Research Article

Tourist Narratives on Authenticity of Experience at Agrotourism Destinations: A Phenomenological Study from an Eco-Spiritual Perspective at Sukomakmur Agrotourism

Nina Mistriani[1*], John J. O. I. Ihalauw [2], Sony Heru Priyanto[3]

[1,2,3] Sekolah Tinggi Pariwisata Ambarrukmo, Yogyakarta, Indonesia;e-mail: ninamistriani@stipram.ac.id[1]

* Corresponding Author: Nina Mistriani

Abstract: This phenomenological study explores tourists' narratives and perceptions regarding the authenticity of experiences at Sukomakmur Agrotourism, Magelang, through an eco-spiritual lens. Agrotourism has evolved beyond agricultural education to encompass cultural, spiritual, and ecological dimensions, yet empirical studies on how tourists narrate authenticity in Indonesian agrotourism contexts remain limited. Using in-depth interviews with 15 tourists and participatory observation over three months (July-October 2025), the research employed interpretative phenomenological analysis to identify emerging patterns in tourists' authentic experiences. The research reveals that authenticity is interpreted through three interconnected dimensions: physical authenticity manifested through natural landscape and farming activities, cultural authenticity expressed through local wisdom and community interactions, and spiritual authenticity experienced through contemplative moments and transcendental connection with nature. Tourists describe experiencing profound connectedness, personal reflection, and transformative insights influenced by local wisdom and the religious-cultural milieu. The integration of eco-spiritual values significantly enhances tourist experience quality, creating memorable and meaningful encounters. The findings suggest that integrating eco-spiritual values can be a distinguishing element for sustainable agrotourism development, offering theoretical contributions to authenticity literature and practical guidance for destination management in creating transformative tourism experiences.

Keywords: Agrotourism; Authenticity; Eco-spirituality; Phenomenology; Sustainable tourism;

1. Introduction

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Global tourism is undergoing a paradigmatic transformation from mass tourism toward experiential tourism that emphasizes authenticity, sustainability, and personal meaning as a response to changing motivations and expectations of contemporary tourists (Cohen and Cohen 2012; Volo 2021). This shift creates opportunities for agrotourism destinations to develop authentic experiences that integrate physical, cultural, and spiritual dimensions in creating memorable tourism experiences (Darcy, McKercher, and Schweinsberg 2020; Lehto et al. 2018; Reindrawati, Noviyanti, and Young 2022; Schweinsberg and Fennell 2024). Agrotourism is no longer viewed merely as agriculture-based recreational activity but has evolved into a space for personal transformation where tourists can reconnect with nature, local culture, and spiritual values increasingly lost in modern urban life (Streimikiene et al. 2021). In this context, authenticity of experience becomes a crucial element that not only distinguishes agrotourism destinations from other forms of tourism but also contributes to tourist satisfaction, destination loyalty, and long-term sustainability (Cong, Zhang, and Chen 2022; Ram, Björk, and Weidenfeld 2016; Zhao et al. 2024).

Sukomakmur Agrotourism, located on the slopes of Mount Sumbing, Magelang Regency, Central Java, at an elevation of 1,726 meters above sea level, is an agrotourism destination offering spectacular terraced vegetable landscapes with Mount Sumbing and Sindoro panoramas as backdrop, creating a stunning visual setting as well as a spiritual atmosphere conducive to contemplation and personal reflection. This destination has attracted domestic and international tourists seeking authentic nature-based experiences

alongside cultural immersion, offering direct interaction with local community farming activities that still maintain traditional practices and local wisdom values in land management (Azmira, 2024). The village government actively involves the Tourism Awareness Group (POKDARWIS) in agrotourism management that prioritizes environmental conservation and farmer empowerment as main actors, reflecting sustainable community-based tourism principles (Richards 2020). However, aspects of authentic experience and tourist spirituality dimensions, which are important elements in forming memorable experiences, have not been deeply explored through systematic academic research.
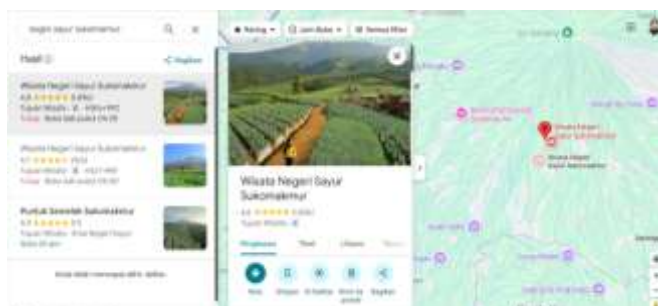

Figure 1: Location and Map of Sukomakmur Agrotourism
Source: https://www.google.com/maps

In recent years, agrotourism in Indonesia has developed beyond agricultural education tourism to also integrate cultural, spiritual, and ecological values, thus encouraging the emergence of the concept of eco-spirituality in tourism experiences that connect environmental awareness with transcendental dimensions and life meaning (Heintzman 2010; Parks 2020). This phenomenon aligns with global trends where agrotourism plays a catalyst role in sustainable rural development, environmental conservation, local culture revitalization, and strengthening social bonds among tourism actors, farmers, and visitor communities (Ajmal et al. 2018; Flanigan, Blackstock, and Hunter 2015; Nguyen et al. 2019; Yen, Tsaur, and Tsai 2023). Eco-spirituality, as a concept combining ecological awareness with spiritual consciousness, offers a new paradigm in understanding tourists' relationships with agrotourism destinations, where experiences are not only hedonistic or educational but also transformative and transcendental (Anderson 2011; Ives et al. 2024; Jenkins and Chapple 2011; Kong et al. 2022; Sideris 2010; Stacey 2024; Stuckrad 2022; Taylor 2020). International studies confirm that authenticity of experience is a key aspect in attracting tourists and building loyalty to agrotourism destinations, where authenticity is not only related to genuine agricultural products and practices but also encompasses emotional, reflective, and transcendental experiences tourists have when interacting with nature and local culture (Guerra et al. 2022; Lever, Elliot, and Joppe 2023; Ling, Lin, and Wu 2016; Rickly and Canavan 2024; Yi et al. 2024).

2. Preliminaries or Related Work or Literature Review
The Concept of Authenticity in Tourism
Authenticity is a multidimensional construct that has become central to tourism studies, particularly as tourists increasingly seek meaningful and genuine experiences (Cohen 1988; Cohen and Cohen 2012). Authenticity in tourism can be understood through multiple lenses: objective authenticity relates to the genuineness of objects and practices as they exist; constructive authenticity emerges from social construction and negotiation of meaning; and existential authenticity refers to personal existential experiences where tourists discover their "authentic self" (Rickly and Canavan 2024).

In the agrotourism context, authenticity extends beyond authentic agricultural products and practices to encompass emotional, reflective, and transcendental experiences tourists have when interacting with nature and local culture (Guerra et al. 2022; Yi et al. 2024). Recent research confirms that authenticity of experience is a key aspect in attracting tourists and building loyalty to agrotourism destinations, where authenticity encompasses not only genuine agricultural activities but also profound personal and cultural encounters (Ram et al. 2016; Zhao et al. 2024). The emergence of authenticity occurs through distinct phases of

tourist experience, from initial encounters to deep engagement with destinations (Rickly 2022).

Eco-Spirituality in Tourism

Eco-spirituality refers to spiritual awareness emerging from deep relationships between humans and nature, integrating ecological principles with spiritual dimensions to create holistic understanding of the interconnectedness of all life (Anderson 2011; Taylor 2020). This concept has gained increasing attention in tourism scholarship as researchers recognize that nature-based experiences can facilitate spiritual transformation beyond conventional religious frameworks (Sideris 2010; Stuckrad 2022).

In the tourism context, spiritual experiences in nature can trigger personal transformation, increased well-being, and reconnection with fundamental life values (Heintzman 2010). Eco-spirituality offers a new paradigm in understanding tourists' relationships with destinations, where experiences are not only hedonistic or educational but also transformative and transcendental (Ives et al. 2024; Jenkins and Chapple 2011). The role of religion and spiritual values in shaping human-nature relationships has become increasingly recognized as central to sustainability transitions and environmental consciousness (Ives et al. 2024; Stacey 2024).

Agrotourism as a Space for Authentic Experience

Agrotourism has developed as an alternative tourism sector offering authentic experiences through direct involvement with agricultural life, rural culture, and natural ecosystems (Streimikiene et al. 2021). Global tourism is undergoing a paradigmatic transformation from mass tourism toward experiential tourism that emphasizes authenticity, sustainability, and personal meaning, creating opportunities for agrotourism destinations to develop authentic experiences that integrate physical, cultural, and spiritual dimensions (Cohen and Cohen 2012; Volo 2021).

Agrotourism plays a catalyst role in sustainable rural development, environmental conservation, local culture revitalization, and strengthening social bonds among tourism actors, farmers, and visitor communities (Nguyen et al. 2019). The evolution of agrotourism reflects broader shifts in tourism toward experiences that are meaningful, memorable, and transformative (Schweinsberg and Fennell 2024). Tourism experiences are increasingly understood through aesthetic and emotional dimensions that contribute to satisfaction, loyalty, and lasting impact (Breiby and Slåtten 2018; Tulasi et al. 2024; Yang et al. 2022).

Furthermore, authenticity and aesthetic experiences in tourism settings influence cultural identity formation and mental experiences of visitors (Cao et al. 2024; Yang et al. 2022). The relationship between perceived authenticity, place attachment, and destination loyalty has been documented across various tourism contexts, demonstrating the critical role of authentic experiences in building sustainable tourism destinations (Cao et al. 2024; Cong et al. 2022; Ram et al. 2016; Zhao et al. 2024). Contemporary research emphasizes the importance of creating accessible and inclusive tourism experiences that accommodate diverse visitor needs while maintaining authenticity and quality (Darcy et al. 2020; Lehto et al. 2018; Reindrawati et al. 2022).

3. Materials and Method

This research uses a qualitative approach with interpretative phenomenological study design (Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis/IPA) aimed at understanding tourists' subjective experiences and perceptions regarding authenticity and eco-spiritual values at Sukomakmur Agrotourism (Nizza, Farr, and Smith 2021; Tuffour 2017). The phenomenological approach was chosen because it can explore deep meaning from tourists' personal experiences regarding multidimensional agrotourism phenomena, covering physical, cultural, and spiritual aspects. Husserlian phenomenology emphasizes epoché (bracketing) where researchers set aside prejudices to understand the essence of research subjects' experiences. This approach allows researchers to explore tourists' lived experience holistically and deeply (Bevan 2014; Neubauer, Witkop, and Varpio 2019; Sloan and Bowe 2014; Tuffour 2017; Zahavi 2021).

The research was conducted at Sukomakmur Agrotourism, Nampan Hamlet, Sukomakmur Village, Kajoran District, Magelang Regency, Central Java, Indonesia. The

location was purposively selected based on criteria: first, an agrotourism destination that has developed with characteristic terraced landscapes; second, has strong local community involvement; third, attracts tourists motivated to seek authentic experiences; and fourth, has eco-spiritual value potential through natural settings and local culture. Data collection was conducted over three months (June-August 2024) with several intensive field visits and ongoing interviews with informants.

Research informants were selected using purposive sampling technique with criteria: first, tourists who have visited Sukomakmur Agrotourism at least once; second, minimum age 21 years (adults with mature reflection capacity); third, willing to share experiences in depth; and fourth, having diversity in demographic and geographic backgrounds. Fifteen informants participated in this research, consisting of 8 domestic tourists (Jakarta, Yogyakarta, Semarang, Surabaya) and 7 international tourists (Africa, United Kingdom, France, Japan, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Thailand) with age range 24-58 years and backgrounds including professionals, academics, retirees, and entrepreneurs. The principle of data saturation was applied, where data collection stopped when no new significant information emerged from interviews.

Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation, while data analysis used the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach with six systematic stages from familiarization, coding, theme development, to in-depth interpretation based on theory. Validation of results was conducted through member checking, peer debriefing, and audit trail, maintaining data validity through principles of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The entire research process also adhered to research ethics, including informed consent, data confidentiality, and informants' right to withdraw.

The conceptual framework shows how the Sukomakmur agrotourism phenomenon produces tourist experiences in three dimensions (physical, cultural, spiritual) that form perceptions of authenticity and eco-spiritual meaning, which are then narrated by tourists.
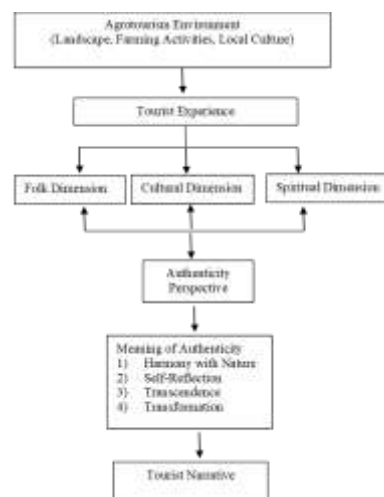

Figure 2 : Research Conceptual Framework

4. Results and Discussion
Physical Dimension
Profile of Sukomakmur Agrotourism Destination

Sukomakmur Agrotourism is located on the slopes of Mount Sumbing at an elevation of 1,726 meters above sea level with an area of approximately 150 hectares. This destination offers stunning terraced vegetable landscapes with main commodities including cabbage, broccoli, lettuce, carrots, and chili. The view of Mount Sumbing (3,371 masl) and Mount Sindoro creates a spectacular panorama that becomes the main visual attraction.

This destination is managed by POKDARWIS Sukomakmur involving 85 farming families as main stakeholders. Activities offered include: farm tours, harvesting experiences, cooking classes with local products, trekking, sunrise viewing, and interaction with local farmers.

(a) The entrance   (b)Terraced Landscape
Figure 3. Terraced Landscape of Sukomakmur Agrotourism (1,726)
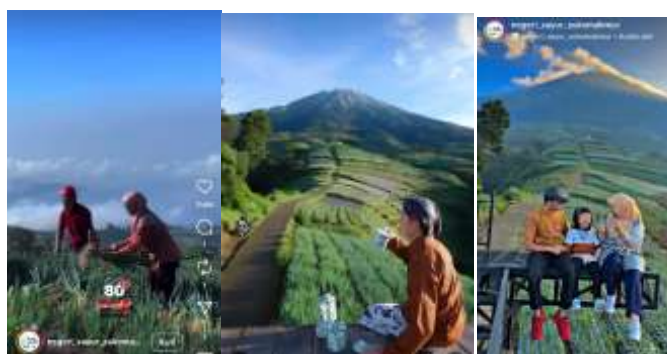Source: Author, 2025   Source : https://www.instagram.com/

Tourist Narratives on Authenticity of Experience

Phenomenological analysis of 15 interview transcripts identified three master themes related to authenticity narratives: (1) Objectivist Authenticity: Landscape and Farming Practices, (2) Constructivist Authenticity: Socio-Cultural Interaction, and (3) Existential Authenticity: Transformative Personal Experience. Tourists perceive authenticity through physical landscapes not overly contaminated by modernization. One informant (R7, female, 34 years, Jakarta) narrated:

"As soon as I arrived at the terraces, I felt this was a real place, not made for tourists. The farmers are really farming, not just acting. The vegetables are fresh, their hands are dirty from work, not staged."

The theme of "unaltered authenticity" emerged strongly, where tourists appreciate minimal artificial intervention. Productive terraces, traditional farming tools used daily, and infrastructure simplicity become markers of objective authenticity.

(a) Framing Practice   (b) Enjoying the view   (c) Faamily Gathering
Figure 4. Authentic Farming Activities
Source: https://www.instagram.com/negeri_sayur_sukomakmur

An international informant (R3, male, 42 years, Australia) compared with agrotourism in his country:

"This is not a theme park version of farming. It's the real deal. The farmers are actually working, not performing. That's what makes it special and different from commercial agrotourism elsewhere."

This objectivist dimension of authenticity aligns concept of "object authenticity" and "indexical authenticity," where authenticity is assessed based on material and factual evidence that the object or activity is "the real thing " (Cohen 1988; Rickly 2022; Wang 1999; Yi et al. 2024).

5. Cultural Dimension
4.2.1 Constructivist Authenticity: Meaningful Socio-Cultural Interaction

The second theme focuses on authenticity constructed through authentic social interaction with farmers and local communities. An informant (R11, female, 28 years, Yogyakarta) explained:

"What makes this experience authentic is not just the scenery, but conversations with Bu Tini (local farmer). She shared stories about farming challenges, simple life philosophy, and how they respect nature. That provides depth of experience that money can't buy."

Table 1: Elements of Socio-Cultural Interaction Building Authenticity

Interaction Element	Frequency	Description	Narrative
Personal conversation with farmers	100%	In-depth dialogue about life, values, and philosophy	" pak Suroto told a story about how weather affect harvest with such detail and honesty"
Eating with farming families	60%	Sharing meals as social ritual	"invited to lunch at the farmer's house with simple but warm menu. Felt like family."
Participation in mutual cooperation (gotong royong)	40%	Involved in collective community work	"joined in gotong royong cleaning irrigation. Teamwork without command, everyone knows their role"
Listening to local stories/legends	80%	Oral narratives about place history	"story about Mount Sumbing and its relationship with farmer' live was very interesting"
Learning local language/terms	55%	Adopting local vocabulary	"learning the term 'nandur' for planting, 'panen' for harvest. Makes me feel more connected"

Field interaction results show that personal conversations with farmers emerged in all cases (100%). This indicates that deep communication is the core in building closeness, especially for understanding life values, philosophy, and farmers' experiences authentically. Listening to local stories or legends also has high frequency (80%), indicating that cultural knowledge and inherited narratives become important media in strengthening community identity. Other prominent interactions include eating with farming families (60%). This activity functions not only as social routine but also as a symbol of acceptance and emotional closeness between researchers and the community. Meanwhile, participation in gotong royong (40%) shows how values of togetherness and solidarity are still maintained in village daily life. Although the intensity is lower, this involvement has important weight because it directly touches collective aspects. Learning local language or terms (53%) becomes a linguistic and cultural bridge facilitating researchers to better integrate with the community. The use of everyday terms like nandur and panen shows adaptation efforts, creating stronger emotional and cognitive connections. Overall, this interaction pattern confirms that personal, participatory, and cultural approaches are the most effective strategies for fully understanding and experiencing farming community life.

This constructivist authenticity reinforces   (Cohen 1988; Cohen and Cohen 2012; Rickly 2022; Rickly and Canavan 2024; Yi et al. 2024) arguments that authenticity in tourism is social negotiation dependent on interpretation and context. Tourists do not passively receive authenticity but actively construct it through meaningful interactions.

Existential Authenticity: Transformative Personal Experience

The third theme reveals the deepest dimension of authenticity: existential authenticity that is transformative. An informant (R5, male, 51 years, Singapore) reflected:

"I came as a tourist looking for beautiful photos. But I left as a different person. Standing there at sunrise, seeing farmers already working while I was still comfortable in my bed yesterday... it made me question my life priorities. That's authentic transformation."

Existential authenticity is not about objects or social construction but about the experience of "being authentic" with oneself (Wang, 1999). Tourists find their "authentic self" through contrast with modern routines, existential reflection, and reconnection with

fundamental values. An informant (R14, female, 45 years, Netherlands) described a transformative moment:

"In the city, I'm always rushing, always connected to devices. Here, I sat on the edge of a terrace, watched the mist moving through the valleys, and for the first time in years, I felt truly present. No past, no future, just now. That's when I felt most authentic."

Themes of "temporal suspension" and "present-moment awareness" emerged consistently, indicating that existential authenticity at Sukomakmur Agrotourism is facilitated by disconnection from modernity and reconnection with natural temporality.

Eco-Spiritual Meaning

Deeper analysis reveals that existential authenticity experience is closely related to the eco-spiritual dimension. Four subordinate eco-spiritual themes were identified: (1) Transcendental Connection with Nature, (2) Contemplation and Mindfulness Practices, (3) Integration of Local Values and Spirituality, and (4) Restorative and Transformative Experience.

Transcendental Connection with Nature

Tourists reported experiencing a feeling of "unity" with nature transcending ordinary aesthetic experience. An informant (R2, female, 29 years, Malaysia) narrated:

"I'm not a religious person, but here I felt something greater than myself. Like there's energy connecting me with the mountain, with the soil, with the plants. It feels spiritual but not tied to any particular religion."

The concept of "immanent transcendence" (Anderson 2011; Ives et al. 2024; Stacey 2024; Taylor 2020)   is relevant here - transcendence not separated from material nature but actually emerging from it. Unlike religious spirituality that is transcendental (beyond the material world), eco-spirituality is transcendence within immanence.

An informant (R9, male, 38 years, Japan) connected this experience with Shintoism:

"In Japanese Shinto, we believe kami (spirits) reside in nature - in mountains, trees, rivers. Here in Sukomakmur, I felt something similar. The mountain (Sumbing) has presence, power. The terraces are sacred geometry. Nature speaks if we listen."

This narrative confirms (Heintzman 2010) that sacred space need not be temples or churches but can be natural landscapes facilitating spiritual experience

Figure 5. Human-Nature Relationship in Eco-Spiritual Context

Contemplation and Mindfulness Practices

The majority of informants (13/15) reported spontaneously engaging in contemplative practices during visits, including informal meditation, prayer, journaling, or simply sitting in silence. An informant (R4, female, 56 years, Semarang) explained:

"I sat in a small gazebo, watching farmers work with calm rhythm. Nothing rushed. I slowed down too. Started being grateful for every vegetable on my plate at home. Previously I never thought about where my food came from. Here, I prayed and gave thanks."

Table 2. Spiritual Practices Emerging Spontaneously

Practice	Number of Informants	Context	Average Duration
Meditation / sitting Quietly	8	Morning or Sunset	15 – 30 minutes
Prayer / Gratitude	10	Various times	5 – 10 minutes

Journaling / written reflelction	5	After activites	20 – 40 minutes
Walking meditation	7	On terrace paths	30 – 60 minutes
Contemplatives photography	6	Various times	Integrated (not specific)

Findings show that prayer or expressions of gratitude are the most dominant practice, performed by 10 informants at various times with relatively short duration (5–10 minutes). This indicates that simple but consistent spiritual expressions become an important part of daily life. Meditation or sitting quietly is also quite prominent, practiced by 8 informants, usually done in the morning or toward sunset with 15–30 minute duration, showing tendency to adjust practice to natural rhythms.

Meanwhile, walking meditation chosen by 7 informants is usually done on terrace paths with longer duration (30–60 minutes), reflecting contemplation forms integrated with physical activity as well as closeness to agricultural landscapes. Contemplative photography, practiced by 6 informants, appears more fluid and integrated at various times, confirming that reflective experience can also occur through visual medium.

Journaling or written reflection is practiced by 5 informants with quite long duration (20–40 minutes), usually after certain activities. This practice is relatively more individual and demands personal space, so its frequency is lower compared to prayer or meditation.

Overall, the practice pattern shows diversity of contemplation forms, from short and spontaneous (prayer, gratitude) to more intense and structured (walking meditation, journaling). This illustrates that spirituality and self-reflection dimensions in the informant community tend to be flexible, adaptive to time, and often integrated with natural environment and daily routines.

These practices were not programmed or mandated but emerged organically as responses to Sukomakmur's setting and atmosphere. This aligns with (Heintzman 2010; Ives et al. 2024; Stacey 2024; Taylor 2020) concept of "spontaneous spirituality" - spirituality not bound to formal ritual but emerging from direct encounter with the sacred in everyday life.

Integrated of Local Values and Spirituality

Local wisdom of Sukomakmur community rooted in Javanese-Islamic values becomes a catalyst for tourists' spiritual experience. Concepts of "memayu hayuning bawana" (maintaining world safety and beauty), "hamemayu hayuning sarira" (perfecting the soul), and the principle of "rukun" (harmony) held by local communities are felt by tourists through interaction. An informant (R8, male, 33 years, Jakarta) shared:

"Pak Hadi (farmer) explained that they don't use excessive pesticides not just because of market demand, but because they believe the soil is a trust that must be maintained for descendants. That's a deep philosophy. Not just business, but spiritual responsibility."

This narrative reveals that local eco-spiritual values are transmitted to tourists not through indoctrination but through observation and dialogue. The concept of "environmental stewardship" held by local communities becomes a living example inspiring tourists.

Figure 6 : Eco-Spiritual Value System of Sukomakmur Community
Source : Author, 2025

This figure represents the Eco-Spiritual Value System of Sukomakmur Community rooted in three main pillars: Javanese value of memayu hayuning bawana (world harmony and balance), Islamic value of khalifah fil ard (humans as earth guardians), and ecological principle of sustainability. In the outer circle, international tourists from Africa, United Kingdom,

France, Japan, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Thailand are displayed, each bringing their cultural and spiritual perspectives. Through direct experience at Sukomakmur, they internalize these values: African tourists feel closeness to agrarian spirituality; British tourists emphasize cultural heritage and sustainability aspects; French tourists relate to art de vivre; Japanese tourists find alignment with satoyama and Shinto concepts; Hong Kong tourists feel contrast with urban life thus finding mindfulness; Malaysian tourists are closer to Islamic values as ecological worship; while Thai tourists connect with Buddhist ecology. Thus, this diagram confirms that Sukomakmur's eco-spirituality can transcend cultural and religious boundaries and become a space for cross-national encounters in building universal human-nature harmony awareness.

Restorative and Transformative Epxperience

The eco-spiritual dimension contributes to psychological restoration and transformative learning. An informant (R12, female, 31 years, Surabaya) described:

"I came in a burnout condition from work. Three days here changed my perspective. Not just rest, but there was a value shift. I realized that success is not only about money and career. Seeing the simple happiness of farmers living in harmony with nature made me question my definition of success."

Table 3. Transformation Outcomes of Eco-Spiritual Experience

Transformaation Dimension	Indicator	Number of Informant
Cognitive	Changed perspective on nature, agriculture, life	100%
Affective	Feelings of calm, gratitude, emotional connection	93%
Behavioral Intention	Intention to change lifestyle (consumption, sustainability)	73%
Spiritual	Increased spiritual awerness, life meaning	87%
Social	Greater appreciation for farmers' work, community	100%

Research results show that transformations experienced by informants are strongest in cognitive and social dimensions, with all 15 informants (100%) reporting changed perspectives on nature, agriculture, and life, as well as increased appreciation for farmers' work and community. This confirms that interaction experiences with farmers not only add knowledge but also form broader social awareness.

In the affective dimension, 14 of 15 informants (93%) felt feelings of calm, gratitude, and deep emotional connection. This emotional experience shows that interaction doesn't stop at the cognitive realm but also touches psychological and feeling aspects. Next, the spiritual dimension is also quite dominant, acknowledged by 13 informants (87%) who felt increased spiritual awareness and life meaning. This indicates that direct experience in nature and with farming communities can present existential reflection.

In the behavioral intention dimension, there were 11 informants (73%) showing intention to change lifestyle, such as more sustainable consumption patterns and environmental concern. Although the percentage is lower than other dimensions, this intention is important because it reflects potential concrete changes in daily behavior.

Overall, this finding pattern shows that transformations experienced by informants are holistic: starting from cognitive awareness, strengthened by emotional and spiritual experiences, then leading to social appreciation and behavioral change intention. Thus, interaction with farmers and environment becomes not only a cultural experience but also a trigger for multidimensional transformation within individuals.

These findings support Attention Restoration Theory and Stress Reduction Theory stating that contact with nature has restorative effects on psychological well-being. However, this research adds a spiritual dimension strengthening these restorative effects (Heintzman 2010; Ives et al. 2024; Taylor 2020).

Eco-Spiritual-Based Authentic Experience Model

Based on analysis findings, this research proposes an Eco-Spiritual-Based Authentic Experience Model depicting how eco-spiritual dimensions contribute to forming tourists' authenticity of experience
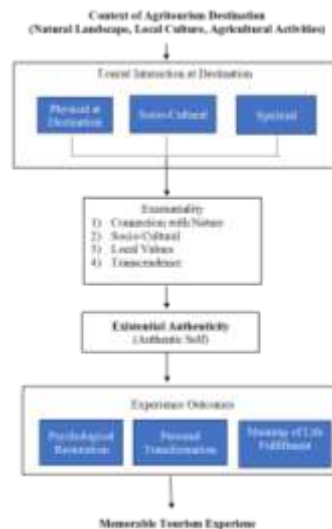
Figure 7 : Eco-Spiritual-Based Authentic Experience Model
Source : Author, 2025

This model shows that agrotourism destination context, consisting of natural landscape, local culture, and agricultural activities, provides space for multidimensional interaction between tourists and destination. Interactions covering physical, socio-cultural, and spiritual aspects integrate to form holistic experiences that are not only surface-level but also deep. The eco-spiritual dimension then appears as an important mediator enriching experience, facilitating connection with nature, contemplation, appreciation of local values, to transcendence. This eco-spirituality process ultimately opens paths for tourists to find existential authenticity or authentic self, resulting in transformative outcomes including psychological restoration, personal transformation, and formation of deep life meaning, thus producing truly memorable tourism experiences.

Implications of Findings

This research provides important contributions to tourism theory development by enriching understanding of authenticity concepts that holistically complement each other among objective, constructive, and existential dimensions. Additionally, this research proposes eco-spirituality as a new dimension in agrotourism emphasizing spirituality embodied through physical and sensorial engagement with nature. These findings also enrich tourism phenomenology literature by showing that tourist experiences are often pre-reflective and embodied, where spiritual meaning appears as bodily knowledge before being articulated cognitively.

Practically, these findings provide direction for destination management, marketing strategies, and tourism policy development. Destination managers need to design holistic experiences uniting physical, social, and spiritual aspects without losing authenticity. From a marketing perspective, using value-based authentic storytelling can attract tourist segments seeking meaningful experiences. For policymakers, research results encourage integration of sustainability standards also considering spiritual experience quality, local community empowerment as cultural interpreters, and utilization of eco-spiritual experiences as nature and culture conservation strategies.

Development Challenges and Opportunities

Development of eco-spiritual-oriented agrotourism destinations faces several complex challenges. Infrastructure limitations remain a major issue, especially regarding difficult road accessibility during rainy season, limited sanitation facilities to accommodate tourist influxes, and minimal adequate accommodation around locations. From human resource capacity perspective, challenges emerge in limited foreign language capabilities, lack of cultural and natural interpretation skills training, and inadequate understanding of modern tourist expectations. These challenges are consistent with (Alam, Alam, and Kalam 2022), who highlight that lack of infrastructure facilities and insufficient human resource training remain major barriers to sustainable tourism development across many developing regions, emphasizing the importance of integrated planning and stakeholder collaboration.

Other challenges lie in visitation management, where overtourism risks, absence of carrying capacity systems, and seasonal visit fluctuations potentially disrupt tourism experience sustainability. Additionally, commercialization pressure encouraging staged authenticity creates risks of losing authenticity, creating tension between economic needs and destination authenticity preservation. This aligns with findings by (Zhang, Yin, and Peng 2021), which demonstrate that excessive commercialization can reduce tourist' perceived authenticity and satisfaction, particularly in destinations rooted in cultural and spiritual heritage.

On the other hand, development opportunities for Sukomakmur agrotourism destination are quite significant, especially through positioning as niche eco-spiritual tourism. Global trends increasingly valuing spiritual wellness and meaningful travel experiences open differentiation space from conventional agrotourism, even with premium pricing potential for tourists seeking quality experiences. Digitalization also opens opportunities through community-based storytelling, use of virtual tours as pre-experience means, and building tourist alumni community platforms. Furthermore, multi-stakeholder collaboration with retreat centers, wellness tourism operators, academics, or other agrotourism destinations can strengthen networks and sustainable innovation. Additionally, efforts to obtain eco-spiritual tourism certification and recognition as sustainable tourism best practices will strengthen destination branding as authentic spiritual sanctuary with global competitiveness.

Table 4. SWOT Analysis of Sukomakmur Agrotourism Development

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
• Spectacular terraced landscape	• Limited infrastructure
• Authentic agricultural practices	• Human resouces with limited skills
• Strong community involvement	• Challenging accessibility
• Rich local wisdom	• Minimal accomodation facilities
• Natural spiritual setting	
OPPORTUNITIES	**THREATS**
• Eco-spiritual tourism niche market	• Overtourism risks
• Academic and industry collaboration	• Climate change impact
• Digital marketing and storytelling	• Competition from other destination
• Certification and awards	• Excessive commercialization
• Growing demand for wellness tourism	• Generational gap (youth migration)

5. Conclusion

This phenomenological research concludes that tourist experiences at Sukomakmur Agrotourism are interpreted through objective, constructive, and existential authenticity dimensions that complement each other, with eco-spirituality as a key element distinguishing this destination. Eco-spirituality presents transcendental connection with nature, harmonious local values, and restorative experiences triggering reflection and personal transformation. The resulting eco-spiritual-based authentic experience model shows that tourist-destination interaction can be mediated by eco-spirituality to create memorable experiences with long-term impacts on tourist well-being.

Based on these findings, destination managers are recommended to develop eco-spiritual-based interpretation programs, manage visitors according to carrying capacity, and strengthen community-based tourism with justice. Marketing should emphasize authentic storytelling and value-based branding, while policies should be directed toward national eco-spiritual tourism standards and strengthening curriculum and applied research. Nevertheless, research limitations regarding limited samples, short duration, and narrative bias emphasize the need for further studies that are more comparative, longitudinal, cross-cultural, and quantitative validation to strengthen academic understanding and practical contributions in sustainable tourism development.

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