

VISUAL STORYTELLING FOR KEMUNING TOURISM VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT: A DOCUMENTARY FILM APPROACH

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ABSTRAK

Desa wisata di perdesaan Indonesia semakin bergantung pada promosi digital, tetapi fragmentasi promosi dan kepemilikan usaha oleh pihak luar yang tidak menetap terus menggerus manfaat bagi masyarakat serta keaslian pengalaman pengunjung. Kajian ini menelaah penceritaan visual (visual storytelling) melalui purwarupa film dokumenter sebagai strategi komunikasi partisipatif untuk Desa Kemuning, Kabupaten Karanganyar, Jawa Tengah. Penelitian memadukan analisis cermat atas film dokumenter dengan diskusi kelompok terfokus (Focus Group Discussion/FGD) yang melibatkan empat belas pemangku kepentingan desa. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa purwarupa film tersebut membangun identitas destinasi yang imersif dan berpijak pada keaslian, selaras dengan nilai-nilai kearifan lokal, terutama kebersamaan dan kepedulian terhadap kelestarian ekologi. Analisis FGD mengungkap lima tantangan struktural: kepemilikan aset oleh pihak nonlokal, ketiadaan pendampingan kelembagaan, fragmentasi promosi, persaingan harga pada wisata petualangan, dan lemahnya tata kelola lingkungan. Kajian ini berargumen bahwa penceritaan visual berfungsi sekaligus sebagai jangkar identitas, kerangka promosi lintas platform, sarana musyawarah komunitas, dan argumen tata kelola, empat fungsi yang menempatkan komunikasi sebagai titik masuk yang logis bagi pengembangan pariwisata berkelanjutan di Kemuning.

Kata kunci: penceritaan visual, film dokumenter, pariwisata berbasis komunitas, kearifan lokal, Kemuning

ABSTRACT

Tourism villages in rural Indonesia increasingly rely on digital promotion, yet promotional fragmentation and absentee business ownership continue to undermine community benefit and authentic visitor experience. This study examines visual storytelling through a prototype documentary film as a participatory communication strategy for Kemuning Village, Karanganyar Regency, Central Java. The study combines close documentary film analysis with a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) involving fourteen village stakeholders. Findings show that the prototype film constructs an immersive, authenticity-grounded destination identity aligned with local wisdom values, particularly togetherness and ecological stewardship. FGD analysis reveals five structural challenges: non-local asset ownership, absence of institutional assistance, promotional fragmentation, adventure tourism pricing competition, and weak environmental governance. The study argues that visual storytelling functions simultaneously as an identity anchor, a multi-platform promotion framework, a community deliberation tool, and a governance argument, four functions that position communication as the logical entry point for sustainable tourism development in Kemuning.

Keywords: visual storytelling, documentary, film, community-based tourism, local wisdom

INTRODUCTION

Tourism development in rural Indonesia has increasingly relied on digital platforms and social media as instruments for constructing destination visibility (Pitana & Diarta, 2009; Kementerian Pariwisata dan Ekonomi Kreatif, 2022). Digital channels offer low-cost, wide-reaching reach for villages that were previously invisible to urban markets (Hanan & Putit, 2014; Leung et al., 2013), yet promotion alone, when disconnected from a community's narrative capacities and lived realities, produces a gap between what is promised and what is delivered, a gap that erodes visitor trust and undermines the very visibility the promotion was designed to build (Gartner, 1993; Morgan et al., 2011; Ooi, 2002). The problem is not merely technological; it is fundamentally communicative, requiring dialogic, participatory approaches rooted in genuine community self-understanding.

Kemuning Village, situated in the highland belt of Karanganyar Regency at approximately 1,100 metres above sea level, offers a compelling case. The village is bordered by working tea plantations, overlooks rolling hills and mountain peaks, and hosts a network of community-run tourism sites including Kali Pucung (a natural river space) and Kemuning Jeep Adventure (an off-road experience). The Pokdarwis (Tourism Awareness Group) coordinates a loose network of operators, while a promotion team formed with Bank Indonesia assistance remains constrained by the absence of integrated village-level governance. The result is a promotional landscape that is fragmented, reactive, and driven by individual initiative rather than collective vision.

Several interlocking structural problems compound this deficit. First, the most commercially significant tourism enterprises operating under the Kemuning name are not owned by village residents. Second, the regional tourism office had allocated no capacity-building budget to Kemuning by the time of this research. Third, environmental stewardship has been inconsistent, with investor-operated venues disregarding local ecological norms. Fourth, the pricing of the jeep adventure had become a site of unhealthy competition rather than differentiated positioning. Fifth, creative development of attractions had failed to keep pace with visitor expectations.

Against this backdrop, this study explores visual storytelling through documentary film as a participatory communication intervention. The documentary produced is explicitly a prototype: a demonstration artefact designed to show what Kemuning can look and feel like when its landscape, community, and cultural practices are given purposeful cinematic form. Drawing on Block's (2013) framework of seven visual elements, space, line and shape, tone, colour, movement, and rhythm, the film was modelled on the National Geographic short documentary 'Slowly into Secret Scotland' and adapted to Kemuning's specific highland character. Three research questions guide this study: (1) How do the visual elements of the prototype film represent Kemuning's identity and potential? (2) What structural and communicative challenges do stakeholders identify as the primary obstacles to tourism development? (3) How can visual storytelling, embedded in a participatory communication strategy, address those challenges while remaining grounded in local wisdom?

This study makes three contributions. Empirically, it provides the first systematic, stakeholder-informed analysis of Kemuning's communication situation. Theoretically, it proposes that documentary film functions not only as promotional content but as a site of community self-representation, brand identity construction, and participatory knowledge production (Pink, 2006; Aufderheide, 2007; Rakic & Chambers, 2012). Methodologically, it demonstrates how documentary film analysis and participatory FGD can be combined to produce integrated communication strategy recommendations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on documentary film as a tourism communication instrument in Indonesia remains limited. Most existing studies focus on promotional video effectiveness (Sugihartati, 2020; Wulandari & Pratama, 2021) or social media content strategy (Fatanti & Suyadnya, 2015), rather than examining documentary film as a form of community self-representation and strategic communication. Studies on visual storytelling for destination branding (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013; Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2009) have not been systematically applied to community-based tourism (CBT) contexts in rural Java, where the gap between promotional imagery and community benefit is especially acute. This study addresses that gap by examining whether and how documentary film, when grounded in local wisdom (kearifan lokal), can function as both a tourism promotion tool and a participatory governance instrument.

Three theoretical frameworks guide data collection and analysis, and their integration is central to the study's argument. The first is Block's (2013) visual grammar framework, which provides the operational vocabulary for analysing the documentary prototype across seven visual elements: space, line and shape, tone, colour, movement, and rhythm. This framework is applied to identify the communicative choices embedded in the film and to argue that these choices constitute a form of strategic communication, not merely aesthetic preference. The second framework is community-based tourism (CBT) theory (Ashley & Roe, 1998; Saufi et al., 2014; Sebele, 2010), which provides the normative criteria against which the film and the FGD data are evaluated. CBT insists that tourism must deliver genuine benefits to host communities, respect local cultures and ecologies, and give community members meaningful voice in governance.

These criteria determine which FGD themes are treated as structurally significant and which film design choices are seen as making governance arguments rather than merely aesthetic ones. The third is participatory communication for development (Servaes, 2008; Mefalopulos, 2008; Freire, 1970), which frames the FGD itself as a deliberative practice and situates the documentary prototype as an instrument of community self-representation. The three frameworks interact throughout the analysis: visual grammar describes how the film works; CBT explains why it matters; and participatory communication theory explains how the process of producing and discussing the film itself constitutes a form of community action. Tensions between frameworks, for example, when a visually compelling choice conflicts with strict CBT authenticity criteria, are addressed by treating the prototype as an argument rather than a claim of fact, and by checking all interpretive claims against the community's own FGD statements.

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative research design that integrates two methods: close documentary film analysis and a Focus Group Discussion (FGD). This combination was selected because the study's dual purpose, evaluating the communicative potential of visual storytelling and diagnosing the structural conditions Kemuning faces, requires both textual and participatory forms of data. Film analysis generates evidence about how the prototype constructs meaning; the FGD generates evidence about what the community experiences as its own most pressing communication problems.

The research was conducted in Kemuning Village, Ngargoyoso District, Karanganyar Regency, Central Java, Indonesia. Kemuning was selected because it combines well-documented natural assets, an active Pokdarwis structure, and a set of governance and promotional challenges that are representative of a broader pattern in Indonesian rural tourism. The FGD took place on 21 May 2026 at Medjora Caffe, a community venue within the village.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure coverage of all major stakeholder positions in Kemuning's tourism ecosystem (Patton, 2015). The fourteen participants included: the Acting Village Head (Pj. Kepala Desa); the Chairman of Pokdarwis; a Bank Indonesia representative who had previously facilitated the village's promotion team; operators from Kemuning Jeep Adventure and Kemuning Sky Hill; event organisers from Kemuning Ceria and Kemuning Adventure; UMKM (small enterprise) representatives; and academic facilitators from Universitas Sebelas Maret. This composition was designed to capture both formal governance perspectives and ground-level operational experience, and to include both actors who benefit from the current situation and those who are structurally marginalised by it. The FGD was conducted in Indonesian across two structured sessions and subsequently transcribed for analysis.

A note on researcher positionality is necessary. The authors produced the documentary prototype that is analysed in this study. This dual role, as both the film's creators and its analysts, carries risks of confirmation bias. These risks were managed through three measures: (1) the FGD was designed and facilitated before the film analysis was written, so community responses could not be retrospectively accommodated to fit analytical conclusions; (2) FGD data were analysed using established thematic analysis procedures independently before being integrated with the film analysis; and (3) analytical claims about the film's communicative effects are framed as arguments about what the film makes possible, not claims about what it achieves with any given audience.

The documentary film prototype was produced as part of the applied research and community service programme (Penelitian dan Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat, P2M) at Universitas Sebelas Maret (Direktorat Penelitian dan Pengabdian Masyarakat UNS, 2026). It was modelled on the National Geographic short documentary 'Slowly into Secret Scotland,' selected through a systematic review of ten award-winning short tourism documentaries because its approach, immersive landscape cinematography, slow rhythm, community encounter sequences, and a clear narrative arc from arrival to contemplative departure, was most closely aligned with Kemuning's highland character and CBT identity. Ten sequences were selected for analysis on the basis of two criteria: they represent each of the three narrative movements (arrival, encounter, closure), and they are the sequences in which the most distinctive visual choices were made, offering the richest material for Block's (2013) framework analysis.

FGD transcripts were analysed using the six-phase thematic analysis procedure of Braun and Clarke (2006). Phase 1 (familiarisation) involved repeated reading of all transcripts in the original Indonesian. Phase 2 (initial coding) applied open coding to all substantive statements, generating 84 initial codes. Phase 3 (theme search) grouped codes into candidate themes; Phase 4 (theme review) tested the coherence and distinctiveness of each theme against the full dataset, resulting in five stable thematic clusters corresponding to the five structural challenges described in the results. Phase 5 (theme definition) involved naming each theme and writing a precise definition tying it to specific coded evidence. Phase 6 (reporting) produced the narrative account presented in the Results and Discussion section, in which each theme is illustrated with direct participant quotations and connected to the relevant CBT and participatory communication literature. The five themes identified, non-local ownership, absence of institutional accompaniment, promotional fragmentation, adventure tourism governance, and environmental accountability, directly organise the FGD findings subsection below, ensuring full alignment between the analytical process and the written discussion. Documentary film sequences were analysed through close reading of visual composition guided by Block's (2013) framework and supported by visual semiotics scholarship (Rose, 2016; Hall, 2005). All analytical claims were cross-checked against FGD data to ensure that the film's visual choices were connected to community-identified values rather than imposed by the researchers' own aesthetic preferences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis is organised around four functions that the documentary prototype performs as a strategic communication tool: (1) identity anchor, (2) multi-platform promotion foundation, (3) community deliberation instrument, and (4) governance argument. This four-function framework is introduced here at the outset and serves as the organising structure for both the visual analysis and the FGD findings, ensuring that the two strands of evidence are consistently integrated rather than presented in isolation. This approach responds to recent calls in the visual storytelling literature (Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2009; Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013; Knorre & Yashchenko, 2022) for frameworks that connect film design choices directly to destination governance and community outcomes, rather than treating visual analysis as an end in itself.

Visual Analysis: The Film as Strategic Communication

The documentary prototype organises its visual argument across three broad movements: arrival and immersion in the natural landscape, encounter with the human community, and contemplative closure at golden hour. Each movement draws on a distinctive configuration of Block's (2013) visual elements. Table 1 provides a detailed, image-anchored analysis of ten key sequences. Frame A and Frame B per row show paired stills from the National Geographic reference film, allowing the reader to see the precise visual language being adapted.

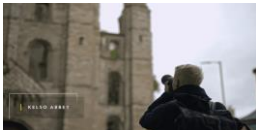
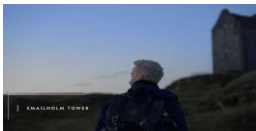
Table 1. Visual Storytelling Analysis: Reference Film Screenshots and Sequence Design in the Kemuning Documentary Prototype

Seq.	Timecode	Reference Screenshots Frame A & Frame B (National Geographic)	Visual Elements (Block, 2013)	Communicative Function & Emotional Effect	Local Wisdom & CBT Dimension
1 Cycling Opening	0:20 - 0:25	Frame A  Frame B	Space: wide landscape framing places subject within, not against, environment. Movement: cycling pace	Function 1 (Identity anchor): Establishes Kemuning as a traversable, explorable world. The cycling figure functions as a	The route passes through active tea plantations, grounding the film in Kemuning's agricultural identity and

Seq.	Timecode	Reference Screenshots <i>Frame A & Frame B (National Geographic)</i>	Visual Elements (Block, 2013)	Communicative Function & Emotional Effect	Local Wisdom & CBT Dimension
			mirrors visitor discovery rhythm. Tone & Colour: lush highland greens, filtered natural light. Line & Shape: road geometry leads the gaze forward.	surrogate for the viewer, creating a first-person sense of arrival and discovery before any specific attraction is named (Urry & Larsen, 2011; Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2009). The viewer becomes an imaginative participant rather than a spectator.	enacting the CBT principle that tourism and resident livelihood are inseparable. The labour of the land is foregrounded as part of the attraction itself (Sartini, 2004).
2 Map Overlay	0:28 - 0:35	Frame A  Frame B 	Line & Shape: cartographic lines communicate connectivity and navigability. Space: territory visualised from above yields cognitive orientation. Colour: warm overlays maintain affective continuity.	Function 2 (Multi-platform foundation): The map communicates that attractions are multiple and connected, providing a visual grammar that can be translated across Instagram, TikTok, and promotional materials (Hall, 2005). Compared to Fatanti and Suyadnya's (2015) study of Bali tourism Instagram content, this approach establishes a systemic visual identity rather than isolated post aesthetics.	The map's dispersed-site structure mirrors Kemuning's CBT architecture: many destinations, many community operators, interconnected by collective rather than corporate logic. This is a community map, not a resort map, and its form makes an implicit governance argument.
3 Community Encounter	0:45 - 0:50	Frame A  Frame B	Space: social framing centres human interaction within the landscape. Movement:	Function 3 (Deliberation tool): Centres the human texture of the village. The organic, unscripted quality produces	Embodies kebersamaan (togetherness) as a visual and embodied practice rather than a stated

Seq.	Timecode	Reference Screenshots <i>Frame A & Frame B (National Geographic)</i>	Visual Elements (Block, 2013)	Communicative Function & Emotional Effect	Local Wisdom & CBT Dimension
			gestural, conversational dynamics carry natural energy. Rhythm: unhurried pacing signals genuine encounter. Ambient Sound: wind and water create a sensory surround.	credibility over staged performance (Pink, 2006; Aufderheide, 2007). This aligns with Knorre and Yashchenko's (2022) finding that authentic encounter sequences generate significantly higher viewer engagement than scenery-only tourism films.	value. Foregrounding this before any adventure attraction makes the argument that Kemuning's most distinctive offer is its people, not only its landscapes.
4 Mountain Air & Ecology	1:50 - 1:59	Frame A  Frame B 	Tone & Colour: natural blues and greens; clear unfiltered highland light. Space: expansive vertical framing emphasises altitude and openness. Movement: mist drift, foliage movement, slow camera. Rhythm: immersive, slow, physiologically calming.	Function 4 (Governance argument): Constructs Kemuning as a therapeutic counter-space to urban stress, aligning with the 'healing tourism' discourse (Rohmah et al., 2022). By showing the landscape at its most immersive, the sequence cinematically argues for ecological stewardship, establishing what would be irretrievably lost if the natural environment were degraded by investor activity.	Ecological integrity is central to Kemuning's local identity and, as the FGD revealed, under active threat from investor venues not observing community environmental norms. The sequence makes the case for stewardship through visual evidence rather than didactic argument.
5 Landscape Exploration	2:10 - 2:15	Frame A	Space: panoramic integration of subject into landscape.	Function 1 (Identity anchor): Constructs Kemuning as a multi-site	The dispersed, organic exploration reflects the actual CBT

Seq.	Timecode	Reference Screenshots <i>Frame A & Frame B (National Geographic)</i>	Visual Elements (Block, 2013)	Communicative Function & Emotional Effect	Local Wisdom & CBT Dimension
		 Frame B 	Line & Shape: plantation geometry and hillside contours as visual grammar. Movement: subject traversing multiple terrain types. Rhythm: dynamic but grounded.	destination rewarding extended engagement. The subject's movement implies an itinerary, consistent with Morgan et al.'s (2011) argument that effective destination branding shows experiential sequences, not isolated attractions. Visual complexity suggests the place repays return visits.	structure: many sites, many operators, interconnected by community rather than corporate direction (Saufi et al., 2014). The UMKM representative's FGD suggestion that jeep tours route through local enterprise sites embodies the same integrative principle.
6 Journey & Social Photography	2:43 - 2:50	Frame A  Frame B 	Space: subject embedded in landscape, pausing at social and scenic nodes. Movement: organic stops within forward motion create contemplative pauses. Rhythm: chosen slowness rather than forced delay. Colour: warm golden undertones begin to emerge.	Function 2 (Multi-platform foundation): The photography motif positions Kemuning as content-generative, a place visitors will post about. This is the 'mythologising' strategy the FGD facilitator introduced, connecting to Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier's (2009) finding that tourism film-generated narratives drive user-created content and organic destination promotion.	Stopping to photograph local UMKM products enacts what the UMKM representative explicitly requested in the FGD: that tourist routes incorporate local enterprise points, not only natural spectacles. The film makes this argument visually before it can be made administratively.
7 Panorama & Connectivity	3:15 - 3:23	Frame A 	Space: wide aerial perspective	Function 4 (Governance argument):	The river and bridge recall Kali Pucung,

Seq.	Timecode	Reference Screenshots <i>Frame A & Frame B (National Geographic)</i>	Visual Elements (Block, 2013)	Communicative Function & Emotional Effect	Local Wisdom & CBT Dimension
		 Frame B 	shows landscape scale. Line & Shape: bridge and river lines lead the eye across territory. Tone: overcast, even light produces meditative quality. Movement: subject walking at the scale of the land.	Positions Kemuning within a larger highland ecosystem, implicitly arguing for ecological scale thinking over site-by-site commercialisation. The human figure dwarfed by landscape produces wonder rather than intimidation (Bordwell & Thompson, 2017), supporting the case for preserving the landscape as a shared communal resource.	one of Kemuning's actual attractions. The wide perspective echoes the CBT model: Kemuning is a networked territory of community-managed experiences, not a single commercial destination.
8 Cultural Heritage & Photography	3:25 - 3:27	Frame A  Frame B 	Space: medium shots foreground subject-environment interaction. Line & Shape: architectural geometry contrasts with soft highland sky. Tone: flat grey light produces documentary credibility. Movement: subject performing active witnessing.	Function 3 (Deliberation tool): The photography gesture performs a tutorial for visitors: this is how you inhabit this place. Creates a visual permission structure for visitor documentation. Ooi (2002) argues this kind of 'mediated authenticity' is central to modern tourism experience, and the act of photographing becomes part of the experience itself.	The heritage photography sequence carries a particular resonance for Kemuning, where the 'Kemuning' name itself is a form of cultural capital. Visitors documenting and sharing what makes Kemuning distinctive contributes to organic brand extension without requiring central coordination.
9 Golden Hour Closure	3:30 - 3:32	Frame A 	Tone & Colour: golden warm light;	Function 1 (Identity anchor): Creates what	The contemplative quality speaks to

Seq.	Timecode	Reference Screenshots <i>Frame A & Frame B (National Geographic)</i>	Visual Elements (Block, 2013)	Communicative Function & Emotional Effect	Local Wisdom & CBT Dimension
		 Frame B 	silhouette aesthetic at dusk. Line & Shape: horizon and body silhouette as compositional poetry. Space: vast, open, contemplative. Movement: minimal, only wind and breath. Rhythm: slow, elegiac, completing.	Gartner (1993) calls nostalgia in advance, the viewer feels they will miss a place they have not yet visited. The silhouette composition elevates landscape to poetry, producing emotional residue that motivates return. This aligns with Kavaratzis and Hatch's (2013) finding that identity-based destination branding requires emotional depth unavailable in conventional promotional formats.	the Javanese value of inner stillness (batin), rarely visible in conventional tourism promotion. This is kearifan lokal rendered cinematically rather than narrated didactically, making the strongest possible argument for what Kemuning uniquely offers.
10 Final Contemplation	5:28 - 5:32	Frame A  Frame B 	Tone & Colour: twilight palette; deep blues and purples. Space: vast, framed by trees; subject small within landscape. Movement: almost still; reflections on water. Rhythm: barely there, the film breathes out.	Function 1 (Identity anchor): Provides emotional and narrative resolution. The figure in quiet contemplation at the water's edge performs the fullness of visitor experience, not a transaction completed but a state of being achieved. This image is what viewers carry away: rest, arrival, and belonging rather than consumption (Urry & Larsen, 2011).	This closing sequence is the purest cinematic expression of kebersamaan at the level of person and place: the visitor resting within the landscape rather than extracting from it. For Kemuning, whose local wisdom values the natural environment as shared communal heritage, this constitutes both a philosophical

Seq.	Timecode	Reference Screenshots <i>Frame A & Frame B (National Geographic)</i>	Visual Elements (Block, 2013)	Communicative Function & Emotional Effect	Local Wisdom & CBT Dimension
					statement and a marketing argument that cannot be made in words alone.

Reading across Table 1, the film's visual grammar consistently prioritises deep space over confinement, slowness over urgency, and organic integration over artificial spectacle. This is a deliberate communicative argument that Kemuning's offer is grounded in what Block (2013) calls deep visual space, compositional depth implying complexity, invitation, and meaning rather than the shallow spectacle of commercial advertising. This finding is consistent with Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier's (2009) conclusion that tourism films generating the strongest destination image employ narrative depth and emotional progression rather than feature-listing. Mateer (2014) notes that documentary film gains credibility precisely because it shows rather than tells, and this credibility is the currency Kemuning needs in a tourism market where algorithmically oversaturated promotion has bred widespread visitor scepticism.

The community encounter sequences (Sequences 3 and 6) represent the most significant departure from conventional destination marketing, which typically subordinates local people to human scenery. By centring the human encounter, the prototype performs what Aufderheide (2007) describes as the documentary's ethical obligation to its subjects: not to instrumentalise them as backdrop but to present them as agents whose presence constitutes the destination's essential value. Compared to purely scenic promotional videos, this choice aligns with Knorre and Yashchenko's (2022) finding that human encounter sequences in destination documentaries produce significantly stronger emotional engagement and visit intention. This is simultaneously a branding argument: in a market where most destinations offer comparable natural views, what Kemuning offers that is genuinely scarce is the quality of human encounter it provides.

Table 2. Schematic Framework: Visual Storytelling, Local Wisdom, and Tourism Development in Kemuning

Core Dimension	Key Concepts & Theoretical Lenses	Evidence from Documentary Prototype	Evidence from FGD / Community Data
VISUAL LANGUAGE <i>Block, 2013; Mateer, 2014; Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2009; Knorre & Yashchenko, 2022</i>	Seven visual elements: Space, Line & Shape, Tone, Colour, Movement, Rhythm Documentary as communicative act and social practice Emotional engagement through mise-en-scene Visual grammar as transferable brand	Wide landscape framing establishes Kemuning as traversable and open. Golden-hour sequences produce contemplative closure. Slow rhythm counters acceleration aesthetics of short-form social media. Community encounter sequences prioritise human warmth over spectacular scenery.	Village head demanded authentic representation: 'tampilkan apa adanya' (show it as it is). Stakeholders' critique of over-promoted tourism that underdelivers validates the choice of slow, authentic visual grammar over viral spectacle, consistent with FGD Theme 3 (promotional fragmentation).

Core Dimension	Key Concepts & Theoretical Lenses	Evidence from Documentary Prototype	Evidence from FGD / Community Data
	language		
LOCAL WISDOM (KEARIFAN LOKAL) <i>Sartini, 2004; Sibarani, 2012; UNESCO, 2003; Rohmah et al., 2022</i>	Kebersamaan (togetherness) as organising principle Ecological stewardship and highland agricultural identity Cultural hospitality norms and host-guest ethics Javanese batin (inner stillness) Communal benefit as the metric of tourism success	Community encounter sequences embody kebersamaan as visual practice. Tea plantation and mountain ecology are foregrounded as identity-defining features. Dusk silhouette sequences render the Javanese contemplative value cinematically rather than didactically.	FGD Theme 2 (absence of accompaniment): Investors disregard for kearifan lokal identified as a major structural grievance. Participants described Kemuning's model as distinctive because 'berbasis kebersamaan.' UMKM request to be integrated into jeep routes enacts CBT collective benefit value.
CBT GOVERNANCE <i>Ashley & Roe, 1998; Saufi et al., 2014; Sebele, 2010; Scheyvens, 1999; Hall, 2000</i>	Community ownership of productive tourism assets Participatory management (Pokdarwis as forkom) Equitable benefit distribution to residents Ecological sustainability as non-negotiable condition Cultural integrity as governance principle	The film's dispersed-site visual structure (map overlay, multi-location exploration) mirrors CBT's organic, non-centralised architecture. No single attraction is privileged; the village itself is the experience. The film makes a governance argument through form, not narration.	FGD Theme 1 (non-local ownership): Pokdarwis functions as coordination forum, not revenue manager. Non-local ownership of Kemuning Sky Hill and external control of the kemuning.com domain represent active CBT violations the film strategy alone cannot resolve.
COMMUNICATION STRATEGY <i>Servaes, 2008; Mefalopulos, 2008; Freire, 1970; Wilkins & Mody, 2001; Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2009</i>	Participatory design grounded in community dialogue Media as community voice, not external broadcast Branding from within: identity constructed by residents (Morgan et al., 2011) Visual grammar as multi-platform	Prototype film was designed in dialogue with FGD stakeholder data. Visual structure reflects community-identified values rather than external tourist expectations. The film's grammar is directly transferable to shorter social media formats.	FGD Theme 3 (promotional fragmentation): Promotion fragmented across individual EO accounts with no shared identity. The hashtag #kemuningngangeni failed without institutional coordination. The primary missing condition is pendampingan, not content ideas.

Core Dimension	Key Concepts & Theoretical Lenses	Evidence from Documentary Prototype	Evidence from FGD / Community Data
	integration foundation Film prototype as anchor for Reels, TikTok, photography		
BRAND IDENTITY <i>Morgan et al., 2011; Gartner, 1993; Urry & Larsen, 2011; Kavatzis & Hatch, 2013</i>	Place name as brand asset: 'Nama Kemuning itu menjual!' Emotion-based positioning: healing, contemplation, community Differentiation from corporate competitors Nostalgia in advance as emotional conversion Visual mythologising through documentary authenticity	'Kemuning' (a flowering shrub) carries natural beauty connotations deployed symbolically through the film's chromatics. The brand value is felt rather than declared, avoiding over-signification that sophisticated audiences distrust.	FGD Theme 4 (adventure tourism governance): Multiple participants affirmed the brand value of 'Kemuning.' External enterprises appropriate the name with no contribution obligation. A village regulation (perdes) governing brand use is a logical next step.
STRUCTURAL CHALLENGES <i>Hall, 2000; Telfer & Sharpley, 2008; Chambers, 2012; Putra, 2011; Kavatzis & Hatch, 2013</i>	Theme 1: Non-local ownership (no collaboration obligation) Theme 2: Absence of pendampingan (institutional accompaniment) Theme 3: Promotional fragmentation (no shared visual identity) Theme 4: Adventure tourism pricing competition Theme 5: Weak environmental accountability from investors	The prototype cannot resolve structural problems alone. Its role is to provide a shared visual reference that stakeholders can rally around and use in governance conversations. A premium visual identity supports a premium pricing argument: repositioning the jeep at IDR 500,000 requires destination image only sustained visual content can build.	All five themes were consistently articulated across both FGD sessions, validating their systemic character. The single most repeated demand was pendampingan (sustained institutional accompaniment), not financial resources. The primary bottleneck is relational and communicative, not material, making communication-led development the logical strategic entry point.

FGD Findings: Five Structural Themes

The FGD thematic analysis produced five stable themes, each reflecting a structurally significant challenge in Kemuning's tourism ecosystem. The themes are presented in order of the frequency and intensity with which they were articulated across both sessions.

Theme 1: Non-local ownership. The village's most commercially significant tourism sites are not owned by residents. Kemuning Sky Hill dominates the area's online presence while operating entirely independently of the village government, with no formal contractual relationship with Pokdarwis and no obligation to contribute to local development. As one participant observed, 'pengelolanya bukan orang Kemuning', the managers are not people of Kemuning. The village's official-looking website was also registered to an external entity at the time of the FGD. This represents a fundamental breach of the CBT principle that place identity and economic benefit should accrue to the community that gives the place its character (Ashley & Roe, 1998; Sebele, 2010; Putra, 2011).

Theme 2: Absence of institutional accompaniment. Pendampingan, sustained, relational, expert guidance, was invoked repeatedly. The regional tourism office had allocated no training budget to Kemuning. Existing support came through the university's P2M programme and Bank Indonesia's community initiative, neither constituting the continuous institutional presence the community requires. This vacuum is among the most predictable causes of CBT failure across Southeast Asia (Telfer & Sharpley, 2008; Saufi et al., 2014).

Theme 3: Promotional fragmentation. Individual EOs maintain separate TikTok, Instagram, and website presences with no shared visual language. The collective hashtag #kemuningngangeni failed without institutional coordination. The academic facilitator's concept of 'mythologising' the destination, building a digital narrative with the emotional depth to create genuine curiosity and shareability, resonated strongly but was immediately complicated by the question of institutional responsibility. This finding aligns with Fatanti and Suyadnya's (2015) analysis of fragmented tourism social media in Bali, which found that without a coordinating visual identity, individual promotional efforts cancel each other out in algorithmic visibility.

Theme 4: Adventure tourism pricing and governance. Kemuning Jeep Adventure operators face price competition from neighbouring villages that depresses both revenue and perceived quality. One participant made a strategically important observation: if the jeep experience is repositioned at IDR 500,000 per trip, then promotional media placement must shift accordingly, targeting audiences with higher disposable incomes and stronger preferences for authentic premium highland experiences. This is precisely the audience a well-crafted documentary prototype addresses. The connection between the film's premium visual identity and the jeep product's pricing ambitions is direct: Kavaratzis and Hatch (2013) demonstrate that identity-based destination branding supports price premiums in ways that feature-based promotion cannot.

Theme 5: Environmental governance. Several participants expressed concern that investor-operated venues do not observe the ecological stewardship values that residents associate with their highland identity. Eco-authenticity is consistently identified as a primary driver of destination choice for environmentally literate tourists (Rohmah et al., 2022; Hall, 2000; Sharpley, 2009). If Kemuning's natural landscape is degraded for short-term commercial gain, its most irreplaceable competitive advantage is lost, a finding the visual analysis of Sequences 4 and 7 directly addresses by establishing what is cinematically at stake.

The Four Functions of Visual Storytelling: Integrated Discussion

The four-function framework introduced at the outset of the Results section can now be substantiated with evidence from both the visual analysis and the FGD themes. The functions are not sequential; they operate simultaneously whenever the documentary prototype is screened, distributed, or discussed.

Function 1, Identity anchor, responds directly to Theme 1 (non-local ownership). In a context where the Kemuning name is appropriated by multiple external actors, a documentary articulating a coherent, community-grounded visual identity provides an authoritative counter-narrative. Morgan et al. (2011) argue that destination branding is most durable when built from the inside out, from the community's own values, rather than fabricated to meet tourist expectations. This study extends that argument by showing, through the visual analysis of Sequences 1, 5, 9, and 10, that an immersive, locally grounded documentary achieves this kind of inside-out construction in ways that social media posts cannot.

Function 2, Multi-platform promotion foundation, responds to Theme 3 (promotional fragmentation). The documentary prototype provides a shared visual grammar, colour palette,

compositional rhythm, human-centred focus, that can be translated into shorter content formats without losing coherence. This is what Mateer (2014) describes as the generative function of an established visual grammar: once established through a sustained production, it can be applied iteratively across platforms at low cost. Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier's (2009) empirical finding that tourism film-generated narratives drive user-created content makes this function directly relevant to the #kemuningngangeni challenge: a documentary-anchored visual identity provides the raw material for organic social media amplification.

Function 3, Community deliberation instrument, responds to Theme 2 (absence of institutional accompaniment) by offering an alternative form of structured community conversation. Pink (2006) observes that making a visual text compels communities to make explicit decisions about what they value and want to protect. The FGD itself is a version of this process, and the high degree of alignment between FGD themes and the film's visual choices demonstrates that the prototype genuinely reflects community self-understanding rather than external imposition.

Function 4, Governance argument, responds to Themes 1, 4, and 5 simultaneously. A documentary framing Kemuning's tourism as community-based, ecologically grounded, and rooted in local wisdom simultaneously makes the case for the regulatory framework needed to protect these values: a village regulation (peraturan desa) governing commercial use of the Kemuning name; benefit-sharing agreements ensuring investor sites contribute to community development; and promotional governance preventing operators from representing themselves as 'Kemuning' without accountability. As Chambers (2012) notes, communication is irreducibly political, and a community that controls its own representation is empirically stronger in governance negotiations.

CONCLUSION

This study has argued that visual storytelling through a locally grounded documentary film prototype constitutes a viable, strategically sophisticated communication approach for sustainable tourism development in Kemuning Village. The visual analysis demonstrates that the film, structured around Block's (2013) seven visual elements, produces an immersive and authenticity-grounded representation of Kemuning's identity that simultaneously anchors the village's brand, provides a multi-platform visual grammar, facilitates community deliberation, and makes a governance argument about the regulatory framework the village needs.

The FGD thematic analysis reveals five structural challenges: non-local ownership of key tourism assets, the absence of institutional accompaniment, promotional fragmentation, unresolved adventure tourism pricing governance, and inadequate environmental accountability. Visual storytelling alone cannot resolve these structural problems. What it can do, and what the prototype demonstrably begins to do, is provide a shared identity reference point, a transferable grammar for integrated promotion, and a communicative claim about what Kemuning deserves to become. The four functions identified are consistent with findings from comparable studies on visual storytelling and destination branding (Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2009; Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013; Knorre & Yashchenko, 2022), while extending those frameworks into the specific context of community-based tourism governance in rural Java.

Future research should test the prototype film's reception among urban tourist audiences in Surakarta and Semarang to establish whether the emotional and semiotic effects identified translate into visit intention. Participatory documentary production, in which Kemuning residents produce their own content, offers a further avenue for deepening representational alignment. Finally, the governance dimensions foregrounded by the FGD, particularly a village regulation (perdes) protecting the Kemuning brand, warrant dedicated policy analysis beyond the scope of this communication study. As one participant observed: 'Nama Kemuning itu menjual', the name Kemuning sells. The challenge is to ensure that what it sells is genuinely, accountably, and sustainably Kemuning.

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