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The Politics of Representation in Green Brand Communication

A Social Semiotics Approach

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The Politics of Representation in Green Brand Communication: A Social Semiotics Approach

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Abstract: Environmental conservation and natural claims are one of the message strategies used by commercial brands to communicate their products' superiority. This article interrogates texts that display green messages and nature preservation on brands' visual communication of two ready-to-drink (RTD) products: tea and mineral water. This study begins by collecting two beverage brands' audiovisual materials for brand communication campaigns. To find texts representing natural claims and environmental issues, we coded and obtained twenty samples of each scene. The analysis uses Halliday's social semiotics method by categorizing meanings that identify field, tenor, and mode. The politics of representation then works more sharply in dissecting and criticizing several findings in the text and context, resulting in insightful reflections. We found that the packaging tea brand is trying to promote the naturalness of its products by displaying the origin of the product content from real nature, with fresh and green plantation scenery. In contrast, the mineral water brand focuses on the packaging recycling movement to promote the new logo with a green leaf bud symbol and new packaging, "eco-crush bottle." Although both discourse on their brands as natural products and care for nature, they do not openly disclose some realities behind the products in their communication narratives. Hypnotizing consumers with "nature" and "natural" spells ultimately makes the communication and representation displayed in the brand narratives the potential to be political. This study is helpful as reflective material for commercial brands when carrying out environmental issues in their communication campaigns. The "nature" and "natural" claims should not be merely a communication mantra that hypnotizes consumers. It should motivate brands and companies to realize their social responsibility in preserving nature and the environment.

Keywords: Branded Nature, Natural Brand, Green Branding, Politics of Green Brand, Environmental Branding

Introduction

We agree with Kilbourne (1995) that the only green product is the one that is not produced. However, in marketing, the concept of green is used to mask a product with eco-friendly frills. Although the use of green marketing is still being disputed by marketers, policy makers, and academicians, consumers prefer to buy a commodity that is environmentally friendly rather than one that is not (Prakash and Pathak 2017). Commonly, this claim toward general environmental friendliness or environmental safety is turning more specific, for example, "biodegradable," "recyclable," and "energy efficient" (Nwadike, Idenedo, and Okoro 2020).

Terms such as "nontoxic," "natural," and "organic" are not the same as safety and have not yet been satisfactorily defined (Reddy 2019). The term "green" can be replaced by "pro-environmental" to indicate concern with the physical environment (e.g., water, land, air) (Wong et al. 2020). Through the use of ads, a message is sought to be conveyed that persuades consumers to think that a product is not harmful to the environment compared with a product without green qualities, and consumers opt for the product that seems to suggest that a company cares about the environment (Cerri, Testa, and Rizzi 2018). The aim of green marketing is to turn consumers into green consumers. Marketers use green marketing to communicate green products for consumers (Laheri, Dangi, and Vohra 2014) and to increase awareness of new product categories (Rajeev 2016; Dangelico and Vocalelli 2017).

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GROUND

Ideologically, green marketing creates a green label as a driver of positive consumer attitude that they had the awareness to care for their environment (Cerri, Testa, and Rizzi 2018). Laheri, Dangi, and Vohra (2014) argue that consumers' environmental awareness is influenced by consumer education, cultural values, and environmental concern. However, the last factor (environmental concern) influences consumers to be aware of environmental problems. Products labeled and marketed as eco-products are sold at premium prices to reach eco-savvy consumers (Gutierrez, Chiu, and Seva 2020; Nguyen and Le 2020). It has been proved that these eco-products have registered certification from authorized agencies and provide environmental assurance (Van, Nguyen, and Nguyen 2019). This assurance helps a company to distinguish the company as one that is environmentally responsible, and it may benefit from that green label (Ali et al. 2020; Moravcikova et al. 2017).

The two main aspects of this issue are how "natural" they are and how concerned they are about environmental preservation. Furthermore, some studies have noted the effect of green marketing in persuading consumers to buy. Nevertheless, several other studies have criticized the notion that indeed "green" products are not manufactured but are the outcome of natural processes, or it is called an oxymoron. Whereas an ad hides the manufacturing process using the metaphor between nature and technology (Wibowo 2017), a study addresses the relationship between green marketing and consumers' purchase intention (Jaiswal and Singh 2018). Other studies elaborate on green marketing and eco-products as a marketing strategy that advocates green consumers (Dangelico and Vocalelli 2017; Pandya 2016) and how green marketing begins to open new markets and increase profitability (Lin, Lobo, and Leckie 2017; Moravcikova et al. 2017).

However, studies on how an ad portrays the "natural" messages and environmental preservation are limited, especially in the Indonesian context. This article analyzes and criticizes two ads of ready-to-drink (RTD) brands, such as tea (Packaging Tea Y) and mineral water (Mineral Water X), in which each brand is trying to campaign that its product is environmentally friendly and is inviting the consumer to participate in the campaign. Specifically, the study aims to answer the research question (RQ): how do Packaging Tea Y and Mineral Water X represent "natural" claims and politicize "nature" through their brand discourse?

Literature Review

The Politics of Representation

Representation can be seen as a signification that refers to the existence of an object—for example, a flag represents a country as a "spokesperson" or representative of a community or group and re-presents what existed in the past, giving it a new meaning (Giles and Middleton 2008). Therefore, the core of representation is "reference," "re-presentation," and "presentation." Representations must have elements of what/who is represented, what/who represents, and how to represent. The reason is that the production of meaning in the representation is not free from the role of representative and represented.

Hall (2013) simply explains a system of representation as a way of producing and communicating meaning through language. Representation connects concepts in our mind by using language that allows us to interpret real objects, people, events, and the world of imagination from fictional objects, people, things, and events, in this context, including brands. Accordingly, representation is not about the material of the language, but about how the language works to construct particular meanings in accordance with what we want to communicate or represent, meaningfully, to the world. "Representation is an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between member[s] of culture, it does involve the use of language, of signs and images which stand for or represent things" (Hall 2013, 1).

Furthermore, Hall elaborates two systems of representation. First, a system that connects objects, people, and events with a set of concepts or mental representation that live in our thinking. Therefore, meaning is dependent on these concepts, which we can use to represent something, referring to something in (fictional) and outside (real) our thinking. However, Hall argues that this system is not

constructed by individual concepts, but by various strategies in organizing, categorizing, and classifying concepts as well as complex relationships between them, which are commonly referred to as a "conceptual map" (Hall 2013, 4). Thus, when we conceptualize something, we are actually building a network of meanings about things or various things that bring us to a concept. When our head "talks" about nature, we are actually imagining what might be called natural and unnatural, and we map various networks of metaphorical meanings as "green," "pure," "healthy," "environmental," and so forth until we arrive at a building of the concept of nature. When this concept intersects with a brand, its meaning becomes the brand's meaning. That is why branding is inseparable from representation (Wijaya 2019a).

In practice, however, the system of representation sometimes produces ambivalent and complex meanings. The reason is that the practice of signification involves not only the formation of "the meaning of what we want to represent and communicate," but also "the meaning of what we want other people to grasp what we represent." Therefore, there is an element of "dishonesty" and "dis-innocence" (Schiappa 2008) in representing something; even "temptation," "pressure," and "repression" may occur through representation that invites resistance to and between meanings. Here, according to Hall, it opens the door to violence, fantasy, and "desire" to play in the spaces of representational practices, and the representation thus becomes political.

The politics of representation are present in various mediums such as news, films, advertisements, social media, song lyrics, and other cultural artifacts. They center on multiple topics ranging from gender roles, racism, and minority issues to the environment. In advertising for environmentally friendly household products, for example, advertising as a medium of representation aims to sell eco-friendly products to spread new consumer awareness about the importance of protecting the environment (Noviani 2014). The practice of green consumerism urges consumers to continue to use the coveted products while protecting themselves, their families, and the environment with eco-friendly products. Furthermore, this type of advertising also discusses the role of gender, especially that of women, in using environmentally friendly household products. Women are responsible for domestic work, supported by household products, and for protecting the earth by using easily recycled products.

Representation is strongly invested in definitions, defining worlds, subjectivities, identities, and so on (Prendergast 2000). Examining the relation of representation and power can take many forms, but it involves another displacement or shift of emphasis. Representation is when one thing substitutes for another; a further question is raised, which is the crucial question for modern critical theory. Questioning the representation is challenging, alienating, and oppressive against something else (an object, a concept).

Environmental Issues and Natural Claims in Commercial Branding

Previous studies have highlighted how environmental issues and natural claims work in various forms of brand communication. Schmuck, Matthes, and Naderer (2018), for example, prove the hypothesis that advertisements that carry the functional benefits of natural product claims increase the perception of the benefits of environmental brands, thereby positively impacting consumer purchase intentions mediated by the attitude toward the brand. Again, a combined nature ad featuring a pleasant nature image and functional attributes is proven to activate other emotional processes in virtually experiencing nature, which then positively affects the attitude toward the brand and purchase intentions beyond the perceived benefits of environmental brands. This study attempted to compare three different print green advertising (a term for advertisements that carry environmental themes and natural claims).

Another study measures the effectiveness of green advertising in terms of gain versus loss message framing, points of reference related to self and environmental attractiveness, and product involvement (Segev, Fernandes, and Wang 2015). The results indicate that the gain-framed and self-appeal elicited a preferred response over the loss-framed and environmental appeal. Moreover, a study conducted by Chan (2015) supports the assumption that the environmentally friendly claim type—

substantive and associative—and the source country's green image both exert a significant effect on the communicative effectiveness of green advertising. These results suggest that marketers should consider the situational perspective—how their target customers perceive the eco-friendliness of the relevant source country before deciding what types of environmental and natural claims to use in green message communication.

However, as consumers become increasingly critical, natural claims and brand messages that declare themselves to be environmentally friendly generate cynicism and skepticism. This is triggered by misleading green advertisements (Schmuck, Matthes, and Naderer 2018), greenwashing strategies (Akturan 2018), eco-bleaching, eco-washing, green makeup, and green image washing (Kahle and Gurel-Atay 2015). In fact, greenwashing has a negative impact on green branding efforts, especially in terms of brand associations and brand credibility, which indirectly also affects green brand equity and purchase intention (Akturan 2018).

According to Kate Hall (Wilkes 2019), greenwashing is a practice used to show the world that something good is being done for the earth although in reality it is not, and manipulation is being resorted to. This may also be termed fake green. For example, the word "organic" is used with no explanation provided, or money is donated to support the protection of endangered animals using materials that damage animal habitats (Wilkes 2019).

To differentiate between fake green and real green is no easy task, because there are contributions from the politics of representation that develop in brand commercial texts. To counter greenwashing strategies as consumers, we need to educate ourselves about environmental issues and practices be more critical while reading labels, and question product claims (Joe 2021). We can also learn to ascertain the certification of the product and focus on the material of the packaging and where the packaging ends up (Wilkes 2019).

Methodology

To analyze the politics of representation that develop in brand commercial texts, we need to understand the context of the situation, in this case, how advertisements or commercial materials relate to the social processes within which they are taking place (situated).

Brand commercial text, mainly advertisements, is filled with codes and visual signs that contain social meaning applied and situated within particular social and cultural settings. Brand representation can be examined using text analysis methods with various approaches such as semiotic, discourse, and narrative analysis (Hall 2013). This study uses social semiotic methods proposed by Halliday (1978). According to Halliday and Hasan (1989), "The text ... is an instance of the process and product of social meaning in a particular context [or] situation," whereas the context of the situation is unfolded "through a systemic relationship between the social environment on the one hand, and the functional organization of language on the other" (Halliday and Hasan 1989, 13).

Halliday (1978) proposed that there are three elements of analysis that can be used to study the context of the situation, namely, the field of discourse, which refers to what is happening, or the subject of the issue that motivates the audience's engagement; the tenor of discourse, which refers to who takes part, the character, status, and their role in discourse; and the mode of discourse, which refers to which part of the language is playing the role of language in a certain situation: symbolic organization of the text, its function in context, including the channel (whether written or spoken or both) and rhetorical mode. In short, in each commercial text, the researcher should analyze three main elements: the field of the discourse, which focuses on the subject matter of the discourse; the tenor of the discourse, which emphasizes the actors; and the mode of discourse, which centers on the strategy used in the text.

Two brand communication materials serve as the case object of this study (ThankstoNature 2012; Xindonesia 2012), namely, the packaging tea commercials of the Packaging Tea Y ad "Thanks to nature" (TVC 15″ duration), produced by YY Company, and the packaging drinking water commercials of the Mineral Water X ad, "eco-crush bottle" (TVC 15″ duration), produced by XX

Company. The two advertisements were chosen because they trigger active and creative participation among Indonesian digital audiences (CSP Pictures 2016; Yoman 2017; Ardiya 2018; Mahrani 2018).

The Mineral Water X TVC narration shows a sporty, healthy, and young guy walking over and opening the refrigerator, accompanied by a male voice-over (MVO) throughout. Then the recycling instruction scenes appear, demonstrated by the guy, with copy: "1. Select," "2. Drink," and "3. Crush." The narrative ends with super "small steps giving change" and the new Mineral Water X logo symbolized with a green bud growing from a crumbling bottle.

Packaging Tea Y TVC features a woman tea picker picking the tops of tea leaves and throwing them into a basket on her back, after which the camera shows a basket that turned out to be filled with Packaging Tea Y products that have been changed directly from the tea leaves she has thrown in. There is no voice-over (VO), and all is quiet, except for insect sounds in the background. The visual narrative ends with light music that accompanies the display of a Packaging Tea Y product with a super "gift from nature" and a bright and fresh background.

To find specific texts representing natural claims and environmental issues, we coded and obtained twenty samples of scenes of each audiovisual material. The analysis uses Halliday's social semiotics method by categorizing meanings that identify field, tenor, and mode of discourse. The politics of representation then works more sharply in dissecting and criticizing several findings in the text and context, resulting in insightful reflections.

Findings

The Field, Tenor, and Mode of Discourse

The data was coded, collected, and analyzed sequentially, beginning with fields, tenors, and modes of the discourse for each brand communication material and followed by a discussion of the politics of representation, which was read closely from both materials. To validate and enrich the text's context, we gathered information from media articles related to the campaign, brands, products, and companies. Furthermore, we took the visual narration materials posted by consumers on YouTube to see how the campaign works and stimulates the engagement of the audience or the public (Table 1).

Table 1: Field, Tenor, and Mode of Discourse of Mineral Water X and
Packaging Tea Y in Representing "Nature"

Brands	Field of Discourse	Tenor of Discourse	Mode of Discourse
Mineral Water X	Environmental preservation, eco-friendly, social responsibility, freshness, quality	Healthy-looking young man, sporty wear, logo, white banner Green packaging/product, sky, bud plant, green field	Recycle campaign, DIY or "how-to" communication, agent of change movement, inviting participation, new life endorsement, clean air condition, green earth, sporty-healthy lifestyle, biological degradation Verbal, wordy
Packaging Tea Y	Naturalness, greenness freshness, pureness	Tea leaves picker, tea plantation, tea plant, insect voices, packaging	Natural scenery, indigenousness, greenery, product as hero, morphing/metamorphosis/alteration nonverbal, to-the-point, tranquil

Source: Wijaya et al.

Mineral Water X Ad

To understand the brand communication of Mineral Water X more clearly, we watched the ad more than twenty times, exploring the details of the scenes according to Halliday's standard. First, we

identified the field of discourse used by the Mineral Water X ad. We mapped the subject, the moving picture, words, sound, backdrops, sections, and the product itself. We identified discourses related to preservation, eco-friendliness, freshness, quality of the goods, user experience, and social responsibility. Second, the tenor of discourse consists of a healthy-looking young man with sporty wear, a green packaging product, green logo, white banner, clear blue sky, bud plant, and green field. They are the essential elements and parties that support the discourse (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Mineral Water X TVC 15″
Source: Xindonesia 2012

Third, we captured the mode of discourse in verbal expression and wordy styles. This mode appears in the communication of the how-to or DIY (do-it-yourself) way to crush the product (a plastic bottle) easily and also in the exposure of clean air conditions, green earth nuances, and a sporty and healthy lifestyle. With this recycle-themed campaign, Mineral Water X also takes advantage of introducing the "new life" awareness by inviting people to be an agent of change in preserving nature and the environment. This effort symbolizes the new benefit of the product using a recyclable plastic bottle (recycle means "new life").

Packaging Tea Y Ad

In the second ad, we found some clues that represent the field of discourse. Those are naturalness, freshness, and pureness. In defining these discourses, the visual's brand communication exposes a woman tea picker, tea plantation, the packaging product, tea plant, and insect voices. Some techniques in mode of discourse to liven up the discourse and brainwash consumers are placing of emphasis on the product-as-a-hero, metamorphosing or visual object alteration, and greenery ambience strategy (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Packaging Tea Y TVC 15″
Source: ThankstoNature 2012

Moreover, the Packaging Tea Y ad uses more nonverbal communication to depict a tranquil situation in the natural scene (tea plantation) focused on an indigenous tea picker, before it uses a morphing strategy to change tea leaves into a tea product through a seamless transition. Amazingly, after some sequences of actions from an indigenous tea picker, this ad has claimed that the product is like a gift from nature. The plot moves on without explaining why the product is claimed to be natural. Visual narrative distracts the public and audience from the substance of the claim.

Discussion

Representing the "Natural," Politicizing "Nature"

From the foregoing explanation, we can see how the brands of Mineral Water X and Packaging Tea Y try to represent the naturalness of their products in different ways. Mineral Water X refers to environmental

preservation, whereas Packaging Tea Y refers to the purity of products processed directly from nature. In other words, Mineral Water X uses the "indirect" strategy by riding on the environmental awareness movement. In contrast, Packaging Tea Y uses the "direct" approach by presenting nature as a source of product content, which Kilbourne terms an oxymoron (Wibowo 2017) (Table 2).

Table 2: How Brands Represent the "Natural"

Direct vs. Indirect	Natural Product	Eco-Friendly
Mineral Water X, through the social responsibility campaign Packaging Tea Y, through the product campaign	Mineral Water X, by highlighting packaging Packaging Tea Y, by highlighting ingredient	Mineral Water X, through recycling packaging Packaging Tea Y, through green packaging

Source: Wijaya et al.

These two types of pathways are common in green marketing communications. In a study of personal care brands that carry the environment theme, Todd (in Liobikienė and Bernatonienė 2017) found two similar strategies, namely the highlighting of performance of products claimed to be natural (direct approach) and emphasis on health through community values (indirect method). Whatever the path that the brand takes, it is an effort to leave traces of meaning in the minds and hearts of consumers, thus creating individual perceptions that drive product purchases (Wijaya 2011, 2019a).

Jaiswal and Singh's (2018) study indicates that consumers' green purchase behavior is stimulated by green purchase intention, attitude toward green products, environmental concern, and perceived consumer effectiveness. At the same time, Prakash and Pathak (2017) suggested that purchase intention toward eco-friendly packaging is significantly correlated with personal norms, attitudes, environmental concerns, and willingness to pay. Besides, the purchase of pro-environmental products is also motivated by consumers' altruistic construction, increasing status when shopping in public spaces (Zhang, Yang, and Zheng 2018). In addition, green messages from brand communication efforts also encourage green behavior to be viral—as exemplified by consumers on YouTube, both for Mineral Water X (CSP Pictures 2016; Ardiya 2018) and for Packaging Tea Y (Yoman 2017; Mahrani 2018). Green messages are thus helping to increase the popularity of brands on the internet and online media communication (Wijaya et al. 2021), which are the brands that intend to position themselves as natural or green brands (Lin, Lobo, and Leckie 2017; Wu et al. 2018).

However, as alluded to by Schiappa (2008), there are always "dishonesty" and "dis-innocence" in representation spaces, an example of which is Mineral Water X. The issue raised in the social campaign is about environmental sustainability through the recycling movement ("select, drink, and crush") of plastic bottle packaging. It is not merely social but also commercial. The factual purpose is to campaign a new "eco-crush bottle" of Mineral Water X with a green leaf logo representing the natural content. According to RS, Senior Innovation of XX Company, the fresh packaging was launched to target young people, who are now increasingly concerned about the environment. It is to increase sales of Mineral Water X (Sunardi 2012). With a view to supporting sales by enhancing perceptions as a natural product and as a brand that is strongly associated with nature and environmental conservation, Mineral Water X even launched the Sobat Air (water friend of) Mineral Water X program (Wulandari 2018).

Not without reason, Mineral Water X uses this strategy. Kautish, Paul, and Sharma (2019)'s study shows the growth of the recycling segment of consumers. These consumers exhibit clear awareness of and sensitivity to environmental problems that distinguish them from the entire population. More impressively, the characteristics of this segment appear to generate a willingness on the part of consumers themselves to adjust their lifestyle according to environmental concerns, and this has a significant effect on consumer decisions in regard to brand purchases. Meanwhile, Ballantine, Ozanne, and Bayfield (2019)'s study reveals five reasons why consumers buy bottled water, including health

(comprising the two subthemes of personal health and cleanliness), the bottle, convenience, taste, and self-image.

However, environmental issues related to mineral water are not only about packaging. Another issue concerns the exploitation of water resources, which causes drought (Kundel 2018) and the problem of water privatization (Hermansyah 2016) and water commercialization (Haryanto 2016), which causes a clean water crisis. Data from Bappenas (Indonesian National Development Planning Agency) shows a clean water crisis in several areas in Indonesia, especially Java and Bali (Bappenas, n.d.). Until 2018, only 20.14 percent had access to national piped drinking water (Purwanto 2020), with 19 out of 34 provinces still having access that was below the standard (Azzahra 2021). Only around 6.8 percent of households in Indonesia are estimated to have access to safe drinking water (Purwanto 2020). In fact, according to the Indonesia Water Institute, there has been a scarcity of clean water in several areas, including Java island, since 2000, which experienced a clean water deficit of 2.809 billion m3, Sulawesi island (9.232 billion m3), Bali (7.531 billion m3), and East Nusa Tenggara (1.343 billion m3) (Anisa 2014). Therefore, it is predicted that Indonesia will have a clean water crisis in 2045 (Iswara 2021). One of the reasons for this crisis was the exploitation, privatization, and commercialization of clean water (Adlina et al. 2011; Haryanto 2016; Hermansyah 2016), which threatens the right to clean water for every individual in Indonesia (Nuh 2009). Access to clean and healthy drinking water in Indonesia is indeed crucial because it involves public health issues that have broad implications for the health and welfare of the population (Afifah et al. 2018).

In addition to environmental issues, there are also injustices that have an impact on the community around clean and natural water sources. Several community groups protested against the exploitation and commercialization of natural springs, such as in Lampung (Haryanto 2016), Kudus, Central Java (Gozali 2017), and Karangasem, Bali (Arjanto 2013). It is therefore important for product brands and bottled water companies (whatever the company) to resolve the issues inherent in their natural claims before representing them in their communications. If not, brand representation and communication are only political tactics that have the potential to deceive consumers/public through greenwashing.

The same is true with the Packaging Tea Y ad, which does not display in full the technological and chemical processes involved when presenting its products, both in the product content processing stage and in the packaging stage. Packaging Tea Y does claim its products are natural and environmentally friendly, with new packaging that is Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified—this certificate indicates whether the carton packaging comes from wood that is processed responsibly (Ngantung 2013). However, RH, Regional Account Manager of SIG Combibloc, a packaging company for Packaging Tea Y, acknowledges that only 75 percent of the material is made of tree trunks, whereas 25 percent is from polyethylene (Paramitha 2013).

Thus, the "natural" message represented by both brands is political. "Nature" issues and environmental preservation are used as mere tactics to lure consumers into choosing their products not only because ecological sustainability has become a significant issue on the international political agenda and is serving as a critical driver of innovation (Dangelico and Vocalelli 2017), but also because nature is a magnetic force for humanity (Scoville 2017). Humans tend to love nature because of several factors, one of which, according to therapist Price-Mitchell (2014), is that connection with nature is improving our health, happiness, and well-being. It is no wonder, therefore, that green marketing is overgrowing. The word "green," which refers to nature, has become a provocative mantra for the natural claims of products, making the concepts and terms of "nature" branded and generic. The aim is to get a large and growing market share from environmentally conscious consumers (Kautish and Sharma 2020) (Table 3).

Table 3: How Brands Politicize "Nature"

Playing with "Nature"	Commodifying "Nature"	Hiding behind "Nature"
Using "nature" spells both verbal and nonverbal to lure consumer audience	"Nature" and its attributes become the selling point of the brands	We are comfortable with the beauty, freshness, and charms of the "nature" displayed, but we forget there are many "unnatural realities" behind the scenes: sales obsession, technological and chemical processes, how they exploit natural resources, how they treat local tea leaf pickers and laborers, and so on

Source: Wijaya et al.

However, Luo et al. (2020) conclude that consumers nowadays are increasingly skeptical and cynical about the green messages of brands. This phenomenon is sharpened by the consumer audience's distrust of the increasing number of inappropriate media today owing to unethical and illogical content (Wijaya 2019b). For this reason, marketers should not alienate them by using ambiguous or misleading messages in their advertising (Schmuck, Matthes, and Naderer 2018), because consumers, although recognizing the positive impression of green claims in an organization's greenwashing condition, negatively assess the integrity of its communications (De Jong, Harkink, and Barth 2018).

Therefore, companies must be more honest, sincere, and open to communicating their brands as part of brand social responsibility (BSR), because, substantively, BSR is the brand's good faith in offering products responsibly, across all stages, from intention, input, process, and output to outcome, to positively and beneficially impact consumers and society at large (Wijaya 2011). Thus, "marketers must think about the products they produce not in isolation but rather in conjunction with the rest of the processes by which they do business: everything from advertising to distribution to branding" (Prothero, McDonagh, and Doscha 2010, 155). Green branding must be comprehensive and fully backed by a sense of commitment, rather than displaying pictures of nature and natural or environmentally friendly claims that anesthetize consumers. In practice, however, brands are inconsistent or only partially and tactically deliver on promises.

Conclusion

Politicizing the meaning of "nature" in brand communication is not new in Indonesia. Notably, one is the mineral water brand of Mineral Water X and the packaging tea brand of Packaging Tea Y. Both use "nature" issues to represent the naturalness of their products. Mineral Water X discourses "nature" as an environment to preserve, whereas for Packaging Tea Y "nature" is an enjoyable freshness and ready-to-drink product. By considering environmental sustainability and nature conservation, Mineral Water X said that its product is very natural. This is communicated by focusing on the recyclable products for its bottle packaging and, at the same time, by campaigning for new green packaging to target young people who are now increasingly concerned about the environment and nature. On the other hand, by saying that the freshness of nature should be directly enjoyable, as symbolized by fresh tea leaves picked straight from the plantation and instantly becoming the product, Packaging Tea Y claims that its product is undoubtedly natural. However, can it be guaranteed that both product content and packaging are free from processes that are contrary to the natural meaning itself; for example, does it not involve preservative chemicals, product waste with technology that does not damage the environment, and so on?

Thus, both brands should not hypnotize consumers by ignoring the "underrepresented" realities attached to the brands in their ad narratives. Either they should expose openly how, for example, the company producing a mineral water brand exploits and conserves mountain spring resources, with implications for the survival of ecosystems and local communities or how the packaging tea's company treats tea pickers on tea plantations as well as laborers in their factories. This is because

without exposing some critical facts behind the brand in the communication of natural product claims and environmental awareness campaigns, the representation of "nature" and "natural" they display in the ad is merely political chitchat.

Limitations and Future Study

This study focuses only on the textual observation and analysis. Textual studies tend to explore the meanings constructed by text producers through media representations. For contextual facts outside the text, this study relies on other textual sources as references, such as media discourse, social media content, and official company websites. Therefore, this study can become a reference for field research with the same issue. Field research will complement the premises resulting from this study, providing richer insights. Other approaches, such as exploratory case studies (Yin 2018) or cultural studies with the political economy approach of the sign (Baudrillard 2019), will also provide a more comprehensive and reflective point of view on issues related to the naturalness of commercial products, which are currently increasingly mushrooming. Furthermore, a study using the BSR perspective with eight theoretical dimensions (including charitable, linkable, responsible, sustainable, investable, communicable, collaborative, and inspirational—Wijaya 2011) will provide systematic and richer insights in reading green branding phenomena. Finally, a more in-depth investigation on the producer side will offer new perspectives and perhaps new facts that have not yet been publicized. This study at least paves the way for these initiatives to be undertaken.

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