

Documenting *Kecap Majalengka* through visual storytelling and audience perceptions in gastronomic tourism

Fitra Ananta Sujawoto¹, Sandi Jaya Saputra², Hardian Eko Nurseto³, Ahmad Muhidin⁴

¹Polytechnic of Tourism NHI Bandung, Bandung, Indonesia

²Faculty of Communication Sciences, Universitas Padjadjaran, Bandung, Indonesia

³Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Padjadjaran, Bandung, Indonesia

⁴Mata Kucing Documentary, Bandung, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Background: Gastronomic tourism increasingly relies on storytelling to communicate the cultural meanings of local food products. Majalengka sweet soy sauce represents a long-standing culinary tradition in West Java, yet its wider tourism promotion remains limited. **Purpose:** This study examines how storytelling is constructed in the research-produced documentary *Kecap Majalengka* and how audiences perceive its storytelling quality and promotional effectiveness. **Methods:** An exploratory sequential mixed-methods design incorporating practice-based documentary production was employed. Interviews and field observations with six purposively selected stakeholders informed the documentary's storyline and production. The completed documentary was analyzed using Hall's storytelling framework of character, conflict, resolution, and lesson. Audience evaluation was then conducted with 60 university students aged 18-25 years using a researcher-developed five-point Likert questionnaire. **Results:** Qualitative analysis identified an interconnected narrative of character, conflict, resolution, and lesson. Audience evaluation showed that lesson received the highest storytelling score ($M = 4.08$), followed by character ($M = 4.03$), resolution ($M = 4.00$), and conflict ($M = 3.78$). The documentary was perceived as an effective promotional medium ($M = 4.13$), while interest in trying the product was positive ($M = 3.87$) and interest in visiting Majalengka was more moderate ($M = 3.40$). **Conclusion:** The findings indicate that the documentary communicated cultural meaning and local identity more strongly than narrative conflict or destination-level travel interest. **Implications:** Gastronomic tourism documentaries should connect culinary products more explicitly with destination experiences while strengthening narrative conflict and human-centered storytelling.

Keywords: Documentary storytelling; gastronomic tourism; Majalengka sweet soy sauce; tourism promotion; visual storytelling

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Correspondence: Fitra Ananta Sujawoto, S.I.P., M.Par, Polytechnic of Tourism NHI Bandung, Jl. Dr. Setiabudi No.186, Hegarmanah, Kecamatan Cidap, Kota Bandung, Jawa Barat 40141. Email: fitra.s@poltekpar-nhi.ac.id

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INTRODUCTION

Gastronomic tourism has developed into an increasingly important component of destination development because food allows visitors to engage not only with consumption, but also with the cultural meanings, identities, and social practices associated with a place. A systematic review by Sio et al. (2024) shows that gastronomy tourism is closely connected with destination image, particularly because local cuisine can function as a distinguishing feature through which destinations communicate their identity. More recent research similarly emphasizes that local gastronomy contributes to regional tourism development by linking food experiences with place branding, visitor experience, and regional identity (Recuero-Virto & Valilla Arróspide, 2024). From this perspective, gastronomic tourism is not limited to the availability of distinctive dishes or products; it also depends on how culinary resources are interpreted and positioned within broader destination narratives. Studies in Indonesia likewise demonstrate that identifying and integrating gastronomic potential can strengthen the development of tourism destinations when local culinary resources are connected with cultural and experiential values (Nurwitasari, 2025). Gastronomy can therefore be understood as both a tourism resource and a cultural medium through which destinations communicate what makes a place distinctive.

The value of local food in tourism is particularly associated with its capacity to

represent heritage, authenticity, and local identity. Cheng et al. (2024), for example, demonstrates that gastronomic identity is produced through relationships between food, cultural practices, and the meanings attached to local traditions. Tourist preferences for local food are also shaped by attributes extending beyond taste and price, including authenticity and connections with local culture and tradition (Tiganis & Chrysochou, 2024). In the Indonesian context, culinary products can similarly function as expressions of gastronomic heritage, as illustrated by the continuing cultural significance attached to foods such as satay (Suwandojo et al., 2023). These studies suggest that the tourism value of a culinary product depends partly on the ability to communicate the cultural relationships surrounding it. For a product such as Majalengka sweet soy sauce, the relevant tourism narrative therefore extends beyond its physical characteristics to include production knowledge, local actors, patterns of consumption, business continuity, and its relationship with the identity of the place in which it is produced.

Such meanings are also important because tourist responses to gastronomy are formed before, during, and after direct consumption. Research on food tourism shows that memorable gastronomic experiences and destination food image can contribute to tourists' behavioural intentions (Prasongthana & Silpsrikula, 2022), while studies of food tourists indicate that local culinary products and related activities can

become significant components of destination engagement (Angelakis et al., 2023). This makes communication an important part of gastronomic tourism development: potential visitors need ways to encounter the meanings, people, and experiences associated with local food even before physically visiting a destination. Audiovisual media are particularly relevant in this respect because they can combine visual evidence, human voices, settings, and narrative organization. In film-related communication, the construction and delivery of messages influence how audiences understand and respond to mediated content (Arindi et al., 2023). Documentary video can also communicate cultural realities through visual and multimodal forms, allowing local identities and cultural meanings to be represented through audiovisual narratives (Harry et al., 2021). These characteristics make documentary storytelling particularly relevant for gastronomic tourism, where the value of a culinary product is often inseparable from the people, practices, and cultural contexts surrounding it.

Storytelling provides one such approach. In tourism marketing, storytelling has been used to transform information about destinations and products into narratives that are easier for audiences to understand, remember, and emotionally engage with (Kusumah & Andrianto, 2023; Michael & Fusté-Forné, 2022; Nurwitasari et al., 2024). Compelling narratives can create emotional connections

between audiences and tourism products or destinations by linking tangible objects and places with human experiences, values, and meanings (Ghaderi et al., 2024; Park et al., 2023). In gastronomic tourism, this function is especially relevant because the value of food is rarely limited to taste or ingredients. Culinary narratives may include the history of a dish or product, the people who make it, inherited knowledge, production processes, social relations, and local cultural values (Jongsuksomsakul, 2024; Masmoudi & Jmour, 2025). Storytelling can therefore provide a more personal and meaningful way of presenting local cuisine, helping audiences connect culinary products with the communities and places from which they originate (Masmoudi & Jmour, 2025; Park et al., 2023).

Documentary video provides a particularly relevant medium for this process because it can combine verbal narrative, visual evidence, sound, character, setting, and everyday practices in a single audiovisual form. Previous tourism studies have demonstrated the usefulness of video for communicating attractions and destination narratives (Prabowo, 2026; Rosyidah, 2025). Documentary content can also record and communicate socio-cultural realities, making it appropriate for representing cultural practices and the experiences of local communities (Prabowo, 2026). In the context of gastronomic tourism, documentary video allows audiences to observe food-production processes, encounter producers and consumers,

and experience aspects of local atmosphere through visual and narrative representation (Dilek, 2017; Xu & Kim, 2019).

However, the availability of videos does not automatically make it an effective storytelling medium. A central challenge is how the narrative is structured so that visual material does more than display a product and instead guides audiences toward an understanding of its cultural significance and tourism relevance (Michael & Fusté-Forné, 2022; Nurwitasari et al., 2024). In culinary promotion, visual content may attract attention, but storytelling requires the deliberate organization of people, tensions, processes, and meanings into a coherent narrative (Michael & Fusté-Forné, 2022; Rosyidah, 2025). This is especially important for a product such as Majalengka sweet soy sauce, whose promotional value depends not only on how the product looks but also on how its history, traditional production methods, relationships with local communities, and contemporary challenges are communicated. Storytelling can transform an otherwise ordinary culinary product into a meaningful cultural experience by connecting food with tradition, place, and everyday life (Masmoudi & Jmour, 2025; Park et al., 2023). Documentary storytelling can consequently function both as a promotional medium and as a way of communicating the cultural values associated with cuisine (Hall, 2019; Xu & Kim, 2019).

Majalengka sweet soy sauce provides substantial narrative material for such an

approach. Beyond its function as a cooking ingredient, kecap is embedded in a local culinary tradition and in the daily practices of producers and consumers in Majalengka (Kautsar, 2024). Traditional manufacturing practices, and the role of kecap in local food culture provide stories that can be explored audiovisually (Kautsar, 2024). These stories may be communicated through the experiences of business owners, workers, consumers, community representatives, and tourism actors, allowing the documentary form to connect a culinary product with broader themes of heritage, local identity, continuity, and adaptation. In this sense, the promotional potential of documentary video lies not merely in showing Majalengka sweet soy sauce but in constructing a narrative through which audiences can understand why the product matters to the place and the people associated with it.

The cultural depth of sweet soy sauce also helps explain why it can be treated as gastronomic heritage rather than simply as a commercial product. Soy sauce has a long history in Asia and is traditionally produced through fermentation processes involving soybeans and microorganisms (Gao et al., 2024; Shurtleff & Aoyagi, 2012). Historical accounts connect the development of soy sauce with China and later with wider Asian culinary practices. Historical accounts further indicate that soy sauce was adapted across different Asian culinary contexts, including Indonesia, where local culinary practices contributed to

the development of distinctive sweeter variants (Shurtleff & Aoyagi, 2012). For the present study, these historical and material characteristics are relevant because they demonstrate that kecap can be narrated through interconnected themes of migration, adaptation, production, taste, and local identity.

To analyze how such themes can be organized into documentary storytelling, this study adopts Hall (2019) storytelling framework. Hall identifies four core elements of a story: character, conflict, resolution, and lesson. Character provides a human point of connection through which audiences encounter the story; conflict introduces challenges or tensions that give the narrative movement; resolution shows how those challenges are addressed or negotiated; and lesson communicates the meaning or value that the audience is expected to take from the story. These elements are particularly suitable for the documentary examined here because the story of Majalengka sweet soy sauce involves identifiable local actors, pressures faced by traditional producers, efforts to sustain the product and its market, and broader messages concerning culinary heritage and local identity. Rather than treating storytelling as a general promotional technique, Hall's framework provides an analytical structure for examining how the documentary organizes its narrative and how audiences respond to the resulting story.

The use of this framework also allows the study to connect textual and visual

construction with audience perception. The four storytelling elements provide the analytical basis for examining the documentary itself, while audience evaluation provides a second perspective on whether the character, conflict, resolution, and lesson are perceived as engaging, understandable, and relevant. This distinction is important because a documentary may contain intended storytelling elements without those elements necessarily being experienced by viewers in the same way. The promotional value of documentary storytelling therefore depends not only on the presence of narrative devices but also on how audiences perceive the resulting audiovisual communication. Existing studies have examined storytelling in tourism promotion, destination narratives, food-related visual communication, and documentary media (Dilek, 2017; Michael & Fusté-Forné, 2022; Rosyidah, 2025; Xu & Kim, 2019), but the relationship between the production of a research-based gastronomic documentary and subsequent audience evaluation remains less explicit in the context addressed by this study.

Audience perception is therefore a necessary component in evaluating whether documentary storytelling functions as intended. Tourism narratives are designed not only to transmit information but also to influence how audiences interpret destinations, products, and cultural meanings (Ghaderi et al., 2024; Park et al., 2023). In food-related audiovisual media, viewers may form expectations about local cuisine and destination experience before direct

visitation, making mediated perception an important stage in the tourism communication process (Xu & Kim, 2019). Storytelling may also shape intentions toward culinary products when narratives make cultural values and human experiences more salient to the audience (Ghaderi et al., 2024). For this reason, evaluating a gastronomic documentary requires attention to both narrative construction and viewer response. The present study does not assume that exposure to a documentary automatically produces actual visitation or consumption behavior. Instead, it examines how viewers assess the documentary's storytelling quality and whether they report interest in trying the product, visiting Majalengka, and regarding the documentary as an effective promotional medium. This approach keeps the analysis at the level of audience perception while still allowing the study to discuss the promotional potential of documentary storytelling.

This gap is particularly relevant in the case of Majalengka because the promotional challenge is not merely to make sweet soy sauce visible, but to communicate why its production practices, local actors, and cultural associations may contribute to the appeal of gastronomic tourism. A documentary can potentially connect these dimensions by presenting traditional production as a lived cultural practice rather than as background information. At the same time, audience evaluation is necessary to determine whether the intended narrative is perceived as interesting and whether viewers associate

the documentary with interest in the product, the destination, and gastronomic tourism promotion. The research therefore focuses on both sides of the communication process: the construction of the documentary story and the way viewers perceive the resulting promotional message.

Unlike previous studies that primarily analyzed existing tourism videos, this study develops and examines a research-produced documentary, *Kecap Majalengka*, as a visual communication artifact for gastronomic tourism. The documentary translates field-based accounts of Majalengka sweet soy sauce, including its traditional production practices, local actors, and cultural meanings into a structured visual narrative. The study therefore examines not only how local gastronomic heritage is represented through documentary storytelling, but also how audiences perceive the resulting narrative as a promotional medium. This dual focus distinguishes the study from approaches that treat documentary content solely as an object of textual or visual analysis. By connecting documentary construction with audience evaluation, the study seeks to explain how visual storytelling can communicate the cultural value of Majalengka sweet soy sauce and support its positioning within gastronomic tourism.

Accordingly, this study addresses two research questions: (1) How are the elements of character, conflict, resolution, and lesson constructed in the *Kecap Majalengka*

documentary to communicate Majalengka's gastronomic heritage? (2) How do audiences perceive the storytelling quality and promotional effectiveness of the *Kecap Majalengka* documentary? By answering these questions, the study aims to identify how a research-produced documentary can translate local gastronomic heritage into an engaging visual narrative and how that narrative is perceived by its audience.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed an exploratory sequential mixed-methods design incorporating a practice-based documentary production component (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The research consisted of two sequential stages. The first stage involved qualitative exploration through in-depth interviews and field observation, with the findings used to develop and produce the documentary *Kecap Majalengka*. The second stage involved a quantitative audience evaluation conducted after the complete documentary was screened. This sequential design enabled the qualitative findings to inform the construction of the documentary, while the quantitative phase examined how audiences perceived the storytelling elements and promotional effectiveness of the resulting audiovisual work.

In the first stage, six informants were purposively selected to represent key stakeholders related to Majalengka sweet soy sauce and gastronomic tourism, including sweet soy sauce business owners, consumers, academics,

representatives of the local community, and tourism actors. Data was collected through in-depth interviews and field observations at Majalengka sweet soy sauce production sites. The qualitative data were analyzed using an interactive model involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles & Huberman, 2014). The analysis focused on traditional production practices, local cultural meanings, stakeholder experiences, and narrative materials relevant to the documentary. Findings from the interviews and observations were subsequently used to develop the storyline, narrative structure, characterization, and visual treatment of the *Kecap Majalengka* documentary. The production process included scriptwriting, filming, visual editing, and audio narration and was carried out by the research team. The completed documentary was subsequently examined using Hall (2019) storytelling framework, focusing on four narrative elements: character, conflict, resolution, and lesson.

In the second stage, the completed *Kecap Majalengka* documentary was screened to 60 respondents who were selected through purposive sampling based on their experience in watching documentary videos and their connection to local culinary or tourism issues. After viewing the documentary, respondents completed a researcher-developed questionnaire consisting of 13 questions. The first four questions collected demographic information and prior awareness of Majalengka sweet soy sauce, while two questions assessed respondents'

general interest in gastronomic tourism and their perception of Majalengka sweet soy sauce as a potential gastronomic tourism icon. The remaining seven questions evaluated the documentary itself. Four items were developed based on Hall's (2019) storytelling framework to assess character, conflict, resolution, and lesson, while three additional items assessed interest in trying Majalengka sweet soy sauce, interest in visiting Majalengka, and the perceived effectiveness of the documentary as a promotional medium. The evaluative questions used a five-point Likert scale, with higher scores indicating more positive audience perceptions.

Quantitative responses were analyzed descriptively using frequencies, mean scores, and standard deviations to identify patterns in audience evaluations of the documentary. The quantitative component was intended to describe audience perceptions rather than to test causal relationships between variables. Integration of the qualitative and quantitative findings occurred at the interpretation stage (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Findings concerning the construction of character, conflict, resolution, and lesson in the documentary were compared with audience evaluations of the corresponding storytelling dimensions and promotional outcomes. Methodological triangulation across interview data, field observations, documentary scenes, and audience survey responses was used to identify convergence and divergence across data sources. This integration enabled the study to connect how storytelling was constructed in

the documentary with how the resulting narrative was perceived by viewers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The documentary was developed within a local context in which traditional sweet soy sauce represents both a culinary product and a form of gastronomic heritage. Majalengka has a long-established tradition of sweet soy sauce production, represented by local brands such as Maja Menjangan, Segitiga, and Ban Bersayap, which have maintained traditional production practices across generations (Kautsar, 2024). Field interviews indicated that competition from large-scale manufacturers, changing consumer preferences, and the modernization of food distribution have placed increasing pressure on smaller producers. This tension between cultural continuity and contemporary market pressures became an important narrative context for the documentary.

Within the broader promotion of Indonesian culinary heritage, sweet soy sauce also carries meanings beyond its function as a flavor enhancer. In the case of Majalengka, however, the documentary focuses specifically on how these cultural meanings are experienced at the local level through production practices, business survival, consumer relationships, and efforts to maintain the cultural relevance of traditional sweet soy sauce.

The qualitative phase resulted in the development of the research-produced documentary *Kecap Majalengka*, which translated

the field findings into an audiovisual narrative about the continuity and contemporary challenges of traditional sweet soy sauce production. Interviews and observations identified several recurring narrative materials, including traditional production practices, dependence on locally sourced ingredients, competition with national-scale manufacturers, consumer preferences, market distribution, and the cultural significance attached to Majalengka sweet soy sauce. These materials were subsequently incorporated into the documentary through characters, interview testimonies, production scenes, market observations, and visual representations of local consumption.

The narrative centers primarily on Dhany, who represents the experience of a traditional sweet soy sauce producer confronting changes in production, distribution, and consumer markets. Rather than presenting the production process as a purely technical sequence, the documentary places these practices within a broader narrative of business continuity and cultural preservation. Competition from industrial brands and changing consumer preferences provide narrative tension, while testimonials from producers, consumers, and local actors introduce different perspectives on the position of traditional sweet soy sauce in contemporary Majalengka. The documentary ultimately frames Majalengka sweet soy sauce not merely as a condiment, but as a local gastronomic product embedded in relationships among production, consumption, heritage, and place.

Consistent with Hall's (2019) storytelling

framework established in the theoretical framework, the documentary analysis identified four interconnected narrative elements: character, conflict, resolution, and lesson. Rather than functioning as isolated components, these elements form a narrative sequence through which local actors are introduced, challenges to traditional sweet soy sauce production are articulated, responses to those challenges are presented, and broader meanings concerning gastronomic heritage and local identity are communicated. Table 1 maps the principal documentary scenes onto these four storytelling elements and provides the analytical structure for the discussion that follows.

The first storytelling element identified in the documentary is character. As summarized in Table 1, Dhany functions as the principal narrative figure through whom the documentary connects traditional sweet soy sauce production with contemporary business challenges. His characterization is developed not through a formal introduction, but progressively through scenes showing his involvement in production, distribution, quality maintenance, and reflections on consumer loyalty. In this way, the documentary constructs Dhany simultaneously as a business actor, a practitioner with technical knowledge, and a representative of the continuity of Majalengka's sweet soy sauce tradition. This construction is consistent with Hall's (2019) emphasis on the role of recognizable and relatable characters in creating an audience's point of connection with a story.

Table 1 Mapping of storytelling elements in the *Kecap Majalengka* Documentary

Storytelling Element	Representative Scenes	Documentary Evidence	Narrative Function
Character	 Scene 1	Dhany explains traditional production practices, product quality, and his involvement in the production process.	Establishes a central human figure through whom the audience encounters traditional sweet soy sauce production and its continuity.
	 Scene 2		
Conflict	 Scene 3	Producers describe competition with national brands; a local consumer prefers industrial soy sauce; traditional products face packaging and market limitations; production remains dependent on natural ingredients and manual processes.	Constructs tension between traditional production, changing consumer preferences, industrial competition, and modernization.
	 Scene 4		
	 Scene 5		
	 Scene 6		

(continued on next page)

Table 1 (continued)

Resolution	 Scene 7  Scene 8  Scene 9  Scene 10	Consumers and food-business actors provide positive evaluations of local sweet soy sauce; producers describe strategies for sustaining and expanding the market; traditional market actors indicate continuing demand. Presents evidence of market resilience, consumer loyalty, and producer adaptation as responses to the challenges depicted in the documentary.
Lesson	 Scene 11  Scene 12	Positive consumer experience, continued household use, and reflections on loyalty position Majalengka sweet soy sauce as more than a commercial condiment. Communicates the broader message that traditional sweet soy sauce represents local culinary heritage, identity, and cultural continuity.

Source: Documentary *Kecap Majalengka*, produced by the research team, 2024

In Scene 1, Dhany explains the distinction between traditional and modern production, noting that human involvement remains important in determining the consistency of the final product. His explanation positions him not only as a business manager but also as a practitioner who understands the tacit knowledge embedded in traditional production.

This characterization is further developed in Scene 2, where Dhany explains the bean-drying process and the scale of monthly production. His direct involvement in this stage portrays him as someone whose managerial role remains closely connected to everyday production practices. In another segment, he explains that approximately 75% of product distribution goes directly to traditional markets because transactions operate largely on a cash-and-carry basis. He also emphasizes the importance of maintaining quality and consumer loyalty, describing Majalengka consumers as customers who tend to remain with authentic local soy sauce once they have developed a preference for it. Together, these scenes construct Dhany simultaneously as a producer, business actor, and custodian of local culinary tradition.

Within Hall's (2019) framework, this characterization gives the documentary a recognizable human point of entry. The cultural meaning of Majalengka sweet soy sauce is not communicated abstractly, but through a person whose everyday decisions embody the tensions between production continuity, market adaptation, and heritage preservation. This

use of a local actor as a narrative anchor is consistent with tourism storytelling studies that emphasize the capacity of personal and place-based narratives to strengthen emotional and cultural connections between audiences and destinations or local products (Ghaderi et al., 2024; Park et al., 2023). In this documentary, therefore, character functions not merely as a storytelling device but as a means through which gastronomic heritage is personified and made socially legible to the audience.

The second element, conflict, is constructed through pressures originating both outside and within the traditional sweet soy sauce industry. Rather than presenting a single dramatic confrontation, the documentary builds tension cumulatively through business competition, changing consumer preferences, market limitations, and vulnerabilities inherent in traditional production. In Scene 1, Dhany describes the decline in the number of local soy sauce companies and the increasing competitive pressure created by national brands with stronger promotional resources. This account frames the continuity of traditional production as uncertain rather than guaranteed.

The documentary then extends this conflict beyond the perspective of producers. In Scene 3, Agnes, a Majalengka resident, explains that her family generally uses an industrial soy sauce brand despite living in a region associated with traditional sweet soy sauce production. Scene 4 visually introduces modern sachet packaging in the traditional market, while a trader in

Scene 5 remarks that Segitiga is preferred for satay but that an industrial brand is used for general cooking. These scenes reveal that the challenge faced by local producers is not only competition between companies, but also a shift in everyday consumer habits and perceptions of product functionality. The conflict is therefore embedded in the relationship between local identity and actual consumption practices.

A further layer of conflict emerges from the production process itself. In Scene 6, Deden explains that natural ingredients such as sugar, soybeans, and salt vary in quality, making complete product consistency difficult to achieve. Images of firewood preparation and sun-drying in Scene 7 reinforce the documentary's depiction of production as labor-intensive and dependent on natural conditions. These traditional practices function ambivalently: they distinguish Majalengka sweet soy sauce from industrial products, yet they also expose producers to limitations in standardization and modernization.

Hall (2019) argues that conflict gives narrative significance to a character's vulnerability and struggle. In the *Kecap Majalengka* documentary, this vulnerability operates at several levels: producers face national competition, local products face changing consumer preferences, and traditional production faces technological and environmental limitations. The conflict therefore does more than create narrative tension; it explains why the preservation of

Majalengka sweet soy sauce cannot be treated as an uncomplicated continuation of tradition. This interpretation also supports previous tourism storytelling research showing that meaningful narratives depend on connecting cultural products with the human and social conditions surrounding them rather than presenting them only as attractive commodities (Jongsuksomsakul, 2024; Michael & Fusté-Forné, 2022).

The third storytelling element, resolution, is constructed through evidence that traditional Majalengka sweet soy sauce continues to retain consumers, commercial relevance, and possibilities for market expansion despite the conflicts presented earlier. Rather than resolving the structural pressures of industrial competition completely, the documentary offers a more modest form of resolution centered on resilience, consumer loyalty, and producer adaptation. This narrative choice is important because it avoids suggesting that the challenges faced by traditional producers have disappeared. Instead, the resolution shows how local actors continue to negotiate those challenges.

Consumer testimonies play a central role in this construction. Yati, an employee of Sate Hj. Uyi Sindangkasih in Scene 8 describes Kecap Segitiga as having a distinctive savory taste and indicates its continued use by the business. Similarly, Agus, the owner of Mie Ayam Kliwon in Scene 9, compares the local product favorably with a national brand in terms of taste and price. These statements provide

narrative counterpoints to the earlier scenes showing consumer preference for industrial products. The documentary therefore does not resolve the conflict through abstract claims of local superiority, but through the continued use and evaluation of the product by everyday consumers and food-business actors.

The resolution is also extended through expressions of future orientation. Agnes encourages viewers not to assume that local soy sauce is inferior before trying it, while Deden describes an intention to expand distribution beyond Majalengka and its surrounding areas toward the national market. Scene 11 further depicts traditional-market actors identifying Kecap Segitiga as a product that remains relevant to consumers. Taken together, these scenes shift the narrative from decline toward possibility: traditional sweet soy sauce is presented as vulnerable but not disappearing.

This structure corresponds with Hall (2019) conception of resolution as the point at which audiences are shown what becomes possible after the central conflict has been established. Importantly, the documentary's resolution is not a definitive solution to industrial competition but a narrative of continuity and adaptation. This distinction is particularly relevant in gastronomic tourism, where the promotional value of local cuisine often depends on presenting cultural continuity without erasing the contemporary pressures faced by the communities that maintain it (Park et al., 2023; Soonsan & Somkai, 2023). The documentary

thus constructs resilience itself as part of the gastronomic story of Majalengka.

The fourth element, lesson, consolidates the documentary's broader meaning by shifting attention from the commercial value of sweet soy sauce to its significance as cultural heritage. Hall (2019) conceptualizes lesson as the meaning or value that remains after the events of the story have been presented. In *Kecap Majalengka*, this meaning is conveyed through a combination of verbal statements and symbolic visual scenes, emphasizing continuity, local attachment, and the everyday presence of traditional sweet soy sauce.

One example occurs in Scene 9, where Agus gives a thumbs-up gesture while discussing his experience with Kecap Segitiga. Although visually simple, the gesture reinforces the positive relationship between a local culinary business and the traditional product it uses. Scene 12 extends this meaning into the domestic sphere by showing a bottle of Segitiga sweet soy sauce in a household kitchen. Rather than functioning merely as product placement, the image places traditional sweet soy sauce within everyday consumption, suggesting that the continuity of local culinary heritage depends on its continued relevance in ordinary life.

Dhany's reflection on consumer loyalty provides the verbal articulation of this lesson. He explains that consumers who have become accustomed to authentic Majalengka sweet soy sauce tend to remain loyal to it. Within the documentary's narrative structure, this

statement carries meaning beyond brand loyalty: it links taste, memory, local preference, and cultural continuity. The product is consequently positioned not only as a market commodity but also as an object through which local identity and culinary practice are reproduced.

The resulting lesson is that the survival of Majalengka sweet soy sauce depends not simply on preserving a traditional production technique, but on maintaining relationships among producers, consumers, culinary businesses, and the locality itself. In this sense, the documentary reflects Hall (2019) argument that an effective lesson derives its strength from meanings that audiences can connect to broader human values. It also resonates with gastronomic storytelling studies that understand local food narratives as vehicles for communicating heritage, identity, and place-based cultural meanings (Jongsuksomsakul, 2024; Masmoudi & Jmour, 2025; Park et al., 2023).

Taken together, the four elements form a coherent narrative progression within the *Kecap Majalengka documentary*. Character personalizes the story through local actors, particularly Dhany; conflict situates traditional production within pressures from industrial competition, changing consumer preferences, and production constraints; resolution shifts the narrative toward resilience, consumer loyalty, and adaptation; and lesson connects these experiences to broader meanings of culinary heritage and local identity. The documentary therefore constructs Majalengka sweet soy

sauce through a narrative that moves from everyday production to vulnerability, response, and cultural meaning.

This analysis answers the first research question by showing how character, conflict, resolution, and lesson are constructed to communicate Majalengka's gastronomic heritage. However, the presence of these elements in the documentary does not by itself establish how effectively they are perceived by viewers. The second stage of the analysis therefore examines audience evaluations of these storytelling dimensions and of the documentary's perceived promotional effectiveness. This distinction between narrative construction and audience reception is important because intended storytelling elements may not necessarily be experienced with equal strength by viewers.

The audience evaluation involved 60 respondents included in the quantitative analysis. All respondents were university students aged 18–25 years; 65.0% were male and 35.0% were female. Prior familiarity with Majalengka sweet soy sauce was relatively limited: 78.3% reported that they had not previously heard of the product, 10.0% reported prior awareness, and 11.7% selected maybe. Respondents nevertheless showed a generally positive baseline interest in culinary or gastronomic tourism ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 0.91$), while their initial assessment of Majalengka sweet soy sauce as a potential gastronomic tourism icon was more moderate ($M = 3.57$, SD

= 0.74). These characteristics are relevant when interpreting the post-viewing responses, as the documentary was evaluated predominantly by young viewers with limited prior familiarity with the featured local product.

Audience responses were subsequently examined to determine how the four storytelling elements identified qualitatively were perceived after viewing the documentary. Table 2 summarizes the descriptive results for character, conflict, resolution, and lesson, together with the three promotional-response items measuring interest in trying Majalengka sweet soy sauce, interest in visiting Majalengka, and perceived promotional effectiveness.

Among the four Hall-based storytelling dimensions, lesson received the highest mean score ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 0.72$), followed by character ($M = 4.03$, $SD = 0.76$) and resolution ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 0.74$). Conflict received the lowest mean score ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 0.76$). The

distribution of responses supports this pattern: 78.3% of respondents rated lessons at 4 or 5, 76.7% did so for character, and 73.3% for resolution, compared with 58.3% for conflict. Overall, the results indicate that viewers responded most positively to the documentary's cultural message and human dimension, whereas the narrative conflict was comparatively less salient.

The quantitative findings both confirm and complicate the qualitative analysis of the documentary. Lesson emerged as the highest-rated storytelling dimension ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 0.72$), which corresponds closely with the qualitative finding that the documentary consistently frames Majalengka sweet soy sauce as part of local culinary heritage, identity, and cultural continuity. Scenes showing continued household use, consumer loyalty, and reflections on the cultural meaning of traditional production appear to have communicated this broader

Table 2 Audience evaluation of storytelling and promotional outcomes

Dimension	Measurement focus	Mean	SD	% rating 4-5
Character	Appeal of character/local figures	4.03	0.76	76.7
Conflict	Audience interest generated by narrative conflict	3.78	0.76	58.3
Resolution	Quality of the narrative resolution	4.00	0.74	73.3
Lesson	Relevance and comprehensibility of the cultural message	4.08	0.72	78.3
Product Interest	Interest in trying Majalengka sweet soy sauce	3.87	0.79	68.3
Visit Interest	Interest in visiting Majalengka	3.40	0.92	43.3
Promotional effectiveness	Perceived effectiveness as gastronomic promotion	4.13	0.70	81.7

Source: Research survey, 2025

message clearly to viewers. Within Hall (2019) framework, this suggests that the documentary's strongest audience-received element lies not simply in how the story concludes, but in the meaning viewers take from that story.

Character was evaluated almost as positively ($M = 4.03$, $SD = 0.76$). This result supports the qualitative interpretation of Dhany as an important narrative anchor connecting traditional production, business realities, and cultural preservation. The relatively high character score suggests that viewers were able to engage with the local figures presented in the documentary, although the score remains slightly below that of lesson. The finding reinforces previous research emphasizing that human-centered storytelling can make tourism and culinary narratives more personally and culturally accessible to audiences (Ghaderi et al., 2024; Park et al., 2023).

Resolution also received a positive evaluation ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 0.74$). Qualitatively, the documentary constructs resolution through continued consumer use, producer adaptation, market persistence, and aspirations for expansion. The audience response indicates that this movement from vulnerability toward resilience was generally understood and positively received. Rather than portraying the pressures on traditional producers as completely resolved, the documentary communicates continuity and adaptation, which is particularly relevant to gastronomic heritage narratives in which tradition must negotiate contemporary

economic and social change (Park et al., 2023; Soonsan & Somkai, 2023).

Conflict, however, received the lowest evaluation among the four storytelling dimensions ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 0.76$), with only 58.3% of respondents selecting ratings of 4 or 5. This finding is especially noteworthy because the qualitative analysis identified conflict as one of the most structurally complex components of the documentary, incorporating national-brand competition, changing consumer preferences, packaging limitations, variable raw materials, and dependence on manual production. The difference between the richness of conflict identified in the documentary and its comparatively weaker audience evaluation suggests that narrative complexity does not necessarily translate into narrative salience. Future documentary development may therefore benefit from making the central tension more explicit and sustained throughout the story.

Audience evaluations of the promotional outcomes reveal a more differentiated pattern. The documentary received its highest overall evaluation for perceived effectiveness as a medium for promoting gastronomic tourism ($M = 4.13$, $SD = 0.70$), with 81.7% of respondents selecting ratings of 4 or 5. Interest in trying Majalengka sweet soy sauce was also positive ($M = 3.87$, $SD = 0.79$), with 68.3% rating this item at 4 or 5. These results suggest that viewers generally considered the documentary an appropriate promotional format and that exposure to the narrative was accompanied

by interest in further engagement with the culinary product. This pattern is consistent with previous studies suggesting that storytelling and audiovisual food representation can stimulate culinary interest and contribute to audience engagement with local gastronomic products (Ghaderi et al., 2024; Xu & Kim, 2019).

Interest in visiting Majalengka, however, was notably more moderate ($M = 3.40$, $SD = 0.92$). Only 43.3% of respondents selected ratings of 4 or 5, while 45.0% selected the midpoint score of 3. This contrast is analytically important. Although viewers perceived the documentary itself as an effective promotional medium and expressed relatively positive interest in the featured product, that response did not translate equally strongly into stated destination visitation interest. The finding indicates that communicating the attractiveness of a gastronomic product and generating interest in consuming it may be easier than converting that interest into destination-level travel intention.

This distinction also helps define the limits of documentary storytelling as a gastronomic tourism promotional tool. Previous studies have shown that food-related audiovisual content can contribute to pre-visit perceptions and destination imagination (Xu & Kim, 2019), while tourism storytelling may strengthen connections between cultural meaning and audience engagement (Ghaderi et al., 2024; Park et al., 2023). In the present study, however, the comparatively lower visit-interest score suggests

that the documentary may have communicated the cultural and culinary value of Majalengka sweet soy sauce more strongly than the broader appeal of Majalengka as a destination. Future promotional documentaries may therefore need to connect the featured gastronomic product more explicitly with destination experiences, places of consumption, visitor activities, and other tourism attractions in Majalengka.

Taken together, the qualitative and quantitative findings demonstrate that the storytelling elements identified in the documentary were not perceived with equal strength by viewers. The qualitative analysis showed narrative progression from character and conflict to resolution and lesson, while the audience evaluation revealed that lesson was the most positively perceived storytelling dimension, followed closely by character and resolution. Conflict remained comparatively weaker despite its extensive presence in the documentary. This divergence illustrates the value of integrating narrative analysis with audience evaluation: an element may be structurally important within a documentary without necessarily becoming equally salient in audience perception.

The promotional findings further indicate that positive perceptions of the documentary should not be equated directly with destination visitation intention. Respondents regarded the documentary as an effective gastronomic tourism promotional medium ($M = 4.13$), and interest in trying the featured product was comparatively

positive ($M = 3.87$), yet stated interest in visiting Majalengka was more moderate ($M = 3.40$). The documentary therefore appears particularly effective in communicating the cultural meaning and promotional value of Majalengka sweet soy sauce, while its capacity to translate product engagement into destination-level interest is more limited.

These findings answer the second research question by showing that audiences generally perceived the storytelling quality and promotional function of the *Kecap Majalengka* documentary positively, but with meaningful variation across narrative and promotional dimensions. The study consequently extends Hall (2019) framework by showing that the analytical presence of character, conflict, resolution, and lesson can be examined alongside their audience reception. In the context of gastronomic tourism communication, this integrated perspective suggests that effective storytelling depends not only on constructing a coherent narrative but also on ensuring that its intended tensions, meanings, and destination connections are sufficiently visible to viewers.

CONCLUSION

The findings indicate that the *Kecap Majalengka* documentary communicates Majalengka's gastronomic heritage through an interconnected narrative of character, conflict, resolution, and lesson. Character is constructed primarily through local actors who personify traditional production and business continuity;

conflict emerges from industrial competition, changing consumer preferences, and production constraints; resolution is represented through consumer loyalty, market persistence, and producer adaptation; and lesson connects these experiences to broader meanings of culinary heritage and local identity. Audience evaluation generally supported this narrative construction, although the four elements were not perceived equally. Lesson received the highest audience evaluation ($M = 4.08$), followed by character ($M = 4.03$) and resolution ($M = 4.00$), while conflict received the lowest score ($M = 3.78$). These findings suggest that the documentary communicated its cultural message and human dimension more clearly than the tensions underlying the story.

The study further shows that positive perceptions of a gastronomic documentary do not necessarily translate into equally strong destination-related interest. Respondents perceived the documentary as an effective promotional medium ($M = 4.13$) and expressed relatively positive interest in trying Majalengka sweet soy sauce ($M = 3.87$), whereas interest in visiting Majalengka was more moderate ($M = 3.40$). The study therefore contributes by integrating Hall's storytelling framework with audience evaluation of a research-produced documentary, demonstrating that narrative construction and audience reception should be examined together. Practically, gastronomic tourism documentaries may benefit from strengthening narrative conflict and connecting

featured culinary products more explicitly with destination experiences. These findings should nevertheless be interpreted within the study's limitations: the quantitative sample consisted of 60 purposively selected university students aged 18–25 years, the questionnaire used single-item researcher-developed measures without prior pilot or psychometric validation, and responses were collected immediately after viewing. Future studies should employ more diverse samples, validated multi-item measures, and longitudinal or behavioral designs to examine whether perceived promotional effectiveness develops into actual product consumption or destination visitation.

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all interview informants and survey participants were informed verbally about the purpose of the study and their participation, and verbal consent was obtained prior to data collection. Individuals appearing in the documentary also provided verbal consent for filming and for the use of the audiovisual material in the documentary and research dissemination.

Data Availability Statement: The anonymized quantitative data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. The research-produced documentary *Kecap Majalengka* is publicly available on YouTube at https://youtu.be/LF5Z_ESf-NE?si=y91ESHv-YuF3stAj. Qualitative interview materials and raw audiovisual data are not publicly available due to participant consent and confidentiality considerations.

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