The Influence of Storytelling Strategies, Customer Engagement, and Visual Content on Food Agritourism Sustainability: A Study of Wondis Chocolate, Kulon Progo

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ABSTRACT

Sustainable tourism has become a strategic approach addressing complex ecological, social, and economic challenges in the post-pandemic era. Food agritourism is recognized as a strategic vehicle for creating sustainable value creation aligned with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This study aims to analyze the influence of storytelling strategies, customer engagement, and visual content on food agritourism sustainability at Wondis Chocolate, Kulon Progo. The research employed a quantitative approach with explanatory design involving 100 tourist respondents selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using Likert scale questionnaires and analyzed through multiple linear regression. Results indicate that storytelling strategies, customer engagement, and visual content have positive and significant effects on food agritourism sustainability, both partially and simultaneously. Visual content demonstrates the strongest influence, followed by customer engagement and storytelling. This research contributes theoretically to destination marketing theory development and provides practical recommendations for optimizing sustainable agritourism marketing strategies.

Keywords – Customer Engagement, Food Agritourism, Storytelling, Sustainability, Visual Content

I INTRODUCTION

Global tourism dynamics experienced unprecedented transformation following the COVID-19 pandemic, with travelers demonstrating heightened preference for authentic, sustainability-oriented experiences. The World Tourism Organization documented substantial shifts toward nature-based tourism, local culinary exploration, and educational travel experiences that emphasize environmental consciousness (UNWTO, 2023).

Indonesia's tourism sector exemplifies this recovery pattern. Statistics Indonesia (Badan Pusat Statistik) reported 1.415 million foreign tourist arrivals in June 2025, an 18.2 percent increase compared with June 2024. Domestic tourism recorded 508.67 million trips during January–May 2025, up 16.1 percent from the same period in 2024. These figures indicate concurrent improvements in inbound and domestic travel volumes (BPS, 2025).

Yogyakarta's Special Region shows similar momentum. In Kulon Progo, the official Satu Data portal records an increase in registered tourist objects from 57 (2021) to 69 (2024). Within Samigaluh, Nglinggo Tea Plantation is identified as a core agritourism asset in recent studies, while Wondis Chocolate managed by KWT Pawon Gendis illustrates food-based agritourism aligned with sustainability-oriented (Kulon Progo, n.d; Fauziyyah & Wicaksono, 2023; Dinas Pertanian dan Ketahanan Pangan DIY, 2023).

Wondis Chocolate represents exemplary community-managed agritourism, operated by Women Farmers Group (KWT) Pawon Gendis since 2019. The destination integrates educational tourism through its signature "From Bean to Bar" program, allowing visitors direct participation in cocoa processing from cultivation through final product creation. The venture implements zero waste agriculture principles, converting cocoa byproducts into

organic fertilizers and natural coloring materials (Akhsan, 2023; Novianti et al., 2022).

Product innovation demonstrates market viability alongside sustainability commitments. Offerings include pegagan chocolate, 80% dark chocolate, and various processed cocoa products that received positive sensory evaluations from consumer testing programs. These innovations reflect successful integration of traditional agricultural practices with contemporary tourism market demands.

Despite positive performance indicators, three strategic challenges emerged through preliminary field observations. First, authentic narratives surrounding traditional cocoa processing and community development remain inadequately systematized for broader audience engagement. Second, tourist interactions primarily depend on physical visitation, with digital engagement platforms underutilized for sustained relationship building. Third, visual content production lacks consistency in communicating the destination's unique sustainable agritourism identity across marketing channels.

Existing research establishes storytelling's capacity for destination image enhancement and return visit encouragement (Jo et al., 2022). Customer engagement correlates positively with tourist loyalty development (Chen et al., 2022), while compelling visual content amplifies digital destination exposure (Aboalganam et al., 2025). However, prior investigations predominantly examine general tourist destinations rather than community-based food agritourism contexts, creating substantial research gaps.

This investigation addresses these gaps by analyzing how storytelling strategies, customer engagement, and visual content collectively influence sustainable food agritourism development at Wondis Chocolate. The study contributes to destination marketing theory advancement while providing actionable recommendations for agritourism practitioners seeking sustainable development strategies.

II LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Sustainable Tourism Framework

Contemporary sustainable tourism frameworks emphasize balanced development across economic, environmental, and social dimensions. The World Tourism Organization defines sustainable tourism as practices meeting present visitor needs without compromising future generations' capacity for equivalent experiences (UNWTO, 2023). This approach necessitates natural resource preservation, cultural heritage respect, and equitable benefit distribution among local communities.

Sustainable Development Goals integration provides structured implementation guidelines, particularly SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), and SDG 15 (Life on Land). Post-pandemic tourism recovery demonstrates accelerated adoption of sustainable practices, with visitors increasingly seeking authentic experiences emphasizing local culture and environmental stewardship (Nations, 2023).

B. Agritourism Characteristics

Food agritourism constitutes agriculture-based tourism delivering authentic experiences through direct participation in agricultural activities, educational programs, and local product consumption. This tourism form connects agricultural-tourism value chains while promoting income diversification, rural employment expansion, traditional knowledge preservation, and responsible production practices (Alexandra & Verduga, 2024).

Bhatta et al. (2025) developed comprehensive SDG indicator frameworks for agritourism evaluation, encompassing 67 specific metrics covering profit enhancement, resource conservation, and climate mitigation strategies. Their analysis reveals potential sustainability trade-offs, particularly regarding resource utilization pressures when carrying capacity management proves inadequate (Grillini et al., 2023).

Community-based agritourism models demonstrate particular relevance for sustainable development objectives. Sosa et al. (2021) propose four-dimensional sustainability

assessment frameworks encompassing socio-cultural preservation, environmental protection, economic development, and visitor experience enhancement.

C. Storytelling Marketing

Tourism storytelling employs narrative techniques for establishing emotional connections and reinforcing destination brand identity. Moscardo (2020) documents the emergence of "story turn" phenomena in contemporary tourism, driven by experience economy dynamics, social media proliferation, and evolving traveler preferences toward meaningful engagement.

Li et al. (2024) identify four primary storytelling research domains within tourism contexts: destination marketing enhancement, visitor experience enrichment, cultural preservation promotion, and digital narrative development. These applications demonstrate strong correlations with sustainable development objectives through authentic local narrative integration.

Effective tourism storytelling requires authentic narrative foundations rooted in genuine local experiences and cultural contexts. Digital platform integration enables broader narrative dissemination while maintaining authenticity through community involvement in content creation processes (Duarte & Soeiro, 2025).

D. Customer Engagement Theory

Customer Engagement represents voluntary resource investment - cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and social - by tourists during destination interactions (Hollebeek et al., 2019). This conceptualization transcends passive consumption toward active participation in value co-creation processes between tourists, destinations, and local communities.

Rather et al. (2019) demonstrate how place authenticity and location attachment drive customer engagement levels, subsequently strengthening trust relationships, brand loyalty, and experience co-creation opportunities. Digital platforms particularly facilitate engagement through interactive communication channels and virtual community building mechanisms.

Zhou & Yu (2022) establish empirical relationships between tourist engagement and destination loyalty, mediated through enhanced functional and emotional value perceptions. These findings emphasize engagement's critical role in developing sustainable visitor relationships extending beyond individual visit experiences.

E. Visual Content

Visual content significantly influences tourism destination perceptions, attention capture mechanisms, and visit decision-making processes. Contemporary research confirms that attractive, authentic visual content enhances audience engagement while strengthening destination social media presence (Chen et al., 2022).

Digital marketing practices increasingly rely on visual storytelling techniques incorporating local symbols, color palettes, illustration styles, and cinematographic approaches for creating emotional resonance with target audiences. Instagram and TikTok platforms particularly reward visually engaging content that effectively communicates cultural narratives (Kartini et al., 2025).

Social media platforms demonstrate transformative impact on destination branding strategies, with visual content and digital interactions significantly influencing perceptions, travel intentions, and engagement levels. Generation Z tourists demonstrate particular responsiveness to high-quality visual content across digital marketing channels (Gofar & Chrismardani, 2024).

III METHODOLOGY

This investigation employed quantitative methodology with explanatory research design for examining causal relationships between independent variables (storytelling strategies, customer engagement, visual content) and the dependent variable (food agritourism sustainability). Quantitative approaches enable hypothesis testing and statistical relationship analysis appropriate for destination marketing theory development objectives.

A. Research Location

Wondis Chocolate, located in Banjararum Village, Samigaluh District, Kulon Progo Regency, served as the primary research location. This destination was selected through purposive sampling due to its representation of sustainable community-based food agritourism incorporating innovative marketing strategies and comprehensive local community empowerment initiatives.

Geographic positioning within the Menoreh Mountains (400-600 meters above sea level) provides optimal conditions for high-quality cocoa cultivation. The destination's integration of traditional agricultural practices with contemporary tourism offerings makes it particularly suitable for examining sustainable agritourism marketing strategies (Astono & Herwin, 2021).

B. Sample Determination

1) Sample size

Sample size determination employed Slovin's formula with 90% confidence level ($\alpha = 0.10$):

$$n = N / (1 + N.e^2) \ (1)$$

Where N represents the population size (1,200 annual visitors) and e represents the margin of error (0.10). Calculation yields:

$$n = 1,200 / (1 + 1,200 \times 0.01) = 92.3 \ (2)$$

Rounding to 100 respondents ensures adequate statistical power for multiple regression analysis while maintaining practical data collection feasibility.

2) Sampling Criteria

Sampling criteria encompass respondents aged minimum 17 years, having visited Wondis Chocolate at least once within the past year, and possessing familiarity with social media platforms (Wondis). These specifications ensure participants possess direct experience relevant to the marketing strategies examined.

C. Variables Operationalization

- X1: Storytelling Strategies - represents narrative communication techniques for building emotional tourist connections through destination-specific stories, agricultural processes, historical contexts, and cultural values. Measurement indicators include narrative quality, story relevance, emotional appeal, and authenticity perception.
- X2: Customer Engagement - measures active tourist participation levels in destination interactions across multiple platforms and activities. Indicators encompass active participation in activities, digital interaction frequency, and experience sharing behaviors.
- X3: Visual Content - assesses quality and attractiveness of visual elements employed in destination marketing communications. Measurement focuses on visual quality standards, aesthetic appeal, and cross-platform consistency.
- Y: Food Agritourism Sustainability – evaluates destination capacity for maintaining and developing tourism activities sustainably across economic viability, social community integration, environmental preservation, and product innovation dimensions.
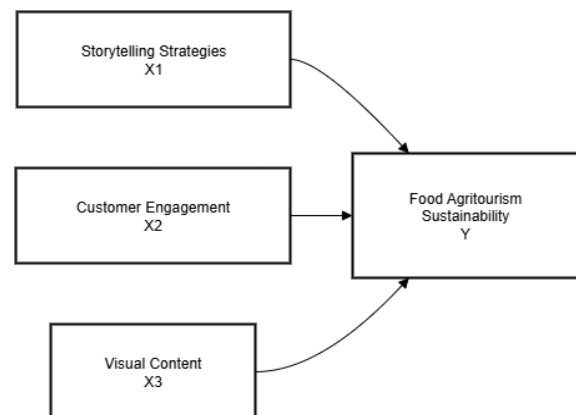
D. Conceptual Framework

Fig. 1. Conceptual framework
Source: Researcher Processed Data, 2025

The research model illustrates relationships between three independent marketing strategy variables and sustainable agritourism development outcomes. This framework synthesizes destination marketing theory with sustainable development principles, demonstrating how integrated marketing approaches influence long-term destination viability.

E. Data Collection Procedures

Data collection employed structured questionnaires developed based on indicators from each variable using five-point Likert scales (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree). Primary data originated from respondent responses to distributed questionnaires, while secondary data derived from Wondis Chocolate visit reports, DIY Tourism Office data, literature and previous research, and website and social media content from Wondis Chocolate.

Research instruments comprised questionnaires that underwent validity and reliability testing, consisting of: Section A (respondent identity), Section B (storytelling strategy statements with 4 items), Section C (customer engagement statements with 3 items), Section D (visual content statements with 3 items), and Section E (food agritourism sustainability statements with 4 items).

F. Statistical Analysis

Multiple linear regression analysis tested hypothesized relationships using the equation:

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \varepsilon \quad (3)$$

Statistical analysis incorporated validity testing through Pearson Product-Moment correlation analysis, reliability assessment using Cronbach's Alpha coefficients, and classical assumption verification including normality (Kolmogorov-Smirnov test), multicollinearity (Variance Inflation Factor), and heteroscedasticity (Glejser test) evaluations.

Hypothesis testing employed t-tests for individual variable significance and F-tests for overall model significance, with significance levels set at $\alpha = 0.05$ for statistical decision-making.

IV RESULTS

A. Respondent Characteristics

Research participants (n=100) demonstrated diverse demographic characteristics reflecting Wondis Chocolate's broad visitor appeal. Age distribution revealed 35% aged 18-25 years, 28% aged 26-35 years, 22% aged 36-45 years, and 15% above 45 years. Gender composition included 58% female and 42% male respondents.

Educational backgrounds encompassed 45% bachelor's degree holders, 25% high school graduates, 18% diploma holders, and 12% postgraduate degree recipients. Occupational diversity included 32% private sector employees, 30% students, 18% entrepreneurs, 15% civil servants, and 5% other categories.

B. Instrument Validation Results

Validity testing confirmed all questionnaire items exceeded minimum correlation thresholds, with Pearson correlation coefficients ranging from 0.742 to 0.892, substantially exceeding the critical value of 0.195 for n=100. These results indicate strong item-total correlations across all measurement scales.

TABLE I
VALIDITY TEST RESULTS

Variable	Item	r-value	r-TABLE	Status
Storytelling (X₁)	$X_1.1$	0.742	0.195	Valid
	$X_1.2$	0.789	0.195	Valid
	$X_1.3$	0.816	0.195	Valid
	$X_1.4$	0.758	0.195	Valid
Customer Engagement (X₂)	$X_2.1$	0.834	0.195	Valid
	$X_2.2$	0.892	0.195	Valid
	$X_2.3$	0.767	0.195	Valid
Visual Content (X₃)	$X_3.1$	0.745	0.195	Valid
	$X_3.2$	0.823	0.195	Valid
	$X_3.3$	0.791	0.195	Valid
Sustainability (Y)	$Y.1$	0.756	0.195	Valid
	$Y.2$	0.812	0.195	Valid
	$Y.3$	0.798	0.195	Valid
	$Y.4$	0.773	0.195	Valid

Source: Researcher Processed Data, 2025

Reliability assessment demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency across all variables. Cronbach's Alpha coefficients exceeded the 0.70 threshold: Storytelling Strategies ($\alpha = 0.823$), Customer Engagement ($\alpha = 0.847$), Visual Content ($\alpha = 0.789$), and Food Agritourism Sustainability ($\alpha = 0.841$).

C. Classical Assumption Testing

Normality testing using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov method yielded significance values of 0.200 ($p > 0.05$), confirming normal data distribution. Multicollinearity assessment revealed variance inflation factor values ranging from 1.412 to 1.605 (all < 10) with tolerance

values between 0.623 and 0.708 (all > 0.10), indicating absence of multicollinearity concerns.

Heteroscedasticity testing through the Glejser method produced significance values exceeding 0.05 for all variables, confirming homoscedastic residual distributions. These results validate the appropriateness of multiple linear regression analysis for hypothesis testing.

D. Multiple Regression Analysis

Statistical analysis produced the following regression equation:

$$Y = 3.461 + 0.255X_1 + 0.330X_2 + 0.587X_3 \quad (4)$$

TABLE II
MULTIPLE LINEAR REGRESSION COEFFICIENTS

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t-value	Sig.
Constant	3.461	0.967	-	3.577	0.001
Storytelling (X_1)	0.255	0.063	0.277	4.063	0.000
Customer Engagement (X_2)	0.330	0.072	0.306	4.548	0.000
Visual Content (X_3)	0.587	0.080	0.475	7.341	0.000

Source: Researcher Processed Data, 2025

Model performance indicators demonstrate strong explanatory power: R = 0.819, R^2 = 0.670, Adjusted R^2 = 0.660, F-statistic = 64.994 (p < 0.001). These results indicate the three independent variables collectively explain 66% of variance in food agritourism sustainability.

E. Hypothesis Testing Results

TABLE III
HYPOTHESIS TESTING SUMMARY

Hypoth esis	Variable Relations hip	t-valu e	t-TAB LE	Sig.	Decisi on
H₁	Storytelli ng → Sustainab ility	4.063	1.984	0.000	Accept ed
H₂	Engagem ent → Sustainab ility	4.548	1.984	0.000	Accept ed
H₃	Visual Content	7.341	1.984	0.000	Accept ed
	→ Sustainab ility				
H₄	Simultane ous Effect	F = 64.9 94	F = 2.70	0.0 00	Accept ed

Source: Researcher Processed Data, 2025

All individual hypotheses achieved statistical significance (p < 0.001), with calculated t-values exceeding critical values. The simultaneous effect hypothesis also achieved significance (F = 64.994 > 2.70, p < 0.001), confirming the combined influence of all three marketing strategy variables on food agritourism sustainability.

F. Mean Analysis Results

TABLE IV
MEAN ANALYSIS

Variable	Mean	Category	Strongest Indicator
Storytelling Strategies	4.01	High	Story Authenticity (4.18)
Customer Engagement	3.24	Moderate	Experience Sharing (3.49)
Visual Content	3.93	High	Visual Quality (4.15)
Food Agritourism Sustainability	3.86	High	Environmental Sustainability (4.05)

Source: Researcher Processed Data, 2025

Detailed mean analysis reveals performance variations across research variables and their indicators. Storytelling Strategies achieved highest evaluation with Story Authenticity as strongest indicator, followed by Story Relevance (4.02), Narrative Quality (3.95), and Emotional Appeal (3.87).

Customer Engagement demonstrated moderate performance, with Experience Sharing as strongest component (3.49), Active Participation at moderate level (3.24), while Interaction mechanisms scored lowest (2.98), indicating areas requiring strategic enhancement.

Visual Content maintained high evaluation standards, with Visual Quality receiving strongest ratings (4.15), followed by Aesthetic

Appeal (3.89), while Visual Consistency presented improvement opportunities (3.76).

Food Agritourism Sustainability achieved high overall evaluation, with Environmental Sustainability dimension scoring highest (4.05), followed by Product Innovation (3.91), Social Sustainability (3.82), while Economic Sustainability presented enhancement opportunities (3.67).

V DISCUSSION

A. Storytelling Strategy Influence

Statistical analysis confirms storytelling strategies significantly influence food agritourism sustainability ($\beta = 0.255$, t = 4.063, p < 0.001). High mean evaluation scores (4.01) with story authenticity receiving strongest ratings (4.18) suggest visitors highly value genuine narratives regarding Wondis Chocolate's "From Bean to Bar" processes and zero-waste agricultural implementations.

These findings align with Moscardo (2020) conceptualization of tourism's "story turn," where authentic narratives create meaningful visitor connections beyond transactional relationships. Wondis Chocolate's integration of traditional cocoa processing stories, farmer experiences, and innovative product development provides a substantial narrative foundation for sustainable tourism development.

However, current narrative systematization requires enhancement for broader audience engagement across digital platforms. While existing storytelling approaches maintain authenticity, they lack comprehensive digital integration and cross-platform consistency necessary for contemporary marketing effectiveness in competitive tourism markets.

B. Customer Engagement Dynamics

Customer engagement demonstrates significant positive effects on sustainability outcomes ($\beta = 0.330$, t = 4.548, p < 0.001), supporting theoretical frameworks proposed by Hollebeek et al. (2019) regarding voluntary resource investment across cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and social dimensions.

Nevertheless, moderate mean scores (3.24) indicate substantial improvement opportunities, particularly regarding interaction mechanisms (2.98), representing the study's lowest-performing indicator. This finding suggests Wondis Chocolate successfully facilitates workshop participation and experience sharing but requires enhanced digital interaction platforms for sustained relationship development beyond physical visits.

Current engagement strategies predominantly rely on physical presence during activities, with limited post-visit relationship maintenance through digital channels. Platform optimization could significantly enhance customer retention and advocacy development, supporting long-term sustainability objectives through improved visitor loyalty and word-of-mouth promotion.

C. Visual Content Impact Analysis

Visual content exhibits the strongest influence on food agritourism sustainability ($\beta = 0.587$, t = 7.341, p < 0.001), confirming contemporary digital marketing's visual-centric nature and visitor responsiveness to high-quality imagery across social media platforms.

High mean evaluation scores (3.93) with particular strength in quality dimensions (4.15) align with Chen et al. (2022) research demonstrating visual content's role in audience engagement and destination image strengthening. Current visual content successfully captures destination activities and product offerings but requires strategic consistency enhancement for improved brand recognition.

Visual consistency scores (3.76) indicate opportunities for comprehensive brand guideline development and cross-platform identity reinforcement. Strategic improvements should focus on cohesive visual identity implementation across all marketing channels while maintaining authentic representation of sustainable agricultural practices and community involvement.

D. Integrated Model Performance

Simultaneous analysis confirms the three marketing strategy variables collectively explain 66% of food agritourism sustainability variance (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.660$, F = 64.994, p < 0.001). This substantial explanatory power validates

integrated marketing approaches for sustainable agritourism development while indicating additional factors contribute to remaining variance.

Sustainability evaluation achieved high mean scores (3.86) with environmental dimensions receiving strongest ratings (4.05), indicating effective communication of zero-waste agricultural practices and environmental conservation commitments. Economic sustainability dimensions (3.67) represent strategic enhancement opportunities through expanded community partnerships and value chain development initiatives.

The model demonstrates that combining authentic storytelling, active customer engagement, and consistent visual content creates synergistic effects supporting long-term destination sustainability across multiple development dimensions. This integration approach proves particularly effective for community-based agritourism ventures seeking competitive advantage through differentiated marketing strategies.

VI CONCLUSION

This investigation confirms that storytelling strategies, customer engagement, and visual content significantly influence food agritourism sustainability at Wondis Chocolate, Kulon Progo. Visual content demonstrates the strongest impact, followed by customer engagement and storytelling strategies. The integrated model explains substantial variance in sustainability outcomes, supporting comprehensive marketing strategy approaches for community-based agritourism development.

Key findings reveal story authenticity as visitors' highest-valued narrative element, suggesting authentic local narratives resonate strongly with contemporary tourist preferences. Customer interaction mechanisms require substantial enhancement, particularly digital engagement platforms for sustained relationship building beyond physical visits. Visual content quality meets high standards but needs improved cross-platform consistency for enhanced brand recognition and market positioning.

Environmental sustainability achievements receive strong visitor recognition, reflecting successful communication of zero-waste agricultural practices and conservation commitments. Economic sustainability dimensions offer expansion opportunities through broader community partnerships and inclusive value chain development strategies.

These results contribute to destination marketing theory development by demonstrating integrated strategy effectiveness within community-based food agritourism contexts. Theoretical contributions include validation of storytelling authenticity importance, confirmation of visual content primacy in digital marketing environments, and evidence supporting comprehensive engagement strategy implementation.

Practical applications encompass narrative systematization recommendations for broader audience reach, digital engagement platform development for sustained visitor relationships, and visual brand guideline implementation for consistent cross-platform identity communication. These strategies support sustainable agritourism development while maintaining community-based operation principles.

Future research directions include longitudinal sustainability impact assessment, comparative analyses across diverse agritourism destinations, and mixed-method approaches for deeper stakeholder perspective understanding. Additional variables including service quality assessments, destination accessibility factors, and pricing strategy influences could enhance model comprehensiveness and practical applicability.

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