Article

Green Tourism Communication Strategies in Supporting Sustainable Tourism Development in Lampung's Coastal Destinations, Indonesia

Indonesian Journal of Tourism and Leisure, 2026
Vol. 07 (2), 142-164
© The Journal, 2026
DOI: 10.36256/ijtl.v7i2.631
https://journal.lasigo.org/index.php/IJTL
Journal

Article History
Received : April 29th, 2026
Revised : October 9th, 2026
Accepted : October 10th, 2026

M. Fikri Akbar
Department of Communication Studies, Faculty of Social and Law Sciences, Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Jakarta, Indonesia
m.fikri@unj.ac.id

Eko Aziz Apriadi
Department of Informatics, Faculty of Engineering and Food Technology, Universitas Indonesia Mandiri, Lampung, Indonesia
ekoazizapriadi@uimandiri.ac.id

Asmaria
Department Public Administration, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Sang Bumi Ruwa Jurai University, Lampung, Indonesia
asmariafisip@gmail.com

Sandy Allifiansyah
Department of Communication Studies, Faculty of Social and Law Sciences, Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Jakarta, Indonesia
sandyallifiansyah@unj.ac.id

Eni Kardi Wiyati
Department of Communication Studies, Faculty of Communication Sciences, Universitas Prof. Dr. Moestopo (Beragama), Indonesia
enikardi@dsn.moestopo.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Coastal tourism development in Indonesia has grown rapidly and plays a significant role in regional economic development, yet it also generates serious environmental and socio-cultural challenges. This study examines green tourism communication strategies in three coastal destinations in Lampung Province, Indonesia (Sebalang Beach, Pahawang Island, and Kiluan Bay) and analyzes their role in supporting sustainable tourism development. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected from May to June 2026 through in-depth interviews with 15 key informants (tourism managers, government officials, community leaders, local tourism actors, and environmental activists), participant observation, and document analysis. The findings show that green tourism communication in these destinations operates through four connected strategies: environmental branding, participatory communication, digital media, and local wisdom. Environmental branding builds a sustainable destination image, but its credibility weakens where waste management facilities do not match the messages on display. Participatory communication through community meetings, education programs, and training workshops strengthens community ownership and shared responsibility. Digital media extend the reach of sustainability messages, although promotional content tends to draw more attention than educational content. Local wisdom gives sustainability messages cultural legitimacy and

Corresponding Author: m.fikri@unj.ac.id | M. Fikri Akbar
IJTL is Licensed Under Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0

acceptance among communities and visitors. Unequal digital literacy among local tourism actors and pressure on traditional practices from commercialization remain challenges. The study concludes that the credibility of green tourism communication depends on the match between what destinations say and what they do, and that participatory and culturally grounded communication may help narrow that gap.

Keywords: Green Tourism; Tourism Communication; Coastal Tourism; Local Wisdom; Greenwashing.

ABSTRAK

Pembangunan pariwisata pesisir di Indonesia berkembang pesat dan berperan penting dalam pembangunan ekonomi regional, namun juga menimbulkan tantangan lingkungan dan sosial-budaya yang serius. Penelitian ini mengkaji strategi komunikasi pariwisata hijau di tiga destinasi wisata pesisir di Provinsi Lampung (Pantai Sebalang, Pulau Pahawang, dan Teluk Kiluan) dan menganalisis perannya dalam mendukung pembangunan pariwisata berkelanjutan. Dengan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif, data dikumpulkan pada Mei–Juni 2026 melalui wawancara mendalam dengan 15 informan kunci (pengelola pariwisata, pejabat pemerintah, tokoh masyarakat, pelaku wisata lokal, dan aktivis lingkungan), observasi partisipan, serta analisis dokumen. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa komunikasi pariwisata hijau di destinasi tersebut dijalankan melalui empat strategi yang saling terhubung: pencitraan merek lingkungan, komunikasi partisipatif, media digital, dan kearifan lokal. Pencitraan merek lingkungan membangun citra destinasi yang berkelanjutan, tetapi kredibilitasnya melemah ketika fasilitas pengelolaan sampah tidak sejalan dengan pesan yang ditampilkan. Komunikasi partisipatif melalui pertemuan warga, program edukasi, dan pelatihan memperkuat rasa memiliki dan tanggung jawab bersama. Media digital memperluas jangkauan pesan keberlanjutan, meskipun konten promosi cenderung lebih menarik perhatian daripada konten edukasi. Kearifan lokal memberi legitimasi budaya dan meningkatkan penerimaan pesan oleh masyarakat dan wisatawan. Literasi digital yang tidak merata di antara pelaku wisata lokal dan tekanan komersialisasi terhadap praktik tradisional masih menjadi tantangan. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa kredibilitas komunikasi pariwisata hijau bergantung pada kesesuaian antara pesan dan praktik di lapangan, dan bahwa komunikasi yang partisipatif serta berbasis budaya dapat membantu mempersempit kesenjangan tersebut.

Kata Kunci: Pariwisata Hijau; Komunikasi Pariwisata; Pariwisata Pesisir; Kearifan Lokal; Greenwashing.

1. Introduction

Coastal tourism development in Indonesia has experienced rapid growth over the past two decades and continues to play a strategic role in regional and national economic development. As an archipelagic country with more than 17,000 islands and one of the longest coastlines in the world, Indonesia possesses abundant natural and cultural resources that make coastal areas attractive tourism destinations. Beach tourism, marine recreation, cultural festivals, and community-based coastal attractions have contributed significantly to employment creation, local income generation, and infrastructure development in coastal regions (Dash & Balamurugan, 2024). Coastal tourism has become an important driver of regional competitiveness and a key component of Indonesia's tourism-based economic strategy.

The rapid expansion of coastal tourism has not always been accompanied by adequate planning, regulation, and environmental management. Uncontrolled tourism activities have frequently resulted in environmental degradation, including coastal erosion, marine pollution, coral reef damage, habitat destruction, and declining ecosystem quality (Liu et al., 2022). Mass tourism behaviors such as excessive waste generation, irresponsible marine activities, and overdevelopment of coastal infrastructure have placed significant pressure on fragile coastal and marine ecosystems. These environmental challenges threaten not only ecological sustainability

Copyright © 2026, Indonesian Journal of Tourism and Leisure

but also the long-term viability of coastal tourism destinations themselves (Ewart et al., 2024; Molina et al., 2023).

The degradation of coastal ecosystems presents a paradox in tourism development. On one hand, tourism depends heavily on the quality of coastal environments as its primary attraction. On the other hand, tourism activities themselves can accelerate environmental degradation when sustainability principles are ignored (Liu et al., 2022). This contradiction illustrates the urgent need for a more balanced approach to tourism development that integrates economic growth with environmental protection and social well-being. Sustainable tourism development has therefore emerged as a critical paradigm to address the negative impacts of conventional tourism models while ensuring long-term benefits for host communities.

Sustainable tourism is defined as tourism that meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future (Peeters et al., 2024). It emphasizes the integration of environmental, socio-cultural, and economic dimensions in tourism planning and management. In coastal areas, sustainable tourism is particularly important due to the vulnerability of marine and coastal ecosystems to climate change, pollution, and human disturbance. Effective sustainable tourism requires not only regulatory frameworks and technological solutions but also behavioral change among tourists, local communities, and tourism stakeholders (Suleman et al., 2024).

Within this sustainability paradigm, green tourism has emerged as a practical and increasingly popular approach. Green tourism refers to tourism practices that prioritize environmental preservation, responsible resource management, and community involvement while minimizing negative ecological impacts (Peeters et al., 2024; Fakfare et al., 2024). Green tourism initiatives often include eco-friendly accommodations, waste reduction programs, renewable energy use, conservation-based tourism activities, and environmental education for tourists and local residents. In coastal contexts, green tourism is closely associated with marine conservation, coral reef protection, mangrove restoration, and community-based ecotourism initiatives.

Despite its growing relevance, the implementation of green tourism principles in coastal destinations faces significant challenges. One of the key obstacles lies in the limited awareness and understanding of sustainability values among tourists and stakeholders. Many tourism development initiatives remain driven by short-term economic objectives, with sustainability treated as an additional or symbolic component rather than an integrated development strategy (Mihalic, 2024). As a result, green tourism is often reduced to "green branding" without genuine environmental commitment, leading to what scholars describe as greenwashing practices in the tourism industry.

Communication plays a crucial and strategic role. Tourism communication is not merely a promotional instrument aimed at attracting visitors; it is a complex process of information exchange, meaning construction, and value transmission between destinations, tourists, and stakeholders (Čuić Tanković & Mušanović, 2022). In sustainable and green tourism contexts, communication functions as an educational, persuasive, and participatory mechanism that can shape perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors toward environmental responsibility.

Effective green tourism communication is essential for translating sustainability concepts into concrete practices. Through well-designed communication strategies, tourists can be informed about environmental rules, encouraged to adopt responsible behaviors, and motivated to participate in conservation efforts. Likewise, local communities and tourism stakeholders can be mobilized to support sustainability initiatives and collaborate in destination management. Research has shown that communication significantly influences tourists' environmental awareness, pro-sustainability attitudes, and actual behavior at destinations (Kim & Pennington-Gray, 2025; Rantsia et al., 2023).

Copyright © 2026, Indonesian Journal of Tourism and Leisure

The role of communication in green tourism development is often underestimated. Many coastal tourism destinations still prioritize promotional communication that focuses on aesthetic appeal and visitor numbers rather than sustainability values. Environmental messages, when present, are frequently fragmented, inconsistent, or poorly contextualized. Such communication approaches may increase tourist arrivals in the short term but fail to foster long-term pro-environmental behavior or community engagement.

Another challenge in green tourism communication lies in limited community participation. Sustainable tourism development requires active involvement of local communities as key stakeholders, co-managers, and cultural custodians of destinations. Yet, communication processes in many coastal tourism areas remain top-down and institutionally driven, marginalizing local voices and traditional knowledge systems. This lack of participatory communication can reduce community ownership, weaken environmental stewardship, and create social conflicts related to tourism development (Fan et al., 2023).

Local wisdom plays a crucial role in addressing these challenges. Indigenous knowledge, cultural norms, and traditional environmental practices developed by coastal communities over generations offer valuable insights into sustainable resource management. Integrating local wisdom into green tourism communication enhances cultural relevance, strengthens message credibility, and fosters community acceptance of sustainability initiatives. In Indonesia, many coastal communities possess traditional norms that regulate fishing practices, waste management, and communal responsibilities, which can support green tourism objectives when effectively communicated.

The rapid growth of digital media has transformed the landscape of tourism communication. Social media platforms, websites, and digital storytelling tools have become dominant channels for destination promotion and information dissemination. Digital communication offers opportunities for interactive engagement, participatory content creation, and real-time environmental messaging. However, without strategic planning, digital tourism communication may prioritize visual appeal over sustainability education, reinforcing consumptive tourism behaviors rather than responsible travel practices.

The gap between sustainability discourse and actual tourism practices, often referred to as the attitude–behavior gap remains a persistent issue in green tourism development (Lin et al., 2022; Li et al., 2023). While many tourists express concern for environmental sustainability, their actions at destinations do not always reflect these values. Communication is a key factor in bridging this gap by ensuring that sustainability messages are clear, relevant, credible, and emotionally engaging.

In Indonesia's coastal tourism context, green tourism communication faces additional structural challenges, including limited institutional coordination, overlapping governance responsibilities, and uneven capacity among local tourism managers. Sustainability messages may vary across government agencies, tourism operators, and community groups, resulting in inconsistent narratives that confuse tourists and weaken sustainability efforts (Radjabov et al., 2025). Strengthening communication coordination is therefore essential to align sustainability goals across stakeholders.

Against this backdrop, systematic research on green tourism communication strategies in Indonesia's coastal areas remains limited. Existing studies tend to focus on environmental management, tourism economics, or policy frameworks, while communication is often treated as a secondary issue. There is a need for comprehensive analysis that places communication at the center of sustainable tourism development, particularly in ecologically sensitive coastal regions.

This study focuses on examining green tourism communication strategies implemented in selected coastal tourism destinations in Lampung, Indonesia, and their role in supporting sustainable tourism development. By exploring how environmental branding, participatory

Copyright © 2026, Indonesian Journal of Tourism and Leisure

communication, digital media, and local wisdom are integrated into tourism communication practices, this research seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of sustainability communication in tourism contexts. The findings are expected to enrich scholarly discussions in tourism and communication studies and provide practical insights for policymakers, destination managers, and tourism practitioners committed to developing environmentally responsible and socially inclusive coastal tourism.

Existing research can be grouped into three strands. The first examines sustainable and green tourism, mostly in terms of policy implementation, ecological outcomes, and economic impacts. The second examines tourism communication, with a focus on destination branding, promotion, and tourist behaviour (Frías-Jamilena et al., 2024). The third examines sustainability communication, including how destination organizations frame sustainability and where their messages fall short of practice (Marchi et al., 2023; Čuić Tanković & Mušanović, 2022). What these strands do not yet explain is how environmental branding, participatory communication, digital media, and local wisdom work together as one communication system at the destination level. Destination image theory explains how branding shapes perception, and participatory communication theory explains how communities take part in decisions, but neither account for what happens when branding messages are not matched by conditions on the ground, or how community participation and local wisdom relate to that mismatch. Much of the work on this problem comes from other settings, such as Mekong Delta agritourism (Marchi et al., 2023), while Indonesian studies tend to look at one dimension at a time, such as local wisdom in a single village.

This study addresses that gap by examining green tourism communication in three coastal destinations in Lampung Province (Sebalang Beach, Pahawang Island, and Kiluan Bay) and by treating the gap between sustainability messages and on-site practice as a central analytical concern, not one observation among others. It makes three contributions. First, it brings four communication dimensions into one analytical frame instead of treating them separately. Second, it documents how the gap between branding and practice appears in Indonesian coastal destinations and how participatory communication and local wisdom relate to the credibility of green messages. Third, it gives destination managers and local governments evidence for planning communication and facilities together.

The study is guided by three research questions: (1) How are green tourism communication strategies carried out in the selected coastal destinations through environmental branding, participatory communication, digital media, and local wisdom? (2) How consistent are the sustainability messages with the practices and facilities observed at these destinations? (3) What challenges limit the effectiveness of green tourism communication, and how do stakeholders respond to them?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Green Tourism and Sustainable Tourism Development

Green tourism is conceptually rooted in the broader paradigm of sustainable tourism, which seeks to meet present tourism demands without compromising the ability of future generations to satisfy their own needs (Peeters et al., 2024). Sustainable tourism highlights the integrated balance between environmental conservation, socio-cultural preservation, and long-term economic viability. Within this framework, green tourism is often understood as an applied and operational approach that emphasizes environmentally responsible tourism practices and ethical interactions between tourists, host communities, and natural ecosystems.

The principle of environmental conservation is central to green tourism. Tourism activities, particularly in environmentally sensitive areas such as coastal and marine destinations, rely heavily on natural resources as their core attraction. However, excessive exploitation of these resources can undermine ecological integrity and tourism sustainability itself. Green tourism

Copyright © 2026, Indonesian Journal of Tourism and Leisure

practices therefore prioritize reducing ecological footprints through waste minimization, energy efficiency, biodiversity protection, and the use of environmentally friendly technologies (Fakfare et al., 2024). In coastal tourism contexts, green tourism is closely associated with marine conservation, coral reef protection, mangrove restoration, and sustainable coastal zone management (Fakfare et al., 2024).

Figure 2. Conceptual framework of green tourism within sustainable tourism development



Source: Author's conceptual illustration.

In addition to environmental concerns, green tourism also emphasizes socio-cultural sustainability. Host communities are not merely passive recipients of tourism development but play a vital role as cultural custodians and co-managers of tourism destinations. Green tourism encourages respect for local customs, traditions, and cultural identities while promoting community empowerment and participation in tourism decision-making processes (Mihalic, 2024). By involving local communities, green tourism enhances social cohesion, strengthens local ownership of tourism resources, and reduces socio-cultural conflicts often associated with mass tourism development.

Economic sustainability constitutes the third pillar of green tourism development. Unlike conventional tourism models that often generate uneven economic benefits, green tourism promotes inclusive economic growth by ensuring that tourism revenues are distributed fairly among local stakeholders. Community-based tourism enterprises, small-scale tourism businesses, and locally managed eco-tourism initiatives are commonly promoted within green tourism frameworks (Peeters et al., 2024). Such approaches contribute to poverty reduction, employment creation, and long-term economic resilience in tourism-dependent regions.

Behavioral change among tourists is a critical component of green tourism development. Green tourism not only provides environmentally responsible tourism products but also seeks to encourage conservation-oriented tourist behavior. Tourists are expected to adopt responsible practices such as minimizing waste, respecting wildlife, conserving water and energy, and complying with environmental regulations at destinations (Lee & Jan, 2023). However, research consistently shows that while tourists may express positive attitudes toward sustainability, their actual practices do not always align with these values. This attitude–behavior gap represents a major challenge in green tourism implementation (Lin et al., 2022; Jiang et al., 2022).

To address this gap, scholars emphasize the importance of communication as a strategic tool in green tourism development. Communication facilitates knowledge transfer, value internalization, and behavioral persuasion that are necessary for transforming sustainability awareness into concrete actions. Sustainability-oriented tourism communication helps tourists recognize the environmental and social implications of their behavior, fosters emotional connections with destinations, and motivates pro-environmental decision-making (Čuić Tanković & Mušanović, 2022). In developing countries and emerging tourism destinations such as

Copyright © 2026, Indonesian Journal of Tourism and Leisure

Indonesia, green tourism plays a particularly strategic role. Coastal regions often face competing interests between economic growth, environmental protection, and community livelihoods. Green tourism offers a pathway to reconcile these competing demands by aligning tourism development with conservation objectives and local development goals. However, the success of green tourism initiatives depends not only on policy frameworks and infrastructure but also on effective communication strategies that engage multiple stakeholders and promote shared sustainability values.

Green tourism represents a pragmatic manifestation of sustainable tourism principles, translating abstract sustainability concepts into tangible tourism practices. By integrating environmental preservation, socio-cultural responsibility, and economic viability, green tourism provides a holistic approach to sustainable tourism development. Its effectiveness, however, is closely linked to the ability of tourism destinations to communicate sustainability values clearly, consistently, and inclusively to tourists, communities, and institutional actors.

2.2. Tourism Communication

Tourism communication encompasses all forms of information exchange related to tourism destinations, products, services, and visitor experiences. It involves structured and unstructured communication processes that occur between destination managers, tourism organizations, local communities, media institutions, and tourists across multiple channels and stages of the travel experience (Armutcu et al., 2023). Tourism communication operates not only before and after travel but also during on-site experiences, shaping tourists' perceptions, satisfaction, and behavioral responses toward destinations.

Figure 3. Key dimensions of tourism communication in sustainable and green tourism development.



Source: Author's conceptual illustration by Autrhors

Strategic communication in tourism plays a pivotal role in destination branding and image formation. Destination images are socially constructed through narratives, symbols, visual representations, and mediated messages that influence how tourists perceive and evaluate destinations (Taecharungroj et al., 2024). Communication strategies such as storytelling, branding slogans, visual marketing, and digital content are used to differentiate destinations in a highly competitive tourism market. Importantly, destination branding is not limited to promotional objectives but increasingly incorporates value-based messages related to sustainability, authenticity, and social responsibility (Frías-Jamilena et al., 2024).

Beyond branding, tourism communication functions as an educational mechanism. Visitor education is a critical component in destinations where tourism activities interact directly with natural and cultural environments. Through interpretive communication, signage, guided tours, visitor centers, and digital platforms, tourists can be informed about local ecosystems, cultural

Copyright © 2026, Indonesian Journal of Tourism and Leisure

norms, and acceptable behavior (Huang et al., 2022). Educational communication enhances tourist knowledge and awareness, which is a prerequisite for encouraging responsible tourism practices, particularly in environmentally sensitive areas such as coastal and marine destinations.

Tourism communication also plays a central role in stakeholder engagement. Sustainable tourism development requires collaboration among multiple stakeholders, including government institutions, private tourism operators, local communities, non-governmental organizations, and tourists themselves. Communication enables dialogue, negotiation, and coordination among these actors, facilitating shared understanding of development goals and sustainability challenges (Suleman et al., 2024; Ewart et al., 2024). Without effective communication, tourism development risks becoming fragmented and conflict-prone, undermining sustainability objectives.

In the context of sustainable and green tourism, communication serves as a tool for environmental awareness, persuasion, and advocacy. Environmental communication in tourism aims to inform tourists about ecological vulnerabilities, persuade them to adopt pro-environmental behaviors, and advocate for conservation-oriented values. Messages related to waste reduction, wildlife protection, energy conservation, and respect for local culture are increasingly integrated into tourism communication strategies. These messages are intended to reduce the negative environmental impacts of tourism while fostering emotional connections between tourists and destinations.

Persuasive communication is particularly important in addressing the attitude–behavior gap commonly observed in sustainable tourism. Although many tourists express positive attitudes toward sustainability, these attitudes do not always translate into responsible behavior during travel (Kim & Pennington-Gray, 2025). Persuasive tourism communication seeks to bridge this gap by framing sustainability messages in ways that are personally relevant, emotionally engaging, and culturally meaningful. Studies in environmental psychology and social marketing suggest that norm-based messaging, storytelling, and social comparison can effectively influence tourist behavior (Deng et al., 2024; Li et al., 2023).

Digitalization has further transformed tourism communication practices. Social media platforms, travel blogs, online review sites, and destination websites have become dominant sources of tourism information. Digital communication allows destinations to engage tourists interactively, co-create narratives through user-generated content, and disseminate sustainability messages in real time (Armutcu et al., 2023; Siegel et al., 2023). In sustainable tourism contexts, digital platforms can amplify environmental campaigns, promote eco-friendly tourism products, and mobilize online communities around conservation initiatives. However, digital tourism communication also poses challenges, as visually driven content may prioritize aesthetic appeal over sustainability education (Siegel et al., 2023; Taecharungroj et al., 2024).

Another important dimension of tourism communication is participatory communication. Participatory approaches emphasize two-way dialogue, inclusion, and shared meaning-making between tourism stakeholders and local communities. In sustainable tourism development, participatory communication empowers communities as co-communicators rather than passive recipients of tourism messages. This approach enhances community ownership, strengthens trust, and improves the legitimacy of tourism development processes (Quang et al., 2023). Participatory communication is particularly relevant in community-based and green tourism initiatives, where local knowledge and cultural values constitute key tourism assets.

Cultural context significantly influences the effectiveness of tourism communication. Messages that are successful in one socio-cultural setting may not resonate in another. Integrating local wisdom, cultural symbols, and indigenous narratives into tourism communication enhances message relevance and acceptance. In coastal tourism destinations in Indonesia, for example,

Copyright © 2026, Indonesian Journal of Tourism and Leisure

traditional ecological knowledge and community norms related to marine resource management can strengthen sustainability-oriented communication strategies when appropriately articulated.

Tourism communication is a multidimensional process that extends beyond promotion to include education, persuasion, coordination, and advocacy. In the context of sustainable and green tourism, communication constitutes a strategic instrument for fostering environmental awareness, encouraging stakeholder collaboration, and promoting responsible tourist behavior. The effectiveness of sustainable tourism development therefore depends not only on policies and infrastructure but also on the ability of destinations to implement coherent, participatory, and value-driven communication strategies.

2.3. Local Wisdom in Environmental Communication

Local wisdom represents a system of indigenous knowledge, cultural values, norms, and practices developed through long-term interaction between communities and their natural environment. It reflects collective experience in managing natural resources, maintaining ecological balance, and ensuring social harmony across generations. In the context of sustainable tourism development, particularly in environmentally sensitive areas such as coastal regions, local wisdom provides an important foundation for environmental communication strategies that are culturally grounded and socially legitimate (Quang et al., 2023; Rizal et al., 2022).

Environmental communication grounded in local wisdom emphasizes contextual relevance and cultural embeddedness. Unlike generic sustainability messages, communication that incorporates local values, symbols, narratives, and customary practices resonates more strongly with local communities because it aligns with their lived experiences and belief systems. In many traditional societies, environmental ethics are not articulated through formal regulations but through customary laws, rituals, and moral narratives that guide daily behavior. These cultural mechanisms can function as powerful communicative tools in promoting sustainable resource management.

Integrating local wisdom into green tourism communication enhances message credibility and trust. Sustainability messages delivered through culturally familiar frameworks are perceived as more authentic and less externally imposed. Research in sustainability communication suggests that messages framed within local cultural contexts are more likely to be internalized and acted upon than abstract or technocratic environmental discourse. In coastal tourism destinations, local wisdom related to marine conservation, fishing restrictions, seasonal resource use, and communal responsibilities can reinforce environmental awareness among both residents and visitors.

Local wisdom also strengthens community ownership in tourism development. When environmental communication reflects local values and traditions, communities are positioned not merely as objects of tourism policy but as cultural authorities and co-communicators of sustainability. This participatory role fosters a sense of pride, responsibility, and stewardship over tourism resources (Quang et al., 2023; Rizal et al., 2022). Community-based environmental communication that draws upon local wisdom enhances social cohesion and reduces resistance to tourism-related environmental regulations.

From a behavioral perspective, local wisdom-based communication supports sustainable resource management by shaping social norms. Social norms are powerful determinants of environmental behavior, often more influential than formal rules or economic incentives (Li et al., 2023). In many coastal communities in Indonesia, traditional norms govern practices such as waste disposal, marine harvesting, and coastal land use. When these norms are articulated and communicated to tourists through storytelling, interpretive signage, or guided experiences, they can influence visitor behavior and promote respect for local environmental practices.

Local wisdom contributes to intercultural communication between hosts and visitors. Tourism inherently involves encounters between culturally diverse actors, and

Copyright © 2026, Indonesian Journal of Tourism and Leisure

miscommunication can lead to environmental degradation and cultural conflict. Contextual communication rooted in local wisdom helps visitors understand the cultural rationale behind environmental rules and sustainable practices, fostering empathy and responsible behavior (Huang et al., 2022). Tourists who are exposed to local ecological narratives are more likely to perceive sustainability as an integral part of the destination's identity rather than as an external restriction.

In green tourism contexts, local wisdom also complements modern sustainability concepts. Rather than opposing scientific or technological approaches, indigenous knowledge can coexist with contemporary environmental management strategies. Studies show that integrating traditional ecological knowledge with modern conservation practices enhances adaptive capacity and resilience in coastal socio-ecological systems (Liu et al., 2022). Communication strategies that bridge traditional wisdom and scientific sustainability discourse create more holistic and inclusive sustainability narratives.

Indonesia provides rich empirical examples of local wisdom-based environmental communication. Coastal communities across the archipelago possess customary marine management systems, such as sasi in eastern Indonesia, which regulate resource use through culturally sanctioned prohibitions and communal agreements. When such practices are communicated as part of tourism narratives, they not only protect ecosystems but also enrich visitors' understanding of local culture and sustainability ethics.

In summary, local wisdom plays a crucial role in environmental communication for green tourism development. By embedding sustainability messages within culturally meaningful frameworks, local wisdom enhances credibility, encourages community participation, and promotes sustainable behavior among tourists and residents alike. Contextual communication grounded in local values is therefore more likely to be accepted, practiced, and sustained, making it a vital component of environmentally responsible coastal tourism development.

3. Method

3.1. Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative descriptive research design, which is particularly suitable for exploring complex social phenomena such as communication practices, meanings, and interactions embedded in tourism development contexts (Dash & Balamurugan, 2024; Hafezi et al., 2023). A qualitative approach allows researchers to capture in-depth insights into how green tourism communication strategies are constructed, implemented, and interpreted by various stakeholders, rather than quantifying predetermined variables. This design is appropriate for examining sustainability-oriented communication, which is inherently contextual, value-laden, and socially constructed.

A qualitative descriptive design was chosen over a case study or an ethnography for three reasons. First, the study aims to describe how green tourism communication is carried out and understood by stakeholders across several destinations, not to explain one bounded case in depth, which is the purpose of a case study. Second, it does not seek a long-term cultural account of one community, which is the purpose of ethnography; fieldwork lasted two months and focused on communication practices instead of the culture of a community as a whole. Third, the design stays close to the data and to informants' own accounts, which suits a topic where little descriptive evidence exists in Indonesian coastal settings (Hafezi et al., 2023).

3.2. Research Site and Context

The research was conducted in three coastal tourism destinations in Lampung Province, Indonesia: Sebalang Beach, Pahawang Island, and Kiluan Bay (Table 2). The sites were selected through purposive sampling, based on criteria including:

1. the presence of coastal or marine-based tourism activities;

Copyright © 2026, Indonesian Journal of Tourism and Leisure

2. the adoption of sustainability-oriented tourism policies or programs; and
3. the involvement of local communities in tourism governance or environmental conservation initiatives.

Indonesia's coastal regions provide a relevant empirical setting due to their ecological vulnerability and increasing tourism pressure. Qualitative tourism research emphasizes the importance of selecting information-rich cases that can illuminate the relationship between tourism development, environmental sustainability, and communication processes (Dash & Balamurugan, 2024).

The three destinations met these criteria. They also differ in tourism type (beach, island, and bay tourism) and in the conservation programs they run, which allowed the study to look at communication practices across different coastal settings.

Table 2. Research Sites

Destination	Province	Regency	Tourism Type	Sustainability Program
Sebalang Beach	Lampung	South Lampung	Coastal Tourism	Coastal conservation and waste management
Pahawang Island	Lampung	Pesawaran	Marine Ecotourism	Coral reef conservation
Kiluan Bay	Lampung	Tanggamus	Marine Tourism	Dolphin conservation and community-based tourism

Source: Authors' fieldwork data (2026)

Fieldwork was conducted from May to June 2026 in the three destinations. The study involved 15 key informants consisting of 3 tourism managers, 3 government officials, 3 community leaders, 4 local tourism actors, and 2 environmental activists. Informants were selected through purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in tourism management, sustainability programs, and tourism communication activities. Interviews lasted between 45 and 90 minutes and were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia. All interviews were audio-recorded with participant consent and subsequently transcribed verbatim. In the Results, informants are identified by role code and number: TM (tourism manager), GOV (government official), CL (community leader), TE (local tourism actor), and EA (environmental activist).

3.3. Data Collection Technique

To enhance the depth, validity, and credibility of the findings, this study used methodological triangulation, combining multiple qualitative data collection techniques (Patton, 2015). Data coding was conducted manually using thematic analysis procedures. Themes were developed inductively through repeated reading, open coding, category development, and cross-validation between interview, observation, and document data until thematic saturation was achieved.

3.3.1. In-depth Interviews

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants directly involved in tourism development and communication processes. Informants included tourism managers and destination administrators, community leaders, local residents, and government officials responsible for tourism and environmental management. Semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of green tourism communication while maintaining flexibility to capture emerging themes (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). The interview guide covered topics such as sustainability narratives, communication channels, stakeholder roles, and challenges in implementing green tourism communication. Interviews were conducted face-to-face or online.

3.3.2. Participant Observation

Participant observation was employed to capture communication practices and interactions within their natural tourism settings. The researcher observed tourism activities, environmental campaigns, interpretive programs, and community-based initiatives to understand how

Copyright © 2026, Indonesian Journal of Tourism and Leisure

sustainability messages were conveyed and practiced. Observation focused on symbolic representations, verbal and non-verbal communication, and stakeholder interactions related to green tourism (Dash & Balamurugan, 2024). Field notes were systematically recorded to document contextual details and communication dynamics that could not be fully revealed through interviews alone. Participant observation is widely used in tourism and communication research to uncover tacit practices and meanings embedded in everyday social interactions (Hafezi et al., 2023). Participant observation was carried out over two weeks.

3.3.3. Document Analysis

Document analysis was conducted to examine sustainability-related communication texts produced by tourism institutions and stakeholders. The analyzed documents included tourism and environmental policy documents, promotional materials, interpretive signage, brochures, and digital communication content such as official websites and social media platforms. Document analysis enables researchers to investigate how sustainability discourses are framed, institutionalized, and communicated to broader audiences (Bowen, 2009). This technique also allowed comparative analysis between formal policy narratives and actual communication practices observed at the destination level. A total of 24 documents were analyzed.

3.4. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using qualitative thematic analysis, an approach suitable for identifying patterns, meanings, and recurring themes across diverse qualitative data sets (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The analysis followed an iterative process of familiarization, coding, theme development, review, and interpretation, consistent with contemporary reflexive thematic analysis guidance (Braun & Clarke, 2022, 2023).

Interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were reviewed, coded, and condensed to focus on information relevant to tourism communication, sustainability narratives, stakeholder participation, and local wisdom integration. Reduced data were organized into thematic categories and analytical matrices to facilitate pattern identification and cross-source comparison. Interpretive conclusions were drawn by examining recurring communication strategies and relationships among themes. Verification was achieved through continuous comparison, triangulation of data sources, and reflective analysis to ensure analytical credibility.

To ensure rigor and trustworthiness, this study applied credibility, dependability, and confirmability criteria commonly used in qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2023). Data triangulation, clear documentation of research procedures, and reflexive analysis were employed to minimize researcher bias. Ethical considerations included informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation, in line with qualitative research ethics standards.

4. Results

4.1. Environmental Branding Strategies

The results indicate that coastal tourism destinations increasingly adopt environmental narratives as a core element of destination branding. Environmental branding is manifested through the consistent use of green imagery, sustainability-oriented slogans, and eco-friendly messages across various communication channels, including promotional materials, destination signage, official websites, and social media platforms. These branding elements are strategically designed to frame the destination as environmentally responsible and aligned with sustainable tourism values.

Findings from in-depth interviews reveal that environmental branding is deliberately constructed as part of destination identity. A tourism manager explained:

> *"We want visitors to immediately recognize this destination as a green area. That is why all our promotional materials emphasize nature, conservation, and community involvement, not mass tourism." (Interview with TM01, May 2nd, 2026)*

Copyright © 2026, Indonesian Journal of Tourism and Leisure

Green imagery, such as visuals of clean beaches, mangrove forests, coral reefs, and community-based conservation activities, serves as a symbolic representation of environmental quality and ecological integrity. Visual communication plays a critical role in shaping tourists' first impressions and reinforcing destination identity, particularly in the digital tourism marketplace where images dominate attention and decision-making processes (Taecharungroj et al., 2024). Observational data confirm that sustainability-oriented visuals dominate both online and offline branding materials. During field observation, destination signage at tourist entry points prominently displayed messages related to environmental protection, accompanied by images of local ecosystems and conservation activities.

A local community leader highlighted the importance of visuals in communicating environmental values to visitors:

> *"Tourists may not read long explanations, but when they see images of mangroves and coral reefs everywhere, they understand that nature is our main asset and must be protected." (Interview with CL02, May 4th, 2026)*

Sustainability slogans and taglines function as concise narrative tools that communicate environmental values and differentiate coastal destinations from mass tourism models. Phrases emphasizing eco-friendliness, conservation, and harmony with nature are used to construct a distinctive brand positioning. Observations of promotional banners and websites indicate frequent use of terms such as eco-friendly destinations, green coastal tourism, and tourism in harmony with nature. Such branding narratives aim to attract environmentally conscious tourists who actively seek destinations aligned with their ethical and sustainability preferences (Čuić Tanković & Mušanović, 2022).

Eco-friendly messages are also embedded in branding content to influence tourist expectations and behavior. These messages include references to responsible waste management, protection of marine ecosystems, and respect for local culture and community life. A destination administrator noted:

> *"Branding is not only about attracting tourists. Through our brand messages, we want visitors to know from the beginning that this is a place where they must behave responsibly." (Interview with TM02, May 9th, 2026)*

By integrating sustainability discourse into branding, destinations attempt to shape tourist behavior even before arrival, positioning sustainability as an integral part of the tourism experience rather than as an optional add-on (Peeters et al., 2024).

The results further reveal that environmental branding serves a differentiation function in the competitive tourism market. Coastal destinations increasingly distinguish themselves from conventional mass tourism by projecting an image of exclusivity, authenticity, and environmental responsibility. This strategy aligns with the broader shift toward experience-based and value-driven tourism, where destination choice is influenced not only by attraction quality but also by ethical considerations and perceived environmental commitment (Mihalic, 2024). Several interviewees emphasized that sustainability branding is used to attract a "different type" of tourist (those who are more respectful of environmental rules and local culture).

The findings also suggest potential challenges associated with environmental branding strategies. In some cases, sustainability narratives are more prominent in promotional discourse than in observable practices on the ground. Field observation revealed instances where cleanliness messages were displayed visually, yet waste management facilities were limited or inconsistently maintained. This discrepancy indicates a risk of symbolic sustainability or greenwashing, where environmental branding is not fully supported by consistent management practices. As noted by one local resident:

> *"The brochures say green tourism, but sometimes tourists still don't find proper waste bins. If the branding is not supported by facilities, people may stop believing the message." (Interview with TE01, May 7th, 2026)*

Copyright © 2026, Indonesian Journal of Tourism and Leisure

Such gaps can undermine destination credibility and erode tourist trust if sustainability claims are not matched by tangible actions (Čuić Tanković & Mušanović, 2022). Environmental branding emerges as a dominant green tourism communication strategy in coastal destinations. When implemented consistently and supported by genuine sustainability practices, environmental branding can enhance destination image, attract responsible tourists, and reinforce sustainable tourism development. Nevertheless, its effectiveness depends on alignment between brand narratives, institutional commitment, and actual environmental management at the destination level.

4.2. Participatory Communication Practices

The results show that local communities are actively engaged through participatory communication practices in the development of green tourism in coastal destinations. Participation is facilitated through various forums such as community meetings, environmental education programs, tourism awareness campaigns, and capacity-building workshops for local tourism actors. These participatory mechanisms position local communities not merely as beneficiaries of tourism development but as key stakeholders and co-creators in sustainability-oriented tourism communication.

Community meetings serve as a primary platform for dialogue and collective decision-making related to tourism development and environmental management. Through these meetings, local residents are informed about tourism plans, environmental regulations, and conservation initiatives, while also being given the opportunity to voice concerns, share local knowledge, and contribute to decision-making processes. A government tourism officer explained:

> *"Community meetings are not only to inform people about tourism programs, but also to listen to their concerns, especially related to environmental impacts. Decisions are usually revised based on community feedback." (Interview with GOV01, May 14th, 2026)*

Observational data confirms that these meetings function as spaces for deliberative communication. During field observation, discussions frequently shifted from tourism promotion issues to concerns about waste management, coastal cleanliness, and the carrying capacity of tourist sites, indicating strong community awareness of environmental sustainability.

Participatory dialogue strengthens mutual understanding between tourism managers, government representatives, and community members, fostering trust and social legitimacy in tourism governance (Ewart et al., 2024). A community leader reflected on this process:

> "*When we are involved in discussions from the beginning, we feel responsible for the outcomes. Tourism is no longer seen as only the government's project." (Interview with CL03, May 15th, 2026)*

Environmental education programs constitute another important form of participatory communication. These programs are designed to enhance community awareness of environmental issues such as marine pollution, coastal ecosystem degradation, and climate change impacts. Educational activities are often conducted through workshops, training sessions, and community-based learning initiatives that incorporate local environmental contexts. A tourism facilitator noted:

> *"Education programs help residents understand why certain rules exist, such as limiting plastic use or protecting mangroves. Once people understand the reasons, they are more willing to participate." (Interview with EA01, May 15th, 2026)*

By improving environmental literacy, participatory education empowers communities to adopt sustainable practices and actively support conservation-oriented tourism development (Huang et al., 2022). Field observations showed that education sessions often integrated local examples and traditional practices, making sustainability concepts more accessible and culturally relevant.

Copyright © 2026, Indonesian Journal of Tourism and Leisure

Tourism training workshops further reinforce participatory communication by building local capacities in sustainable tourism management. Training activities focus on developing skills related to eco-tour guiding, waste management, environmentally responsible entrepreneurship, and hospitality services that align with green tourism principles. One training participant stated:

> *"The training gave us practical skills, but more importantly, it made us confident to manage tourism activities without damaging our environment." (Interview with TE04, May 11th, 2026)*

These workshops not only transfer technical knowledge but also encourage interactive learning and peer exchange among participants. Such participatory capacity-building processes enhance community confidence and enable local residents to take ownership of tourism activities (Fan et al., 2023; Quang et al., 2023).

The findings indicate that participatory communication practices contribute to shared responsibility for environmental conservation. When community members are involved in communication processes, sustainability is no longer perceived as an externally imposed agenda but as a collective commitment. Research in sustainable tourism highlights that participatory approaches increase local compliance with environmental regulations and strengthen stewardship behavior, as communities feel accountable for protecting the resources upon which tourism depends (Fan et al., 2023). This was echoed by a local resident:

> *"Because we are involved in planning and discussions, we also remind tourists if they behave irresponsibly. We feel that this place belongs to all of us." (Interview with TE01, May 11th, 2026)*

Participatory communication supports the integration of local knowledge and cultural values into tourism development. Local ecological knowledge, customary norms, and traditional environmental practices are frequently articulated through community discussions and educational forums. Incorporating these perspectives into tourism communication enhances cultural relevance and contextual appropriateness of sustainability messages (Murtiningsih et al., 2025). This integration not only benefits environmental management but also enriches the authenticity of tourism experiences offered to visitors.

From a behavioral perspective, participatory communication practices contribute to long-term sustainability outcomes by shaping collective norms. Participation encourages a sense of ownership and pride, motivating communities to monitor tourism activities, promote responsible visitor behavior, and address environmental problems collaboratively. Such social norm formation is critical in coastal tourism destinations, where enforcement of formal regulations alone is often insufficient to ensure sustainable behavior (Li et al., 2023)..

The results demonstrate that participatory communication is a key enabling strategy in green tourism development. By fostering dialogue, enhancing environmental awareness, and strengthening community capacity, participatory communication practices support shared responsibility and collaborative governance. These practices play a crucial role in aligning tourism development objectives with environmental conservation and social sustainability in coastal destinations.

4.3. Digital Media Utilization

Digital media have become an increasingly important component of green tourism communication in supporting sustainable tourism development within Indonesia's coastal destinations. The findings indicate that tourism managers, local governments, community organizations, and tourism entrepreneurs actively utilize various digital platforms, including websites, Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, and online travel applications, to communicate environmental values and sustainable tourism practices to wider audiences. Through these platforms, sustainability messages can reach potential visitors before, during, and after their travel experiences, thereby extending the impact of communication beyond physical tourism spaces.

Copyright © 2026, Indonesian Journal of Tourism and Leisure

The analysis revealed that digital communication strategies primarily focus on disseminating information related to environmental conservation, waste management, marine ecosystem protection, and responsible tourist behavior. Tourism stakeholders regularly share visual content, educational videos, environmental campaigns, and community conservation activities to promote environmental awareness among visitors. Social media platforms, particularly Instagram and TikTok, were identified as effective tools for presenting sustainability messages through attractive visual storytelling that aligns with contemporary tourist media consumption patterns.

One tourism manager explained:

> *"Social media allow us to communicate directly with potential tourists before they visit. We use Instagram and TikTok not only to promote the beauty of the destination but also to educate visitors about environmental rules, waste reduction, and conservation activities." (Interview with TM02, May 9th, 2026)*

Observational findings further demonstrated that sustainability-related content generated relatively high levels of audience engagement, especially when environmental messages were integrated with appealing visual narratives. Posts featuring beach clean-up activities, mangrove planting programs, coral reef conservation efforts, and local community participation often received positive responses through comments, shares, and user-generated content. Such interactions indicate that digital media facilitate two-way communication, enabling tourists to actively engage with sustainability narratives rather than merely receiving information passively.

In addition, digital platforms were found to support collaboration among stakeholders involved in coastal tourism development. Government agencies, tourism operators, environmental organizations, local communities, and tourists frequently participate in digital communication networks that disseminate information regarding sustainability initiatives and environmental campaigns. These networks contribute to broadening public awareness while strengthening collective responsibility toward environmental protection.

Despite these advantages, several challenges emerged regarding the effectiveness of digital sustainability communication. Informants noted that promotional content emphasizing destination attractiveness often receives greater public attention than educational sustainability messages. Consequently, environmental communication sometimes becomes secondary to marketing-oriented content designed to increase tourist arrivals. Furthermore, unequal digital literacy among local tourism actors and limited technological resources within some coastal communities may constrain the effectiveness of digital communication strategies.

A local tourism entrepreneur stated:

> *"Many tourism businesses understand the importance of social media promotion, but not all of them consistently incorporate sustainability messages into their digital content. Most still focus on attracting visitors rather than educating them about environmental responsibility." (Interview with TE03, May 11th, 2026)*

These findings suggest that digital media play a significant role in strengthening green tourism communication by expanding information reach, encouraging stakeholder interaction, and promoting environmental awareness among tourists. However, the effectiveness of digital communication depends on the ability of tourism stakeholders to balance promotional objectives with sustainability education. Therefore, the integration of environmental values into digital communication strategies should become a central component of sustainable coastal tourism management to ensure that tourism promotion and environmental conservation objectives are achieved simultaneously.

The findings support the argument that digital communication serves not merely as a promotional instrument but also as a strategic mechanism for shaping environmental attitudes and encouraging sustainable tourism behavior. In the context of Indonesia's coastal tourism destinations, digital media function as a bridge connecting sustainability policies, local

Copyright © 2026, Indonesian Journal of Tourism and Leisure

communities, tourism operators, and tourists, thereby contributing to the long-term sustainability of coastal tourism development.

4.4. Local Wisdom Integration

The integration of local wisdom emerged as one of the most significant communication strategies supporting sustainable tourism development in Indonesia's coastal areas. Findings indicate that local wisdom functions not only as a cultural asset but also as an effective communication medium for transmitting environmental values, strengthening community participation, and encouraging responsible tourism behavior. In many coastal communities, sustainability principles are deeply embedded within traditional knowledge systems, customary regulations, social norms, and cultural practices that have evolved through generations of interaction with coastal and marine ecosystems.

The study found that local communities possess valuable ecological knowledge that guides the sustainable use of coastal resources. Traditional beliefs regarding respect for nature, communal responsibility, environmental stewardship, and resource conservation continue to influence community attitudes toward tourism development. These cultural values are frequently incorporated into tourism communication activities to educate both local residents and visitors about the importance of preserving coastal ecosystems.

A community leader explained:

> *"Our ancestors taught us that the sea is not merely a source of livelihood but a heritage that must be protected for future generations. These values continue to guide how we manage tourism and interact with visitors." (Interview with Cl01, May 15th, 2026))*

The findings further reveal that local wisdom enhances the credibility of sustainability messages. Unlike externally imposed environmental regulations, messages grounded in local traditions are perceived by community members as culturally legitimate and socially meaningful. As a result, sustainability communication becomes more persuasive because it resonates with shared identities, collective memories, and local values. This cultural legitimacy encourages stronger acceptance of conservation initiatives and facilitates greater compliance with environmental regulations.

Observation data showed that various forms of local wisdom were actively utilized in tourism communication, including traditional ceremonies, storytelling practices, customary laws, community gatherings, and local cultural performances. Tourism managers and community organizations often integrate these cultural elements into visitor experiences to communicate environmental values in an engaging and culturally relevant manner. Through storytelling and cultural interpretation, tourists gain a deeper understanding of local environmental ethics and the historical relationship between coastal communities and their natural surroundings.

One tourism manager stated:

> *"When tourists hear stories about how local people traditionally protect mangroves, coral reefs, and coastal resources, they become more aware that conservation is part of our culture, not just a government policy." (Interview with TM03, May 9th, 2026))*

In several destinations, customary norms also serve as informal governance mechanisms that complement formal environmental regulations. Community-based rules concerning waste disposal, protection of marine habitats, resource extraction, and visitor behavior reinforce sustainability objectives while promoting collective accountability. These locally embedded regulations are often communicated through community meetings, tourism orientation activities, cultural events, and informational materials provided to visitors.

The findings suggest that local wisdom contributes to sustainable tourism communication through three interrelated functions. First, it serves as a source of environmental knowledge that informs sustainable resource management practices. Second, it strengthens social cohesion by

Copyright © 2026, Indonesian Journal of Tourism and Leisure

fostering collective responsibility for environmental protection. Third, it enhances the effectiveness of communication by presenting sustainability messages in culturally meaningful forms that are easily understood and accepted by local communities and tourists alike.

Moreover, local wisdom plays an important role in differentiating coastal destinations within increasingly competitive tourism markets. While many tourism destinations promote environmental sustainability, destinations that successfully integrate cultural heritage and traditional ecological knowledge create more authentic tourism experiences. Informants reported that tourists increasingly value opportunities to engage with local traditions and learn about community-based conservation practices. This cultural dimension strengthens destination identity while simultaneously supporting environmental preservation.

A local tourism entrepreneur explained:

> *"Visitors are interested not only in beautiful beaches but also in learning how local communities protect the environment through traditional practices. This makes their tourism experience more meaningful." (Interview with TE02, May 15th, 2026))*

The integration of local wisdom also contributes to the long-term sustainability of tourism development by reducing dependence on externally driven conservation programs. Because local communities are recognized as knowledge holders and active participants in tourism management, they develop a stronger sense of ownership over sustainability initiatives. This ownership encourages continuous participation in environmental conservation efforts and supports the resilience of tourism destinations in responding to environmental and social challenges.

However, the study also identified several challenges associated with preserving local wisdom within rapidly developing tourism destinations. Modernization, commercialization, and increasing tourist arrivals may gradually weaken traditional practices and cultural values if they are not adequately protected and transmitted to younger generations. Consequently, tourism stakeholders emphasized the importance of documenting traditional ecological knowledge, supporting cultural education programs, and integrating local wisdom into formal tourism planning and communication strategies.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that local wisdom is not merely a complementary element of green tourism communication but a fundamental pillar supporting sustainable coastal tourism development. By linking environmental conservation with cultural identity, local wisdom strengthens the effectiveness of sustainability communication, promotes community empowerment, and fosters responsible behavior among tourists. In this context, local wisdom functions as a strategic communication resource that connects environmental sustainability objectives with the socio-cultural realities of coastal communities, thereby contributing to more inclusive and resilient tourism development.

5. Discussion

This study demonstrates that green tourism development in coastal destinations is fundamentally shaped by strategic communication processes that integrate environmental branding, participatory engagement, digital media utilization, and local cultural values. These findings reinforce the central principle of sustainable tourism theory which posits that long-term tourism sustainability cannot be achieved solely through environmental policies or technical management, but must be mediated through communication that transforms sustainability principles into shared meanings, norms, and practices among stakeholders (Peeters et al., 2024).

The clearest finding is the gap between what destinations say and what they do. In the destinations studied, green imagery, sustainability slogans, and eco-friendly messages are used to present the destination as responsible, and managers described this branding as a deliberate way of telling visitors from the start how to behave. Yet observation showed cleanliness messages on

Copyright © 2026, Indonesian Journal of Tourism and Leisure

display while waste facilities were limited or poorly maintained, and one resident warned that people stop believing the message when facilities are missing. Destination image theory explains how branding shapes perception (Frías-Jamilena et al., 2024), but it does not say what happens when the image is contradicted by what visitors find on site. The pattern fits the concern about greenwashing in tourism (Papagiannakis et al., 2024). It also resembles the gap between promotional narratives and visitor experience reported for Mekong Delta agritourism (Marchi et al., 2023) and the tendency of destination organizations to stress low-effort behavior while downplaying the negative impacts of tourism (Marchi et al., 2023). This study adds evidence from Indonesian coastal destinations and shows that residents are aware of the gap.

Figure 3. Integrated theoretical framework of green tourism communication for sustainable coastal tourism development.



Source: Author's conceptual synthesis

Participatory communication and local wisdom appear to work on the other side of this problem, because they change who is speaking. Community meetings, education programs, and training workshops made residents co-communicators: residents said they remind tourists about proper behavior and feel the place belongs to them, and an official said decisions are usually revised after community feedback. Messages built on local stories and customary norms were described as more legitimate than rules imposed from outside. This supports participatory communication theory, which holds that development is more sustainable when decision-making and meaning-making are shared (Fan et al., 2023), and it agrees with the argument that social norms can shape environmental behavior where formal regulation falls short (Li et al., 2023). It also supports earlier Indonesian work on local wisdom in sustainability communication. The contribution here is to link these two dimensions to the credibility problem above: a green message carried by residents and rooted in local values is harder to dismiss as branding alone. The data support this reading but do not test it directly.

Digital media extended the reach of sustainability messages before, during, and after visits and allowed two-way interaction, for example through responses and user-generated content on posts about clean-ups and mangrove planting. At the same time, informants said that promotional content about scenery attracts more attention than educational content, and that digital literacy and technical resources are uneven among local tourism actors. This is consistent with concerns that visually driven digital communication can put attractiveness ahead of

Copyright © 2026, Indonesian Journal of Tourism and Leisure

sustainability education (Rantsia et al., 2023). Experimental evidence suggests that the way environmental information is presented on digital media affects tourists' intention to act in pro-environmental ways (Deng et al., 2024), which implies that destinations lose a chance to influence behavior when their accounts lead with scenery alone. Because this study did not collect data from tourists, that implication should be tested in future work.

Two tensions in the data deserve attention. First, branding presents the destination as exclusive and aimed at a "different type" of tourist, while participatory communication and local wisdom frame sustainability as a shared community responsibility. Whether an exclusive image and an inclusive community agenda can coexist is not settled by these data. Second, local wisdom is valued as a communication resource, yet informants noted that commercialization and growing tourist numbers can weaken the very traditions that give messages their legitimacy. Using local culture as part of the visitor experience therefore needs care, so that sustainability does not become only a symbolic component of tourism (Mihalic, 2024).

Theoretically, the findings suggest adding a credibility condition to how green tourism communication is understood. Destination image theory, participatory communication theory, environmental communication theory, and social norm theory each explain one part of the process, but the data point to a shared dependency: branding, participation, digital media, and local wisdom are effective to the extent that their messages are matched by visible practice, such as waste facilities and their upkeep at the site. This gives the integrated framework in Figure 4 a more specific claim than the general statement that communication matters for sustainability (Peeters et al., 2024). For Indonesian coastal tourism, where destinations may be promoted as green while facilities remain limited, as in the instances observed here, the finding points to planning communication and infrastructure together instead of separately. The data do not allow conclusions about cross-sector coordination between agencies, operators, and communities, which the literature identifies as a likely barrier (Ewart et al., 2024). This remains a question for further research.

This study has limits. It covers three destinations in one province and 15 purposively selected informants, so the findings describe these cases and are not meant to be generalized to all Indonesian coastal tourism. Tourists were not interviewed, so statements about their attitudes and behavior reflect what stakeholders reported and what was observed, not measured tourist responses. Future studies could add tourist perspectives, compare destinations with and without strong facilities, and examine how coordination between agencies and operators affects the consistency of messages.

6. Conclusions

This study examined green tourism communication in three coastal destinations in Lampung. Environmental branding, participatory communication, digital media, and local wisdom are used together to present these destinations as responsible, to involve communities, and to build acceptance of sustainability messages.

The credibility of this communication depends on consistency between what is communicated and what is practiced: branding loses trust when facilities do not match the message. Participatory communication builds community ownership and shared responsibility. Digital media extend the reach of sustainability values, although promotional content tends to overshadow education. Local wisdom gives messages about cultural legitimacy, but it is itself under pressure from commercialization.

The findings suggest that sustainable green tourism in these destinations is a communication-driven process that works only when messages, participation, and on-site practice are aligned. Destination managers and local governments can act on this by planning facilities and communication together, involving residents in delivering messages, and giving more space to educational content in digital channels.

Copyright © 2026, Indonesian Journal of Tourism and Leisure

7. Acknowledgment

The author would like to express sincere gratitude to all informants and stakeholders who contributed valuable insights, information, and support to this study. Their participation and cooperation were essential to the successful completion of the research.

The author also extends sincere appreciation to the Rector of Universitas Negeri Jakarta for institutional leadership and support in fostering academic research. Special thanks are addressed to the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Law for providing an academic environment that supports scholarly activities, as well as to the Coordinator of the Communication Studies Program for continuous guidance, encouragement, and facilitation throughout the research process.The author is also grateful to all colleagues, students, and parties who provided assistance, feedback, and support, either directly or indirectly, during the implementation and writing of this research.

Finally, the author sincerely apologizes if there were any shortcomings, limitations, or unintentional errors made by the research team during the research process. All findings, interpretations, and conclusions presented in this article are the responsibility of the author.

8. Funding

This research was funded by the Faculty of Social Sciences and Law, Universitas Negeri Jakarta.

9. Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

10. Declaration of the use of AI

The authors declare that generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used during the preparation of this manuscript to assist with language editing, text refinement, organization of ideas, and improvement of readability. AI tools were not used to generate research data, conduct data analysis, or draw research conclusions. All intellectual contributions, including the study design, data collection, interpretation of results, and final approval of the manuscript, remain the sole responsibility of the authors. The authors have carefully reviewed and edited all AI-assisted outputs and accept full responsibility for the content of this article.

11. Authors' Contribution

M. Fikri Akbar conceived and designed the study, developed the research methodology, supervised the research process, conducted data analysis, and prepared the original manuscript draft. Eko Aziz Apriadi contributed to the development of the research methodology, data analysis, validation of the research findings, literature review, and critical revision of the manuscript. Asmaria contributed to data collection, field investigation, data organization, document analysis, and manuscript revision. Sandy Allifiansyah contributed to field investigation, data collection, participant observation, data management, and interpretation of the research findings. Eni Kardi Wiyati contributed to fieldwork activities, document analysis, data collection, visualization of the research findings, and critical review of the manuscript. All authors contributed substantially to the development of the manuscript, reviewed and approved the final version of the article, and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of the work, ensuring the accuracy, integrity, and reliability of the research.

References

Armutcu, B., Tan, A., Amponsah, M., Parida, S., & Ramkissoon, H. (2023). Tourist behaviour: The role of digital marketing and social media. *Acta Psychologica*, 240, 104025. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2023.104025

Copyright © 2026, Indonesian Journal of Tourism and Leisure

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2022). Conceptual and design thinking for thematic analysis. *Qualitative Psychology*, 9(1), 3–26. https://doi.org/10.1037/qup0000196

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2023). Toward good practice in thematic analysis: Avoiding common problems and be(com)ing a knowing researcher. *International Journal of Transgender Health*, 24(1), 1–6. https://doi.org/10.1080/26895269.2022.2129597

Čuić Tanković, A., & Mušanović, J. (2022). Exploring direct and indirect effects of sustainability communication on destination reputation. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 25, 100729. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2022.100729

Dash, B., & Balamurugan, G. (2024). Sustainable tourism, livelihood and coastal governance: Chilika lake, India. *Ocean & Coastal Management*, 253, 107128. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ocecoaman.2024.107128

Deng, P., Zhou, X., Xie, D., & Zheng, P. (2024). How to drive tourists' pro-environmental behavior: Interactive effect of benefit appeals and goal framing. *Sustainability*, 16(13), 5600. https://doi.org/10.3390/su16135600

Ewart, M., Scherrer, P., & Dimmock, K. (2024). Managing commercial tourism for conservation and sustainable use: Policy instrument interactions in Cape Byron Marine Park, Australia. *Marine Policy*, 166, 106233. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2024.106233

Fakfare, P., Manosuthi, N., Lee, J.-S., Promsivapallop, P., Kang, H., & Han, H. (2024). Eliciting small island tourists' ecological protection, water conservation, and waste reduction behaviours. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 32, 100900. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2024.100900

Fan, K. H. F., Ng, S. L., & Bayrak, M. M. (2023). Appraising the community in community-based tourism. *Tourism Geographies*, 25(2–3), 594–614. https://doi.org/10.1080/14616688.2021.1943702

Frías-Jamilena, D. M., Polo-Peña, A. I., Peco-Torres, F., & Sabiote-Ortíz, C. M. (2024). Can co-creating a "slow destination" image boost sustainability? *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 32, 100898. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2024.100898

Hafezi, F., Bijani, M., Gholamrezai, S., Savari, M., & Panzer-Krause, S. (2023). Towards sustainable community-based ecotourism: A qualitative content analysis. *Science of the Total Environment*, 891, 164411. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2023.164411

Huang, Z., Weng, L., & Bao, J. (2022). How do visitors respond to sustainable tourism interpretations? A further investigation into content and media format. *Tourism Management*, 92, 104535. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2022.104535

Jiang, J., Gao, B. W., & Su, X. (2022). Antecedents of tourists' environmentally responsible behavior: The perspective of awe. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 619815. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.619815

Kim, M., & Pennington-Gray, L. (2025). Enhancing pro-environmental behaviors in tourism: Communication strategies rooted in elaboration factors. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 64, 101317. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2025.101317

Lee, T. H., & Jan, F.-H. (2023). How do smart tourism experiences affect visitors' environmentally responsible behavior? Influence analysis of nature-based tourists in Taiwan. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 55, 1–10. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2023.02.016

Li, J., Huang, L., He, M., & Ye, B. H. (2023). Understanding pro-environmental behavior in tourism: Developing an experimental model. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 57, 213–224. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2023.10.005

Lin, M.-T., Zhu, D., Liu, C., & Kim, P. B. (2022). A meta-analysis of antecedents of pro-environmental behavioral intention of tourists and hospitality consumers. *Tourism Management*, 93, 104566. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2022.104566

Liu, J., Li, J., Jang, S. C., & Zhao, Y. (2022). Understanding tourists' environmentally responsible behavior at coastal tourism destinations. *Marine Policy*, 143, 105178. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2022.105178

Marchi, V., Marasco, A., & Apicerni, V. (2023). Sustainability communication of tourism cities: A text mining approach. *Cities*, 143, 104590. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2023.104590

Mihalic, T. (2024). Trends in sustainable tourism paradigm: Resilience and adaptation.

Copyright © 2026, Indonesian Journal of Tourism and Leisure

Sustainability, 16(17), 7838. https://doi.org/10.3390/su16177838

Molina, R., Di Paola, G., Manno, G., Panicciari, A., Anfuso, G., & Cooper, A. (2023). A DAPSI(W)R(M) framework approach to characterization of environmental issues in touristic coastal systems: An example from Southern Spain. *Ocean & Coastal Management*, 244, 106797. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ocecoaman.2023.106797

Papagiannakis, G. E., Vlachos, P. A., Koritos, C. D., & Kassinis, G. I. (2024). Are publicly traded tourism and hospitality providers greenwashing? *Tourism Management*, 103, 104893. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2024.104893

Peeters, P., Çakmak, E., & Guiver, J. (2024). Current issues in tourism: Mitigating climate change in sustainable tourism research. *Tourism Management*, 100, 104820. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2023.104820

Quang, T. D., Nguyen, Q. X. T., Nguyen, H. V., Dang, V. Q., & Tang, N. T. (2023). Toward sustainable community-based tourism development: Perspectives from local people in Nhon Ly coastal community, Binh Dinh province, Vietnam. *PLOS ONE*, 18(10), e0287522. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0287522

Radjabov, O., Davronov, I. O., Boltayeva, M., Ashurova, M., & Navruz-Zoda, L. (2025). Prospects of using strategic communication in sustainable tourism promotion. *Frontiers in Sports and Active Living*, 7, 1623121. https://doi.org/10.3389/fspor.2025.1623121

Rantsia, M., Garrod, B., Sthapit, E., & Pesonen, J. (2023). Impact of sustainability communication on German tourists' willingness to pay for a Finnish cottage holiday. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 23(4), 283–299. https://doi.org/10.1080/15022250.2023.2284137

Rizal, A., Riyadi, A., Haryanti, Aliah, R. S., Prayogo, T., Prayitno, J., Purwanta, W., Susanto, J. P., Sofiah, N., Djayadihardja, Y. S., Ikhwanuddin, M., Wahyono, S., Yudo, S., & Sachoemar, S. I. (2022). Development of sustainable coastal benchmarks for local wisdom in Pangandaran village communities. *Sustainability*, 14(21), 14648. https://doi.org/10.3390/su142114648

Siegel, L. A., Tussyadiah, I., & Scarles, C. (2023). Exploring behaviors of social media-induced tourists and the use of behavioral interventions as salient destination response strategy. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 27, 100765. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2023.100765

Suleman, M. A., Syed, J., & Koburtay, T. (2024). A structure and agency perspective of sustainable tourism. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 27(14), 2199–2216. https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2024.2302072

Taecharungroj, V., Vasiljević, Đ., & Pattaratanakun, A. (2024). Snapshots of nature: Harnessing Flickr data to frame sustainable brand positioning strategies for Thailand's national parks. *Journal of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism,* 46, 100765. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jort.2024.100766

Copyright © 2026, Indonesian Journal of Tourism and Leisure