOKt8>



A change for travellers:

- The desire and ability to share immediately

A change for operators:

- Stories will spread through remarkable experiences

A destination's brand is the sum of all stories somebody hears about a destination plus the sum of all experiences they have during a trip. These create a personal perception in the visitor.

The DMO doesn't create the brand, visitors do.

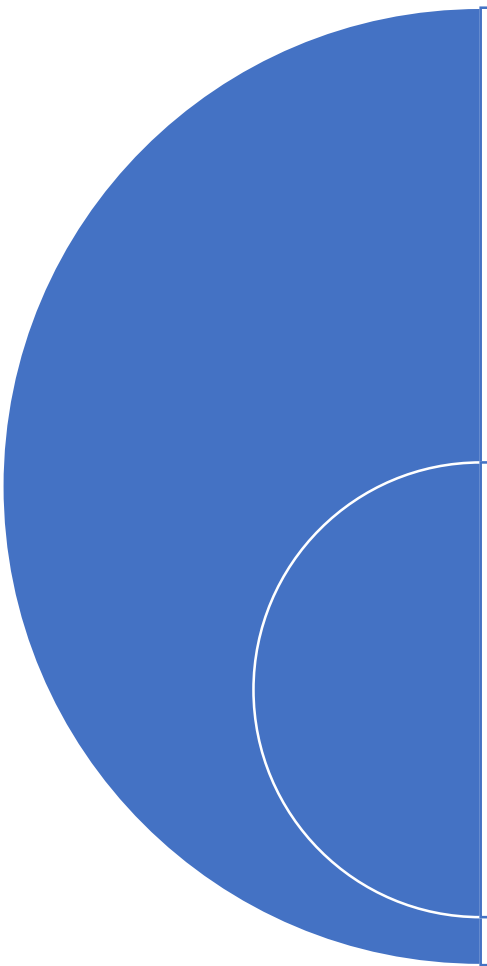
But zooming out a little first

- Stories are literally hardwired into our brains
- Stories are used to:
 - Identify and make sense of “experiences”
 - Organise memory
 - Create our personal and social identities
 - Communicate with others
 - Learn and decide how to act



<https://www.jeffbullas.com/4-powerful-ways-to-use-the-art-of-storytelling/>

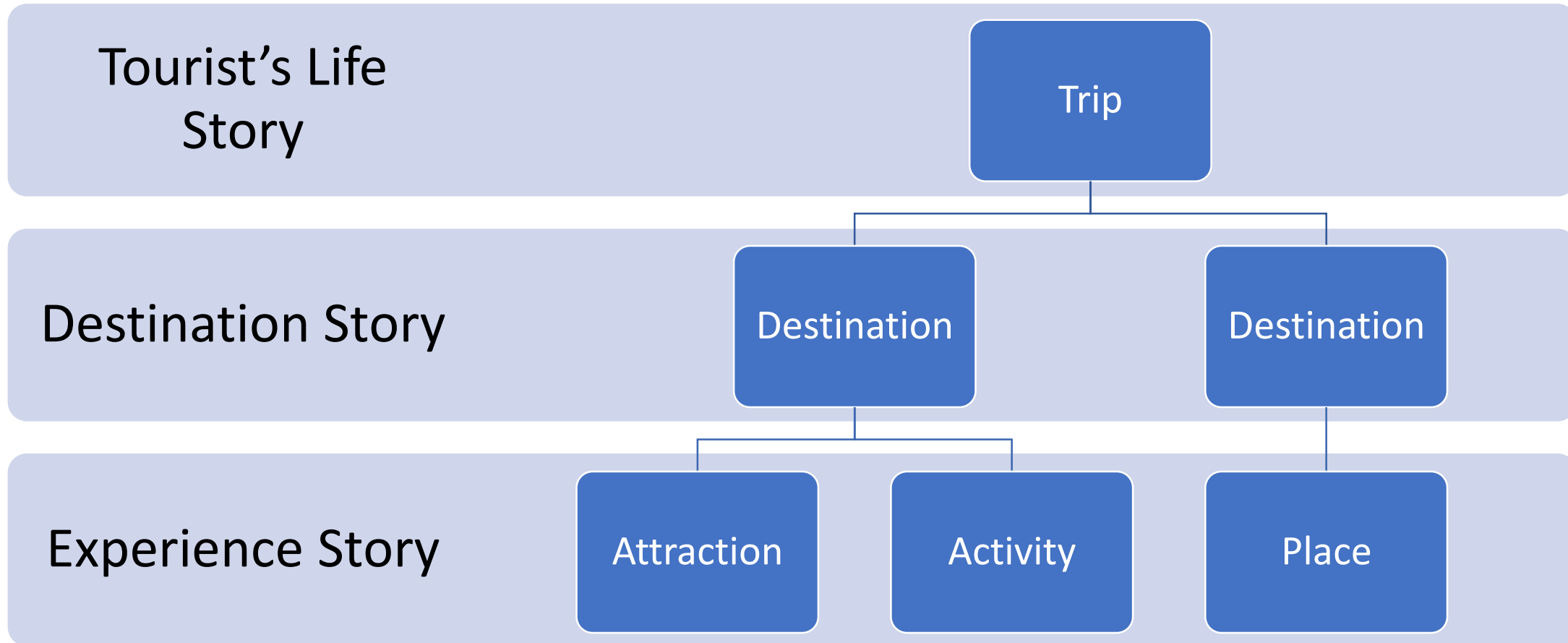
What are stories?



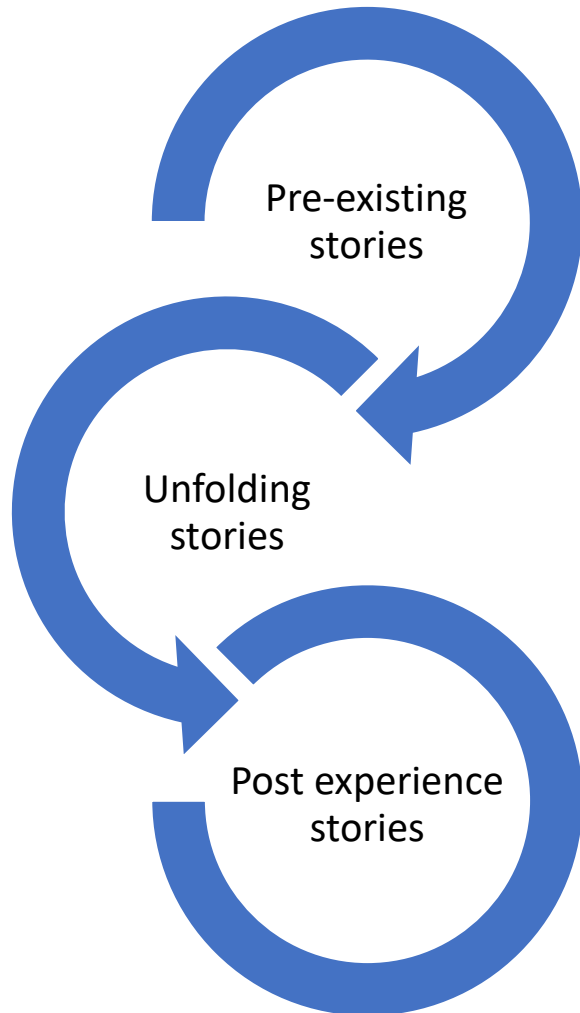
A story is a description of an event/set of connected events built around the action of a set of characters who have to make decisions, the reactions of these characters to event/s and the decisions that are made, and the consequences of these decisions.

They are explicitly meant to entertain and to generate emotions in their audience

Stories in People's Lives & in Tourism



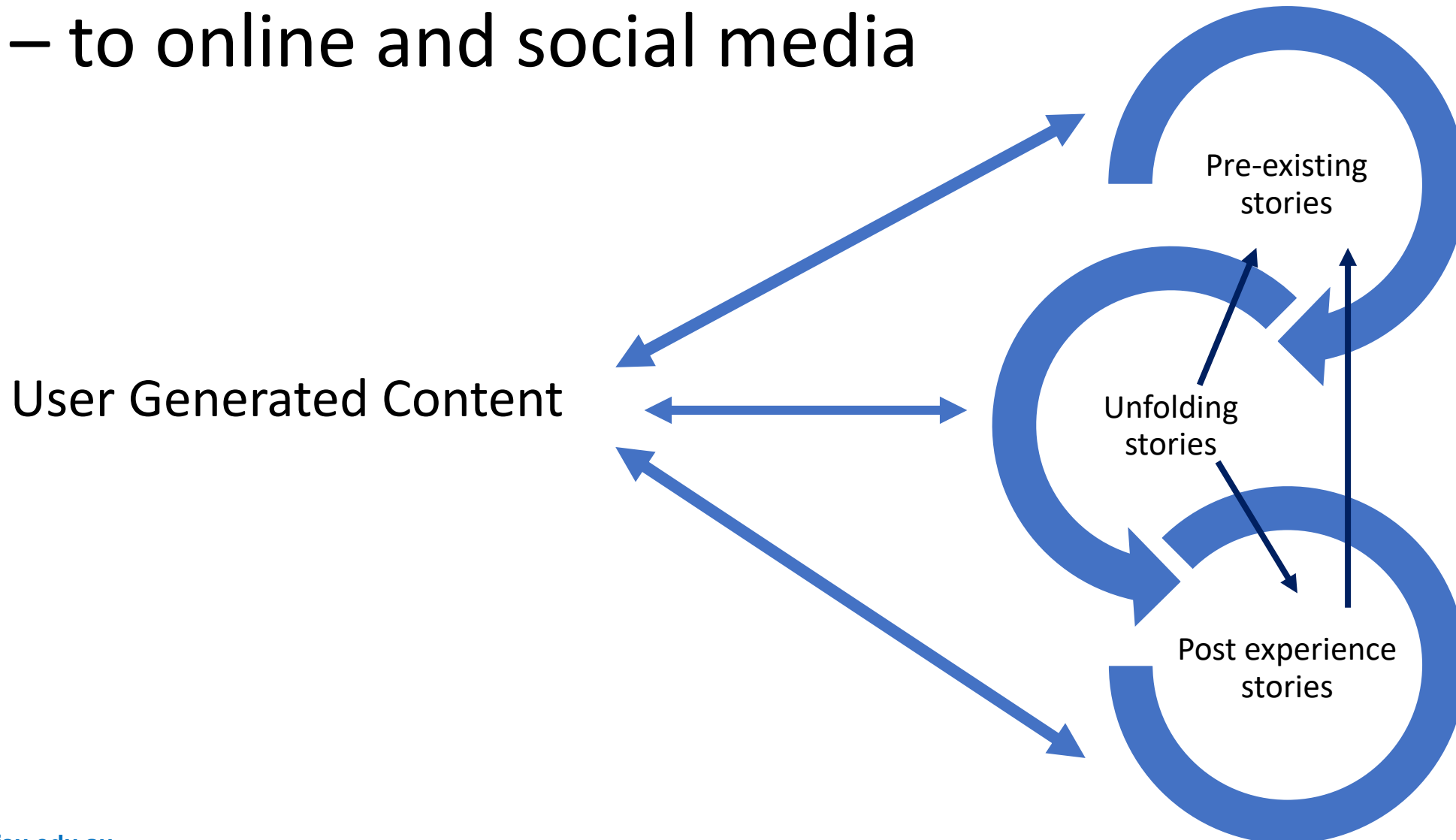
Main Places in Tourism Where Stories matter



Visitors	Tourism Managers
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identity• Choice• Expectations• Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Guidance• Persuasion• Preparation
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engagement• Experience• Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Experience opportunity design• Managing
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Making sense• Remembering• Sharing• Justifying	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reminding• Sharing• Staying connected

Zooming back in

– to online and social media





Destination Think!'s strategic model for destination marketing

What do we know about UGC?

It is becoming the main source of travel information

Visitors trust it more than other sources (warning)

People respond more positively to UGC organized as a story

People use the opportunity to co-create stories in interactive ongoing conversations

Very visual

Visitors repeat stories they are told at the destination

People post stories online

- To present who they are, express & reaffirm their identity
- To express themselves creatively
- To share, create, build and maintain social relationships
- To help others by providing information
- For entertainment

If Stories matter – whose stories matter the most?

Tourists get stories from

Themselves

- The experiences they get to create
- Pursuing their personal interests/challenges
- Their previous experiences of this

Other tourists

- Repeat them (ie., produce own version)
- Recreate them (ie., do exactly the same thing)
- Participate with them (eg., gaming)

Other people they encounter

- Staff
- Locals

Tourism businesses/ Organisations

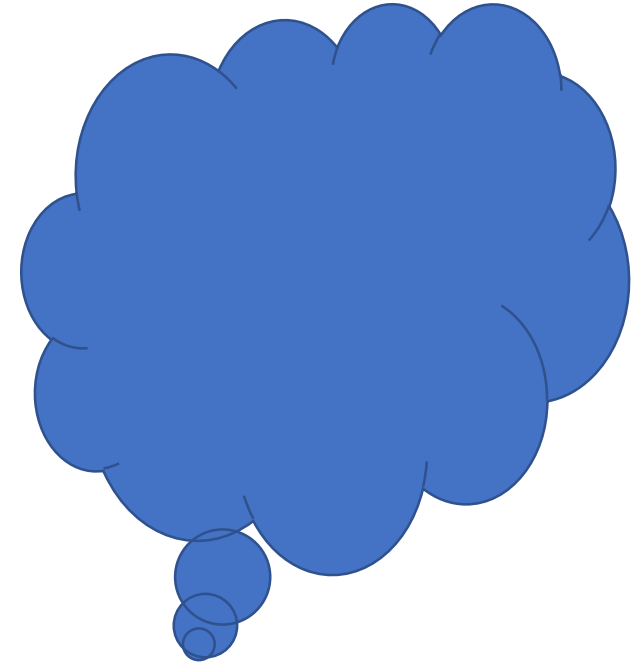
Destination Marketing Organisations

- Stories of the destination – its history, culture, & residents, both fiction & non-fiction

What does this mean for tourism operators?

- Almost all of their guests are now newscasters and camera crews.
- They are in the best position to trigger and promote sharing from guests.
- They can't rely on a DMO's mass media campaign to bring in guests.
- They can significantly improve the design of their visitor experiences and help their destination by curating exceptional visitor content for DMOs to share by:
 - designing experience opportunities around stories (not just existing destination stories, get creative)
 - adding to, repeating, and sharing good visitor stories
 - encouraging visitors to share their stories

Some last things to think about



- How will we respond to visitor stories we don't like?
- Are stories the same across cultures?
- Whose stories aren't being told?
 - Why not?

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