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Aristotelian Analysis of Sidomuncul Sustainability Report to Circular Economy Tourism

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the persuasive styles in PT. Sidomuncul's sustainability report and its contribution to the development of circular economy and sustainable tourism in Indonesia. As a leading herbal and jamu company, Sidomuncul plays a strategic role in supporting sustainable tourism through responsible business practices grounded in local wisdom. The method employed is text analysis of PT. Sidomuncul's 2024 Sustainability Report using the Aristotelian Model approach, encompassing three persuasive dimensions: logos (rational appeal), ethos (credibility), and pathos (emotional engagement). The findings demonstrate that Sidomuncul constructs a balanced persuasive architecture that integrates institutional credibility, evidence-based environmental performance, and community-centered emotional narratives. Structural development initiatives, renewable energy utilization, biodiversity conservation, women empowerment programs, and agro-tourism development illustrate that the company's sustainability rhetoric is grounded in operational substance rather than declarative claims. The study concludes that Sidomuncul achieves persuasive equilibrium by aligning credibility with measurable transformation and fostering stakeholder engagement through participatory empowerment. This rhetorical integration meaningfully supports circular economy systems and sustainable tourism development within local communities while reinforcing the company's identity as a sustainable cultural heritage enterprise.

Keywords: Aristotelian Model, Circular Economy, Sustainability Communication, Sustainability Report

1. INTRODUCTION

Sustainability reporting has emerged as a hallmark of corporate efforts to demonstrate commitment to environmental, social, and governance (ESG) outcomes. However, there is growing concern among scholars and practitioners that many sustainability reports are characterized by superficial claims rather than empirically verifiable data, leading stakeholders to question the credibility of corporate sustainability narratives [1]. In many instances, companies emphasize achievements and aspirations without clear evidence, creating a communication gap between what is reported and what ought to be transparently disclosed according to robust rhetorical standards. According to recent studies on sustainability reporting and greenwashing, such disconnects can significantly undermine the perceived integrity of corporate sustainability efforts and stakeholder trust [2].

The concept of sustainability reporting is intended to serve multiple functions ranging from accountability to strategy communication yet the challenge of meaningful disclosure remains persistent. Studies have highlighted that sustainability reports sometimes prioritize positive narratives without commensurate data or evidence of implementation, a phenomenon linked to greenwashing and rhetoric that obscures rather than clarifies corporate performance [2]. These observations resonate with concerns in the field that traditional sustainability reporting frameworks such as the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) are criticized for broadness and ambiguity, leaving room for interpretative reporting rather than rigorous evidence-based disclosure [3].

Against this backdrop, Aristotle's classical rhetorical model centered on ethos, logos, and pathos offers a theoretically grounded framework for evaluating corporate communication strategies [4]. Ethos relates to credibility and trustworthiness; logos refers to evidence and logical structure; and pathos involves emotional appeal. Existing research on rhetorical strategies in sustainability communication suggests that logos which involves clear data and logical reasoning is crucial for authenticating corporate sustainability claims [4]. However, empirical work shows that organizations often rely more heavily on ethos and pathos while underutilizing logos, thus raising questions about the substantive quality of disclosures [5].

In parallel, the literature on circular economy and sustainable tourism has increasingly underscored the need for integrated, measurable approaches to sustainability that transcend rhetorical rhetoric [6].

Circular economy principles such as waste reduction, resource efficiency, and value retention are widely promoted as frameworks for sustainable development in tourism and hospitality because they facilitate regenerative practices and reduce environmental burdens [7]. Yet, scholars also highlight a disconnect between conceptual advocacy and practical implementation: most studies provide theoretical insights without systematically examining how corporate communication supports or fails to support these principles in practice [6].

Moreover, sustainable tourism research emphasizes the importance of destination management, community engagement, and transparent reporting practices to ensure long-term social and environmental wellbeing [7]. While the tourism literature offers valuable frameworks for conceptualizing sustainability outcomes, it rarely intersects with rhetorical analysis of corporate disclosures especially in the context of emerging economies such as Indonesia [8].

Sidomuncul a leading Indonesian herbal pharmaceutical company provides a compelling case for studying sustainability disclosures through a rhetorical lens. The company's sustainability report articulates its initiatives related to circular economy practices, community engagement, and tourism development, particularly in rural and agro-tourism contexts [9]. However, the actual alignment between these reported initiatives and substantive evidence remains unclear absent a systematic rhetorical evaluation focused on logos, the appeal rooted in factual and logical proof [6]. This creates an analytical opportunity to discern how deeply the report relies on data compared to narrative claims.

Thus, the study addresses two central forms of research gap. The reality that many sustainability reports often consist of generalized, claim-heavy narratives with limited empirical grounding, making it challenging for stakeholders to distinguish between symbolic rhetoric and substantive sustainability performance [10]. In contrast, sustainability reports represents the normative ideal that sustainability communication should be grounded in clear, structured, and verifiable data, consistent with Aristotelian logos, to support credibility and stakeholder accountability [11].

Accordingly, the primary aim of this research is to analyze how Aristotelian rhetorical strategies ethos, logos, and pathos are articulated in Sidomuncul's 2024 Sustainability Report to support the integration of circular economy principles and sustainable tourism development in Indonesia. By applying qualitative text analysis within a rhetorical framework, this study reveals not only the persuasive styles and patterns embedded in corporate sustainability narratives but also how these strategies align with or diverge from substantive sustainable practices [12].

The contributions of this research are threefold. First, it extends rhetorical analysis in sustainability reporting, particularly in the context of emerging economies, filling a gap in current communication scholarship. While rhetorical approaches have been discussed broadly [13], very few studies focus specifically on sustainability communication in relation to circular economy and tourism. Second, the findings contribute to the field of sustainability management by demonstrating how corporate narratives function not only as information but as persuasive constructs that can reinforce or undermine stakeholder trust and engagement [10]. Third, this study offers practical implications for policymakers, corporate communicators, and tourism stakeholders on crafting more credible and transparent sustainability reports that authentically support circular economy and sustainable tourism implementation.

By situating Aristotelian rhetoric within the sustainability reporting context, this research provides a nuanced understanding of how companies like Sidomuncul use linguistic and narrative strategies to legitimize their sustainability commitments, bridging the conceptual gap between rhetoric theory and sustainability practice in corporate reporting [1].

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Text Analysis and Content Analysis in Sustainability Reporting

Qualitative text analysis, particularly content analysis, has become a widely accepted methodological approach in sustainability reporting research. Content analysis involves the systematic categorization and coding of text in corporate communication to identify themes, patterns, and meanings embedded within the narratives [14]. This method is frequently used to assess the completeness and quality of sustainability disclosures by comparing text against established frameworks such as the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) and other reporting standards [2].

Recent studies emphasize the value of qualitative text analysis in capturing not just the presence of sustainability related terms but the deeper meanings behind narratives, including persuasive strategies or omissions that may guide stakeholder perception [4]. Furthermore, text analysis allows researchers to systematically compare sustainability reports across companies or sectors to understand how different reporting practices reflect variations in transparency and accountability [5].

Beyond traditional content analysis, advanced research in sustainability reporting highlights the need to differentiate between descriptive reporting and strategic narrative framing [8]. This is essential because corporate reports can shift stakeholder attention through selective presentation of data and emotive language, potentially influencing audiences more than factual substance [12].

2.2 Aristotelian Rhetoric in Communication Research

Classical rhetorical theory traces back to Aristotle's ethos, logos, and pathos three artistic proofs that are fundamental in evaluating persuasive messages [15]. Ethos refers to the communicator's credibility and ethical standing; logos relates to logical evidence and transparency; and pathos captures emotional appeal. Although this theory originates from ancient rhetorical

discourse, its relevance persists in contemporary communication research, especially for analyzing persuasive texts such as sustainability reports [11].

Studies on rhetoric confirm that ethos, logos, and pathos remain crucial for effective communication in diverse contexts ranging from public speeches to digital media and corporate narratives [10]. Research on rhetorical practices in corporate sustainability reports has demonstrated that companies strategically leverage these appeals to shape stakeholder perceptions and legitimize sustainability claims [16].

For instance, qualitative analyses show that logos often appears in the form of performance metrics, certifications, and references to standards**,** while ethos may manifest through third-party validations or compliance indicators [3]. Pathos typically involves emotive stories of community impact or environmental stewardship that emotionally engage audiences. Studies also highlight that imbalance among these appeals especially overreliance on ethos or pathos without strong logos could lead to scepticism or accusations of greenwashing [13]

3. METHOD

3.1 Research Design

This study employs a qualitative text analysis design to examine how Aristotelian rhetorical strategies are embedded in Sidomuncul's 2024 Sustainability Report and how they support the discourse on circular economy and sustainable tourism development in Indonesia [9]. Text analysis is considered suitable because sustainability reports consist primarily of textual narratives, performance statements, and rhetorical constructions that require interpretation beyond mere quantitative counting [17]. The analysis focuses on identifying specific instances of ethos (credibility), logos (logical appeal), and pathos (emotional appeal) within the report text based on explicit wording and contextual meaning [6].

Text analysis in sustainability reporting has been extensively used to evaluate narrative quality, transparency, and persuasive content [18]. This methodology draws on content analysis principles, where text segments are systematically coded and interpreted to derive meanings aligned with theoretical constructs [17]. Within this framework, Aristotelian rhetorical theory offers a robust structure for understanding how companies persuade stakeholders through language, beyond simply reporting data [19].

3.2 Data Source and Text Search Procedure

The primary data source is the PDF version of the Sidomuncul 2024 Sustainability Report made available publicly by the company. The text analysis process involves:

a. Text extraction and navigation: The PDF report is opened electronically, and a systematic search approach is adopted to locate relevant terms and phrases across the document.
b. Keyword search using ctrl+F: Several keywords are identified prior to searching, such as "desa wisata," "petani lokal," "community," "agrotourism," "conservation," "circular economy," and "infrastructure." Each occurrence of these terms is located using the search function (ctrl+F) and examined in context.
c. Contextual interpretation: After identifying keywords, the surrounding text is read carefully, understood, and interpreted using Aristotelian rhetorical theory. The analyst notes whether the usage of the term or phrase implies ethos, logos, or pathos in the narrative and whether it reflects evidence, credibility, or emotional appeal associated with sustainable practices [4].

The focus is not solely on the presence of keywords but on how they construct arguments, evidence, and persuasive reasoning within the report [20]. For example, statements with specific data, metrics, or certifications are coded as logos, while references to stakeholder values, ethics, or community sentiments may be coded as ethos or pathos depending on context.

3.3 Analytical Framework

The analysis adopts a deductive coding scheme [21] guided by the Aristotelian rhetorical model:

a. Ethos: Indicates credibility, character, and trustworthiness. In sustainability reports, ethos is often expressed through references to standards (e.g., ISO certifications), third party acknowledgments (e.g., PROPER rating), and governance structures that signal accountability [22].
b. Logos: Refers to logical evidence, factual data, or quantitative information that supports claims. In sustainability reporting, logos is typically represented through performance indicators, empirical results, CO_2 emission data, renewable energy percentages, and audited figures [23].
c. Pathos: Represents emotional appeal and value aden language aimed at stakeholder engagement. Pathos in reporting may appear in narratives on community wellbeing, employee empowerment, or testimonials that evoke affective responses [14].

The coding process involves categorizing each relevant text unit into one of the three Aristotelian categories, followed by interpretative analysis to explain how the appeal functions within the sustainability narrative and contributes to the company's overall rhetorical positioning [4].

3.4 Trustworthiness and Rigor of the Study

To ensure analytical rigor, the following steps are taken:

a. Credibility refers to the accuracy and plausibility of interpretations derived from the text. In this study, credibility is achieved through systematic and repeated reading of the Sustainability Report. Each keyword identified using the ctrl+F search function is not directly categorized; rather, the surrounding paragraphs are carefully examined to understand their contextual meaning before assigning them to ethos, logos, or pathos. This contextual interpretation minimizes superficial coding and strengthens interpretative depth [8]

b. Documentation of coding rules: Clear definitions for ethos, logos, and pathos categories are written prior to analysis to reduce ambiguity [24].
c. The confirmability aspect was addressed by strictly basing interpretations between the three authors on textual evidence found in the reports. Researchers avoided speculative assumptions by ensuring that each rhetorical classification was supported by direct quotations from the documents. This approach reduced researcher bias and strengthened objectivity in qualitative interpretation. [21].
d. Transferability is achieved by providing a detailed description of the research design, keyword selection process, coding framework, and analytical procedures. By transparently explaining how the PDF document was searched (using ctrl+F), how excerpts were identified, and how meanings were interpreted based on Aristotelian theory, future researchers can replicate or adapt this method to analyze other sustainability reports in different industries or national contexts [20].

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Rhetorical Architecture of Sustainability Communication

This study investigates the persuasive style developed by PT Sidomuncul in its 2024 Sustainability Report to support circular economy practices and sustainable tourism development. The findings reveal that the company constructs a balanced Aristotelian rhetorical configuration, integrating ethos (credibility), logos (evidence-based reasoning), and pathos (community-centered emotional engagement).

Recent scholarship emphasizes that sustainability reports are not neutral technical documents but persuasive narratives that shape stakeholder perception and legitimacy [22]. In this sense, Sidomuncul's report can be understood as a strategic rhetorical artifact that negotiates between corporate accountability and socio-ecological transformation.

The dialectical tension between corporate sustainability claims and normative expectations of transparency and accountability is frequently discussed in ESG communication literature [15]. Many companies are criticized for symbolic disclosure or greenwashing, where rhetorical sophistication exceeds operational substance [10]. Against this theoretical backdrop, Sidomuncul's persuasive style demonstrates a structured attempt to align discourse with measurable action [25].

4.2 Ethos: Institutional Credibility and Structural Commitment

Ethos emerges strongly through infrastructural and institutional interventions in villages surrounding the factory. Infrastructure development in Diwak, Ngempon, Karangjati, and Bergas Kidul signals long-term embeddedness rather than episodic CSR.

Legitimacy theory suggests that corporations maintain social approval by aligning operations with societal values [13]. However, legitimacy can be symbolic if unsupported by structural investment. In Sidomuncul's case, infrastructure development functions rhetorically as materialized credibility.

Similarly, the designation of Sambirata as a "Spice Village" situates the company within Indonesia's herbal biodiversity identity. This aligns with studies arguing that sustainability rhetoric becomes persuasive when corporate identity is coherently tied to ecological heritage [26]. The ethos appeal thus strengthens trust by demonstrating continuity between corporate history and community development [5].

Unlike firms that rely solely on certification references to signal credibility [5], Sidomuncul extends ethos into territorial development. This territorial embedding supports what Higgins et al. in [6] describe as "place-based corporate legitimacy.".

4.3 Logos: Rationalization of Circular Economy Practices

Logos is particularly evident in the conversion of unused dried spices into biomass energy in Sambirata Village. Circular economy literature emphasizes resource efficiency, waste valorization, and regenerative loops [27]. Sidomuncul's biomass initiative reflects these principles operationally rather than rhetorically.

Empirical ESG studies argue that quantitative disclosure enhances credibility and reduces greenwashing suspicion [28]. The detailed description of waste-to-energy systems and TPS3R waste management initiatives demonstrates measurable implementation.

Furthermore, biodiversity conservation 269 plant species and 146 animal species adds empirical depth. According to Bini et al. in [29], biodiversity metrics in corporate reporting signify ecological accountability when presented transparently. The numerical specificity strengthens logos by anchoring claims in observable evidence.

This approach contrasts with reports criticized for vague environmental statements lacking metrics [30]. Thus, Sidomuncul's logos appeal reduces the rhetorical–operational gap frequently identified in sustainability communication research [11].

4.4 Pathos: Emotional Engagement and Community Empowerment

Pathos appears prominently in tourism village narratives and women empowerment programs. Sustainable tourism research emphasizes emotional attachment, local participation, and identity formation as key factors in long-term viability [31] [32]

The Diwak Tourism Village and Bergas Kidul avocado agrotourism initiatives frame tourism as experiential and community driven [9]. Rather than presenting tourism as commodification, the narrative highlights pride, resilience, and intergenerational sustainability [33].

Emotional resonance strengthens stakeholder engagement, as sustainability communication scholars argue that affective narratives foster deeper identification than purely technical reporting [34].

The "Mbok Jajan" women microenterprise program exemplifies a dual rhetorical strategy. The empowerment narrative (pathos) evokes solidarity and gender equity values, while measurable income growth (logos) substantiates impact. This hybridization aligns with findings by Testa et al. in [35], who argue that emotional storytelling gains legitimacy when reinforced by empirical indicators.

4.5 Integrated Persuasive Architecture

The most significant finding is the integration of rhetorical modes. Sidomuncul does not rely solely on emotional storytelling nor exclusively on data. Instead, it balances credibility, evidence, and empathy.

This triadic equilibrium reflects what Hahn and Kühnen (2021) in [36] describe as "substantive sustainability communication," where rhetoric and operational practice converge. The biomass energy initiative (logos) is embedded within village development (ethos) and community empowerment (pathos).

Circular economy practices are thus framed not only as technical systems but as social transformation processes. This integrated persuasion strengthens the argument that sustainability is systemic rather than fragmented [27].

4.6 Circular Economy as Rhetorical Strategy

Circular economy and sustainable tourism intersect in the report through agro-tourism, biodiversity conservation, and local sourcing programs. According to Geissdoerfer et al. (2020) in , circular economy becomes transformative when linked to socio-economic regeneration. Sidomuncul's initiatives reflect this integration.

Tourism villages benefit from waste management systems (TPS3R), renewable energy, biodiversity conservation, and local entrepreneurship. This holistic narrative aligns with Rasoolimanesh et al. (2023) in [37], who argue that sustainable tourism requires environmental integrity, social participation, and economic inclusivity.

4.7 Sustainable Tourism as Socio-Economic Regeneration

Tourism development around the factory area is framed as community revitalization rather than commercialization [38]. Infrastructure development (ethos), biodiversity conservation (logos), and experiential village tourism (pathos) collectively construct a regenerative tourism model.

This model aligns with sustainable tourism principles:

- Environmental protection
- Community participation
- Local economic retention

The persuasive style suggests that tourism is embedded within ecological and social ecosystems, not imposed externally.

5. CONCLUSIONS

PT Sidomuncul's 2024 Sustainability Report reflects a persuasive architecture that moves beyond declarative sustainability claims. The integration of structural development, renewable energy practices, biodiversity conservation, women empowerment, and agro-tourism initiatives demonstrates a rhetoric grounded in operational substance.

In Aristotelian terms, the company achieves persuasive equilibrium: credibility legitimizes claims, evidence substantiates transformation, and emotional engagement sustains stakeholder connection.

Thus, the report exemplifies how corporate sustainability narratives can meaningfully support circular economy systems and sustainable tourism development within local communities.Explaining the conclusions of the research that has been done and written in the research paper. It shouldn't be written by points, only a paragraph will be approved.

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