From Floral Waste to Sustainable Value: A Content Analysis of Sustainability Digital Communication in Dried Flower Businesses

Pijar Suciati[1]*, Tiffani Amanda Azzahra[2], Angela Kadek Aprilia Handayani[3]

[1,2,3] Program Pendidikan Vokasi, Universitas Indonesia, Indonesia
*suciati.pijar@ui.ac.id

Abstract. With the increasing adoption of circular economy principles, creative businesses have been compelled to convert garbage into goods with superior environmental and commercial value. Dried flower businesses are a new type of sustainable entrepreneurship through preservation and creative design that extends the life cycle of floral materials. While sustainability communication is gaining popularity, little is known about the use of digital channels by these organizations to communicate sustainability. This study examines the sustainability communication of the dried flower market by qualitatively content analyzing 100 Instagram contents from ten dried flower firms in Indonesia. The analysis was based on five coding dimensions: digital storytelling, resource efficiency, product longevity, reduction of waste and environmental responsibility. The results show that sustainability is communicated primarily through implicit narratives, and not through explicit environmental statements. Visual storytelling is a way for brands to create sustainable identities through artistic mastery, botanical preservation, emotional connection, and memory preservation. Resource efficiency and product longevity are often cited in product stories but we seldom observe any communication about waste reduction and environmental responsibility. Beyond the pre-defined coding categories the study revealed an emergent Artist-Flower-Memory Framework illustrating how sustainability is communicated through interwoven narratives of creativity, resource preservation and emotional continuity. This paradigm contributes to the sustainability communication literature by demonstrating that innovative MSMEs communicate circular economy values through narrative as opposed to conventional green marketing messages. The findings provide practical implications for creative entrepreneurs for creating authentic sustainability communication, and contribute to research in sustainability communication, circular economy and sustainable entrepreneurship.

Keywords: Sustainability Communication, Circular Economy, Creative MSMEs, Digital Storytelling, Instagram.

1 Introduction

The urgency to face climate change, depletion of resources and generation of waste has accelerated the worldwide transition to sustainable development, leading to a paradigm change in the approach of governments, businesses and entrepreneurs to conventional

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P. N. G. Akbar and K. A. Safitri (eds.), *Proceedings of the 8th International Conference of Vocational Education, Applied Science and Technology (ICVEAST 2026)*, Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research 1034,
https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-620-8_8

business practices [1]. Nowadays, businesses are more and more encouraged to apply concepts of the circular economy, which are based on resource efficiency, waste reduction, product lifespan and regenerative value creation [2,3], rather than the linear economic model of "take–make–dispose". In recent years, the circular economy has developed from an environmental agenda to a holistic business strategy that promotes economic competitiveness, environmental stewardship and social sustainability at the same time [4,5]. Sustainable entrepreneurship has, therefore, become an important process to transform environmental problems into new economic possibilities and contribute to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) [6].

The fast digital transformation we have seen over the last decade has also changed how sustainability is being implemented and communicated. Digital technologies are not only seen as operational tools, but as strategic enablers to enable circular business models, better resource management, foster stakeholder involvement and encourage sustainability-oriented innovation [7,8]. Digitalization has recently been shown to help firms increase product lifecycle optimization, supply chain transparency, and the communication of environmental values to more sustainability-conscious customers [9,10]. Accordingly, the intersection of digital transformation and the circular economy is one of the most fast-growing research fields in sustainability management, reflecting the growing awareness that digital communication may be an enabler for sustainable production and consumption habits.

In this transformation, sustainability communication has moved from an add-on marketing activity to a core strategic function [11]. Consumers today expect businesses to do more than simply adopt environmentally responsible practices; they expect those practices to be communicated transparently, authentically, and consistently [12]. Thus, organizations are shifting away from traditional promotional communication to value-based stories focusing on environmental responsibility, ethical production, resource conservation and social impact [13]. Recent study has shown that good sustainability communication leads to higher levels of organizational legitimacy, increased trust among stakeholders, improved involvement from consumers, and a greater competitive advantage [14,15]. However, researchers also warn that sustainability communication should be underpinned by credible organizational practices, to prevent the risk of greenwashing, which can have a significant erosive effect on corporate credibility [16,17].

Social media platforms have developed as effective tools in this landscape of communication, allowing organizations to communicate directly with stakeholders and to present sustainability through attractive and emotionally appealing narratives [18, 19]. Instagram is one of these platforms that has a special place in terms of visual narrative, aesthetic presentation, and community interaction [20]. Instagram offers an alternative to typical corporate communication channels for companies to promote sustainability through images, short video clips, behind-the-scenes documentation, customer experiences, and interactive storytelling that together build real brand narratives [21]. Recent studies have shown that Instagram sustainability marketing is increasingly based on symbolic representations, human experiences and emotionally engaging narrative rather than on strictly informational environmental messaging [22,23]. These communication tactics promote the idea of sustainability as a lifestyle choice rather than an abstract environmental responsibility.

This evolution is particularly relevant to creative industries where the value of a product is not only functional but also emotional, symbolic and aesthetic experience. Digital storytelling is a key strategic competence as creative enterprises often communicate craftsmanship, authenticity, cultural identity and environmental principles simultaneously [24. In this sense, the dried flower industry is a growing example of sustainable entrepreneurship within the circular economy. Fresh flowers are inherently perishable items that generate large amounts of organic waste from weddings, ceremonies, hospitality events and retail usage. By using preservation procedures, these discarded floral materials are made into ornamental goods with prolonged lifecycles, thereby producing extra commercial value and minimizing environmental waste at the same time. Thus, the companies of dried flowers are naturally aligned with various concepts of circular economy, such as waste reduction, resource efficiency [25], product longevity [26], and sustainable consumption [27].

While dried flower items are becoming increasingly popular in many countries, there is surprisingly little scholarly work on this new creative industry. The current sustainability literature has been mainly focused on manufacturing, fashion, tourism, food systems, construction and large-scale circular production processes, with much less attention on small creative enterprises that transform waste into aesthetic products [28]. Even in research on sustainable entrepreneurship of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) the main focus has been on business models, innovation capability, operational performance or consumer purchasing behaviour [29], but not on sustainability communication.

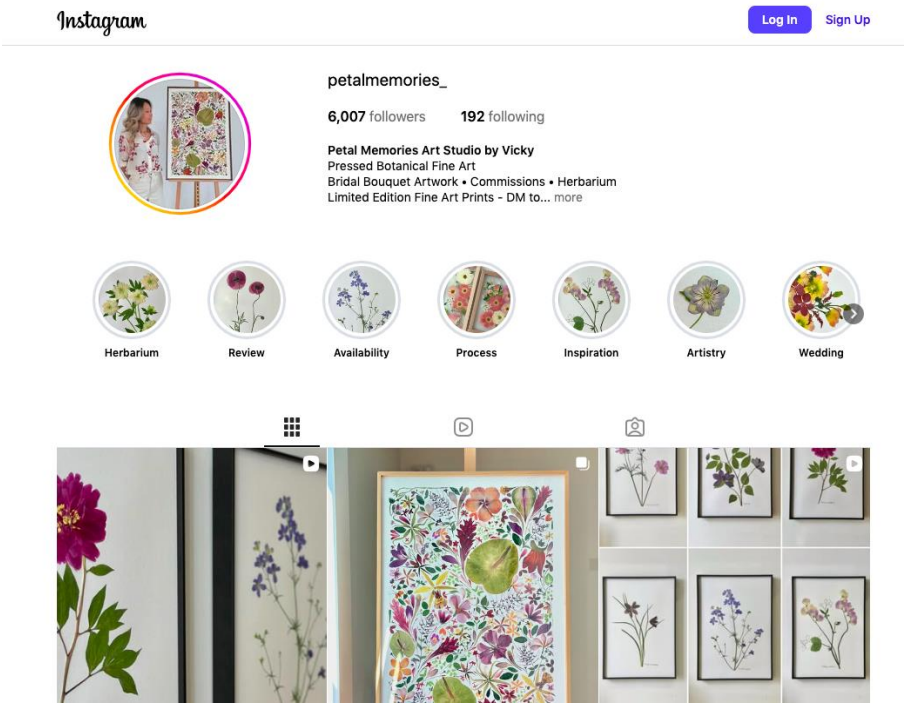


Figure 1. Example of The Dried Flowers Business Instagram Account

Source: https://www.instagram.com/petalmemories_?igsh=MWllNmxhN3FsOXVidw%3D%3D

The communicative perspective seems to be even less researched. Sustainability communication on social media, digital influencers and environmental activism have been increasingly studied recently, and it has been found that storytelling, authenticity, emotional engagement and visual narratives significantly influence how audiences perceive sustainability [18,16]. But most of these studies are about environmental organizations, public campaigns, sustainable fashion brands or digital influencers. There are few studies that comparatively analyzed how small businesses with sustainability orientation use their own organizational content for the transmission of environmental values [30,31]. Almost no studies have explored how dried flower businesses construct narratives around sustainability, specifically, even though their business models inherently reflect circular economy principles.

Additionally, previous studies have mainly investigated sustainability communication through the lens of consumer responses, engagement metrics, or influencer effectiveness [32,33]. While these studies provide valuable insights into audience behaviour, they offer little understanding of the communication content per se. Questions about what sustainability themes are actually communicated, which environmental values are emphasized and how sustainable business identities are constructed through digital storytelling are underexplored, especially among small creative enterprises working in a circular economy context. This limitation implies that sustainability communication research has paid more attention to communication outcomes than to communication content.

To address these limitations, this study explores how dried flower businesses communicate sustainability on Instagram through qualitative content analysis. The authors examine five dimensions of sustainability: waste reduction, resource efficiency, product longevity, environmental responsibility and digital storytelling. This study is about the strategic construction of sustainability narratives through digital communication, rather than measurement of business performance or consumer attitudes. The current research contributes to three growing streams of literature, by analyzing the content shared by dried flower businesses. First, it contributes to the sustainable entrepreneurship literature by examining an emerging creative industry based on circular economy principles. Second, it adds to the literature on sustainability communication by identifying the dominant environmental narratives used by businesses operating in a waste-to-value context. Third, it adds to the scholarship on digital communication by showing that Instagram is not just a marketing platform but a strategic medium for the construction of sustainable organizational identities. Overall, the findings offer practical advice to MSMEs for enhancing sustainability-oriented branding through authentic digital storytelling and also contribute to the theoretical knowledge of sustainability communication in the circular economy.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Circular Economy and Sustainable Entrepeneurs in Creative Industries

The circular economy (CE) has arisen as a sustainable alternative to the old linear economic model, emphasizing resource efficiency, waste reduction, reuse and regeneration. CE is not just a commercial strategy to create economic, environmental and social value [34], but also an environmental endeavor. Recent studies suggest that digital technologies have an essential role in expediting CE adoption by improving the management of resources, tracking the product life cycle and communicating with stakeholders, thereby strengthening the organizational competitiveness [35,36].

The creative industries are a fertile ground for CE. They generate value by invention, redesign and reuse of materials rather than heavy use of resources. This is exemplified in companies that dry flowers and convert floral waste from ceremonies, hospitality and retail into robust decorative products, thereby prolonging product lifespan and minimizing organic waste. Although dried flower enterprises are in close agreement with circular economy concepts, they have not yet been sufficiently studied from the perspectives of sustainability and communication, as much study has been conducted in relation to sectors like manufacturing, fashion, food systems, and tourism. This gap underlines the importance of investigating the ways floral upcycling companies propagate sustainability in the circular economy.

2.2 Sustainability Communication in Digital Media

As sustainability has become a major factor in the assessment of corporate legitimacy, communication has become a strategic skill to promote stakeholder relationships, reputation and organizational value. Stakeholders are increasingly expecting firms to adopt sustainable practices and report on them clearly and consistently. Thus, sustainability communication has evolved from a one-way information transmission to an ongoing stakeholder engagement on digital platforms [37,38].

Digital media enable firms to convey sustainability stories, share visual information, engage with audiences, and demonstrate responsible business practices. These approaches allow organizations to show transparency, establish credibility and motivate stakeholders to get involved in sustainability initiatives. Therefore, organizations need to embed sustainability into operational and communication strategies for effective sustainability communication [39, 40].

However, sustainability communication must be based on authentic organisational practices. Greenwashing accusations may emerge from over-exaggerated or incorrect environmental claims that may erode trust of stakeholders and damage corporate reputation [41]. As a result, corporations are being pressured to convey sustainability through credible, evidence-based narratives that show measurable actions, not just symbolic assertions.

2.3 Digital Storytelling through Instagram

Digital storytelling is a common approach to sustainability communication that helps organizations link environmental efforts with their mission, values, and stakeholder

experiences [42]. Storytelling can boost emotional engagement, message memory and perceived authenticity compared to just informative communications, making sustainability communication more engaging and convincing [43].

Instagram's visual and interactive nature through photos, videos, reels, and user engagement capabilities makes it a great medium for sustainability storytelling. Companies are increasingly selling sustainability through visual aesthetics, craftsmanship, lifestyle representation and authentic stories, rather than highlighting technical environmental information, enabling consumers to link sustainable processes with everyday life [44].

This strategy is particularly important for creative firms, as their goods are typically not just useful but also possess symbolic and aesthetic significance. With Instagram these firms can exhibit the quality of the product, the making of it, the workmanship and the environmental duty all at once. Although earlier research has focused on sustainability narrative of fashion, cuisine, tourist or eco-design enterprises, there is less research on Instagram communication [45,46] by dried flower businesses, thus suggesting an essential gap in the literature.

2.4 Sustainability Communication among MSMEs and Creative Business

Micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) play a significant role in the sustainable development through employment generation, innovation and local economic growth [47]. Sustainability is becoming a key consideration for consumers. Many MSMEs are adopting sustainable practices in their operations and communicating these through social media. MSMEs, in contrast to major firms, generally use authentic storytelling, involvement of owners and community engagement to highlight transparency, craftsmanship, local identity and environmental responsibility [48].

Creative MSMEs are particularly well placed to promote sustainability, since their goods are often the result of artisanal processes, recycled materials and local resources [49]. While previous studies have focused mainly on sustainability adoption, innovation and consumer behaviour, relatively few have focused on how MSMEs communicate sustainability through digital storytelling [50,51]. Thus, there is no evidence of sustainability themes communicated by MSMEs and how sustainable organizational identities are established through social media communication.

2.5 Research Gap and Conceptual Framework

A synthesis of recent literature identifies four important research gaps:

1. Research on circular economy has mainly focused on operational implementation, while comparatively less attention has been paid to the communication processes that influence stakeholder understanding of sustainability.
2. Although research on sustainability communication has increasingly focused on digital storytelling and Instagram, existing studies to date have focused on environmental campaigns, sustainable fashion, tourism, and influencer communication, rather than creative MSMEs.

3. Finally, dried flower businesses, as a good example of waste valorization through circular economy principles, are still almost absent from sustainability communication literature.

To date, existing studies have not systematically examined how these businesses communicate waste reduction, resource efficiency, product longevity, environmental responsibility and digital storytelling through social media content.

Therefore, this study aims to fill these gaps by conducting qualitative content analysis of Instagram content generated by dried flower businesses. Prior research has mainly focused on consumer perceptions or business performance without emphasizing the communication per se, but this research aims to fill this gap by identifying the dominant sustainability themes present in organizational social media content. In this way, the research contributes to literature in the areas of sustainable entrepreneurship, circular economy, sustainability communication and digital storytelling and offers practical insights for creative MSMEs in their effort to strengthen sustainability-oriented branding through authentic digital communication.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative content analysis approach to investigate the sustainability communication of dried flower businesses on Instagram. Qualitative content analysis is particularly useful for systematically identifying, interpreting and categorizing patterns of meaning which are embedded within communication content [52]. Quantitative content analysis merely counts the observable elements, while qualitative content analysis allows the researcher to explore the contextual meanings, narratives, and underlying messages of sustainability communicated by organizations [53].

The purpose of this study was not to measure the consumer responses or engagement levels, rather, it was to understand how sustainability is represented via digital communication. This makes qualitative content analysis an appropriate methodological framework, as it allows for an in-depth examination of recurring sustainability narratives across social media content, while maintaining the contextual meaning of each post [54].

The unit of analysis selected was Instagram, one of the most popular visual social media among creative micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). This digital space offers a suitable environment for companies to communicate sustainability through photographs, videos, captions, hashtags and storytelling and to study the communication strategies on sustainability.

3.2 Sample Selection

The sampling technique used is purposive sampling, in which the dried flower business is actively communicating with consumers through Instagram. Qualitative research

often uses purposive sampling because it enables researchers to choose information-rich cases that best illustrate the phenomenon of interest [55].

To be included in this study, businesses had to satisfy the following criteria:

1. Actively engage in dried flower businesses;
2. To have an active Instagram account;
3. To regularly upload original content related to their products or business activities;
4. Writing captions or voice over for the posts in English Language;
5. Communicate publicly, explicitly or implicitly, on topics related to sustainability.

With these criteria in mind, 10 dried flower business accounts were selected. Based on these reports, 100 Instagram posts from 2024-2026 were collected for analysis. Visual/audio visual content and captions constituted each post, and these were the unit of analysis.

The number of 100 posts was chosen as a representative number to reveal recurring communication patterns, and at the same time, it would be manageable for a qualitative interpretation of the content.

Table 1. List of Dried Flower Business Instagram Account

No	Account Name	Account Link
1	petalmemories_	https://www.instagram.com/petalmemories_?igsh=MWllNmxhN3FsOXVidw%3D%3D
2	nordicflowershansen_lutin	https://www.instagram.com/nordicflowershansen_lutin?igsh=MTVxOWRqZ2liN25veg%3D%3D
3	meadowandthyme	https://www.instagram.com/meadowandthyme?igsh=bW5iYjdhaXljemdn
4	flowerframery	https://www.instagram.com/flowerframery?igsh=M29uaW11cmt1NTlx
5	elemecreations	https://www.instagram.com/elemecreations?igsh=M3JtMTcweG8wcm82
6	createdwithjoyart	https://www.instagram.com/createdwithjoyart?igsh=MTNzbGdmNml0OTQ0Mg%3D%3D
7	herbaria	https://www.instagram.com/herbariaa?igsh=MXhqdjB0enNqMGtqcQ%3D%3D
8	flowerpresstips	https://www.instagram.com/flowerpresstips?igsh=MTBnZ3hqZDNhM3gxNQ%3D%3D
9	everbloom_press	https://www.instagram.com/everbloom_press?igsh=YXdzNTAxeTIxczZs
10	pressedpetalsbyemily	https://www.instagram.com/pressedpetalsbyemily?igsh=NGZpcDE3MGQzNnB5

3.3 Data Collection

Data were collected via non-participant observation of publicly available Instagram posts. All posts were archived manually and recorded in a coding spreadsheet

developed for this study. The coding process was based on visual and textual elements, considering that sustainability communication on Instagram is created through the interaction of images and captions, and not by one element in isolation.

Each post on Instagram was one unit of analysis. The information collected during the data collection process was: business name; date of publication; visual content; caption; hashtags; sustainability messages; researcher observations.

The coding instrument was developed based on a broad review of sustainability communication and circular economy literature. Five analytical themes were defined for coding beforehand, but flexibility was allowed for further interpretations during analysis.

3.4 Coding Framework

The coding framework consisted of five sustainability dimensions that frequently appear in the sustainability communication literature.

Table 2. Themes of Coding Framework

Theme	Operational Definition
Waste Reduction (Kumar et al., 2025)	Communication describing the reuse, recycling, preservation, or reduction of floral waste.
Resource Efficiency (Kumar et al., 2025)	Communication emphasizing efficient utilization of natural materials, production processes, or resource optimization.
Product Longevity (Mallick & Poddar, 2026)	Communication highlighting the extended lifespan, durability, or long-term usability of dried flower products.
Environmental Responsibility (Wijayanti et al., 2026)	Communication demonstrating environmental awareness, eco-friendly practices, or sustainability commitments.
Digital Storytelling (Blau et al., 2022)	Communication using narratives, emotional storytelling, customer experiences, craftsmanship, or behind-the-scenes content to convey sustainability values.

These themes were adapted from recent sustainability communication and circular economy literature and served as the primary analytical categories throughout the coding process.

3.5 Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed through qualitative content analysis described by Bohm & Sundqvist (2025). The analysis was performed in five sequential stages [58].

1. Familiarisation: All Instagram posts were read several times to get a general understanding of the sustainability narratives presented by each business.

2. Initial Coding: Each post was analyzed in a detailed way, both visually and textually.
3. Sustainability-related messages were coded into the a priori analytical categories.
4. Category Refinement: Codes with similar meanings were gathered into broader sustainability themes, so consistency was kept through the dataset.
5. Theme Interpretation: The themes identified were interpreted to explain how dried flower businesses construct sustainability narratives through digital communication.
6. Pattern Identification: Finally, similarities and differences between businesses were compared to find dominant sustainability communication patterns in the dataset.

The study was done manually using Microsoft Excel for systematic coding and theme arrangement.

3.6 Trustworthiness

The following measures were taken to improve the credibility and reliability of the findings. First, the coding system was constructed based on the well-established literature on sustainability communication to improve the theoretical validity. Second, all Instagram posts were coded with the same coding instrument for the consistency of coding. The coding process is iterative and implicates both the visual and verbal material to mitigate researcher bias and improve the accuracy of interpretation. Third, Finally, during the research, representative examples from the Instagram postings were kept to support the interpretation of each sustainability topic.

While qualitative content analysis is not concerned with statistical generalization, the systematic coding procedures applied in this study provide sufficient transparency and analytical rigor to enable credible interpretations of sustainability communication in dried flower companies.

4 Results and Discussion

4.1 Overview of Sustainability Communication

Qualitative content study shows that there is an embeddedness of sustainability communication in the Instagram content of dried flower businesses, however it is not always openly conveyed. In the data set, firms generally marketed themselves as creative businesses that transformed botanical ingredients into valuable artistic goods. Therefore sustainability was couched in terms of craftsmanship, preservation, originality and emotional worth and not through explicit environmental initiatives.

All of the selected companies belong to a circular economy by prolonging the life of the floral materials but the depth and focus of the sustainability communication varied significantly. Some companies specifically addressed methods of preservation, choice of materials and the long-term desirability of their product, while others focused mostly on product appearance and promotional material. In particular, one business often

added sustainability-related stories into its posts, making it one of the richest studies to understand how innovative MSMEs communicate sustainability using digital media.

These data indicate that sustainability communication in dried flower enterprises is implicitly communicated. Businesses are embedding sustainability into stories of artistic practice, customer experience and product workmanship, rather than making environmental responsibility the central theme. As a result, sustainability is integrated into the brand story, rather than being presented as a stand-alone environmental promise.

4.2 Digital Storytelling as the Dominant Communication Strategy

The most common form of communication in this study was digital storytelling. The companies told stories about the creative process, artistic inspiration, customer memories and the emotional value of saving flowers instead of marketing environmental responsibility explicitly . These stories change dried flower items from ornamental objects to valuable artefacts that preserve human stories and emotional experiences.

The way the story was told also contributed to the feeling of genuineness. By documenting the time, effort and workmanship that went into each piece of art work, businesses valued preservation, not just the end result. So the way of communicating sustainability wasn't through environmental messaging, but through creation.

This suggests Instagram is not just an advertising tool but a storytelling tool where companies can develop sustainable identities through visual narratives. Companies that sell dried flowers don't try to convince the public with environmental data. Instead, they play to the consumer's empathy for their products, whose value isn't simply beauty, but preservation of memories and craftsmanship.

Table 3. Excerpt of Instagram Posts Illustrating the Digital Storytelling Theme

Caption Excerpt	Interpretation
"Designing on such a large scale was challenging... I really needed that natural flow to make the whole piece feel 'alive'... I might have spent over 100 hours on this piece..."	The artist tells the tale of how the piece came to be, the work, the skill, the emotional investment. There's no obvious environmental message delivered in the article. Instead, sustainability is created via real narrative.
"What moves me most about creating works like this is the sense of preserving memories through memories themselves... Being able to hold love, history, and personal stories within a piece like this is something I feel truly grateful for."	The narrative promotes dried flower art as a method of holding onto emotional moments, encouraging buyers to value products with lasting sentimental significance.

Source: Instagram posts analysed by the authors.

The findings add to earlier work in sustainability communication by showing that creative MSMEs communicate sustainability through emotive storytelling. Companies

promote sustainability not as an environmental issue, but as the experience of creation, memory and creative identity. This sort of communication coincides with contemporary digital storytelling techniques where stories are more successful in establishing the authenticity and consumer engagement than factual messages.

4.3 Resource Efficiency: Highlighting the value of Natural Materials

Another common theme concerned the effective use of botanical resources. Businesses would often claim that the flowers were carefully selected, preservation processes and archive quality materials used to ensure the best quality and life of the product. These were couched in terms of craft and professionalism, rather than as environmental practices.

The message about resource efficiency also means that sustainability is part of the quality of manufacturing. The choice of indigenous botanical materials and rigorous preservation processes, which are responsible resource management, add to the uniqueness of handmade items.

Table 4. Excerpt of Instagram Posts Illustrating Resource Efficiency

Caption Excerpt	Interpretation
"For Series I, only locally collected Malaysian plants were used. In total, there were around 200 plants included, across at least 30 different types."	This caption is a fantastic illustration of the local plant resources may be used to celebrate biodiversity and craftmanship.
"I chose a beautiful, museum-grade paper... a 100% cotton rag paper that brings out every detail of the pressed flowers..."	This is the hallmark of quality manufacturing and the management of resources in the premium archival materials.

Source: Instagram posts analysed by the authors.

The results suggest that resource efficiency is perceived as a question of quality and craftsmanship, not as a question of environmental responsibility. Creative MSMEs can choose between sustainability and product quality, and ecological value can be integrated into artistic practice.

4.4 Product Longevity: Extending the Life Cycle of Floral Materials

Another theme that ran through the investigation was the lifespan of products (product longevity). Businesses repeatedly emphasized the methods of preservation, archival materials and the ability of dried flower artworks to last for decades or even generations. This kind of communication is one of the basic ideas of the circular economy, which extends the life of items not to waste resources unnecessarily.

Instead of promoting their products for repeated use, companies sold them as lasting souvenirs, able to hold botanical specimens and human memories. This positioning is consistent with sustainability and at the same time enhances the notion of exclusivity and premium quality.

Table 5. Excerpt of Instagram Posts Illustrating Product Longevity

Caption Excerpt	Interpretation
"…bringing out every detail of the pressed flowers while ensuring it lasts for generations."	The business has a clear focus on longevity and long-term preservation, to extend the life cycle of botanical materials.
"Photographs printed on Hahnemühle paper using giclée printing (archival quality, colour lifespan 100 years plus). Desiccant sealed for long-term preservation."	Archival print and preservation processes encourage product life span, as a practice of sustainability and a premium quality characteristic.

Source: Instagram posts analysed by the authors.

The findings imply that the sustainability story of dried flower enterprises is inscribed in product life span. Longevity is an important aspect as it is not a technical environmental term but a meaningful promise to preserve beauty and memories across generations.

4.5 Waste Reduction: An Implicit Economy Narrative

Although the dried flower industry is premised on increasing the longevity of floral resources, specific references to waste minimization were relatively rare. Instead, businesses imparted this lesson indirectly through the presentation of the conservation of flowers that otherwise would have a short life span.

This shows that the environmental value of flower upcycling is an untapped resource in communication. Businesses concerned with the artistic transformation of flowers into decorative objects, not with waste diversion or circular economy concepts.

Table 6. Excerpt of Instagram Posts Illustrating Waste Reduction

Caption Excerpt	Interpretation
"Roses have always been one of my favourite flowers to work with because they press beautifully and usually retain their colour very well after pressing."	The caption does not mention waste but describes the preservation of fresh flowers and their transformation into long-lasting pieces of art. This is a manifestation of the philosophy of extending the life of materials.
"🌿 All botanicals used in this artwork retain their natural colours."	Keeping the natural botanical traits intact also shows how short-lived flowers can be turned into lasting beautiful pieces, which therefore, in a way, promotes waste reduction.

Source: Instagram posts analysed by the authors.

The absence of waste reduction in the communication signifies an opportunity for dried flower businesses to enhance their sustainability storytelling. A clear description of how the flower waste is converted into artistic objects may increase consumers' appreciation of the circular economy value of these businesses.

4.6 Environmental Responsibility: An Emerging but Underdeveloped Theme

Environmental responsibility was the least common theme, most often expressed through implicit organisational ideals rather than stated sustainability pledges. Broader environmental topics such as biodiversity protection, carbon reduction or eco-friendly packaging were rarely mentioned by businesses .

Instead, environmental stewardship was expressed via respect for natural resources, handmade production and love of botanical beauty. While these tales support a sustainable brand image, they are not enough to communicate a full environmental commitment.

Table 7. Excerpt of Instagram Posts Illustrating Environmental Responsibility

Caption Excerpt	Interpretation
"I also try to remind myself that orchids aren't something to take for granted. Some are protected, and some are becoming quite rare. It feels important to leave them where they belong in nature, especially wild orchids, so they can keep growing long after us."	The artist clearly communicates biodiversity conservation and responsible interaction with natural resources, going far beyond sustainability in product creation.
"Working with flowers I've cared for myself feels deeply special."	The caption communicates environmental stewardship in that it encourages individual responsibility and respect towards the sustainable cultivation of botanical resources.

Results suggest that environmental responsibility remains an evolving discourse in dried flower companies. Hence, companies do not seem to be actively branding themselves as environmentally responsible brands but rather rely on consumers to infer sustainability from visible activities.

4.7 Emergent Sustainability Narrative: The Artist-Flower-Memory Framework

In summary, the results demonstrate that the sustainability communication of dried flower companies is primarily based on implicit sustainability stories rather than explicit ones. Companies are telling stories of sustainability on innovation, craftsmanship, preservation and emotional value, rather than green marketing themes. We communicate in a way that makes sustainability part of the artistic nature of the firm, not something added on as a separate promotional statement.

The data also reveals a substantial communication gap. Of course, the circular economy is referenced in dried flower firms through preservation of blooms and lasting materials, but they rarely directly state what the environmental benefits are. These

organizations may want to consider more open communication regarding their environmental responsibilities and waste reduction efforts, which might assist to strengthen their sustainable brand identities and educate consumers on the ecological benefits of floral upcycling. This finding represents the study's key contribution to the literature on sustainability communication, creative entrepreneurship and the circular economy.

In addition to the five identified coding categories, the analysis identified a generalizable pattern of narrative structure that consistently linked the sustainability themes presented by dried flower businesses. The Instagram photographs combined to create sustainability not as individual environmental statements but as three interconnected narrative layers, the artist, the flower and the memory (Figure 2).

The first story layer, the artist, talks about the human dimension of sustainability. The creative process behind each piece of art was explained in multiple postings covering the amount of time invested, technical problems, artistic inspiration and emotional reward during the preservation journey. The narratives demonstrated sustainability as important artistic work that was labor hard, not only ecologically responsible production. The craftsmanship was a highlight and onlookers were welcome to admire the human labor that turned natural materials into durable art works. The flower is a transformation and a second layer of botanical compounds. They delivered flowers not as throwaway decorations but as precious natural treasures to be preserved. Posts highlighted floral selection, preservation processes, locally-sourced botanicals and archive grade materials, echoing resource efficiency and product longevity, while reinforcing the business's creative character. Interestingly, the medium through which environmental values were expressed was not explicit ecological discourse but the love of botanical beauty.

The memory, the last layer, was the most powerful emotional side of sustainability communication. Many responses referred to the art of dried flowers as a way of preserving important life events, family ties, unique occasions and personal recollections. Flowers were made into everlasting keepsakes, extending not only the physical life of botanical materials but the emotional life of valued memories. Thus, sustainability was defined not only as a matter of environmental preservation but also as a matter of cultural and emotional preservation.

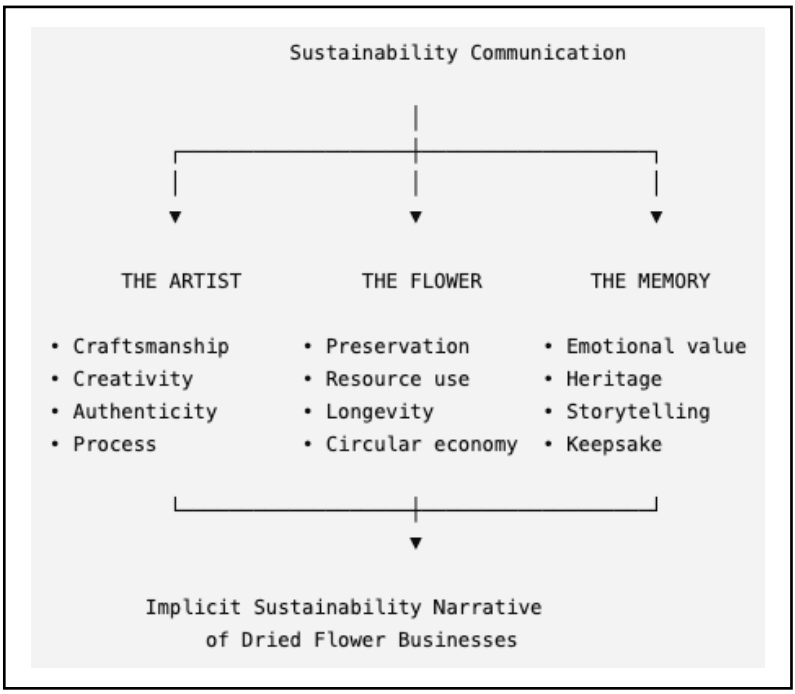


Figure 2: The Artist–Flower–Memory Framework of Sustainability Communication

These three narrative layers collectively indicate that sustainability communication in dried flower enterprises is beyond standard environmental message. Sustainability is communicated with interlinked narrative praising creative workmanship, botanical preservation and emotional attachment, rather than green marketing jargon or ecological assertions. This narrative structure allows for sustainability to become an implicit organizational value embedded in the identity of the business rather than an explicitly promoted marketing message.

Therefore, the results show that sustainability communication in creative MSMEs works through what is proposed in this study as an Artist—Flower—Memory Framework (Figure 2). The concept demonstrates how sustainability is communicated through the interaction of three complementing narratives. The artist represents creativity and craftsmanship, the flower resource preservation and circular economy activities and the memory the long-lasting emotional value created via preservation. These stories together provide for a holistic sustainability tale that sets dried flower businesses apart from the usual sustainability communication of larger companies.

This concept extends the current literature on sustainability communication by demonstrating that environmental message can be communicated indirectly through narratives of creativity and emotional, rather than through explicit environmental activism. The findings therefore add a communicative perspective to the circular economy research by emphasizing that sustainability is not only about operational processes but also about the stories companies tell about those processes.

5 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to analyze the communication of sustainability of dried flower businesses on Instagram using qualitative content analysis. The results imply that sustainability communication is not only achieved through direct environmental claims, but also through stories about creativity, craftsmanship, preservation and emotional significance. Rather than traditional green marketing, the enterprises create sustainable brand identities through visual storytelling highlighting the making of meaningful and lasting art objects from floral waste [11,22,37].

The research identified five pillars of sustainability communication, including digital storytelling, resource efficiency, product lifespan, waste reduction, and environmental accountability, and an emerging theme of emotional value. Digital storytelling was the most used communication strategy to communicate sustainability ideals among them [18,22]. The companies did not use any technical environmental terminology, but told stories on botanical preservation, creative workmanship, and personal stories of the consumer, thereby making sustainability an implicit characteristic of the brand story and not a definite marketing claim [42,57].

The present study identified an emergent pattern of communication that exceeded the predefined analytical categories, which we have termed the Artist–Flower–Memory Framework. The framework shows three interrelated narratives that shape sustainability communication. The artist is a symbol of creativity, craftsmanship and authenticity, while the flower symbolizes resource conservation, product durability and circular economy concepts, memory, emotional bond and the conservation of valuable life experiences. By combining environmental responsibility and the development of artistic and emotional value, these narratives indirectly communicate sustainability, extending the current sustainability communication literature beyond explicit environmental advocacy [1,27,37].

Moreover, the results add to the sustainable entrepreneurship and the circular economy communication literature by extending the focus from operational sustainability to sustainability communication by creative MSMEs. Previous research have mostly focused on sustainability adoption, business performance or customer reactions. This study shows that communication is a strategic instrument for audiences to perceive, experience and value circular economy values. This communication-centred paradigm is a contribution to studies on sustainability communication and creative enterprise [28,47].

The results suggest that, from a practical point of view, companies working with dried flowers have a significant opportunity to strengthen their sustainability positioning. The business models are inherently based on circular economy ideas, prolonging the life cycle of floral materials and reducing waste, but these environmental benefits are usually only implicitly articulated [14,16]. More appealing storytelling tactics to build sustainable brand identity, while yet preserving authenticity and limiting the potential of greenwashing might include stronger evidence-based narratives around floral waste reduction, resource conservation and environmental responsibility [17,41].

The study has a number of limitations. First, the analysis was restricted to Instagram posts from a purposive sample of dried flower retailers. Thus, the results are solely indicative of communication on one social media and cannot be applied to other creative industries or other digital platforms. Second, the study was based on the

substance of communication from the organizational perspective, and the audience's impression or the effectiveness of communication was not considered [52–55].

In the future, it would be interesting to analyze sustainability communication on several digital platforms, such as TikTok, Pinterest, Facebook, and organizational websites, to assess how stories are tailored to each medium. Comparative studies on other creative industries such as sustainable fashion, recycled crafts, eco-friendly home décor and handmade products may bring new insights into sustainability communication in circular economy firms. In addition, a combination of qualitative content analysis with consumer interviews or engagement analytics may provide more subtle insights into the influence of sustainability narratives on consumer trust, engagement and purchase behaviour.

The research illustrates how dried flower companies promote environmental sustainability. The results show that sustainability communication work best on MSMEs when environmental responsibility is described through stories that relate people, nature, creativity and emotion.

Acknowledgments. The authors would like to thank the Public Relations Study Program, Vocational Education Program, Universitas Indonesia, for supporting this research. The authors also thank the dried flower businesses for publicly available Instagram contents as the primary data source for this study.

Disclosure of Interests. The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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