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Storytelling Analysis: Building a Sustainable Ecotourism Brand

(Study "Ecology to Reborn Campaign" for a Green & Healthy Indonesia)

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ABSTRACT

This discussion analyzes the role of tourism communication in constructing sustainable ecotourism branding as a manifestation of the ecological campaign towards the vision of "Green and Healthy Indonesia." The phenomenon of environmental degradation due to mass tourism demands a shift in communication paradigm from merely promoting visual aesthetics to persuasive and educational sustainability narratives. Through a strategic review, this study identifies the integration of ecological values into destination identities to mitigate the negative impacts of the industry while raising environmental awareness. This study shows that women in the Indonesian Women's Empowerment Forum are the main determinants of the success of green communication. As key communicators, women transform conservation messages into authentic experiences through storytelling techniques and curating environmentally friendly local products. The "Green and Healthy Indonesia" branding serves not only as a marketing instrument but also as a public literacy medium that encourages responsible traveler behavior. The active involvement of women in the ecotourism supply chain, such as zero-waste practices and environmentally empathetic accommodations, strengthens the transmission of ecological narratives organically at the grassroots level.

Keywords: *Tourism Communication, Ecotourism Branding, Ecology Campaign, Women Empowerment, Sustainability.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's tourism landscape currently stands at a troubling crossroads. While the industry serves as the backbone of the economy, it is also suffering from what has been termed "Sick Tourism," a condition in which natural beauty begins to wither under the weight of overtourism and piles of plastic waste. Communicologically, this ecological crisis reflects a profound communication crisis. As explained in Ecological Communication Theory [1], environmental damage often fails to resonate with society because nature lacks the language to protest directly; it is only recognized as a problem if the narrative of the damage is successfully translated into the language of social systems such as economics or law [1]. Therefore, sustainable ecotourism branding exists not merely as a promotional tool, but as a vital effort to articulate the interests of nature through a narrative that is understandable and accepted by the wider public.

This effort requires a branding strategy that not only touches on visual aspects, but also involves Visual Rhetoric Theory to change the way tourists perceive a destination [2]. By carrying the pillars of Authentic, Healthy, and Sustainable, ecological branding seeks to build the perception that a trip is no longer about consumption, but about wellness or mental and physical health that aligns with sustainability. In line with findings in the Indonesian Tourism Journal, a consistent "green" narrative in digital media can create an emotional bond between tourists and destinations, so that conservation is no longer seen as a burden [2]. This phenomenon is reinforced by the results of recent research showing that the quality of digital tourism content and the credibility of information providers are crucial in building tourists' self-identification with sustainable destinations [3].

Amidst these efforts for change, women have emerged as a central figure, referred to as the "Heart of Environmental Sustainability." Through the lens of Ecofeminist Theory, the relationship between women and nature is understood as an organic, nurturing relationship women possess a more ethical communicative sensitivity in preserving ecosystems

compared to traditional approaches that tend to be exploitative [4]. At the local level, women, through empowerment forums, act as effective drivers of Small Group Communication to instill conscious tourism values starting from the smallest circle, namely the family [5]. The power of women's voices is able to encourage the creation of more pro-environmental village policies, while also giving birth to innovations in sustainable local products.

This transformational success story can be seen in the Nglanggeran Tourism Village in Yogyakarta. Their journey from a damaged mining area to a world-class ecotourism destination is a clear demonstration of the success of participatory Development Communication Theory [13]. There, the narrative of an ancient volcano and the women's success in managing "Griya Cokelat" demonstrate that when the community is actively involved in communication, economic prosperity and nature conservation can go hand in hand. This success was also recognized by the UNWTO (2021) report as a global standard for developing tourism based on the strength of communities and local narratives [15].

Entering the digital era, this narrative is strengthened through the Storytelling for the Earth strategy on various social media platforms. Based on Narrative Paradigm Theory, humans are essentially storytellers, more easily moved by stories with emotional coherence than mere numerical data (Fisher, 1987). Social media has now become a space where authentic tourist experiences are captured and widely shared. This phenomenon creates what is known as User-Generated Content (UGC) or Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WoM), which has been shown to significantly influence both travel intentions and positive emotions [3]. Through tourists' posts about environmentally friendly activities, they transform into voluntary "environmental ambassadors" [1]. This organic communication has a much stronger influence because it is based on trust between users and a strong self-identification with sustainable values [3].

In closing, building a green and healthy Indonesia requires synergy between intelligent branding strategies, the power of digital media, and the empowerment of female communicators. According to the Sustainable Tourism Village Guidelines from the Indonesian Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy [6], the future sustainability of Indonesian tourism lies in our ability to communicate the harmony between nature, people, and prosperity in a single, honest and transparent narrative. Through a solid communication approach, the vision of a Green Indonesia is no longer just a dream on paper, but a concrete movement driven by collective awareness from households to national policy.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Ecological Communication Theory

From a communication perspective, the ecological crisis is understood as a systemic communication crisis in which nature lacks the language to protest directly. According to [7], environmental damage will only be considered a social problem if the narrative is successfully translated into the language of social systems such as economics or law. Therefore, ecotourism branding serves as a vital effort to articulate the interests of nature through narratives that are understandable to the wider public.

2.2. Narrative Paradigm and Digital Storytelling

Humans are inherently storytelling creatures (homo narrans), more easily moved by stories with emotional coherence than by mere numerical data. The Storytelling for Earth strategy on social media platforms amplifies conservation narratives through widely shared, authentic experiences. This narrative approach unites research findings through the integration of nature as a message, destination brand identity, and public participation in one inspiring storyline.

2.3. User-Generated Content (UGC) and Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WoM)

The digital world creates a space where authentic tourist experiences can be captured and shared through User-Generated Content (UGC) and Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WoM). This phenomenon significantly influences travel intentions and evokes positive emotions in travelers. Tourists who post about eco-friendly activities transform into voluntary "eco-ambassadors," where this organic communication has a powerful impact based on trust between users.

2.4. Credibility and Quality of Digital Tourism Content

The effectiveness of tourism communication depends heavily on the credibility of the information provider and the quality of the content presented in digital media. According to findings by Widaningsih & Putranto (2025), these two factors are crucial in building tourists' self-identification with sustainable destinations. Ecological campaigns that leverage the credibility of local narratives can trigger tourists' self-identification with conservation values on a massive scale across geographic boundaries.

2.5. Social Media as a Communication Channel

In David K. Berlo's communication model (SMCR), ecological campaigns in digital media play a vital role as channels that deliver brand messages from the source to consumers. Social media functions as an "accelerator medium" that ensures the massive circulation of green development messages to the wider community. The choice of digital channel determines the extent to which the message can stimulate the audience's five senses through authentic experiences.

2.6. Sustainability as an Impact of Communication

Sustainability is not just a technical term, but rather an ethical imperative and a promise for the future that guarantees the rights of future generations. Using Harold Lasswell's model, the primary focus is on the "With What Effect" element, where green

communication strategies aim to create ecological resilience and economic sovereignty. Sustainability serves as the ultimate quality standard, ensuring local identity is maintained through accountable and transparent management.

3. METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach based on an interpretive paradigm to analyze ecological communication strategies in the development of a green and healthy Indonesia. Theoretically, the choice of this descriptive qualitative method refers to the view of Sugiyono [8], who stated that this method is used to study natural objects where the researcher acts as a key instrument, with the aim of providing a clear and detailed picture of the phenomenon being studied without statistical generalization. The emphasis on descriptive aspects is in line with the thinking of Moleong [9], who defines qualitative research as an effort to understand phenomena holistically, including the perceptions, motivations, and actions of subjects through in-depth verbal descriptions. The use of this method allows researchers to capture the complex realities of ecological campaigns that touch not only economic aspects, but also sociocultural and psychological aspects.

The data collection method was carried out through two main complementary techniques. First, through In-depth Interviews, researchers collected primary data from key informants directly involved in the Women's Empowerment Forum and ecotourism managers to gain authentic perspectives on communication practices in the field. Empirically, these interviews involved representatives from eco-green business units and the managers of Nglanggeran Tourism Village to verify how conservation narratives are transmitted to tourists. Second, researchers conducted Content Analysis through literature studies and digital content searches. This content analysis technique refers to the Krippendorff framework [10], in which researchers make valid inferences on texts and policy documents to understand how sustainability messages are constructed visually and narratively in the "Green and Healthy Indonesia" campaign. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation, comparing government policy data with the reality of organic communication (UGC) found on social media.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

An analysis of the development vision of "Green and Healthy Indonesia" reveals an ontological paradigm shift regarding the position of ecology within contemporary human social systems. The essence of this evolving thinking suggests that nature can no longer be viewed reductionistically as a separate external entity, but rather must be recognized as the sole foundation and existential support for all living systems, providing absolute intrinsic and extrinsic benefits. In the discourse of development communication, nature has transformed from a mere static backdrop into a core message element that demands in-depth decodability by all stakeholders. This aligns with Niklas Luhmann's [12] thinking in Ecological Communication, which states that social systems must be able to translate environmental disturbances into the language of communication in order to respond effectively to ecological crises. Messages about resilience and homeostasis transmitted by nature are the primary determinants of human quality of life. Theoretically, this understanding serves as a catalyst for a paradigm shift in tourism from an exploitation model to a conservation movement that recognizes the absolute interdependence between humans and ecosystems, where failure to protect nature is seen as a systemic communication failure that results in a systematic decline in well-being.

This transformation then brings nature to a more dynamic metafunction, namely as an active communication medium (experiential media). In the context of ecotourism, ecological spaces are no longer merely destinations, but rather instructional media capable of transmitting environmental ethical values with a retention rate that exceeds conventional media channels. The subject's physical involvement in vegetation restoration activities allows for a direct assimilation of sensory experiences. Referring to the UNWTO [13] report on Best Tourism Villages, authentic experiences in nature prove to be the most honest communication channel, where the pristine environment becomes a visual narrative that cannot be manipulated by sectoral interests. As a medium, nature has a unique ability to eliminate distortions in conservation messages because individuals interact directly with biological reality. The empirically perceived authenticity of the ecosystem serves as proof of the validity of the ecological campaign, thereby triggering active public participation through sensory connections that are permanent in collective memory.

In line with nature's function as a communication medium, sustainable ecotourism's brand construction is positioned as a strategic marketing message to drive the people's economy inclusively. This strategy integrates the "Authentic" and "Healthy" pillars into its brand identity to reframe the meaning of travel from hedonistic consumption to investment in holistic wellness. Based on the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy's Sustainable Tourism Village Guidelines [8], the integration of health values and local authenticity in branding has proven effective in building market trust, which can practically absorb local production and create a dignified work ecosystem. This marketing message is designed as an instrument to synergize the accumulation of economic capital with environmental protection within the grand narrative of national development. The ecotourism brand serves as a bridge that transforms ecological potential into tangible economic value that can be felt by grassroots communities through the empowerment of the creative economy sector.

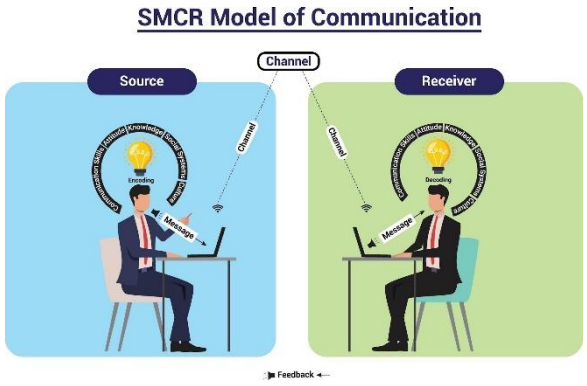
In modern discourse, ecological campaigns emerge as tools or acceleration media tools that ensure an efficient transition toward a greener vision for Indonesia. These campaigns serve as strategic bridging

infrastructure that supports the functional connection between the pillars of nature as a life support, the role of nature as a medium, and the power of tourism brands as economic drivers. As Widaningsih & Putranto [14] noted in their research on digital tourism communication, campaigns that leverage the credibility of local narratives and the quality of digital content can trigger tourists' massive self-identification with conservation values across geographic boundaries. Ecological campaigns serve to reduce the semantic barrier between technical government policies and the practical awareness of the wider public, ensuring that messages about the future of the environment become mass movements driven by a collective awareness of the importance of maintaining biosphere stability.

As the teleological conclusion of this entire series of communication and development processes, the concept of sustainability emerges as the primary purpose that binds the entire framework of thought. Sustainability is no longer merely a technical nomenclature, but rather an ethical imperative and a promise for the future that ensures that current resource utilization does not negate the fundamental rights of future generations. From this perspective, sustainability becomes the final quality standard that ensures local identity is maintained through accountable and transparent natural management. The primary function of sustainability is to protect the existence of future generations so that they can continue to live in a healthy, independent, and dignified ecosystem. This is the meeting point where all messages, media, brands, and campaigns merge into one grand teleology (grand purpose) for the future ecological resilience and economic sovereignty of the Indonesian nation.

4.1. Brand Construction as a Message

In the discourse of sustainable ecotourism, a brand is no longer understood narrowly as a visual identity, logo, or simply a physical product differentiator. Communicologically, a brand is a complex construct of meaning that functions as the primary message in the information exchange process between a destination and its audience. This phenomenon can be analyzed in depth through David K. Berlo's communication model (SMCR), which emphasizes four key elements: Source, Message, Channel, and Receiver.



In Berlo's framework, a brand represents the Message element, which includes the content, message structure, and message treatment sent by destination managers to the public. Communication science views branding as a systematic effort to communicate a destination's unique identity in order to create differentiation amidst intense market competition. Through the Message element in Berlo's theory, a brand acts as a bridge that transforms the physical potential of the environment into symbolic values that can be understood and accepted by the audience (Receiver).

This discussion finds that the construction of a tourism brand in sustainable ecotourism is positioned as a strategic marketing message to drive the people's economy in an inclusive manner. The treatment of messages in the ecotourism brand, especially the "Authentic" and "Healthy" pillars, aims to reframe the meaning of travel, from mere consumption to a form of investment in holistic wellness. Thus, the brand becomes a communication entity that unites the vision of conservation with consumer expectations, ensuring that every signal sent has a consistent meaning and builds market trust (brand trust).

4.2. Ecology: Between Environmental Potential and the Ethics of Responsible Tourism

Ecology is generally defined as the study of the complex interactions between living organisms and their environment. However, in the context of tourism development, ecology is positioned as a strategic asset that offers the potential for the environment to become a beautiful, friendly, and educational tourist destination. As revealed in research findings, nature can no longer be viewed reductionistically as a separate external entity, but rather is recognized as the sole foundation and existential support for all life systems.

Ecology provides both intrinsic and extrinsic benefits to humans, making it a prime prospect sought by modern travelers who are beginning to avoid the burdens of overtourism. However, this discussion provides a critical note that nature is not simply an economic commodity to be exploited without limits and responsibility. The problem of "Sick Tourism," characterized by piles of plastic waste and the destruction of natural beauty, is a real consequence when ecology is viewed solely as a commercial commodity.

Theoretically, the failure to protect nature is a failure of systemic communication. As explained in Ecological Communication Theory, nature lacks a human language for direct protest; it is only considered a problem if the narrative of its destruction is successfully translated into the language of social systems such as economics or law. Therefore, the potential of ecology must be accompanied by a conservation ethic that recognizes the absolute interdependence between humans and ecosystems. Placing ecology as a "core message element" means communicating nature's resilience as a primary determinant of human quality of life, not simply an object of consumption.

4.3. Campaign as a Marketing Channel

In the realm of strategic marketing, a campaign is defined as a series of planned communication activities to achieve specific objectives, particularly in enhancing brand image and awareness. When linked back to Berlo's communication model (SMCR), a campaign occupies a vital position as a Channel or connecting medium that delivers brand messages from the source to the target consumer (Receiver).



The research identified that the ecological campaign emerged as a "tool" or "accelerator media tool." As a channel, the campaign ensures that green development messages not only stop at the government policy level but are widely circulated to the wider community. The effectiveness of this channel depends heavily on the credibility of the narrative and the quality of the content used, particularly on digital media platforms.

The campaign supports the functional connection between nature's pillars as life-supporting elements and its role as an active communication medium. Through appropriate campaign channels, the semantic barrier between technical government policies and public awareness can be reduced. Within Berlo's framework, the choice of channels, both digital media and visual narratives, determines the extent to which the message can stimulate the audience's five senses through authentic experiences, thereby fostering tourists' self-identification with conservation values.

4.4. Sustainability: Future Impacts in Business Communication Perspective

From a business communication perspective, sustainability is defined as the strategic ability to maintain long-term value and benefits through accountable and transparent stakeholder management. This concept is not merely a technical nomenclature, but rather an ethical imperative and a promise for the future. The impact of sustainability can be analyzed using Harold Lasswell's classic communication model, which dissects the communication process through five key questions: Who, Says What, In Which Channel, To Whom, and With What Effect.

The main focus of this discussion lies in the "With What Effect" element. The research results show that sustainability emerges as the "main purpose" that ties together the entire framework. The expected effect of this entire communication strategy is to maintain ecological resilience and the nation's economic sovereignty in the future.

In business communications, sustainability serves as a final quality standard that ensures local identity is maintained through accountable management. Its primary function is to protect the existence of future generations so they can continue to live in a healthy, independent, and dignified ecosystem. In Lasswell's model, the effect of this green communication is the creation of a society that is not only economically savvy but also possesses a collective awareness to maintain biosphere stability for an honest and transparent future.

4.5. Storytelling as an Integration of Research Results

As a closing section of this discussion, the concept of Storytelling for Earth is used as an integrative tool to synthesize all research findings. Based on the Narrative Paradigm, humans are inherently storytellers, more easily moved by stories with emotional coherence than by mere numerical data.

The concept of storytelling unites research findings through the following dimensions:

- Integrating Nature as a Message and a Medium: Through storytelling, authentic experiences in ecological spaces (such as vegetation restoration) transform from mere physical activities into honest channels of communication. True stories of physical interactions with nature provide evidence of the validity of ecological campaigns.
- Integrating Tourism and Economic Brands: Storytelling provides coherence to a destination's brand identity. Transformation success stories like those in Nglanggeran Tourism Village integrate the geological narrative of an ancient volcano with the community's economic success through local products like "Griya Cokelat," proving that conservation and well-being can go hand in hand in one inspiring story.
- Integrating Women's Roles as Communicators: Narratives of women's compassion and nurturing of nature are integrated into small group communication strategies. This creates a more ethical communication bridge for instilling sustainability values from the family level to pro-environmental village policies.
- Campaign Integration and Public Participation: The use of User-Generated Content (UGC) on social media allows travelers to share their own eco-friendly experiences. These organic stories strengthen public perception of the official campaign, transforming travelers into voluntary environmental ambassadors through user-to-user trust.

Theoretically, the connection between Berlo's SMCR Model (for the brand message transmission process) and the Lasswell Model (for measuring future sustainability impacts) forms a solid ecological communication ecosystem. With storytelling as a means of integration, all these elements merge into one Grand Purpose. Building a green and healthy Indonesia is no longer just a dream on paper, but a real movement driven by collective awareness from households to national policies, communicated in one honest, transparent, and sustainable narrative.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The journey toward the vision of a "Green and Healthy Indonesia" is not simply a technical transformation of the tourism industry, but rather a profound communication movement to reposition nature as the sole supporter of human life. Through this approach, nature is no longer viewed as a static backdrop, but rather as a core message element that actively speaks through its beauty and sustainability. The success of this strategy depends heavily on the actors' ability to shift public perception of a destination, where the tourism brand is no longer merely a promotional tool, but rather a promise of holistic health and authentic experiences offered to tourists.

These messages about environmental preservation are then channeled through various strategic campaigns that serve as a bridge connecting government policies with the practical awareness of the wider public. In this process, engaging the five senses and direct experience in open spaces serve as the most honest instructional medium, capable of eliminating distorted information about the importance of conservation. When tourists interact directly with preserved biological realities, a strong emotional bond emerges that then encourages active participation in maintaining ecosystem stability.

Ultimately, this entire communication process culminates in one overarching goal: sustainability. The concept of sustainability emerges as a final quality standard, ensuring that current economic prosperity does not compromise the rights of future generations. Through the power of storytelling integrated into every aspect, the findings of this study demonstrate that the success of national development lies in the alignment between protecting the earth's heritage and economic prosperity. This is the intersection where honest and transparent narratives can transform Indonesian tourism into a more dignified, independent, and sustainable destination across time.

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