

Digital Storytelling and Its Impact on sales promotion effectiveness in the Moroccan hospitality industry: case of a Moroccan Hotel

Morad FAREH

Management and Development Research Laboratory (LRMD), Faculty of Economics and Management Hassan First University, Settat, Morocco.

Khadija IDRISI

Management and Development Research Laboratory (LRMD), Faculty of Economics and Management Hassan First University, Settat, Morocco

Abstract. This study investigates the impact of storytelling marketing strategies on sales promotion effectiveness in the Moroccan hospitality industry, examining the mediating roles of customer engagement and emotional connection. A quantitative research design was employed using a structured questionnaire administered to 312 guests at a luxury hotel in Marrakech, Morocco. The study utilized structural equation modeling (SEM) to test three hypotheses regarding the relationships between storytelling marketing, customer engagement, emotional connection, and booking intentions. Results demonstrate that storytelling marketing significantly influences booking intentions ($\beta = 0.487$, $p < 0.001$), with customer engagement ($\beta = 0.356$, $p < 0.001$) and emotional connection ($\beta = 0.423$, $p < 0.001$) serving as significant mediators. The model explained 64.3% of variance in booking intentions and 58.7% in sales promotion effectiveness. Hotel managers should integrate authentic cultural narratives into their marketing strategies, focusing on emotional storytelling that highlights local heritage, guest experiences, and unique value propositions to enhance promotional campaign effectiveness. This study provides empirical evidence from the Moroccan hospitality context, contributing to the limited literature on storytelling marketing in North African tourism and offering a validated measurement framework for hospitality storytelling effectiveness.

Keywords: *Storytelling marketing; Sales promotion; Hotel marketing; Customer engagement; Emotional connection; Morocco; Hospitality industry.*

1. Introduction

The global hospitality industry faces unprecedented competition, with hotels increasingly seeking differentiation strategies beyond traditional price-based promotions. Storytelling has emerged as a powerful marketing tool that creates emotional connections, enhances brand identity, and influences consumer behavior. In the context of Moroccan hospitality, where rich cultural heritage and authentic experiences form core value propositions, storytelling represents a natural alignment between marketing strategy and destination identity.

Morocco's tourism sector contributes approximately 7% to national GDP, with luxury and boutique hotels in cities like Marrakech, Fez, and Casablanca competing for international and domestic travelers. Traditional promotional strategies—discounts, package deals, and seasonal offers—often commoditize the hotel experience, leading to price sensitivity and reduced brand loyalty. Conversely, narrative-based marketing approaches that communicate heritage, craftsmanship, and experiential value can transform promotional campaigns from transactional to relational exchanges.

Despite growing recognition of storytelling's importance in hospitality marketing, limited empirical research examines its quantitative impact on sales promotion effectiveness, particularly in emerging market contexts. The Moroccan hotel industry presents a unique research setting where cultural authenticity and narrative richness intersect with modern marketing practices. Hotel managers require evidence-based guidance on whether investments in storytelling marketing yield measurable returns in promotional campaign performance,

customer engagement, and booking conversions.

This study aims to:

1. Examine the direct relationship between storytelling marketing and booking intentions in a Moroccan hotel context
2. Investigate the mediating role of customer engagement in the storytelling-booking intentions relationship
3. Assess the mediating role of emotional connection in the storytelling-sales promotion effectiveness relationship
4. Provide practical recommendations for integrating storytelling into hotel promotional strategies

This research contributes to hospitality marketing literature by providing quantitative evidence of storytelling's impact on sales promotion outcomes in a North African context. The study develops and validates measurement scales adapted to cultural hospitality settings, offering practitioners actionable insights for campaign design. Furthermore, the research addresses a geographical gap in hospitality marketing scholarship, which has predominantly focused on Western and Asian markets.

The structure of this article is distinguished by its targeted methodological originality, going beyond simple statistical modeling to incorporate a strong and contextualized empirical grounding. The structural originality lies in the combination of a rigorous quantitative study (measuring the impact of digital storytelling on promotional effectiveness) and an in-depth analysis of the specific case of a Moroccan hotel. This approach allows for the concrete and thorough validation of hypotheses within a precise cultural and sectoral environment, thus filling an empirical and geographical gap while providing strategic recommendations immediately applicable to hospitality professionals in Morocco.

Riad Palais des Étoiles justifies its selection as a case study for this article due to its ideal location for analyzing the impact of digital storytelling in the Moroccan hospitality industry. This type of riad is generally compelled to focus on authenticity, traditional charm, and a unique guest experience to stand out from the competition. These elements are at the very heart of effective digital storytelling.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

a. Storytelling in Marketing : Conceptual Foundations

Storytelling marketing refers to the strategic use of narrative structures to communicate brand values, create emotional resonance, and influence consumer attitudes and behaviors. Rooted in narrative transportation theory, storytelling operates by immersing audiences in narrative worlds, reducing counterarguing, and facilitating persuasion through emotional and cognitive engagement.

Escalas (2004) demonstrated that self-referencing narratives increase persuasion by connecting brand stories to consumers' self-concepts. In hospitality contexts, narrative persuasion mechanisms include comprehension fluency (ease of understanding the story), imagery fluency (vividness of mental imagery), and transportability (individual propensity for narrative immersion). These factors collectively determine the degree of narrative transportation, which mediates storytelling effects on brand attitudes and behavioral intentions.

b. Storytelling in Hospitality and Tourism

The hospitality industry offers a particularly fertile ground for storytelling marketing due to its experiential nature and the intangible qualities of service products. Hotels increasingly leverage narratives about heritage, design philosophy, culinary traditions, and guest experiences to

differentiate their offerings.

Research by Huang et al. (2018) found that narrative transportation in luxury hotel social media significantly predicted positive affect, brand attitudes, and visit intentions through mediated pathways. Similarly, studies demonstrate that visual storytelling on Instagram enhances customer engagement with hotel brands, particularly when narratives highlight authentic cultural elements and gastronomic experiences.

In boutique and cultural hotels, storytelling combined with co-creation strengthens hedonic ties and perceived customer value. The emotional bonds formed through narrative engagement translate into loyalty and positive word-of-mouth, extending beyond immediate transactional outcomes.

c. Customer Engagement as a Mediating Variable

Customer engagement represents a multidimensional construct encompassing cognitive, emotional, and behavioral investment in brand interactions. In digital marketing contexts, engagement manifests through attention, participation, and advocacy behaviors that signal psychological connection to brand narratives.

Empirical evidence demonstrates that storytelling marketing directly increases customer engagement, which subsequently predicts purchase intentions. The 14-item hospitality storytelling involvement scale developed by researchers identifies four dimensions of engagement: contextual cues, emotional engagement, mental cognition, and immersive experience. This framework provides operational measures for assessing how storytelling activates consumer involvement with promotional content.

d. Emotional Connection and Purchase Intentions

Emotional connection—the affective bond between consumers and brands—serves as a critical driver of loyalty and purchase behavior in experiential industries. Storytelling facilitates emotional connection through identification with characters, empathy with narrative situations, and resonance with cultural values embedded in stories.

Research in luxury hotel contexts shows that narrative engagement mediates the relationship between short-video storytelling and brand attitude, indicating that emotional response mechanisms link story exposure to favorable brand evaluations. In promotional contexts, stories that frame offers in terms of hedonic and utilitarian value increase perceived attractiveness and willingness to participate in promotions.

e. Research Gaps and Hypotheses Development

While existing literature establishes storytelling's positive effects on engagement and attitudes, several gaps warrant investigation:

1. **Quantitative evidence in emerging markets:** Limited studies examine storytelling effectiveness in North African hospitality contexts where cultural narratives differ from Western settings.
2. **Sales promotion outcomes:** Most research focuses on brand attitudes and visit intentions, with insufficient attention to specific promotional campaign metrics and booking conversions.
3. **Mediation mechanisms:** The simultaneous roles of engagement and emotional connection as mediators require integrated modeling to understand their relative contributions.

Based on theoretical foundations and empirical precedents, this study proposes three

hypotheses:

H1: Storytelling marketing positively influences booking intentions in hotel promotional campaigns.

H2: Customer engagement mediates the relationship between storytelling marketing and booking intentions.

H3: Emotional connection mediates the relationship between storytelling marketing and sales promotion effectiveness.

f. Conceptual Model

The research model positions storytelling marketing as the independent variable, with customer engagement and emotional connection as parallel mediators influencing booking intentions and sales promotion effectiveness (dependent variables). This framework integrates narrative transportation theory with customer engagement and relationship marketing perspectives, providing a comprehensive view of how storytelling operates in promotional contexts.

3. Methodology

a. Research Design and Context

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to test the proposed hypotheses. The research was conducted at Riad Palais des Étoiles, a luxury boutique hotel in Marrakech, Morocco, featuring 45 rooms and suites designed in traditional Moroccan architectural style. The hotel implemented a storytelling-based marketing campaign for its autumn 2024 promotional period, emphasizing narratives about artisan craftsmanship, culinary heritage, and personalized guest experiences.

The storytelling campaign included:

- Website content featuring artisan stories and hotel history
- Social media posts showcasing guest experiences and cultural activities
- Email marketing with narrative-driven promotional offers
- In-property storytelling through staff interactions and design elements

b. Sample and Data Collection

The target population consisted of guests who booked stays during the promotional campaign period (September–November 2024). A convenience sampling approach was used, with questionnaires distributed to guests at check-out. Of 400 distributed questionnaires, 312 usable responses were obtained (response rate: 78%).

Sample characteristics:

- **Gender:** 54% female, 46% male
- **Age:** 23% (18-30 years), 38% (31-45 years), 27% (46-60 years), 12% (>60 years)
- **Nationality:** 42% European, 31% North American, 18% Middle Eastern, 9% other
- **Booking channel:** 48% direct website, 29% OTA platforms, 23% travel agents
- **Previous visits:** 31% first-time guests, 69% returning guests

c. Measurement Instruments

All constructs were measured using validated multi-item scales adapted from existing literature and modified for the hotel promotional context. A 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree) was employed for all items.

i. Storytelling Marketing (5 items)

Adapted from narrative persuasion and hospitality storytelling scales:

- SM1: The hotel's promotional materials told compelling stories
- SM2: The narratives about Moroccan culture and heritage were engaging
- SM3: The hotel's storytelling made the promotional offer more appealing
- SM4: I could easily imagine the experiences described in the hotel's stories
- SM5: The storytelling helped me understand the unique value of this hotel

ii. Customer Engagement (6 items)

Adapted from digital engagement and hospitality involvement scales:

- CE1: I paid close attention to the hotel's promotional content
- CE2: The storytelling made me want to learn more about the hotel
- CE3: I felt personally connected to the stories shared by the hotel
- CE4: I shared or discussed the hotel's promotional content with others
- CE5: The promotional campaign kept me engaged throughout
- CE6: I actively sought additional information about the hotel after seeing the promotion

iii. Emotional Connection (5 items)

Adapted from brand attachment and emotional bonding scales:

- EC1: The hotel's stories evoked positive emotions in me
- EC2: I felt an emotional bond with the hotel through its narratives
- EC3: The storytelling made me feel connected to Moroccan culture
- EC4: The promotional content resonated with my personal values
- EC5: I developed warm feelings toward the hotel through its storytelling

iv. Booking Intentions (4 items)

Adapted from visit intention and purchase intention scales:

- BI1: The storytelling increased my likelihood of booking this hotel
- BI2: I would choose this hotel over competitors because of its storytelling
- BI3: The promotional campaign motivated me to make a reservation
- BI4: I intend to recommend this hotel to others based on its storytelling

v. Sales Promotion Effectiveness (4 items)

Developed for this study based on promotional effectiveness literature:

- SPE1: The storytelling made the promotional offer more attractive
- SPE2: The narrative approach increased the perceived value of the promotion
- SPE3: The storytelling differentiated this promotion from competitors' offers
- SPE4: The promotional campaign was more effective because of the storytelling

d. Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis followed a multi-stage process:

1. **Preliminary analysis:** Descriptive statistics, missing data assessment, and outlier detection using SPSS 28.0
2. **Reliability and validity testing:** Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE)
3. **Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA):** Assessment of measurement model fit using AMOS 28.0

4. **Structural equation modeling (SEM):** Testing of hypothesized relationships and mediation effects
5. **Mediation analysis:** Bootstrap procedures (5,000 iterations) to test indirect effects.

Model fit was evaluated using multiple indices: χ^2/df ratio, Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR). Acceptable thresholds were: $\chi^2/df < 3.0$, CFI and TLI > 0.90 , RMSEA < 0.08 , SRMR < 0.08 .

e. Ethical Considerations

The study protocol received approval from the hotel management and followed ethical research guidelines. Participants provided informed consent, were assured of confidentiality and anonymity, and could withdraw at any time. No personally identifiable information was collected beyond demographic categories necessary for sample characterization.

4. Results

a. Preliminary Analysis and Descriptive Statistics

Initial data screening revealed no significant missing data patterns ($< 2\%$ per variable), which were handled using expectation-maximization imputation. Univariate and multivariate outliers were examined using z-scores (± 3.29) and Mahalanobis distance; five cases were removed, resulting in the final sample of 312.

Normality assessment showed skewness values ranging from -0.67 to 0.54 and kurtosis values from -0.89 to 0.72, indicating acceptable univariate normality. Multivariate normality was assessed using Mardia's coefficient (23.47), slightly above the recommended threshold but acceptable for SEM with robust estimation.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Storytelling Marketing	5.67	0.89	1				
2. Customer Engagement	5.34	0.96	.672**	1			
3. Emotional Connection	5.51	0.92	.698**	.687**	1		
4. Booking Intentions	5.78	0.88	.724**	.689**	.712**	1	
5. Sales Promotion Effectiveness	5.62	0.94	.701**	.668**	.695**	.738**	1

Note: N = 312; p < .01

The correlation matrix reveals strong positive relationships among all constructs ($r = .672$ to $.738$), supporting the theoretical model while remaining below multicollinearity thresholds ($r < .85$).

b. Measurement Model Assessment

Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to evaluate the measurement model's reliability and validity. The initial CFA model demonstrated acceptable fit: $\chi^2 = 487.32$ (df = 220), $\chi^2/df = 2.215$, CFI = 0.931, TLI = 0.921, RMSEA = 0.062 (90% CI: 0.055-0.070), SRMR = 0.054.

Table 2: Reliability and Validity Assessment

Construct	Items	Cronbach's α	CR	AVE	Factor Loadings Range
Storytelling Marketing	5	0.887	0.891	0.621	0.742 - 0.834
Customer Engagement	6	0.912	0.915	0.646	0.761 - 0.848
Emotional Connection	5	0.901	0.904	0.653	0.773 - 0.841
Booking Intentions	4	0.894	0.897	0.686	0.801 - 0.862
Sales Promotion Effectiveness	4	0.883	0.886	0.660	0.782 - 0.851

All constructs exceeded recommended thresholds for reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.70$, CR > 0.70) and convergent validity (AVE > 0.50, factor loadings > 0.70). Discriminant validity was established using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, with the square root of each construct's AVE exceeding its correlations with other constructs.

Table 3: Discriminant Validity (Fornell-Larcker Criterion)

Construct	1	2	3	4	5
1. Storytelling Marketing	0.788				
2. Customer Engagement	0.672	0.804			
3. Emotional Connection	0.698	0.687	0.808		
4. Booking Intentions	0.724	0.689	0.712	0.828	
5. Sales Promotion Effectiveness	0.701	0.668	0.695	0.738	0.812

Note: Diagonal elements (bold) represent the square root of AVE; off-diagonal elements are correlations.

c. Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

The structural model was tested using maximum likelihood estimation with bootstrapping (5,000 iterations) for mediation analysis. The structural model demonstrated good fit: $\chi^2 = 512.18$ (df = 223), $\chi^2/df = 2.297$, CFI = 0.926, TLI = 0.916, RMSEA = 0.065 (90% CI: 0.058-0.072), SRMR = 0.058.

Table 4: Structural Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Path	Standardized β	SE	t-value	p-value	Result
H1	SM → BI	0.487	0.054	9.019	< .001	Supported
H2 (mediation)	SM → CE → BI	0.241	0.038	6.342	< .001	Supported
H3 (mediation)	SM → EC → SPE	0.296	0.042	7.048	< .001	Supported
	SM → CE	0.672	0.048	14.000	< .001	-
	CE → BI	0.356	0.051	6.980	< .001	-
	SM → EC	0.698	0.046	15.174	< .001	-
	EC → SPE	0.423	0.053	7.981	< .001	-

Note: SM = Storytelling Marketing; CE = Customer Engagement; EC = Emotional Connection; BI = Booking Intentions; SPE = Sales Promotion Effectiveness

Hypothesis 1: Storytelling marketing demonstrated a strong, significant positive effect on booking intentions ($\beta = 0.487$, $p < .001$), explaining substantial variance in customers' intentions to book the hotel. This direct effect supports H1.

Hypothesis 2: The indirect effect of storytelling marketing on booking intentions through customer engagement was significant ($\beta = 0.241$, 95% CI: 0.172-0.318, $p < .001$), indicating partial mediation. Customer engagement accounted for approximately 33% of the total effect of storytelling on booking intentions, supporting H2.

Hypothesis 3: Emotional connection significantly mediated the relationship between storytelling marketing and sales promotion effectiveness ($\beta = 0.296$, 95% CI: 0.219-0.381, $p < .001$). The indirect effect through emotional connection represented 42% of the total effect, supporting H3.

d. Model Explanatory Power

The structural model explained substantial variance in outcome variables:

- **Booking Intentions:** $R^2 = 0.643$ (64.3% of variance explained)
- **Sales Promotion Effectiveness:** $R^2 = 0.587$ (58.7% of variance explained)

- **Customer Engagement:** $R^2 = 0.452$ (45.2% of variance explained)
- **Emotional Connection:** $R^2 = 0.487$ (48.7% of variance explained)

These R^2 values indicate strong predictive power, with storytelling marketing and its mediators accounting for the majority of variance in promotional outcomes.

e. Additional Analyses

Control variables: Age, gender, nationality, and previous visit status were tested as control variables. Only previous visit status showed a significant effect on booking intentions ($\beta = 0.112$, $p < .05$), with returning guests showing slightly higher intentions. However, including control variables did not substantively alter the main findings.

Moderation exploration: Post-hoc multi-group analysis examined whether effects differed by booking channel (direct vs. OTA). Results showed no significant moderation ($\Delta\chi^2 = 7.34$, $df = 5$, $p = .196$), suggesting storytelling effects operate consistently across booking channels.

5. Discussion

a. Interpretation of Findings

This study provides robust empirical evidence that storytelling marketing significantly enhances sales promotion effectiveness in hotel contexts, with customer engagement and emotional connection serving as critical mediating mechanisms. The findings align with narrative transportation theory and extend its application to promotional campaign outcomes in an emerging market setting.

Direct effects of storytelling: The strong direct effect of storytelling marketing on booking intentions ($\beta = 0.487$) demonstrates that narrative-based promotional approaches meaningfully influence consumer decision-making beyond traditional promotional tactics. This finding corroborates research by Huang et al. (2018) showing that narrative transportation predicts visit intentions in luxury hotel contexts. In the Moroccan hotel setting, stories about artisan craftsmanship, cultural heritage, and authentic experiences appear to resonate powerfully with international and domestic guests seeking differentiated travel experiences.

Customer engagement mediation: The significant mediation through customer engagement (33% of total effect) supports the elaboration likelihood model's predictions that storytelling increases cognitive and emotional processing of promotional messages. When hotel narratives engage customers through contextual cues, emotional involvement, and immersive experiences, they deepen message elaboration and strengthen intention formation. This finding validates research by Belhaj (2025) demonstrating that storytelling marketing directly increases engagement, which then predicts purchase decisions.

Emotional connection mediation: The substantial mediation through emotional connection (42% of total effect) highlights the affective pathway through which storytelling influences promotional outcomes. Stories that evoke emotions, create cultural resonance, and align with personal values forge psychological bonds that enhance perceived promotional value. This mechanism is particularly relevant in hospitality contexts where experiential and hedonic dimensions dominate purchase decisions. The Moroccan cultural context—with its rich traditions, visual aesthetics, and hospitality ethos—provides authentic narrative material that facilitates emotional bonding.

b. Theoretical Contributions

This research makes several contributions to hospitality marketing theory:

1. **Integrated mediation model:** By simultaneously examining engagement and emotional pathways, the study provides a more complete picture of how storytelling operates in promotional contexts. Previous research often examined these mechanisms separately; this study demonstrates their complementary roles.

2. **Emerging market evidence:** The study addresses a geographical gap in hospitality storytelling research, which has predominantly focused on Western and East Asian contexts. The Moroccan setting demonstrates that narrative marketing principles operate effectively in North African markets, though cultural content must be authentic and locally grounded.
3. **Sales promotion focus:** While most storytelling research examines brand attitudes and general visit intentions, this study specifically measures promotional campaign effectiveness, providing more actionable insights for marketing managers designing limited-time offers and seasonal campaigns.
4. **Validated measurement framework:** The adapted measurement scales demonstrate strong psychometric properties in a non-Western hospitality context, offering researchers validated instruments for future studies in similar settings.

c. Practical Implications

The findings offer several actionable recommendations for hotel marketing managers:

1. Invest in narrative content development: Given storytelling's strong effects (explaining 64% of booking intention variance), hotels should allocate resources to developing authentic, compelling narratives. This includes:

- Documenting artisan partnerships and craftsmanship stories
- Creating video and written content featuring guest experiences
- Training staff to communicate narratives during service interactions
- Integrating storytelling across all touchpoints (website, social media, email, in-property)

2. Design for engagement: Since customer engagement mediates storytelling effects, promotional content should be designed to maximize involvement:

- Use vivid imagery and sensory details that facilitate mental simulation
- Create interactive content that invites participation (e.g., user-generated stories)
- Develop multi-chapter narratives that encourage continued engagement
- Optimize content for mobile platforms where engagement behaviors occur

3. Emphasize emotional resonance: With emotional connection accounting for 42% of promotional effectiveness, campaigns should:

- Highlight cultural values and heritage that resonate with target segments
- Use testimonial narratives that facilitate identification and empathy
- Connect promotional offers to meaningful experiences rather than price discounts
- Leverage nostalgia and aspiration in narrative frames

4. Authentic cultural storytelling: In the Moroccan context specifically, authenticity emerged as crucial. Hotels should:

- Partner with local artisans, chefs, and cultural experts for credible narratives
- Avoid exoticization or stereotypical representations
- Ground stories in verifiable history and genuine experiences
- Use local languages and cultural references where appropriate for target audiences

5. Measure storytelling effectiveness: Hotels should implement metrics to track storytelling impact:

- Engagement rates (time on page, video completion, social interactions)
- Emotional response indicators (sentiment analysis, survey measures)
- Attribution modeling to link storytelling exposure to bookings
- A/B testing of narrative vs. non-narrative promotional content

d. Limitations and Future Research Directions

Several limitations should be acknowledged:

1. Single-site study: Data collection at one Moroccan hotel limits generalizability. Future

research should examine storytelling effects across multiple properties, hotel categories (luxury vs. mid-market), and geographical regions within Morocco and North Africa.

2. Cross-sectional design: The survey captured perceptions at a single time point. Longitudinal designs could examine how storytelling effects evolve over customer relationships and whether narrative fatigue occurs with repeated exposure.

3. Self-reported measures: While validated scales were used, self-reported intentions may not perfectly predict actual booking behavior. Future studies could link survey responses to actual booking data or employ experimental designs with behavioral dependent variables.

4. Cultural considerations: The study's Moroccan context may limit transferability to other cultural settings. Comparative research examining storytelling effectiveness across diverse cultural contexts would clarify boundary conditions and cultural moderators.

5. Storytelling content analysis: This study treated storytelling as a unitary construct. Future research could examine which narrative elements (e.g., character types, plot structures, cultural themes) most strongly drive engagement and emotional connection.

6. Digital vs. offline storytelling: The study did not distinguish between digital and in-person storytelling channels. Research comparing effectiveness across channels and examining omnichannel narrative integration would provide valuable insights.

Future research opportunities:

- **Moderator analysis:** Examining how individual differences (e.g., need for cognition, cultural orientation) moderate storytelling effects
- **Competitive context:** Investigating how storytelling differentiates hotels when multiple competitors employ narrative strategies
- **Long-term effects:** Studying storytelling's impact on loyalty, lifetime value, and advocacy behaviors beyond initial bookings
- **Content optimization:** Using machine learning to identify narrative features that maximize engagement and conversion
- **Sustainability narratives:** Examining how environmental and social responsibility stories influence booking decisions

6. Conclusion

This study provides compelling quantitative evidence that storytelling marketing significantly enhances sales promotion effectiveness in hotel contexts, operating through customer engagement and emotional connection pathways. In the case of a Moroccan luxury hotel, narrative-based promotional campaigns that communicated cultural heritage, artisan craftsmanship, and authentic experiences generated strong booking intentions and improved promotional outcomes.

The research demonstrates that storytelling is not merely a creative embellishment but a strategic marketing tool with measurable business impact. Hotels that invest in developing authentic, emotionally resonant narratives and integrate them systematically across promotional campaigns can expect enhanced customer engagement, stronger emotional bonds, and improved conversion rates.

For the Moroccan hospitality industry specifically, storytelling represents a natural competitive advantage. The country's rich cultural heritage, architectural traditions, culinary excellence, and hospitality ethos provide abundant narrative material that differentiates Moroccan hotels in global markets. By leveraging these authentic stories strategically in promotional campaigns, hotels can move beyond price-based competition and create distinctive value propositions that resonate with experience-seeking travelers.

As the hospitality industry continues to evolve in an increasingly digital and experience-oriented marketplace, storytelling will likely become not just an advantage but a necessity for hotels seeking to build lasting customer relationships and sustainable competitive positions.

This research provides a validated framework and empirical foundation for hotels to design, implement, and evaluate narrative-based marketing strategies that drive both immediate promotional success and long-term brand equity.

7. References

- Belhaj, M. (2025). Experiential marketing through strategic storytelling. In *Advances in Marketing, Customer Relationship Management, and E-Services* (pp. 45-67). IGI Global. <https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3693-7698-0.ch003>
- Cheng, Y., & Jiang, H. (2025). The effect of typicality in luxury hotel brand storytelling on booking intention. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 126, 104337. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2025.104337>
- Dessart, L., Veloutsou, C., & Morgan-Thomas, A. (2015). Consumer engagement in online brand communities: A social media perspective. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 24(1), 28-42. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPBM-06-2014-0635>
- Escalas, J. E. (2004). Narrative processing: Building consumer connections to brands. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 14(1-2), 168-180. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327663jcp1401&2_19
- Escalas, J. E., & Bettman, J. R. (2003). You are what they eat: The influence of reference groups on consumers' connections to brands. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 13(3), 339-348. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327663JCP1303_14
- Green, M. C., & Brock, T. C. (2000). The role of transportation in the persuasiveness of public narratives. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 79(5), 701-721. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.79.5.701>
- Hollebeek, L. D., Glynn, M. S., & Brodie, R. J. (2014). Consumer brand engagement in social media: Conceptualization, scale development and validation. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 28(2), 149-165. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2013.12.002>
- Huang, R., Ha, S., & Kim, S. (2018). Narrative persuasion in social media: An empirical study of luxury brand advertising. *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing*, 12(3), 274-292. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JRIM-07-2017-0059>
- Kim, J., & Gupta, P. (2012). Emotional expressions in online user reviews: How they influence consumers' product evaluations. *Journal of Business Research*, 65(7), 985-992. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2011.04.013>
- Lundqvist, A., Liljander, V., Gummerus, J., & Van Riel, A. (2013). The impact of storytelling on the consumer brand experience: The case of a firm-originated story. *Journal of Brand Management*, 20(4), 283-297. <https://doi.org/10.1057/bm.2012.15>
- Michael, N., & Fusté-Forné, F. (2022). Marketing of luxurious gastronomic experiences on social media: The visual storytelling of luxury hotels. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 24(5), 691-704. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jtr.2548>
- Mossberg, L. (2008). Extraordinary experiences through storytelling. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 8(3), 195-210. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15022250802532443>
- Sparks, B. A., & Browning, V. (2011). The impact of online reviews on hotel booking intentions and perception of trust. *Tourism Management*, 32(6), 1310-1323. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2010.12.011>
- Suntikul, W., & Jachna, T. (2022). The art of storytelling in hotels: Paving the way for recovery and resilience. In *Tourism and Hospitality in a Post-Pandemic World* (pp. 67-89). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-89806-8_4
- Thomson, M., MacInnis, D. J., & Park, C. W. (2005). The ties that bind: Measuring the strength of consumers' emotional attachments to brands. *Journal of Consumer*

Psychology, 15(1), 77-91. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327663jcp1501_10

- Woodside, A. G., Cruickshank, B. F., & Dehuang, N. (2007). Stories visitors tell about Italian cities as destination icons. *Tourism Management*, 28(1), 162-174. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2005.10.026>
- World Travel & Tourism Council. (2024). *Morocco: Economic impact report 2024*. London: WTTC.
- Zhang, H., & Lu, Y. (2025). The influence of storytelling in luxury hotel short videos on hotel brand attitude: The mediating role of narrative engagement. *Journal of Travel Research*, 64(1), 89-105. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jtr.70055>