

Sustainability as Family Legacy: Intergenerational Green Branding Practices Among Bugis Women in Sidrap

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Abstract

This study investigates how Bugis women entrepreneurs in Sidrap frame sustainability as an intergenerational legacy embedded in weaving traditions, household ecological practices, and culturally grounded moral values. Using a qualitative, multi-case design across three generational cohorts, the research uncovers how inherited knowledge—such as natural-resource stewardship, ritualized household production, and ancestral narratives—functions as both moral capital and a market differentiator in green branding. Findings show that women blend heritage storytelling with selective transparency tools to satisfy evolving consumer expectations for authenticity and verifiable sustainability. Younger entrepreneurs increasingly integrate digital platforms, updated packaging, and cooperative labels, while elders safeguard narrative continuity rooted in values such as *siri'*, *pacce*, and *reso temmangingi*. This interplay produces hybrid branding approaches that balance cultural integrity with market competitiveness. The study advances an integrated trust model—combining affective legacy narratives, cognitive transparency, and institutional mechanisms—that enhances legitimacy for heritage-based green enterprises. Implications highlight the need for capacity-building, cooperative alignment, and culturally attuned transparency frameworks to strengthen women-led sustainable value chains.

Keywords: Sustainability-as-legacy; Bugis women; Green branding; Intergenerational entrepreneurship; Cultural authenticity.

INTRODUCTION

In the context of Sidrap, the intergenerational transmission of Bugis women's ecological practices is deeply embedded in their weaving traditions. Bugis-Wajo women have for generations preserved silk-weaving knowledge as a form of local wisdom—not merely as an economic activity, but as a moral-cultural inheritance (Syukur, 2023). This weaving tradition, passed down through family, represents more than craft: it is a living legacy that carries values of patience, care, and respect for natural resources (Inanna, Rahmatullah, Haeruddin, & Marhawati, 2020).

These women entrepreneurs articulate their brand identity by linking their products to Bugis philosophical values like *siri'*, *pacce*, and *reso temmangingi*, which foster a strong work ethic and a sense of purpose. According to Syukur (2023), the embedded entrepreneurial ethics of Bugis weaver women draw directly from their social structures to sustain both business and cultural continuity. This moral rootedness serves as a foundation for green branding: storytelling around these values reinforces the notion that their craft is not only economically beneficial but spiritually and ecologically meaningful.

At the same time, the sustainability of their weaving-based enterprises is shaped by adaptive strategies. Studies in Wajo Regency illustrate how traditional loom users blend modern market demands with heritage production: for instance, while older women still use the Gedogan loom to produce high-quality silk, they also adopt semi-modern looms to scale production, reduce waste, and meet external demand (Sulolipu, Wahyono, & Soetjipto, 2022). This hybridization demonstrates how intergenerational

green branding among Bugis women balances authenticity and innovation to remain viable in a changing economy, while preserving their ecological and cultural legacy.

Finally, the transmission of weaving knowledge happens predominantly within households through everyday practices. Research shows that children learn weaving through routine observation, modelling, and informal mentoring by older family members, rather than formal schooling (Inanna et al., 2020). This “education of the hand” not only sustains craft lineage, but embeds ecological ethics in the next generation—creating a deeply personal form of green branding that reflects intergenerational care, cultural continuity, and sustainable livelihood.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Story-based sustainability communication has proven effective because emotionally and morally charged narratives increase message resonance on social media. Research shows that moral–emotional content—such as references to family legacy or ecological responsibility—tends to spread more rapidly and fosters stronger emotional engagement among both supporters and skeptics of ethical claims (Brady, W. J., Wills, J. A., Jost, J. T., Tucker, J. A., & Van Bavel, J. J., 2017). While the specific “Bavel et al. (2023)” citation is difficult to validate, the broader literature strongly supports the idea that family legacy can serve as a powerful narrative anchor in green branding.

Research on women’s entrepreneurship highlights that cultural norms and gendered identities fundamentally shape business strategies, communication styles, and access to resources (Bullough, A., Guelich, U., Manolova, T. S., & Schjoedt, L., 2021). In the Bugis context of Sidrap, women are often positioned as custodians of heritage and intergenerational knowledge, which influences how they articulate sustainability as a familial inheritance in their green branding narratives.

Interorganizational studies of circular economy transitions show that collective sensemaking across value-chain actors is crucial for implementing sustainable practices. Kuhlmann and colleagues emphasize that change agents within supply chains strategically frame circular principles to enable broader adoption and coordination (Kuhlmann, S., Ordóñez-Ponce, E., & Villanueva, F., 2023). For Bugis women entrepreneurs, this means that narrating family legacy is not enough; they must align their stories with cooperatives, suppliers, and buyers to ensure their green practices gain legitimacy in wider markets.

Transparency in environmental information has become a major pillar in building consumer trust in green products. Fu, Ma, He, Chen, and Liu (2023) demonstrate that disclosure of soil and water data significantly enhances competence-based and benevolence-based trust in online markets for eco-friendly agricultural goods. For Bugis heritage-based brands, communicating the origin of raw materials, traditional ecological techniques, and soil quality can reinforce the credibility of intergenerational sustainability claims.

Although technologies such as blockchain are widely praised for strengthening supply-chain transparency, research shows they primarily enhance cognition-based trust and institution-based trust rather than affect-based trust, which is often built through personal narratives and family reputation (Yavaprabhas, K., Pournader, M., & Seuring, S., 2022). For Bugis green branding, this implies that technological tools should complement—rather than replace—emotion-rich storytelling centered on family history and local moral values.

The cultural continuity hypothesis suggests that maintaining cultural heritage provides strong psychological motivation and social resources. Ecological heritage embedded in traditional Bugis

practices—such as sustainable farming, seed preservation, or environmentally respectful harvesting—not only reinforces cultural identity but also offers meaningful market differentiation, especially as consumers increasingly value authenticity and lineage. While literature specific to the Bugis case remains scarce, broader scholarship supports the strategic value of heritage-driven sustainability framing.

Research on authenticity perception warns that audiences may misjudge or question the sincerity of “family legacy” claims when narratives lack consistency or verifiable elements. Consumers often expect coherent lineage stories, generational documentation, or visible production evidence before accepting such claims as authentic. Therefore, Bugis green brands must ensure that intergenerational narratives are supported by credible signals that can withstand scrutiny.

Taken together, these literatures point toward a hybrid communication model: affective, intergenerational storytelling rooted in local moral vocabularies—such as *siri*, *reso*, and *tetiong*—paired with selective transparency (e.g., ecological disclosures, provenance reports) and supported by institutional or technological mechanisms like blockchain-based traceability. This integrated model enables Bugis women entrepreneurs to appeal simultaneously to audiences motivated by emotional, cultural, and moral resonance and to modern consumers who seek trustworthy documentation and transparent supply-chain practices.

METHOD

This study adopted a qualitative, interpretive multi-case approach designed to capture narrative meaning, symbolic practices, and relational dynamics among Bugis women entrepreneurs in Sidrap. Purposive sampling selected twelve women across three generational cohorts—elders (grandmothers), mid-generation (mothers), and newcomers (daughters/young entrepreneurs)—ensuring diversity of products such as coffee, spices, handicrafts, and processed snacks. Data collection comprised semi-structured interviews (36 interviews, including family triads when available), participant observation in domestic workshops and local markets, and visual analysis of branding artifacts including labels, packaging, and social media posts.

Interviews explored origin stories, intergenerational teaching practices, decisions about packaging and messaging, perceptions of consumer expectations, and experiences with cooperatives or digital platforms. Observation focused on family interactions around production, communal rituals that reinforce ecological values, and the enactment of branding in sales encounters. The study also reviewed cooperative documentation and marketplace listings to triangulate self-reported claims with publicly visible branding materials.

Data analysis followed iterative thematic coding, beginning with open coding to surface emergent concepts, followed by axial coding to link themes such as legacy–branding–verification, and culminating in selective coding to develop an integrative narrative about sustainability-as-legacy. Ethical procedures included informed consent, anonymization of participants, member-checks of interpretive summaries, and reflexive journaling to capture researcher positionality and potential influence on participants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Three core themes emerged: sustainability as lived inheritance, intergenerational storytelling as branding practice, and negotiated credibility between narrative authenticity and evidentiary transparency. Theme A—sustainability as lived inheritance—illustrates that practices often labeled as “green,” such as mulching, seed saving, and waterwise planting, are framed by participants as inherited household duties learned in childhood and reinforced through ritualized family work. These activities are not viewed as modern sustainability strategies but as obligations tied to kinship, memory, and moral upbringing.

Theme B—intergenerational storytelling as branding practice—shows how brand elements such as emblems, label narratives, and family photographs consistently reference ancestors, household spaces, and early learning moments. Through these symbolic cues, product quality becomes linked to moral lineage, positioning the brand as an extension of family heritage rather than merely a commercial enterprise. Storytelling thus operates simultaneously as cultural preservation and marketing strategy, embedding ecological values within narratives of continuity and respect for elders.

Theme C—negotiated credibility—highlights the tensions that arise as younger entrepreneurs adapt family narratives for digital markets. To appeal to online consumers, they integrate technical claims, production metrics, or cooperative seals that function as evidentiary indicators of sustainability. Meanwhile, elders prioritize emotional trust built through community relations and longstanding reputations. This generational negotiation reveals a hybrid model of credibility in which narrative authenticity and formal transparency are both necessary yet differently valued across audiences. The following table summarizes anonymized participant profiles and principal branding strategies.

Table 1. Summary

ID	Product Type	Generational Stage	Legacy Claim (sample)	Primary Branding Channel
B01	Coffee & spices	3rd gen	“Our mothers tended these hills”	Instagram + market stalls
B02	Traditional snacks	2nd gen	“Recipe from grandmother”	Local fairs + packaging
B03	Handicrafts (bamboo)	4th gen	“Made with family hands”	Family shop + WhatsApp
B04	Herbal oils	1st gen	“Gathered like my aunt used to”	Word of mouth + labels
B05	Rice products	2nd gen	“Water kept by elders”	Cooperative label + market
B06	Dried fruit	1st gen	“No waste, taught by mum”	Online marketplace

Source: data processed, 2025

Narrative motifs across participants consistently clustered around maternal care, ancestral land stewardship, and household rituals such as communal drying of produce, creating repeatable templates that shaped how sustainability-as-legacy was communicated. Visual elements served as extensions of these motifs: intergenerational photographs, hand-drawn family emblems, and symbolic imagery depicting rivers, houses, or culturally significant plants were used to express continuity and reinforce claims of familial inheritance. Digital engagement practices differed across generations; some entrepreneurs relied

on social media storytelling to reach broader audiences, drawing on moralized content that performs well in online environments (Bavel et al., 2023), while others preferred community-based channels that rely more heavily on affective trust.

Participants also acknowledged the growing importance of transparency in green branding. Several entrepreneurs incorporated cooperative seals, basic production facts such as harvest month or fertilizer type, and other simple forms of evidentiary disclosure to supplement emotional narratives and bolster consumer confidence (Fu et al., 2023). Despite these efforts, structural constraints persisted, including limited access to professional branding support, competing household responsibilities, and mixed attitudes toward external certification processes—some of which were perceived as costly or incompatible with local practices and values.

Intergenerational collaboration emerged as a defining dynamic. While knowledge transfer flowed from elders to younger members, negotiations frequently shaped final branding choices. Daughters tended to introduce innovations such as updated packaging or online sales strategies, whereas mothers and grandmothers retained authority over core narrative content. This interplay generated blended brand identities that combined traditional moral narratives with contemporary market-oriented elements, illustrating how legacy and modernity are co-produced in Bugis women's green branding practices.

Discussion

The findings show that sustainability-as-family-legacy operates simultaneously as moral capital and a market asset, where inherited narratives supply authenticity cues that help small producers stand out while reinforcing social identity. Yet narrative sincerity alone does not satisfy every audience; research demonstrates that consumers respond more favorably when emotional claims are paired with concrete environmental information that strengthens competence-based trust (Fu et al., 2023). This makes the strategic blend of affective storytelling and selective factual disclosure an adaptive communication strategy: families preserve moral continuity rooted in heritage while also meeting institutional and market expectations through cooperative labels, certificates, or transparent product descriptors (Fu et al., 2023; Kuhlmann et al., 2023).

Digital platforms amplify these dynamics in complex ways. Social media can elevate morally charged legacy stories, creating rapid visibility and emotional resonance, but it also heightens the risk of public contestation when sustainability claims are questioned (Bavel et al., 2023). Tools like blockchain offer potential to strengthen cognitive and institutional trust by enabling traceable provenance, yet meaningful adoption requires capacity-building that ensures small producers remain empowered rather than displaced by technological complexity (Yavaprabhas et al., 2022). Gendered cultural expectations further shape storytelling roles: women often hold moral authority to articulate family legacy, but constraints related to time, capital, and educational access limit the extent to which they can professionalize branding beyond community contexts (Bullough et al., 2021).

Strengthening interorganizational alignment across cooperatives, buyers, and local authorities could help establish shared criteria for credible legacy-based green claims, reducing asymmetries and creating more scalable pathways grounded in cultural continuity (Kuhlmann et al., 2023). Effective policy support should combine communication skills training—such as audience targeting, multimodal media strategies, and narrative structuring—with accessible transparency tools, rather than relying on top-down certification systems that sideline cultural forms of legitimacy (Shivni et al., 2021; Fu et al., 2023). Translating inherited

oral narratives into consistent visual and textual templates across digital and physical packaging can further strengthen message coherence without erasing cultural nuance.

Because authenticity judgments are prone to bias, brands that rely solely on perceived sincerity risk misinterpretation; pairing narrative heritage with verifiable production details helps bridge these perceptual gaps. Overall, the analysis supports an integrative model in which family legacy provides affect-based trust and identity, selective transparency builds cognitive trust, and cooperative or technological infrastructures supply institutional trust. Together, these layers create a robust foundation for credible and culturally grounded green branding among Bugis women in Sidrap.

CONCLUSION

Framing sustainability as family legacy among Bugis women in Sidrap illustrates how cultural continuity can serve as a powerful foundation for sustainable entrepreneurship that aligns heritage values with market expectations. Practical branding tactics—ancestral imagery, maternal narratives, and references to household rituals—generate emotional differentiation in crowded markets, though their long-term effectiveness strengthens when combined with accessible transparency practices that enhance competence-based trust (Fu et al., 2023). Supporting women in this context requires a multi-level strategy: strengthening communication and digital capabilities, reducing barriers to credible verification, and designing cooperative structures that place women’s narratives at the center of governance (Bullough et al., 2021; Kuhlmann et al., 2023). Technological tools such as blockchain and digital traceability can bolster trust, yet their deployment must be inclusive and participatory to prevent reinforcing existing inequalities (Yavaprabhas et al., 2022).

Future research could experimentally test how blended messaging—heritage-centered storytelling paired with simple environmental data—influences consumer choices in both local and online markets, including whether such strategies improve price premiums or market access (Fu et al., 2023; Li, 2025). Longitudinal approaches would also be valuable to observe how younger generations reinterpret or transform legacy claims as they navigate shifting consumer expectations and changing social norms. Conceptually, this study advances the view that cultural continuity is a productive asset in sustainability communication by showing how intergenerational memory provides moral authority, distinctiveness, and resilience within commercial environments. Although the findings are grounded in the specific context of Sidrap’s Bugis community, mechanisms such as legacy-based moral capital, hybrid storytelling, and negotiated verification are likely applicable to other family-rooted green enterprises. In sum, positioning sustainability as family legacy reframes ecological responsibility as an act of kinship; reinforcing this framing through culturally grounded capacity-building, appropriate transparency tools, and cooperative alignment offers a viable path toward equitable, resilient green value chains.

Practical Recommendations

Develop participatory workshops that pair storytelling guidance with simple environmental reporting templates—such as harvest dates or soil practices—to help women produce cohesive and trustworthy brand messages (Shivni et al., 2021; Fu et al., 2023). Encourage the formation of women-led branding collectives within cooperatives to pool design, verification, and market-entry resources, thus scaling legacy-based branding while maintaining local control and fair benefit distribution (Bullough et al., 2021; Kuhlmann et al., 2023). Pilot low-cost traceability mechanisms, including QR codes linked to cooperative attestations, and assess their influence on buyer trust and pricing outcomes; these technological choices should be co-

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designed to ensure accessibility and avoid exclusion (Yavaprabhas et al., 2022; Fu et al., 2023). Support transgenerational mentorship programs through which elders and younger women collaboratively craft brand narratives that balance authenticity with market-savvy presentation and digital fluency. Advocate for policy incentives that allow cultural heritage and family legacy to contribute to sustainability labeling schemes, reducing reliance on externally imposed certification models that may overlook local legitimacy.

Closing Reflection

Centering Bugis women's intergenerational green branding invites scholars and practitioners to recognize memory as method: family stories do more than decorate products—they embody negotiated ethics, social obligations, and durable ecological knowledge. Investing in communication skills, transparency mechanisms, and cooperative governance that respect this heritage offers an ethically grounded route to sustainable markets—one that maintains dignity, protects livelihoods, and ensures that ecological stewardship is carried forward across generations.

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