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Storytelling Marketing on @fromthisisland Instagram: Green and Sustainability Messages and Audience Perceptions of Brand Image

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Abstract

Although research on storytelling marketing and sustainability communication has developed, studies on the representation of sustainability narratives through storytelling on Instagram and audience interpretations of brand image formation in local Indonesian skincare brands remain limited. This study aims to explore how the Instagram account @fromthisisland represents green and sustainability messages through storytelling and how these narratives are perceived by audiences in relation to brand image. This research used a constructivist qualitative approach. Data were collected through content analysis of 25 purposely selected Instagram posts containing storytelling elements and sustainability messages, a focus group discussion with six purposively selected followers of @fromthisisland on Instagram, and semi-structured interviews with two experts in marketing and digital media communication. Data were analysed using qualitative content analysis through decontextualization, recontextualization, categorization, and compilation. Across the 25 analysed posts, sustainability narratives were represented through natural ingredients, responsible production, local community empowerment, and environmental conservation. Participants generally perceived these narratives as authentic and transparent and associated them with perceptions of positive brand image attributes. They also interpreted storytelling as supporting understanding of sustainability values more than emotional engagement or active participation. These findings reflect perceptions from a small purposive sample and are not intended to be generalised. This study contributes to storytelling marketing and sustainability communication literature by integrating Instagram content representation and audience interpretation to explain how sustainability narratives are understood in relation to brand image in a local Indonesian skincare brand context.

KEYWORDS

storytelling marketing; sustainability communication; brand image; Instagram.

Introduction

Developments in the scope of digital marketing communication, particularly in the beauty industry, have shifted from focusing on product centric promotion to more value based communication that emphasizes sustainability and environmental responsibility. As a result, many consumers are increasingly likely to evaluate not only the performance of the product but also the extent to which brands can demonstrate social and environmental commitment through their communication practices. This change requires brands to look for ways to create narratives that can foster relevance, trust, and meaningful relationships with consumers. In addition, there is a phenomenon of increasing consumer interest in sustainability reflected in purchasing behaviour. Jakpat (2023), as cited in Putra et al. (2024) reports that 81% of Indonesian consumers consider a brand's social and environmental commitment when buying skincare products. At the same time, NielsenIQ (2024) reported that Indonesian

consumers are becoming more cautious and selective in their brand choices, highlighting the importance of clear and credible brand communication. As a result, companies or brands must adopt effective communication strategies in order to align brand values with consumer expectations.

One approach that is getting more and more attention is storytelling marketing. Storytelling encourages brands to communicate complex ideas through narratives that are more relatable and meaningful to the audience. Fischer et al. (2023) show that storytelling can make sustainability issues easier to understand while increasing audience engagement. In line with this, Moin (2025) also explained that storytelling can connect brand identity with consumer values by creating a more meaningful brand experience. Similarly, Alexander (2011) explains that storytelling is built through four key elements: action, communication, value transmission, and knowledge, which together form the audiences' understanding of a brand. Therefore, storytelling plays an important role in sustainability communication by transforming complex environmental issues into relatable narratives. Amid growing concerns about greenwashing, storytelling can help brands increase transparency, authenticity, and trust. One of the Indonesian skincare brands that uses this approach is From This Island, which was founded by Maudy Ayunda and Patricia Davina in 2023, by promoting the philosophy of "Farm to Face" which contains the meaning of sustainability through the responsible use of Indonesia's natural resources (From This Island, 2025). Through its Instagram content, From This Island strives to communicate stories about the origin of raw materials, responsible production, community engagement, and sustainability initiatives through visuals, videos, and text. Therefore, Instagram was selected as the context of this study because of its high popularity in Indonesia, with a usage rate of 84.6% (We Are Social, 2025). Beyond its function as a promotional platform, Instagram has become an important branding medium that enables brands to interact directly with audiences, build more personal relationships, communicate brand values, and represent brand identity through visual and narrative content. Martinus & Chaniago (2017) further argue that Instagram is particularly effective for storytelling based branding because its interactive features and visual format facilitate emotional engagement while strengthening brand image. Through these capabilities, Instagram provides an appropriate environment for communicating sustainability narratives and fostering meaningful relationships between brands and consumers.

Studies on storytelling on social media have been conducted in various contexts. Lukiyanto et al. (2024) found that storytelling on Instagram plays a role as a digital promotion strategy that is able to increase audience engagement through story based content. Cahyaningrum et al. (2025) explained that storytelling marketing communication is built through a series of actions, communication, value transmission, and knowledge that are delivered chronologically to the audience. Meanwhile, Utaridah et al. (2025) show that digital storytelling is used to build brand meaning through historical, functional, and symbolic narratives. These findings are strengthened by Armiani & Nursansiwati (2024) who through a meta analysis study showed that interactive storytelling on visual platforms contributes significantly to the formation of brand perception.

Other research has also shown that storytelling has an important role in building brand identity and image. Wibowo et al. (2024), Hasibuan et al. (2024), Fahdillah et al. (2025), Patria (2022), and Farida & Azhar (2025) found that storytelling on Instagram is used to communicate identity, values, and brand image through narrative and visual consistency. In addition, Dias & Cavalheiro (2021), Ofosu-Boateng & Jose (2025), and Alim et al. (2025) show that

digital storytelling is able to create emotional attachment, increase the perception of authenticity, and strengthen the relationship between brands and audiences. Priskila et al. (2024) also explain that storytelling contributes to the formation of identity and brand image through the representation of everyday experiences as well as continuous interaction with audiences.

In the context of sustainability communication, Instagram is increasingly used to convey green and sustainability messages. Studies show that sustainability communication on Instagram emphasizes transparency, ethical practices, and environmental responsibility as part of brand identity (Luna et al., 2025). This emphasis on transparency is particularly important because consumers may respond sceptically to environmental claims when they perceive potential greenwashing, highlighting the importance of clear and credible sustainability communication (Rinaldi et al., 2026). Sustainability messages are also strengthened through cultural storytelling and product origin narratives (Tedjakumala et al., 2023), while visual elements such as natural colors, environmental symbols, and eco-friendly aesthetics play an important role in representing sustainability values (Jmour, 2025). In addition, green messages are often delivered through visual narratives that present problems, actions, and solutions to raise audience awareness (Febriana & Rosmilawati, 2024).

Research conducted by Thao (2025), Blau et al. (2022), and Cahyani et al. (2023) also shows that environmental sustainability and visual narratives contribute to building reputations and brand images related to social and environmental concerns. The findings show that storytelling and sustainability communication both have an important role in building engagement, trust, and positive perceptions of brands. In the Indonesian context, Lauwrensia & Ariestya (2022) found that green storytelling marketing on Instagram significantly influenced environmental consciousness and purchase decisions, with environmental consciousness partially mediating the relationship between green storytelling and purchase decisions. However, their study focused primarily on environmental consciousness and purchase related outcomes, leaving room to examine how green and sustainability messages are represented through storytelling and interpreted by audiences in relation to brand image. More broadly, most previous research still places storytelling and sustainability communication as two separate focus studies. Storytelling is generally researched as a branding and engagement strategy, while sustainability communication is more discussed in the context of green marketing or sustainability communication.

In the perspective of brand image, Keller & Swaminathan (2020) explains that brand image is a collection of perceptions and associations formed in consumers' minds towards a brand. For brands that carry the value of sustainability, brand image is not only related to product quality, but also includes perceptions of credibility, transparency, authenticity, and corporate social responsibility. Therefore, storytelling can be understood as a communication mechanism that allows sustainability values to be translated into a more understandable form of narrative so as to form a positive perception of the brand. Although studies on storytelling, sustainability communication, and brand image have grown quite rapidly, there are still some research gaps.

Previous studies have examined Instagram storytelling in relation to audience engagement, brand values, and brand identity. Studies on sustainability communication have mainly focused on how brands communicate environmental messages through transparency and green marketing practices, while research on brand image has explored how consumers form perceptions and associations with a brand. However, there is still limited understanding of how sustainability narratives shared through Instagram storytelling are interpreted by

audiences and how these interpretations are reflected in perceptions of brand image. Most previous studies have focused either on the representation of sustainability messages in brand content or on audience responses, without examining both as part of the same communication process. To address this gap, this study combines qualitative content analysis with audience interpretation. Content analysis is used to examine how sustainability storytelling is represented on Instagram, while focus group discussions explore how followers understand and interpret these narratives. Examining both aspects makes it possible to understand not only how sustainability messages are communicated by brands but also how they are interpreted by audiences.

Schmälzle & Huskey (2023) argue that media studies should examine not only how messages are represented but also how they are interpreted by audiences. Following this perspective, the present study examines both the representation of sustainability storytelling and audience interpretations in the context of an Indonesian local skincare brand. Alexander (2011) storytelling elements are used to analyse how sustainability narratives are communicated, while Keller & Swaminathan (2020) brand image framework helps explain how those narratives are reflected in audience perceptions of brand image. The Indonesian local skincare context is particularly relevant because sustainability, locally sourced ingredients, and Indonesian identity have become important ways for brands to differentiate themselves in an increasingly competitive beauty market. This study contributes to a better understanding of how sustainability storytelling is represented and interpreted and how it shapes audience perceptions of brand image within this context.

This study explores how storytelling marketing is represented on the Instagram account @fromthisisland in communicating green and sustainability messages and how a small group of followers interprets these storytelling practices and their implications for brand image. Using qualitative content analysis, focus group discussions, and expert interviews, this study examines both the representation of sustainability storytelling in Instagram content and follower's interpretations of these narratives. Accordingly, this study addresses the following research questions: (1) How is storytelling marketing represented on @fromthisisland Instagram in communicating green and sustainability messages? and (2) How does a small group of followers interpret these storytelling practices and their implications for brand image?

Methods

This research uses a constructivist paradigm with a qualitative approach to understand how storytelling marketing is constructed by From This Island through Instagram and how the narrative is interpreted by the audience in the formation of brand image. The constructivist approach is used because this research focuses on interpreting the meaning, experience, and perception of the audience towards digital media texts built through brand sustainability communication. Meanwhile, qualitative content analysis serves as the main research method because it helps in interpreting the meanings, narratives, symbols, and representations that are implicitly contained in Instagram content rather than using content frequency measurement (Bengtsson, 2016). In addition, research on contemporary media can also emphasize the integration of content analysis and audience acceptance so that it can provide a more comprehensive understanding of digital communication (Schmälzle & Huskey, 2023).

The study focused on the official Instagram account @fromthisisland, with Feed and Reels posts serving as the

unit of analysis. During the observation period from 12 June 2024 to 1 October 2025, a total of 451 posts were manually retrieved and catalogued in a spreadsheet containing publication dates, formats, post identifiers, and preliminary content descriptions. Purposive sampling (Creswell & Poth, 2018) was then applied to select posts relevant to the research questions. Posts were included if they were (1) original Feed or Reels posts published during the observation period, (2) contained identifiable storytelling elements beyond product promotion, (3) presented characters, experiences, or sustainability related narratives, and (4) conveyed emotional, symbolic, or value oriented meanings. Promotional announcements, giveaways, duplicated or reposted content, and posts without identifiable storytelling elements were excluded. The screening process followed the storytelling characteristics identified by Jacob et al. (2025). Following the screening, 25 posts met all inclusion criteria and were retained for analysis.

To complement the content analysis, one online focus group discussion and two semi-structured expert interviews were conducted. The focus group discussion involved six participants recruited through purposive sampling. Participants were selected based on the following criteria: (1) following the official Instagram account @fromthisisland, (2) familiarity with the brand's sustainability related content, (3) prior exposure to the selected posts or similar content, and (4) willingness to participate voluntarily. Recruitment was based on participants' familiarity with the brand's Instagram content rather than their purchase experience, as the study examined audience interpretations of digital storytelling rather than consumer purchasing behaviour. The online focus group discussion lasted 57 minutes, followed a semi-structured discussion guide, was audio recorded with participants' informed consent, transcribed verbatim, and anonymised to protect participant confidentiality.

The focus group discussion sample size was guided by the concept of information power (Malterud et al., 2016). The narrowly defined research aim, purposive participant selection, use of established theoretical frameworks, rich data generated through semi-structured discussions, and theory-informed qualitative content analysis collectively provided sufficient information power to address the research questions. To complement the audience perspectives, two semi-structured interviews were conducted with experts selected through purposive sampling based on their expertise in marketing communication, branding, digital media, and social media analytics. One interview was conducted online (78 minutes), and the other was conducted offline (90 minutes). Both interviews followed a semi-structured interview guide, were audio recorded with participants' informed consent, and transcribed verbatim. Rather than validating the focus group discussion findings, the expert interviews provided professional and contextual perspectives that complemented the audience interpretations.

Data collection and analysis were conducted in three stages. First, Instagram posts were identified, documented, and organised according to the predetermined sampling criteria. Second, the selected posts were analysed using the qualitative content analysis approach proposed by Graneheim & Lundman (2004), as cited in Bengtsson (2016). Coding followed a deductive approach using Alexander (2011) storytelling framework and the sustainability storytelling characteristics identified by Cahyaningrum et al. (2025). The codebook consisted of four analytical categories: action, communication, value transmission, and knowledge. Coding was conducted systematically using these predefined categories, and all coding decisions were documented to ensure consistency and transparency. Third, the focus group discussion and expert interviews explored participants' interpretations of sustainability storytelling and its contribution

to brand image. Audience interpretations were analysed using Keller & Swaminathan (2020) brand image framework, comprising the strength, favourability, and uniqueness of brand associations.

The data were analysed following the four stages of qualitative content analysis described by Graneheim & Lundman (2004), including decontextualisation, recontextualisation, categorisation, and compilation. During decontextualisation, meaning units were identified, condensed, and assigned codes. The coded data were then reviewed during recontextualisation to ensure consistency with the original context. Similar codes were grouped into analytical categories based on shared meanings and interpreted using Alexander (2011) storytelling framework. The findings were subsequently synthesised to address the research questions concerning the representation of sustainability storytelling and audience perceptions of brand image.

To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, methodological triangulation was applied by comparing evidence derived from the qualitative content analysis, the focus group discussion, and the expert interviews. An audit trail documenting coding decisions and analytical development was maintained throughout the study, while reflexive notes were used to support consistent interpretation and researcher reflexivity. These procedures strengthened the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the findings by ensuring transparency and consistency throughout the analytical process (Miles et al., 2014).

Result and Discussion

An analysis of 25 Instagram posts published by @fromthisisland identified storytelling representations through four elements adapted from Alexander (2011): action, communication, value transmission, and knowledge. The analysed posts presented narratives about the origin of Indonesian natural ingredients, production processes, local community involvement, and environmental and social initiatives through combinations of visuals, captions, and videos. During the coding process, a single post could contain more than one storytelling element when multiple narrative components appeared simultaneously. For example, a post describing community-based reforestation while simultaneously emphasizing environmental responsibility was coded under both Action and Value Transmission. Consequently, the 25 analysed posts generated a total of 46 coded appearances across the four storytelling elements. The reported frequencies describe the occurrence of each storytelling element within the dataset and are intended to illustrate patterns of representation rather than indicate the relative importance or effectiveness of any element. Table 1 summarizes the distribution of storytelling elements identified across the analysed posts.

Among the four storytelling elements, Value Transmission appeared in 18 of the 25 analysed posts (72%), followed by Action in 14 posts (56%). Communication and Knowledge each appeared in 7 posts (28%). These frequencies describe the distribution of storytelling elements across the analysed dataset and indicate that sustainability related values were represented in a larger proportion of posts than the other storytelling elements (see Table 2).

Representation of Storytelling Elements in Instagram Content @fromthisisland

The Action element was represented through posts depicting activities related to natural ingredient exploration, production processes, community involvement, and environmental initiatives. Several posts depicted the exploration of natural ingredients from different regions of

Indonesia, raw material processing, and the involvement of local communities throughout the production chain. Other posts presented tree planting initiatives, environmental restoration activities, and community based environmental education as part of the brand's sustainability narratives. For example, Post A4 presented the planting of 460 endemic trees as part of an environmental restoration initiative. Similarly, Post A5 depicted interactions with the Rumbih Village community through tree planting activities and environmental education.

The Communication element was represented through combinations of visuals and captions describing the origin of raw materials, environmental contexts, and the people involved in product development. The A5 content featured material exploration trips in Kalimantan with the local community, while the A11 content highlighted the commemoration of International Orangutan Day through a message about orangutan habitat conservation. In A13 content, the use of the product was associated with the protection of Kalimantan's forests and support for local communities. Across these posts, product-related information was presented alongside narratives about environmental conservation and community involvement.

Value Transmission appeared in a larger proportion of the analysed posts than the other storytelling elements. Posts representing this element repeatedly emphasized sustainability, social responsibility, environmental conservation, and local community empowerment. For example, Post A3 described Illipe Butter as being sourced through collaboration with local communities in Kalimantan. The A12 content presented the development of the archipelago's botanical materials with scientists and the local community, while the A25 content presented a mini impact report describing the reported social and environmental outcomes of the brand's initiatives. These sustainability-related values were represented across different types of Instagram posts rather than being confined to a single content format.

The knowledge element was represented through content that provided information about raw materials, production processes, benefits of natural ingredients, and sustainability practices carried out by companies. In the A1 content, the benefits of Borneo Illipe Butter and the processing process were explained. The A10 content showed the production process of Illipe Butter at the Forestwise processing facility, while the A15 content highlighted the Papuan Red Fruit and its benefits, processing process, and accompanying local knowledge. In addition, the content of A20 explained the use of sugarcane based Green PE as an alternative packaging material. These posts combined educational information with supporting visual materials related to the featured topics. Across the 25 analysed Instagram posts, the four storytelling elements frequently co-occurred within individual posts. Action, Communication, Value Transmission, and Knowledge were represented through different combinations of narratives and visual elements, illustrating how sustainability messages were communicated through multiple storytelling components rather than a single storytelling dimension.

Triangulated Findings from Focus Group Discussions and Expert Interviews

Table 3 summarizes the themes identified from the focus group discussion and expert interviews. Five recurring themes emerged across both data sources, namely sustainability storytelling as brand differentiation, transparency in storytelling, storytelling and brand image, cognitive understanding before emotional engagement, and participatory storytelling. Participants generally perceived that storytelling about local ingredients, ethical sourcing, and responsible production distinguished @fromthisisland from other skincare brands. Several participants highlighted that the brand communicated stories beyond product functions by explaining the origin of ingredients, production processes, and

Table 1. Categorization of Storytelling Marketing Elements in @fromthisisland's Instagram

Element	Number of Posts (n=25)	Percentage	Characteristics of Findings
Action	14	56%	Activities related to ingredient exploration, production processes, and community involvement
Communication	7	28%	Visual narratives and emotional storytelling
Value Transmission	18	72%	Emphasis on sustainability and social responsibility
Knowledge	7	28%	Education about ingredients, benefits, and product processes

Source: Researcher's Analysis, 2026

Table 2. Coding of Alexander's Storytelling Elements in Content Analysis Based on Bengtsson (2016)

No.	Meaning Unit	Condensed Meaning Unit	Code	Sub-category	Category (Alexander's Storytelling)
A1	"Borneo Illipe Butter is processed without harming forests or using chemicals."	Sustainable processing of natural ingredients.	Local ingredient; Chemical-free; Eco-friendly production	Natural information; ingredient benefits; Ingredient Eco-friendly production	Knowledge and Value Transmission
A3	"Sustainably sourced Illipe Butter benefits both people and nature."	Sustainable sourcing creates environmental and social benefits.	Sustainable sourcing; Collaboration; Forest conservation	Sustainability practices; Community collaboration; Environmental and social impact	Action and Value Transmission
A4	"The brand supports farmers through reforestation and circular practices."	Community empowerment through sustainability.	Farmer support; Tree planting; Circular system	Community empowerment; Environmental restoration; Long-term impact	Action and Value Transmission
A5	"The team engaged with local communities through field activities."	Direct engagement with local communities.	Community visit; Community activities; Tree planting	Direct community engagement; Field activities; Experiential education	Action and Communication
A10	"The team observed the Illipe Butter production process firsthand."	Production transparency builds appreciation for product quality.	Factory visit; Production process; Product quality	Production education; Production transparency; Quality appreciation	Knowledge and Value Transmission
A11	"Celebrating International Orangutan Day... protecting Kalimantan's rainforest through reforestation."	Reforestation supports orangutan habitat conservation.	Orangutan Day; Reforestation; Habitat protection	Environmental campaign; Wildlife protection; Reforestation	Value Transmission and Communication
A12	"From This Island was born from Indonesia's botanical heritage... collaborating with scientists and local communities."	The brand combines local resources, research, and community collaboration.	Local botanicals; Scientific collaboration; Community partnership	Local resource development; Multi-stakeholder collaboration; Social contribution	Value Transmission and Action
A13	"Every purchase becomes part of protecting Kalimantan's rainforest and supporting local livelihoods."	Purchasing products contributes to environmental and community protection.	Purchase contribution; Forest protection; Local livelihood	Product-mission connection; Local economic empowerment; Biodiversity protection	Value Transmission and Communication
A15	"Professor Rudy discovered Papua Red Fruit, a traditional ingredient rich in nutrients."	Papua Red Fruit is introduced as a valuable traditional ingredient.	Local ingredient; Traditional knowledge; Nutrients	Local exploration; ingredient wisdom; Local Ingredient benefits	Knowledge
A20	"We use Green PE made from sugarcane for sustainable packaging."	Sustainable packaging reduces fossil fuel dependence.	Green PE; Sustainable packaging	Eco-friendly packaging; Renewable resources; Environmental impact	Value Transmission and Knowledge
A25	"Mini Impact Report... thank you for helping us create beauty that gives back."	The brand shares its impact and appreciates consumer support.	Impact report; Consumer appreciation	Impact communication; Audience engagement; Consumer appreciation	Action and Value Transmission

Source: Researcher's Analysis, 2026

Table 3. Summary of Focus Group Discussion and Expert Interview Findings

Theme	FGD Findings	Expert Perspectives
Sustainability Storytelling as Brand Differentiation	Participants perceived that storytelling about local ingredients, ethical sourcing, and production processes differentiated From This Island from other skincare brands (P1, P6).	TP: Sustainability narratives highlighting local ingredients and environmentally responsible production differentiate the brand. ARN: Social impact, local empowerment, and authentic Indonesian ingredients have become important brand differentiators beyond product functionality.
Transparency and Storytelling Strengthen Brand Trust	Participants stated that detailed explanations about ingredients and production processes increased their trust in the brand's sustainability claims (P1, P4, P5, P6).	TP: Transparency encourages trust and supports consumers throughout the decision making process. ARN: Authenticity and consistency are essential because audiences quickly recognize greenwashing.
Storytelling Builds Brand Image Through Sustainability Values	Participants associated From This Island with sustainability, transparency, ethics, and trustworthiness (P1, P4, P5, P6).	TP: Sustainability storytelling reinforces positive brand perceptions through communicated values. ARN: Storytelling succeeds when audiences associate the brand with its intended sustainability values rather than merely generating engagement.
Storytelling Primarily Builds Cognitive Understanding Before Emotional Engagement	Most participants reported gaining knowledge about sustainability and production processes, but emotional attachment remained limited (P1, P3).	TP: Effective storytelling should extend beyond trust to foster emotional engagement and action. ARN: Emotional connection develops when storytelling is relevant, authentic, and meaningful.
Audience Engagement Through Participatory Storytelling	Participants suggested increasing interaction through Q&A sessions, polls, user generated content, and customer stories because storytelling was still perceived as one way (P4).	TP: Brands should encourage user generated content, short form videos, refill initiatives, and participation in sustainability activities. ARN: Polls, comments, user generated content, and interactive communication help audiences feel involved in the brand's story.

Source: Researcher's Analysis, 2026

environmental initiatives. As Participant 1 explained: "They do not just show the product. They explain where the ingredients come from, who is involved in the process, and the social impact they want to create. That is what makes the brand different." (FGD-P1, personal communication, April 28, 2026).

This perception was consistent with the expert interviews. T. P. explained that storytelling should be understood as the way a message is communicated, while sustainability represents the content being communicated (T. P., personal communication, July 1, 2026). Likewise, A. R. N. stated that brands increasingly compete through values such as local empowerment and social impact rather than product functionality alone (A. R. N., personal communication, May 15, 2026). Participants also perceived that detailed explanations about ingredient origins, sourcing processes, and production practices increased the credibility of the sustainability messages. Participant 5 stated: "They explain the ingredients and where they come from in detail. That was what made me trust the brand enough to try the product." (FGD-P5, personal communication, April 28, 2026). These perceptions were supported by the expert interviews. T. P. explained that storytelling becomes meaningful when it consistently communicates brand values, while A. R. N. emphasized that audiences are increasingly able to recognize inauthentic sustainability claims, making authenticity and consistency essential in sustainability communication (T. P., personal communication, July 1, 2026; A. R. N., personal communication, May 15, 2026).

The discussion further indicated that participants associated @fromthisisland with sustainability, transparency, ethical values, and environmental responsibility. Participant 1 commented: "The brand does not only want to sell skincare. It also brings a broader mission related to sustainability and local Indonesian ingredients." (FGD-P1, personal communication, April 28, 2026). Participant 4 similarly perceived the brand as transparent and educational, although the participant suggested that stronger interaction with audiences would further strengthen the brand image (FGD-P4, personal communication, April 28, 2026). T. P. likewise

explained that repeatedly communicating particular values enables audiences to develop corresponding brand associations (T. P., personal communication, July 1, 2026).

Most participants reported that storytelling primarily increased their understanding of sustainability practices and local ingredients before creating an emotional connection with the brand. Participant 3 explained: "The storytelling is there, but it feels more like educational content. I simply think, 'Oh, this is how the process works,' and then it ends there. It does not make me feel closer to the brand." (FGD-P3, personal communication, April 28, 2026). Similarly, Participant 1 stated: "I feel some connection, but it is not very strong because the stories are not yet closely related to my personal experience as a consumer." (FGD-P1, personal communication, April 28, 2026). Both experts expressed similar views. T. P. noted that storytelling should ideally encourage audiences to move beyond understanding toward action (T. P., personal communication, July 1, 2026). A. R. N. also emphasized that emotional engagement develops when storytelling is perceived as relevant and authentic (A. R. N., personal communication, May 15, 2026).

Participants also suggested that storytelling could become more engaging by involving audiences more actively. Participant 4 emphasized the importance of audience participation in storytelling: "Storytelling should not only be about how the brand tells the story, but also about how the audience becomes part of that story through Q&A sessions, polls, discussions, or user experiences" (FGD-P4, personal communication, April 28, 2026). This recommendation was supported by both experts. T. P. recommended creating short, shareable storytelling content to encourage word of mouth communication (T. P., personal communication, July 1, 2026). Similarly, A. R. N. suggested using polls, comments, and user-generated content to encourage audiences to participate in storytelling rather than passively consume it (A. R. N., personal communication, May 15, 2026). Not all participants interpreted the storytelling in the same way. Several participants stated that sustainability was not their primary consideration when choosing skincare products. Instead, product effectiveness, compatibility with their skin, and price remained the dominant purchase considerations. For

example, Participant 2 explained: "The sustainability message is clear, but it is not the main factor influencing my purchase decision. I am still considering whether the product is effective and fits my budget." (FGD-P2, personal communication, April 28, 2026). Participant 3 also noted that although the storytelling provided useful information, it did not motivate further exploration or create a stronger attachment to the brand (FGD-P3, personal communication, April 28, 2026).

Representation of Storytelling Marketing in Communicating Green and Sustainability Messages

The findings suggest that the storytelling elements identified in the content analysis functioned not merely as narrative features but as communication mechanisms through which green and sustainability messages were represented and interpreted. Rather than presenting sustainability as a functional product attribute, @fromthisisland consistently embedded environmental responsibility, ethical sourcing, community empowerment, and transparent production practices within coherent narratives. This communication approach enabled audiences to associate the brand with broader organisational values, indicating that sustainability was represented as part of the brand's communicated identity rather than merely as a promotional message. Among the four storytelling elements, value transmission was reflected in how the brand communicated sustainability by connecting its products with environmental and social commitments.

This interpretation was reflected in the focus group discussions. As participant 1 explained, "They don't just upload product photos, but really tell the story behind the ingredients, the local farmers involved, and the production process" (FGD-P1, personal communication, April 28, 2026). Rather than evaluating the content primarily through product performance, participants interpreted these narratives as communicating broader environmental and social commitments. This finding indicates that storytelling encouraged audiences to construct meaning around sustainability by connecting individual products with the organisational values they represented.

The expert interviews provide further insight into why value transmission emerged as the dominant storytelling element. T.P distinguished storytelling from sustainability by explaining that "Storytelling is the way the message is delivered, whereas sustainability is the content of the message. Any content can become storytelling as long as it is communicated through a narrative" (T.P, personal communication, July 1, 2026). This distinction suggests that storytelling functions as the mechanism through which sustainability values become meaningful and memorable for audiences. A similar perspective was offered by A.R.N, who observed that digital audiences are increasingly exposed to information overload and therefore respond more positively to narratives communicating organisational values than to conventional product centred promotion. These perspectives help explain why storytelling enabled @fromthisisland to communicate sustainability beyond individual product claims while differentiating the brand within an increasingly competitive digital environment.

These findings extend previous studies on storytelling marketing and sustainability communication. Alexander (2011) conceptualised storytelling as a process through which meaning is transmitted through action, communication, knowledge, and value transmission. The present study demonstrates that value transmission becomes particularly significant in sustainability communication because audiences interpret environmental responsibility primarily through repeated narratives rather than isolated informational claims. This finding also extends Moin (2025) argument that storytelling marketing builds meaningful

relationships by embedding organisational values within narratives instead of relying solely on persuasive product communication. Similarly, Jacob et al. (2025) emphasised that storytelling on social media encourages audiences to construct meanings beyond product attributes, while Tedjakumala et al. (2023) argued that integrating sustainability narratives with local culture strengthens brand differentiation. The present findings complement these studies by demonstrating that differentiation is achieved not merely through discussing sustainability but through the consistent communication of interconnected values including environmental responsibility, ethical sourcing, and community empowerment that audiences perceive as authentic representations of the brand's identity.

In addition to value transmission, the findings indicate that transparency functioned as another key storytelling mechanism through which sustainability was communicated. Rather than relying on broad environmental claims, @fromthisisland consistently contextualised its sustainability commitments by explaining ingredient origins, sourcing practices, production processes, and collaborations with local communities. Consequently, transparency enabled audiences to understand how sustainability was communicated rather than simply asking them to accept environmental claims at face value.

This interpretation was also reflected in the focus group discussions. One participant explained, "They don't simply say they are sustainable; they explain where the ingredients come from and how the products are made, which makes the message feel more believable" (FGD-P6, personal communication, April 28, 2026). Rather than accepting sustainability narratives uncritically, participants evaluated credibility by considering the specificity, consistency, and contextual information provided by the brand. This interpretation was reinforced by the expert interviews. TP emphasised that transparency is essential for reducing scepticism towards sustainability communication, while A.R.N argued that contemporary audiences increasingly expect brands to support sustainability narratives with clear and credible explanations rather than relying solely on persuasive storytelling. Together, these findings indicate that transparency functions not as proof that sustainability claims are objectively true but as a communication mechanism through which audiences evaluate the credibility of those claims.

These findings also extend previous research on transparency in sustainability communication. Bulmer et al. (2024) argue that sustainability narratives become more persuasive when supported by specific and contextual information rather than broad environmental claims. Similarly, Topcuoglu et al. (2022) found that transparency reduces consumer scepticism by enabling audiences to evaluate the authenticity of sustainability messages. Luna et al. (2025) further demonstrated that transparency has become an essential component of sustainability storytelling on Instagram because it strengthens perceptions of authenticity and accountability, while Umoren et al. (2022) argued that authentic digital storytelling depends on consistency between communicated values and organisational practices. Building on these studies, the present research demonstrates that transparency should be understood not merely as information disclosure but as a communication mechanism through which audiences negotiate the credibility of sustainability claims. Rather than eliminating scepticism, transparency provides audiences with sufficient contextual information to assess whether sustainability narratives are consistent with the organisational values communicated by the brand.

Collectively, these findings highlight two particularly important aspects of sustainability storytelling in the analysed content which are value transmission and transparency. Value transmission emerged as the most prominent element, while transparency emerged from the findings as an important

communication mechanism through which audiences evaluated the credibility of the sustainability narratives. While value transmission enabled audiences to associate the brand with broader environmental and social values, transparency provided contextual information that supported their evaluation of those narratives. This extends previous storytelling literature by suggesting that sustainability storytelling involves not only communicating environmental and social values but also providing sufficient context for audiences to interpret and critically assess the credibility of communicated sustainability claims.

Audience Interpretation of Storytelling Marketing in Building Brand Image

Regarding audience interpretations, the findings examined how audiences interpreted storytelling marketing on Instagram @fromthisisland in shaping the brand image. The findings show that storytelling contributed to brand image by encouraging audiences to associate the brand with broader organisational values rather than with product functionality alone. Through repeated exposure to narratives highlighting sustainability, transparency, ethical sourcing, and community empowerment, participants gradually developed an understanding of @fromthisisland as a brand committed to environmental and social responsibility. These findings suggest that brand image was constructed through an ongoing process of meaning making, in which audiences interpreted recurring narratives and integrated them into their overall perceptions of the brand.

This interpretation was consistently reflected in the focus group discussions. One participant described @fromthisisland as “serious about promoting sustainability and Indonesian local ingredients,” while also acknowledging that the brand's sustainability claims should continue to be demonstrated through consistent practice. Another participant similarly perceived that the brand “not only sells products but also has stories behind the products, especially regarding ethical sourcing.” These responses indicate that participants interpreted the brand primarily through the organisational values embedded within its storytelling rather than through immediate product related benefits. Instead of perceiving sustainability as an isolated promotional message, audiences understood it as a recurring narrative that shaped their broader perception of the brand.

Participants further explained that storytelling differentiated @fromthisisland from many competing skincare brands because the Instagram content consistently introduced the origins of natural ingredients, collaborations with local communities, and the production processes behind the products. As one participant explained, “They don't just upload product photos. They really tell the story behind the ingredients, the local farmers involved, and the production process. That's what makes them different from many other skincare brands” (FGD-P1, personal communication, April 28, 2026). Likewise, another participant observed that detailed explanations about ingredient origins and production processes made the content informative even for audiences who had not yet used the products (FGD-P6, personal communication, April 28, 2026). Rather than evaluating the brand primarily through advertising messages or product claims, participants interpreted its identity through recurring stories concerning ingredient origins, ethical sourcing, local empowerment, and environmental responsibility. These findings suggest that storytelling encouraged audiences to construct brand meaning through sustained exposure to narratives communicating organisational values.

This interpretation can be understood through Kotler et al. (2022) concept of brand image, which proposes that brand image develops through the formation of strong, favourable, and unique brand associations. Although these dimensions

were not used as predetermined coding categories, they were subsequently employed as a post hoc interpretive lens to theoretically contextualise the brand associations emerging from the FGD findings. The findings indicate that storytelling contributed to each of these dimensions. First, the repeated communication of sustainability, transparency, ethical sourcing, and community empowerment strengthened audience associations with @fromthisisland by consistently linking these values with the brand across different Instagram posts. This was reflected in participants' recurring descriptions of @fromthisisland as a brand associated with sustainability, Indonesian local ingredients, and ethical sourcing. Rather than being communicated as isolated campaign messages, these narratives appeared repeatedly throughout the brand's content, allowing audiences to gradually develop stable cognitive associations between the brand and its environmental and social commitments.

Second, the emphasis on transparency, responsible production practices, and support for local communities contributed to favourable brand evaluations. This was evident in participants' appreciation of the brand's detailed explanations of ingredient origins and production processes, which made its sustainability communication appear more informative and credible. At the same time, these favourable evaluations remained conditional, as participants emphasised that sustainability claims required continued demonstration through observable practices. Rather than interpreting sustainability solely as a marketing strategy, participants perceived these narratives as reflecting organisational values that distinguished the brand from conventional product centred communication. This finding suggests that storytelling influenced brand image not only by increasing awareness of sustainability initiatives but also by encouraging audiences to evaluate those initiatives as meaningful and relevant aspects of the brand's identity.

Finally, storytelling contributed to the uniqueness of the brand image through the consistent integration of Indonesian botanical ingredients, ethical sourcing, and community stories within a coherent sustainability narrative. This distinction was explicitly recognised by P1, who explained that stories about ingredients, local farmers, and production processes were “what makes them different from many other skincare brands” (FGD-P1, personal communication, April 28, 2026). While many skincare brands primarily emphasise product efficacy, @fromthisisland differentiated itself by positioning sustainability and local identity as central components of its communication. Rather than emerging from a single promotional campaign, these associations developed gradually through continuous exposure to interconnected narratives across the brand's Instagram content. Taken together, these findings suggest that storytelling strengthened brand image because it enabled audiences to construct meaningful and distinctive associations that extended beyond functional product attributes and reflected the broader values represented by the brand.

The expert interviews provide additional insight into why these associations emerged. T.P emphasised that storytelling should be understood as the communication mechanism through which audiences interpret and remember organisational values, whereas sustainability represents the content being communicated. Without an effective narrative, sustainability initiatives may remain unnoticed or fail to create meaningful associations. A similar perspective was offered by A.R.N, who emphasised that the effectiveness of storytelling depends on whether the values communicated by a brand are actually recognised by audiences. As he explained, “The indicator of successful storytelling is not only high engagement or many views, but whether the audience actually understands the value that the brand wants to build” (A.R.N, personal communication, 15 Mei, 2026). In digital environments

characterised by information overload, storytelling can therefore help brands communicate values that extend beyond functional product attributes and become meaningful associations in audience perceptions. These expert perspectives help explain why participants consistently associated @fromthisisland with sustainability, transparency, and community empowerment instead of perceiving it merely as a skincare brand.

The present findings are consistent with Armiani & Nursansiwati (2024) and Priskila et al. (2024), who argue that storytelling strengthens brand image through the consistent communication of organisational values and identity. Similarly, Mahendra et al. (2026) explain that Instagram storytelling contributes to brand image through a gradual process of meaning construction rather than direct persuasion. Building on these studies, the findings suggest that sustainability storytelling was associated with participants' perceptions of brand image, as they gradually formed strong, favourable, and distinctive brand associations through repeated exposure to coherent narratives. Rather than functioning solely as a promotional strategy, storytelling becomes a communication process through which audiences continuously interpret what the brand represents and how its organisational values differentiate it from competing brands.

Despite these positive perceptions, the findings indicate that audiences did not accept @fromthisisland's sustainability narratives uncritically. Instead, participants consistently distinguished between sustainability as a communicated brand value and sustainability as an organisational practice that requires continuous verification. Although the brand's storytelling was generally perceived as transparent and informative, participants emphasised that sustainability claims should ultimately be supported by observable actions beyond social media communication. This finding suggests that storytelling contributed to favourable initial perceptions of the brand but did not eliminate audiences' critical evaluation of sustainability claims.

This cautious perspective was reflected in the focus group discussions. As one participant explained, "According to me, the sustainability message is very clear and quite consistent. However, because many brands now also use sustainability narratives, I still consider it a claim that needs to be proven. For example, I would like to see the actual impact or continuous progress of their sustainability programmes" (FGD-P1, personal communication, April 28, 2026). Likewise, another participant commented that the storytelling appeared more credible because the brand explained its production processes in considerable detail rather than simply describing itself as environmentally friendly (FGD-P6, personal communication, April 28, 2026). Rather than accepting sustainability messages at face value, participants evaluated the credibility of the brand by considering the specificity, transparency, and consistency of the information communicated. These findings indicate that storytelling supported the development of trust by providing audiences with sufficient information to critically assess the authenticity of the brand's sustainability commitments.

The expert interviews further explain why transparency became an important factor in shaping audience trust. A.R.N observed that contemporary digital audiences have become increasingly critical of sustainability communication because environmental issues are now widely discussed across digital platforms. Consequently, audiences no longer respond solely to sustainability narratives but also evaluate whether these narratives are consistently reflected in organisational behaviour. He argued that authenticity and consistency have become essential prerequisites for trust, particularly as audiences are increasingly able to recognise communication that appears opportunistic or resembles greenwashing. This perspective helps explain why participants appreciated

@fromthisisland's transparency while continuing to evaluate whether its sustainability commitments would remain consistent over time.

Another perspective was provided by T.P, who emphasised that sustainability practices become meaningful only when they are communicated through effective storytelling. According to him, storytelling functions as the narrative mechanism that enables audiences to understand and appreciate sustainability initiatives that might otherwise remain unnoticed. However, he also argued that storytelling should encourage meaningful engagement rather than merely delivering information. This distinction suggests that storytelling alone is insufficient to establish long-term credibility unless the narratives are continuously reinforced by organisational practices that audiences perceive as authentic.

These findings support Dias & Cavaleiro (2021) argument that storytelling contributes to organisational trust by making corporate values more understandable and relatable to audiences. Similarly, Azzahra & Halim (2026) argue that transparency strengthens trust because it enables consumers to evaluate a brand's environmental commitments more openly. The present findings, however, extend these arguments by demonstrating that transparency should not be interpreted as evidence that sustainability claims are automatically accepted. Instead, transparency functioned as the basis upon which audiences evaluated whether the sustainability values communicated through storytelling were consistently reflected in organisational practices. In other words, storytelling served as an entry point for developing credibility, whereas long term trust depended on audiences' continuous assessment of whether organisational actions aligned with the narratives communicated by the brand.

This distinction between communicated sustainability and verified sustainability represents an important contribution of the present study. The findings suggest that storytelling alone does not guarantee audience trust; rather, it creates the conditions under which trust can develop through ongoing evaluation of authenticity, consistency, and transparency. Consequently, sustainability storytelling should be understood not merely as a persuasive communication strategy but also as a process through which audiences actively assess the credibility of organisational values before incorporating them into their perceptions of brand image.

Although storytelling strengthened participants' perceptions of transparency and credibility, the findings indicate that it did not always generate an equally strong emotional connection with the brand. Participants generally appreciated the sustainability values communicated through @fromthisisland's Instagram content; however, these positive evaluations did not consistently translate into feelings of personal closeness or identification with the brand. This finding suggests that storytelling supported the cognitive dimension of brand image by enhancing audiences' understanding of organisational values, yet its influence on the affective dimension appeared to be more limited.

This interpretation was consistently reflected in the focus group discussions. One participant explained, "I do feel some connection, but it is not very strong. I appreciate the values they communicate, especially when they talk about communities and social impact. However, the stories do not really relate to my personal experience as a consumer, so I admire the values more than I feel emotionally close to the brand" (FGD-P1, personal communication, April 28, 2026). A similar perspective was expressed by another participant, who suggested that the storytelling focused primarily on sustainability issues and production processes and would create a stronger emotional connection if it incorporated stories that were more closely related to consumer's everyday experiences (FGD-P3, personal communication, April 28, 2026). Rather than rejecting the sustainability narratives themselves, participants appeared to

seek stories that enabled them to see their own experiences reflected within the brand narrative. These responses indicate that emotional engagement depends not only on communicating meaningful organisational values but also on connecting those values with the audiences' personal experiences and everyday consumption practices.

The distinction between cognitive understanding and affective engagement can be further interpreted through the Elaboration Likelihood Model. This explains that greater elaboration involves deeper cognitive effort and analytical engagement with substantive message information. In green communication on social media, Song et al. (2026) found that detailed sustainability information can encourage greater elaboration and improve audiences' understanding of green attributes, particularly when communicated through credible brand accounts. This helps explain why participants in the present study primarily engaged with @fromthisisland's narratives by evaluating ingredient origins, production processes, ethical sourcing, and communicated sustainability values. However, such cognitive understanding did not necessarily translate into equally strong affective attachment, as participants could appreciate these values while still reporting limited personal identification with the narratives. The present findings therefore extend previous evidence by suggesting that, in sustainability storytelling, informational depth may facilitate understanding and evaluation, whereas stronger emotional engagement may additionally require personal relevance and opportunities for audiences to identify themselves within the brand story.

This finding differs from Kurniawan et al. (2025), who found that emotionally relevant narratives, particularly founder and family related stories, strengthened consumers' emotional connection with local brands. The divergence may reflect differences in narrative emphasis, as @fromthisisland's storytelling focused more strongly on sustainability information, production processes, and organisational values than on personal or consumer centred experiences.

The expert interview with T.P provides further insight into this finding. According to him, storytelling should not only communicate organisational values but also create opportunities for audiences to participate in the storytelling process through user generated content, interactive discussions, and sustainability related activities. Such participation enables consumers to become contributors rather than passive recipients of brand narratives, allowing them to develop a stronger sense of involvement with the brand. T.P further argued that consumers who perceive themselves as part of a brand's story are more likely to share their experiences through electronic word of mouth, whereas storytelling that merely delivers information may increase understanding without necessarily encouraging deeper engagement. This perspective helps explain why participants in the present study expressed interest in more interactive formats, including question and answer sessions, community discussions, and opportunities to share their own experiences related to sustainability.

These findings suggest that opportunities for audience participation may strengthen emotional engagement with the brand. While @fromthisisland communicated sustainability values through informative and transparent narratives, participants generally perceived themselves as audiences rather than active contributors to those narratives. This indicates that emotional attachment may be strengthened when storytelling extends beyond one way communication and encourages audiences to participate in constructing, sharing, and experiencing the brand story. In this sense, participation complements value transmission and transparency by transforming storytelling from a communication activity into a collaborative process of

meaning construction.

This interpretation is consistent with Moin (2025), who argues that digital storytelling is inherently participatory because audiences contribute to the creation, circulation, and interpretation of brand narratives. Likewise, Febrina & Fikri (2025) suggest that user generated content, online discussions, and shared consumer experiences strengthen authenticity while fostering emotional attachment to brands. Building on these studies, the present findings suggest that sustainability storytelling was associated with participants' interpretations of brand image through three interconnected processes. First, storytelling enables audiences to construct meaning around sustainability narratives and organisational values. Second, transparency was associated with perceptions of credibility by providing audiences with sufficient information to evaluate the authenticity of sustainability claims. Third, audience participation creates opportunities for consumers to become actively involved in the brand narrative, which participants associated with stronger emotional engagement with the brand.

These findings should also be interpreted in light of several alternative explanations. First, the prominence of value transmission may partly reflect the purposive sampling strategy, as the selected corpus specifically included posts containing storytelling and sustainability-related elements. Therefore, its prominence within the analysed content should not be interpreted as evidence that value-oriented narratives dominate the brand's entire Instagram account. Second, participants' differing levels of prior familiarity with @fromthisisland may have influenced how they interpreted the brand's sustainability-related associations, as participants with greater prior exposure may have developed more established perceptions than those with limited familiarity. Finally, possible social desirability effects should be considered, since sustainability and environmental responsibility are socially valued issues that may encourage favourable responses during group discussions. Accordingly, the FGD findings represent participants' expressed and contextually constructed interpretations rather than direct evidence of actual purchasing behaviour or generalisable audience responses.

Taken together, these findings provide a context-specific interpretation of how sustainability storytelling on Instagram is not merely a persuasive communication strategy for promoting products or organisational values. Rather, in the context of @fromthisisland, it was interpreted as part of an ongoing communication process through which audiences continuously construct, evaluate, and negotiate brand meaning in relation to sustainability, transparency, and organisational practices. This study therefore contributes to the growing literature on storytelling marketing by highlighting that, in the context of @fromthisisland, opportunities for audience participation may complement the communication of environmental values by enabling participants to engage with and personalise sustainability narratives. Such participation may provide opportunities for storytelling to extend beyond information sharing and may be associated with deeper audience engagement and interpretations of brand image.

Conclusion

This study shows how storytelling marketing on Instagram @fromthisisland is used to communicate green and sustainability messages and how participating followers interpret this storytelling in relation to brand image. The results show that @fromthisisland communicates green and sustainability messages through narratives about the origins of raw materials, production processes, local community empowerment, and environmental and social initiatives. Based on the content analysis of 25 purposively selected Instagram

posts, value transmission appeared in the largest proportion of the analysed posts, followed by action. These findings show that, within the analysed content, sustainability is represented not only as product-related information but also through environmental and social values embedded in the brand's storytelling.

Based on the FGD findings, the six participating followers associated @fromthisisland with transparency, environmental concern, ethical sourcing, and the use of local Indonesian ingredients. Participants generally understood and appreciated the sustainability messages conveyed by the brand. However, their responses reflected stronger cognitive understanding than emotional attachment. Some participants also continued to consider product effectiveness, suitability, and price more important than the sustainability narratives communicated by the brand. These findings are limited to the participating followers and should not be generalised to the wider audience of @fromthisisland or Indonesian skincare consumers.

The main contribution of this study is to show the connection between storytelling elements, audience interpretations of sustainability messages, and brand image associations. Value transmission was associated with participants' recognition of the environmental and social values represented by the brand, while transparency provided information through which participants could evaluate the credibility of its sustainability messages. The findings further indicate that understanding and appreciating sustainability messages does not necessarily result in equally strong emotional attachment. In this study, audiences interpreted sustainability storytelling based not only on the values communicated by the brand but also on their own experiences, priorities, and consumption considerations. This highlights a distinction between understanding sustainability messages and developing an emotional connection with the brand.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that sustainability storytelling could be made more relevant to audiences' needs, experiences, and consumption motivations. For @fromthisisland, greater audience participation through interactive discussions, consumer-generated stories, and sustainability-related activities may encourage audiences to become more involved in the storytelling process. Sustainability communication should also provide specific and consistent information about environmental and social initiatives so that audiences can evaluate the claims communicated by the brand. However, these recommendations are based on the findings of this study and should be understood within the context of @fromthisisland rather than as general recommendations for all brands.

This study has several limitations. The content analysis was limited to 25 purposively selected Instagram posts from

a single brand within a specific research period. Therefore, the findings do not represent all content published by @fromthisisland and cannot be directly applied to other brands or social media platforms. Audience interpretations were also obtained through one focus group discussion with six participants. The relatively small and potentially homogeneous group may not represent the diversity of skincare consumers, while participants' prior familiarity with the brand, group dynamics, and possible social-desirability effects may have influenced their responses. The coding and interpretation of the data also involved researcher judgement. Furthermore, this study did not independently verify the environmental and social claims communicated by the brand. Therefore, the findings describe how sustainability was represented and interpreted rather than providing evidence of the brand's actual sustainability performance. The study also cannot establish causal effects of storytelling on brand image, engagement, or consumer behaviour.

Future research could examine multiple skincare brands and social media platforms, conduct multiple focus group discussions with more diverse participants, use individual interviews to provide additional audience perspectives, and investigate sustainability storytelling over a longer period. Future studies could also include interviews with brand representatives and relevant external stakeholders, supported by sustainability reports or certification data, to compare sustainability claims communicated through social media with actual organisational practices. Further research could compare storytelling with informative communication approaches in communicating sustainability issues to examine how different communication approaches relate to cognitive understanding, emotional engagement, and brand image associations.

Author contributions

Catherine contributed to the conceptualization of the study, literature review, research design, data collection, data analysis, interpretation of the findings, and drafting of the manuscript. Jihan Nila Safira contributed to data collection, data analysis, literature review, and manuscript preparation. Jefri Audi Wempi Liwoso supervised the research, provided methodological guidance, critically reviewed the manuscript, and approved the final version for publication. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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