
Innovating Culinary Tourism: Concept Development for cultural media travel packages through storytelling

Abstract

This study explores how culinary tourism can be innovated through narrative-driven experiences by integrating Dutch Royal Cuisine (DRC) with a transmedia storytelling approach. In collaboration with BigHouse Entertainment (BHE), a South Korean media company, the study conceptualizes media-based travel packages that connect food heritage with immersive storytelling. Drawing on literature review, documentary analysis, and expert interviews, the research identifies key themes in DRC—such as symbolism, ritual, and exclusivity—and translates them into culturally engaging tourism content. A framework is proposed to guide the design of narrative-based culinary experiences for senior luxury travelers, aligning media content with physical travel. The findings highlight the potential of storytelling to enhance cultural tourism through emotional engagement, heritage preservation, and market differentiation. This study contributes to innovation in cultural tourism by demonstrating how culinary narratives can serve as strategic assets in experiential travel, media production, and destination branding.

Key Words OSMU strategy, transmedia storytelling, cultural tourism, dutch royal cuisine

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Introduction

Culinary tourism has become a vital strand of cultural tourism, appealing to travelers in search of immersive, authentic, and meaningful experiences (Stone et al., 2022). It positions food as a cultural artifact and an experiential product, aligning with consumer interest in regional products, storytelling, and cultural authenticity. As global destinations seek competitive differentiation, culinary experiences offer value in promoting uniqueness and diversity. The World Food Travel Association (2023) reports that over 80% of leisure travelers qualify as “food travelers,” highlighting the central role of gastronomy in tourism behavior. Concurrently, the media are powerful in shaping tourism motivations. Streaming platforms like Netflix inspire new travel interests through series like *Chef’s Table* and *Street Food*, where food is embedded in stories of place, identity, and heritage. This synergy between media and tourism has driven the rise of ‘screen tourism’ or ‘film-induced tourism’—where emotionally compelling narratives increase destination appeal (Hudson & Ritchie, 2006). This phenomenon is evident across genres, such as increased travel to New Zealand following *The Lord of the*

Rings, and to Croatia after *Game of Thrones*. Storytelling fosters affective connections, cultural authenticity, and participatory tourism experiences.

Transmedia storytelling and the One-Source-Multi-Use (OSMU) strategy have emerged as innovative frameworks to support media-enabled tourism. While transmedia storytelling unfolds narratives across multiple platforms (Jenkins, 2007), the OSMU strategy ensures narrative consistency across media formats while maximizing content reuse (Kim & Hong, 2016). Widely used in South Korea's media industry, OSMU has economic potential by extending stories into consumer products, tourism, and digital experiences. In Europe, it is seen in the *Visit Britain* campaign tied to *Downton Abbey*, which translated narrative content into guided tours, merchandise, and themed dining (Janet Redler Travel Limited, 2025; Pihach, 2025).

This study explores how culinary tourism in the Netherlands can be innovated through narrative-driven experiences based on Dutch Royal Cuisine. In collaboration with BigHouse Entertainment (BHE), a South Korean media company, this research conceptualizes travel packages that align with BHE's OSMU strategy. Based on exploratory research with key stakeholders, the paper proposes a framework that integrates cultural storytelling, media, and culinary heritage into experiential tourism tailored to the modern traveler's desire for authenticity, engagement, and thematic depth.

Literature Review

Narrative Storytelling

Storytelling is a fundamental aspect of human history, embodying the essence of humanity (James & Minnis, 2004; Tobin, 2007). It is a universal practice that transcends cultures and generations, described as the act of sharing knowledge, experiences, or traditions in a narrative form that is easy to understand, meaningful, and memorable (Kim et al., 2020). Storytelling plays a vital role in enriching experiences across various domains. In tourism, storytelling significantly enhances cultural immersion by offering contextual depth and fostering emotional bonds that deepen appreciation for local heritage. For instance, Khater et al. (2025) found that tourists often recall stories about local legends, personal anecdotes, and historical narratives to make their experiences more memorable and immersive. Narrative storytelling presents information through a structured sequence—beginning, middle, and end—which aligns with human cognition and is commonly found in films, dramas, comics, and personal experiences (Hinyard & Kreuter, 2007). It enables audiences to follow the logic of events, adopt the perspective of characters (Cohen, 2018), and immerse themselves in the story world (Green & Brock, 2000), thereby making experiences more meaningful and emotionally resonant.

Storytelling in Cultural Tourism

In cultural tourism, narrative storytelling has been shown to enhance tourist experiences, particularly during guided tours. Descriptions of sensory elements specific to a destination and stories linking local or famous figures can create emotional connections, making visits more memorable and engaging (Kusumah & Andrianto, 2023). Such storytelling contributes to destination competitiveness, especially as the sector faces challenges like increasing diversity,

demand for personalized experiences, and limited resources. Narrative storytelling also motivates museum visits and encourages participation in exhibitions and interactive media (UNWTO, 2011). Compared to traditional factual presentations, storytelling by tour guides may excel in conveying core concepts, establishing logical sequences, stimulating curiosity, and increasing exposure, as it effectively bridges tangible and intangible heritage, serving as a performative communication tool in heritage interpretation. Roque (2022) emphasized storytelling's power in allowing communities to share cultural knowledge while enabling tourists to participate in these narratives, fostering authenticity and belonging. Stevenson (2019) further highlighted its role in promoting intercultural communication and understanding. Combining local storytelling with sensory cultural elements, such as regional cuisine, strengthens the narrative experience, making it more immersive and memorable for visitors.

Culinary Tourism Through Media

Food and culture are deeply intertwined, with food serving as a reflection of cultural identities, traditions, and values. Beyond fulfilling a basic human need, food functions as a “symbolic system” that conveys societal norms, religious beliefs, and historical experiences (Lystra, 1983). It plays a central role in rituals, social hierarchies, and celebrations, distinguishing class and ethnicity through the types of food consumed. As a medium of cultural exchange, food evolves with migration and globalization, blending culinary traditions across regions. Given this cultural significance, it is unsurprising that food and culinary travel have become vital aspects of cultural tourism, with visitors increasingly drawn to local cuisines (Richards, 2018).

With the rise of digital media, culinary storytelling has become a key method for connecting physical and virtual visitors. In Thailand, Jongsuksomsakul (2024) used storytelling as a co-creative media approach to connect local culinary traditions with global tourists. The study also emphasized storytelling's educational and preservation functions. Similarly, Nurwitasari et al. (2024) found that storytelling in Indonesian gastronomic tourism enhances emotional engagement and culinary authenticity. In this context, Dutch Royal Family food traditions, as a symbolic food system, could represent a powerful narrative vehicle to attract international tourists seeking authentic and historically rooted culinary experiences.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative, exploratory approach to develop a conceptual framework that integrates Dutch Royal Cuisine (DRC) with media-driven tourism experiences. The methodology was designed to contextualize DRC to be used in an OSMU strategy and apply it to a broader culinary tourism landscape. A literature review and documentary analysis were conducted. The literature review examines Dutch Royal Cuisine, Dutch Food Culture (DFC), culinary tourism trends and consumer behavior, providing a theoretical foundation for understanding how food culture and media intersect in tourism. Additionally, a documentary analysis of existing Royal Table episodes was performed to extract thematic and structural elements, ensuring that new content within the OSMU strategy maintains consistency in storytelling, format, and cultural representation.

To strengthen the definition of DRC and Dutch Food Culture (DFC) and ensure alignment storytelling goals, semi-structured expert interviews were conducted. Participants were selected based on their expertise in Dutch royal gastronomy and heritage. This selection process ensured that insights were drawn from professionals who could provide valuable perspectives on integrating food storytelling into on screen and real time experiences. Table 1 provides an overview of interviewees that participated in this study.

<i>Participant Code</i>	<i>Expertise</i>	<i>Date of interview</i>	<i>Interview duration</i>
<i>P1</i>	<i>Dutch Cuisine</i>	<i>15-11-2024</i>	<i>60 Minutes</i>
<i>P2</i>	<i>Dutch (Royal) Cuisine</i>	<i>7-10-2024</i>	<i>120 Minutes</i>
<i>P3</i>	<i>Dutch royal House</i>	<i>26-11-2024</i>	<i>60 Minutes</i>
<i>P4</i>	<i>Dutch Food Culture</i>	<i>28-11-2024</i>	<i>30 Minutes</i>
<i>P5</i>	<i>Dutch (Royal) Cuisine</i>	<i>5-11-2024</i>	<i>60 Minutes</i>
<i>P6</i>	<i>Dutch (Royal) Cuisine</i>	<i>11-11-2024</i>	<i>60 Minutes</i>
<i>P7</i>	<i>Dutch (Royal) Cuisine</i>	<i>15-11-2024</i>	<i>15 minutes</i>
<i>P8</i>	<i>Dutch (Royal) Cuisine</i>	<i>18-11-2024</i>	<i>30 minutes</i>
<i>P9</i>	<i>Dutch (Royal) Cuisine</i>	<i>19-11-2024</i>	<i>25 minutes</i>
<i>P10</i>	<i>Dutch royal House</i>	<i>12-12-2024</i>	<i>35 minutes</i>
<i>P11</i>	<i>Dutch (Royal) Cuisine</i>	<i>Written interview</i>	<i>Written interview</i>

Table 1. Overview of Expert Interviews

The interviews focused on the historical and cultural significance of DRC, the role of food storytelling, Dutch culinary heritage and royal culinary narratives. Deductive thematic analysis was conducted based on key components of DRC and DFC identified through secondary research and documentary analysis of existing Royal Table episodes to formulate overarching themes from the interviews which could inform the design of the tourist experience on Dutch Royal Cuisine. Finally, a decision matrix was developed to translate findings into actionable input for tourism experiences and media content.

Findings

The research identified key components of DRC, emphasizing its ceremonial precision, exclusive ingredients, symbolic narratives, and cultural representation. Expert interviews highlighted that DRC is strongly associated with tradition, formality, and refined dining, making it distinct from broader Dutch cuisine and DFC. *“Meals currently served at royal events are seen as opportunities to tell stories about Dutch heritage, traditions, and pride through carefully chosen ingredients and presentation”* (P1).

Narrative and Structural Storytelling

A thematic analysis of Royal Table episodes, executed to contrast interview findings, revealed recurring themes and storytelling techniques currently used within BHE's OSMU strategy. The narrative storytelling techniques, such as the use of personal anecdotes, historical narratives, and sensory descriptions, enhance audience engagement. Experts suggested that successful

culinary tourism experiences require a narrative structure that emotionally connects visitors to the cultural significance of the cuisine. They also suggested that to enhance tourism potential, DRC should be framed within a narrative that highlights its historical context but also its experiential and participatory elements. An interviewee touched on this by highlighting how recognition can make a story feel more relatable to the audience. “*Past Queen Juliana would be most interesting. She also hosted the British queen Elisabeth during a fancy dinner in the palace on the dam. That event made the newspapers. I think she has the most international allure.*” (P5) From the documentary analysis it became apparent that structural storytelling techniques like the number of stories used, themes discussed, experts interviewed, and locations shown ensured consistency of media content. The table below showcases the average number of structural elements of the episodes.

Structural element	Average Frequency
Main Themes	1
Sub Themes	11,75
Topics	11,75
Royals	6,75
Ingredients	37,75
Dishes	10,5
Experts	9,5
Locations	7,75

Table 2. Overview of Structural element frequencies

The analysis showed the importance of structural storytelling techniques. Visiting locations shown in the documentary and speaking to experts connect the audience to the media content. Including both storytelling techniques ensures consistency of media content and creates audience engagement, while establishing direct links to real time experiences

Connecting content to contextual relevance of the target audience

The OSMU strategy anchors this research in a media-based travel package. A character, conflict, plot and message were identified that match the emerged themes into an interesting story based on the collected data. A story was identified about “The importance of the color orange in the royal house.” This was categorized under the theme “Symbolism and Rituals in food”. It fit the storytelling criteria due to the vast availability of relevant members of the royal family as main characters. The color orange symbolizing dynasty, identity and power adds to the plot. Lastly, the color orange conveys the message of love and respect for the family of Oranje, the Dutch Royal Family. During banquets at the palace, it is tradition to let guests serve themselves: “*Many people are nervous when dining with a king or queen, and nervousness shrinks the stomach. So the fact that you can serve your own food [from the buffet] can be nice, so you can finish your food.*” (P3). Historically this was done to ensure guests were not poisoned. However, the tradition remains intact to this day and is just another example of connecting historical context to current day hospitality experiences.

Multiple locations tie to possible stories and experts on the use of the color in food, both currently and in the past. In combination with the availability of recipes and incorporation of

the color in both royal and common cuisine, this makes that the story fits all media criteria so that it can be implemented into a travel package.

To connect the OSMU strategy with an actual guest experience in form of a travel package, these criteria can be used as guidelines for activities, locations and design. Obviously, practical considerations need to be heeded to ensure that the experience allows a guest to immerse themselves in the media but is also feasible to create. For the DRC travel package, this includes conscious choices on transportation, physical activity and establishments which could be relevant for luxury senior travellers. For instance, to tie the story together into an experience, one of the travel agents added: “*for [the senior traveller] one should consider distance between locations*” as well as “*one or two activities a day would be recommended.*” Therefore the physical limits of the target audience should be considered to ensure practicality

Discussion

This exploratory study demonstrates how integrating cultural storytelling, media formats, and culinary heritage can innovate narrative culinary tourism experiences based on a Dutch case study. A framework for aligning content creation with modern traveller preferences is offered by applying the OSMU strategy for immersive, meaningful, and culturally resonant experiences for travellers.

In this study, narrative storytelling emerged as a central design principle in both the media content and experiential offerings. The interview results confirmed that stories rooted in Dutch Royal Cuisine (DRC) evoke strong associations with national heritage, ceremonial symbolism, and cultural pride. Emotionally rich narratives significantly enhance cultural immersion, which was confirmed in our study. This study affirms that both narrative (e.g., personal anecdotes, symbolic themes) and structural components (e.g., setting, format, number of experts) of the story are essential in maintaining consistency and engagement across media and real-life experiences. Similarly, emotional engagement and culinary authenticity are strengthened when food narratives are grounded in identity and visual symbolism. This aligns with our findings, exemplified by the integration of royal traditions and symbolism to ensure that the resulting product offers not only a gastronomic appeal but also cultural resonance and narrative continuity. The OSMU strategy can be an effective approach to structure content across platforms while preserving narrative coherence. By embedding such narratives into travel itineraries, our study confirms Li et al.’s (2025) observation that demand is rising for tourism experiences that offer thematic coherence, emotional depth, and sustainability alignment.

Our study was conducted in a Dutch context. In other contexts, cultural components and relevant stakeholders could differ which might result in different results and effectiveness of the OSMU strategy at different locations. While narrative design provides a rich framework for media content and tourism alignment in theory, potential tensions in accommodating logistical constraints at locations can emerge. Some documentary settings particularly those related to the royal family may for instance not be publicly accessible or replicable in real-time experiences as evidenced by the limited access to the royal family residence. Therefore, designing an OSMU-based travel package requires balancing narrative integrity with operational feasibility. Input from various stakeholders, such as travel agents is required to ensure that the needs of the primary audience can be incorporated in terms of physical and location-based requirements, travel comfort suitability, and tailored activities.

Conclusion

This study contributes to the intersection of media, storytelling, and culinary tourism by conceptualizing a travel experience that integrates Dutch Royal Cuisine (DRC) with the OSMU storytelling strategy. It bridges theoretical insights and practical design for immersive, media-driven cultural experiences. The paper's primary contribution lies in its conceptual development of a cultural media travel package that fuses DRC with transmedia storytelling principles. It extends the discourse on culinary tourism by applying narrative techniques, thereby advancing the role of food as both a heritage symbol and an experiential medium. Importantly, it provides a framework that can be transferred to other destinations.

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