

Methodology

This study is a narrative review, a form of knowledge synthesis that prioritizes a subjective, interpretative, and critical examination of a broad body of literature [16]. The construction of this article specifically adopts the "state-of-the-art" subtype of narrative review, which is designed to provide a three-part description: "where are we now in our understanding, how did we get here, and where should we go next?" [16].

Following this structure, the article is organized into four strategic phases:

- Conceptual Definition: Establishing the boundaries of rural tourism and the "experience economy".
- Diachronic Analysis: Tracing the global trajectory from the 1950s to the 2020s to explain "how we got here".
- Synchronic Comparison: Analyzing the current state ("where we are now") through a comparative lens between the mature European model and the "New Frontier" of Oceania.
- Prospective Synthesis: Identifying future research gaps and the "digital/green" mandates for the sector ("where to next").

The fundamental narrative backbone used as the "skeleton" for this study is the historical evolution of rural tourism from a peripheral economic survival strategy to a central pillar of regional resilience and lifestyle expression. The relevance of choosing this specific narrative lies in its ability to capture the transition in tourist engagement modalities—moving from a superficial "surfing" modality of observation to a "diving" modality of immersive, transformative integration. By using this evolution as a structural core, this study justifies the shift toward "regenerative tourism," where the visitor becomes a custodian rather than a mere consumer. This narrative choice is critical because it frames the challenges of digital literacy and ecological stewardship not as technical hurdles, but as existential requirements for the sector's survival.

The identification of the literature included in this review followed an iterative, multi-stage process:

- The initial corpus was established through the analysis of seminal volumes and handbooks [34,35]. These "base volumes" provided the theoretical anchors and historical context needed, particularly for the European evolution.
- To ensure contemporary relevance and to bridge the gap with the "New Frontier" of Oceania, the initial bibliography was expanded through targeted keyword searches on Scopus and Google Scholar. Search terms included "rural tourism", "sustainability", "agritourism Oceania", "regenerative tourism," and "digital nomads rural areas".
- In line with the narrative review process, manuscripts were not selected for exhaustive statistical coverage but for their seminal value and their ability to provide "saturation" or "thematic sufficiency" regarding the research questions. This allowed for the inclusion of diverse sources, ranging from WTO reports to specific ethnographic studies on terroir and gastronomy.

References

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