

Luxury Tourism Brand Storytelling

Vision from Serandipians' Members

By Anne-Flore MAMAN LARRAUFIE (Ph.D.) & Cécilia GOUTRAN



Brand Storytelling

A key element in brands' strategy to connect with their clients through stories and emotions. Here are 6 criteria brands should follow to create a great storytelling:

- 1 There is a story.
- 2 The client is the hero of the story or may project him/herself in the hero.
- 3 There is a plot with a 'conflict' that might be:
 - An internal conflict: psychological, personal for the hero.
 - An external conflict: environment, competition, others surrounding the hero.
- 4 The brand is helping resolve the conflict.
- 5 The brand uses the codes of its industry. For luxury brands, luxury ingredients of the showcased experience are respected: unicity, rarity, excellence, elegance, etc.
- 6 The storytelling triggers emotions.

Our goals with this study are to:



- Identify the major trends in luxury tourism storytelling.
- Understand how luxury travel brands stage themselves when creating a story for their clients.
- Provide a set of guidelines for future luxury tourism storytelling productions.

Methodology

As part of a global contest on Brand Storytelling between Members of the Serandipians by Traveller Made network (Luxury Hotels, Luxury Travel Agencies, DMCs), we had the opportunity to get insights on key characteristics of Luxury Travel Brand Storytelling.

All formats were accepted, from videos to comics including social media campaigns. All participants used videos except one who chose an Instagram feed with a dozen posts. Participants had 2 months to produce their content after their training on storytelling for the jury evaluation in March 2020. 32 stories out of 48 were doubled-coded by two researchers using semiotic models; the other contents did not match the predefined storytelling requirements.

Who is the hero?



- 43% **OFTEN A MIDDLE-AGED MAN** - the client segment targeted by the participant companies encompasses businessmen and companies owners in which men are highly represented.
- 59% **ALONE** - this helps the audience to identify with the hero; travel is also a self-experience linked to introspection, passion, discovery, knowledge acquisition.
- 47% **NOT OFTEN IDENTIFIED** - this favours the audience personification through the hero.
- 25% **SOMETIMES THE AUDIENCE ITSELF** - a direct action to empower the audience.

What is the hero looking for?

- Overall, the hero is going on an **adventure to DISCOVER something new or hidden**. The object of desire can be **abstract** such as...
- 17% **SELF DISCOVERY** - learning one's passion, limits and aspirations during a trip.
- 6% **DREAM** - travelling allows people to dream of undiscovered and magnificent places.
- 4% **INSPIRATION** - travelling is a way to learn new things and to open one's mind.
- 26% ... or **concrete, PLACE, COUNTRY, HOTEL**.

Who benefits from the story?

THE HERO is the first to learn from the story (59% of cases). This reminds that travelling is a personal and experiential activity and passion. Each traveller can take back home souvenirs, personal knowledge and new inspiration.

THE AUDIENCE may also learn from the hero's adventure (32% of cases). The audience (i.e. the prospects and clients) feels empowered by the brand storytelling and is invited to act on this rising desire to discover and travel.



To win the quest for discovery, the hero needs a certain set of skills:

- The **WILL TO DO THE TASK** (vouloir-faire) is the most important one with 39%.
- Then comes the **KNOW-HOW** (savoir-faire) with 30%.
- The performance of the hero is **often (50%) BOTH PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL.**



Who helps the hero?



64% of helpers are concrete elements:

- 14% • **A PLACE:** the hotel, the country or the region that inspires the hero and provides with anything he or she needs.
- 14% • **ONE OR SEVERAL PERSONS:** a guide, the hotel employees who are dedicated to helping the hero enjoy his or her trip.
- 9% • **AN OBJECT:** related to the hero's souvenirs or to travelling.
- 6% • **A MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION:** helicopters, cars, airplanes, scooters that are used by the hero to reach his or her destination.

The main abstract helpers are:

- 4,5% • **CURIOSITY:** a key element for a fantastic and personal discovery.
- 4% • **PASSION/LOVE:** for others and for travelling.
- 4% • **HARMONY/PERFECTION:** created by the place where the hero stays.

Who plays against the hero?

44% of opponents are concrete:

- 11% • **DAY-TO-DAY LIFE:** travelling forces people to discover new places and leave their comfort zone.
- 8% • **ONE OR SEVERAL PERSONS:** relatives can be a brake to travels.
- 5% • **WORK:** people with high responsibility tend to be unable to take a real vacation break and thus unable to focus on their travelling experience.

48% of opponents are abstract:

- 14% • **IGNORANCE:** prejudices and stereotypes are a real brake to travels.
- 9,5% • **TIME:** most people lack time to enjoy travelling experiences.
- 6% • **HERO'S PERSONALITY:** people can be afraid or reluctant to try new places.

The Role of Brands in Storytelling

Present in the stories at different positions:

- **AS HELPER:** either through the place (hotel) or directly with the brand (logo) – brands help the subject understand his or her goal and create the perfect surrounding to perform the internal or external quest. (6 times)
- **AS HERO:** twice with « the company »; the story explains the work and the required knowledge behind exceptional and tailor-made luxury travels.
- **AS SENDER:** the brand creates the quest for the subject. (9 times)
- **NEVER as the object of desire, as receiver nor as an opponent.**

Semiotic Tools


The **Actantial Model** is used to break an action or a story down into six facets, called actants. The hero/subject desires the object of his or her quest. The helper supports the subject in obtaining the object whereas the opponent works against the helper and tries to prevent the subject from gaining the object. The sender initiates the action and the receiver profits from the action and/or the object.

The **Canonical Narrative Model** is used to describe a story as a structure consisting of five components. The action component can be broken down into skill (includes the conditions that are necessary to accomplish the action - wanting-to-do, having-to-do, knowing-how-to-do, and being-able-to-do) and performance (the actual accomplishment of the action). Manipulation is the component that deals specifically with wanting-to-do and having-to-do. The sanction evaluates whether the action was in fact accomplished, and the corresponding retribution (reward or punishment) that the performing subject has incurred.

SO WHAT?



- Luxury tourism players focus on a male client and hardly project a female clientele into the experience.
- A very rational storytelling leaving little room for emotions.
- Luxury tourism players showcase their brand using concrete practical elements and forget the emotional part of it, thus helping the client to build his/her memorable experience without any emotions.
- The hero of the story remains alone, as if a luxury memorable experience was not to be shared with family or friends.
- The hero's quest is leading to very prosaic rewards: few stories help the hero transcend him/herself.

A special thank you to:  **SERANDIPIANS**

For more details on the analysis methodology or on the results, contact us at info@semioconsult.com