

PERSUASIVE COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN ENVIRONMENTAL CAMPAIGNS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE BODY SHOP INDONESIA AND ECOTON FOUNDATION

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Abstract. Indonesia is currently facing an unprecedented waste management emergency, with annual production reaching 69.7 million tons. This research provides a comprehensive analysis of the persuasive communication strategies utilized by two prominent yet distinct actors: The Body Shop Indonesia (commercial) and Ecoton Foundation (non-commercial). By employing a qualitative case study methodology, this study dissects digital narratives, symbolic messaging, and community engagement frameworks across multiple social media ecosystems. The findings reveal a dichotomy in persuasive approaches; The Body Shop employs "soft" persuasion integrating green marketing, celebrity ethos, and consumer rewards to cultivate sustainable lifestyle choices. In contrast, Ecoton utilizes "hard" persuasion grounded in scientific advocacy, visual pathos, and legal pressure to catalyze grassroots mobilization and systemic policy shifts. This expansion explores the implications of these strategies on public perception and behavioral change. The study concludes that the intersection of market-driven ethics and radical environmental advocacy is fundamental to mitigating Indonesia's plastic crisis and fostering long-term ecological resilience.

Keywords: Persuasive Communication, Green Marketing, Environmental Activism, The Body Shop, Ecoton, Waste Crisis.

Abstrak. Indonesia saat ini menghadapi darurat pengelolaan sampah yang belum pernah terjadi sebelumnya, dengan produksi tahunan mencapai 69,7 juta ton. Penelitian ini memberikan analisis komprehensif tentang strategi komunikasi persuasif yang digunakan oleh dua aktor terkemuka namun berbeda: The Body Shop Indonesia (komersial) dan Yayasan Ecoton (non-komersial). Dengan menggunakan metodologi studi kasus kualitatif, penelitian ini membedah narasi digital, pesan simbolik, dan kerangka keterlibatan masyarakat di berbagai ekosistem media sosial. Temuan mengungkapkan dikotomi dalam pendekatan persuasif; The Body Shop menggunakan persuasi "lunak" mengintegrasikan pemasaran hijau, etos selebriti, dan penghargaan konsumen untuk menumbuhkan pilihan gaya hidup berkelanjutan. Sebaliknya, Ecoton menggunakan persuasi "keras" yang didasarkan pada advokasi ilmiah, pathos visual, dan tekanan hukum untuk mengkatalisasi mobilisasi akar rumput dan perubahan kebijakan sistemik. Ekspansi ini mengeksplorasi implikasi dari strategi-strategi tersebut terhadap persepsi publik dan perubahan perilaku. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa persilangan antara etika yang didorong pasar dan advokasi lingkungan radikal sangat penting untuk memitigasi krisis plastik di Indonesia dan membina ketahanan ekologi jangka panjang.

Kata Kunci: Persuasive Communication, Green Marketing, Environmental Activism, The Body Shop, Ecoton, Waste Crisis.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is currently confronting an environmental emergency of unprecedented proportions, primarily driven by an anthropogenic waste crisis that far outpaces the adaptive capacity of existing management infrastructure. By the end of 2023, national waste production was projected to exceed a staggering 69.7 million tons. Alarmingly, research indicates that approximately 33% of this total remains poorly managed, leaking into illegal landfills, traversing fragile river basins, and ultimately accumulating in the ocean (Subitmele, 2024). This trajectory has solidified Indonesia's position as the world's second-largest contributor to marine plastic pollution, trailing only behind China. This is not merely an aesthetic or logistical inconvenience; it represents a profound disruption of marine ecosystems, threatening biodiversity and the socio-economic stability of coastal communities that rely on aquatic resources.

The crisis has further evolved from visible macro-plastic debris into a more insidious and pervasive biological threat: the proliferation of microplastics. As synthetic materials undergo physical and chemical degradation, they fragment into microscopic particles that permeate aquatic environments and infiltrate the human food chain. Evidence from the University of Newcastle and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) highlights a harrowing reality: the average human may now ingest up to five grams of microplastics per week a mass equivalent to a standard credit card (Gerald, 2023). These particles act as vectors for endocrine-disrupting chemicals and heavy metals, posing long-term risks to metabolic health, reproductive systems, and cellular integrity. Consequently, environmental conservation in Indonesia has transitioned from an optional ethical stance into a critical public health necessity that necessitates immediate intervention through effective communication.

As the public becomes increasingly cognizant of these biological threats, a significant paradigm shift has occurred in consumer psychology. Modern Indonesian consumers are rapidly migrating toward "conscious consumerism," where purchasing decisions are no longer dictated solely by product utility or price, but by the perceived ethical and ecological footprint of the provider. Data from Kantar indicates a 112% surge in interest for sustainable products among Indonesian consumers between 2019 and 2020 (Nariswari, 2022). This shift presents a complex communicative challenge: how can organizations effectively bridge the gap between abstract environmental values and tangible behavioral change? Communication, therefore, emerges as the primary mechanism for social engineering acting as the catalyst that translates environmental awareness into sustained collective action.

In the commercial landscape, The Body Shop Indonesia stands as a paradigmatic example of ethical business integration. Since its entry into the Indonesian market in 1992, the brand has transcended the traditional boundaries of the cosmetics industry by prioritizing a "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle" philosophy. Unlike mass-market firms that rely on the aesthetics of luxury, The Body Shop utilizes a persuasive narrative grounded in the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) framework balancing Profit, People, and the Planet. Their marketing strategies do not merely promote products; they advocate for a lifestyle of "ethical beauty" (Hardhiyanti & Rasyid, 2018). Through large-scale commercial campaigns, they educate the public on cruelty-free practices and sustainable packaging, effectively proving that corporate profitability and ecological stewardship can be harmonized through sophisticated persuasive communication.

Conversely, the battle against plastic pollution is also spearheaded by grassroots, non-commercial entities such as the Ecoton Foundation. Established as a wetland conservation study group, Ecoton operates through the rigorous application of "Citizen Science," environmental research, and public advocacy. Their approach to persuasion is fundamentally distinct from the corporate sector; while The Body Shop focuses on sustainable consumption, Ecoton emphasizes radical environmental stewardship and the restoration of polluted river ecosystems. By mobilizing local communities to monitor water quality and advocate for policy reform, Ecoton transforms passive citizens into active agents of change (Subrata & Febriana, 2024). Their partnership with commercial brands creates a unique synergy, where corporate influence meets grassroots mobilization, forming a multi-dimensional front against ecological degradation.

Despite the proliferation of environmental campaigns from both sectors, there remains a critical research gap concerning the comparative efficacy of their persuasive tropes. Most existing literature focuses on either corporate green marketing or NGO activism in isolation, failing to address how these two distinct models of communication interact or complement each other in a shared cultural context. This research aims to fill this void by conducting a comparative analysis of the persuasive marketing communication strategies employed by The Body Shop Indonesia and the Ecoton Foundation. By dissecting their digital narratives, emotional appeals, and community engagement frameworks, this study seeks to identify the most effective communicative mechanisms for addressing the plastic waste crisis in the digital age. This analysis is not only academically significant but also practically essential for developing more integrated and impactful environmental communication strategies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study utilizes a multi-dimensional theoretical framework to analyze the efficacy of environmental

campaigns. The integration of marketing, psychological, and sociological theories provide a robust lens through which to evaluate the intersection of commercial interests and grassroots activism.

Green Marketing and the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) Framework. Green marketing is conceptualized as a holistic management process responsible for identifying, anticipating, and satisfying the requirements of customers and society in a sustainable way (Chandra & Tunjungsari, 2019). Unlike traditional marketing, which prioritizes short-term financial gain, green marketing integrates environmental stewardship into the core brand identity.

Central to this approach is the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) framework, which posits that a corporation's ultimate success should be measured by its impact on three specific pillars: Profit, People, and the Planet. The Body Shop Indonesia exemplifies this by adhering to a philosophy where ethical business is a prerequisite for long-term growth (Hardhiyanti & Rasyid, 2018). Within this framework, environmental campaigns are not merely philanthropic side-projects but are strategic instruments designed to foster "Eco-Branding," where the brand becomes a symbolic vessel for the consumer's ethical values.

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM). The Elaboration Likelihood Model, developed by Petty and Cacioppo, provides a psychological blueprint for understanding how persuasive messages are processed (Putri, 2021). The model identifies two distinct routes of persuasion:

1. **The Central Route:** This path is utilized when the audience is motivated and capable of processing complex information. Persuasion occurs through the evaluation of logical arguments and empirical evidence. Ecoton Foundation heavily utilizes this route by presenting scientific data on microplastics and chemical pollution to convince policymakers and environmental experts (Subrata & Febriana, 2024).
2. **The Peripheral Route:** This path is triggered when the audience is influenced by superficial cues rather than the content of the message. Elements such as visual aesthetics, celebrity endorsements, and emotional music play a critical role. The Body Shop leverages this route by utilizing brand ambassadors like Iqbaal Ramadhan to create an immediate, emotionally driven connection with younger demographics who may not yet be deeply engaged in environmental science (Aisya & Febriana, 2023).

Aristotelian Pillars of Persuasion: Ethos, Pathos, and Logos. The foundation of any persuasive campaign lies in the three modes of persuasion defined by Aristotle.

1. **Ethos (Credibility):** This refers to the perceived trustworthiness of the source. The Body Shop builds ethos through global certifications such as B-Corp, while Ecoton establishes it through the rigor of their ecological laboratories.
2. **Pathos (Emotional Appeal):** This involves tapping into the audience's feelings to drive action. In environmental communication, pathos often manifests as "Fear Appeal" (Yusof, 2021) highlighting the catastrophic consequences of pollution or "Positive Reinforcement," such as the joy of protecting biodiversity.
3. **Logos (Logical Argument):** This uses reasoning and facts to support a claim. Ecoton's "Citizen Science" programs empower individuals to see environmental degradation through a logical lens, using data to transform subjective concerns into objective advocacy.

Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) Theory. According to Rogers (2003), the Diffusion of Innovation theory explains how new ideas and technologies spread within a social system. In the context of the plastic crisis, "sustainable living" is the innovation. The DOI framework identifies five key attributes that determine the rate of adoption: Relative Advantage, Compatibility, Complexity, Trialability, and Observability. Effective environmental campaigns must ensure that green practices (such as returning bottles or cleaning rivers) are perceived as compatible with the user's lifestyle and offer a clear relative advantage over traditional, less-sustainable habits (Shah et al., 2023). Both The Body Shop and Ecoton strive to reduce the "complexity" of these actions by providing clear tutorials and accessible platforms for community involvement.

METHOD

This research employs a qualitative paradigm with a comparative case study design to provide an in-depth, interpretative analysis of environmental persuasive strategies (Yin, 2018). The comparative framework is utilized to systematically contrast the commercial "green" branding of The Body Shop Indonesia with the non-commercial grassroots activism of the Ecoton Foundation. This approach allows for a "thick description" of how different organizational mandates profit-driven ethicality versus advocacy-driven stewardship shape the construction and delivery of sustainability narratives within the Indonesian socio-cultural context, providing a granular view of the communicative mechanisms that drive behavioral change (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data collection was executed through a rigorous "Netnography" and digital observation process, focusing on visual and textual artifacts across multiple social media ecosystems. The researcher systematically observed official Instagram accounts (@thebodyshopindo and @ecoton.id), TikTok video campaigns, and YouTube podcasts/tutorials over a 24-month period from January 2022 to December 2023. This timeframe was strategically selected to capture seasonal shifts, such as The Body Shop's Ramadan sustainability campaigns and Ecoton's annual river expeditions, ensuring a comprehensive dataset that includes campaign slogans (#BringBackOurBottle, #ZeroWasteCity), influencer-led testimonials, and scientific educational posters (Subrata & Febriana, 2024).

The collected data were analyzed using the six-step Thematic Analysis framework to identify recurring communicative cues and persuasive tropes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These themes were subsequently mapped against the Aristotelian pillars (Ethos, Pathos, Logos) and the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) to evaluate the processing routes of the messages. To ensure the reliability and trustworthiness of the findings, the study employed data triangulation by cross-referencing social media narratives with institutional documents, such as B-Corp impact reports and scientific e-books, thereby minimizing subjective bias and ensuring an objective interpretation of the environmental communication landscape in Indonesia.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study reveal a significant divergence in the persuasive communication architectures employed by The Body Shop Indonesia and the Ecoton Foundation. While both organizations share the overarching goal of mitigating Indonesia's plastic crisis, their strategies are dictated by their respective organizational mandates commercial sustainability versus radical advocacy.

Persuasive Strategy of The Body Shop Indonesia: Commercial Ethical Branding

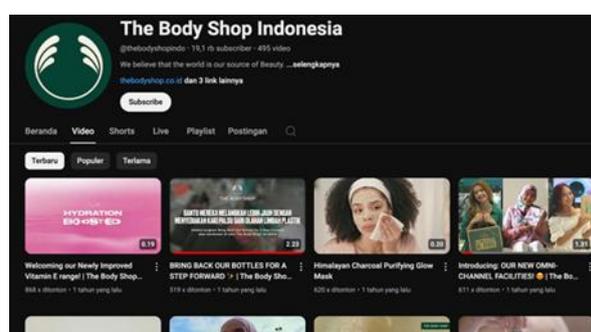


Figure 1. Official Youtube The Body Shop Indonesia

The Body Shop Indonesia utilizes a "Soft Persuasion" model that seeks to integrate environmental responsibility into the consumer's daily lifestyle. This approach is characterized by several key communicative pillars:

1. Emotional Appeal and Cultural Resonance The Body Shop effectively employs emotional appeal by synchronizing its campaigns with significant cultural and religious milestones in Indonesia. During the month of Ramadan, for instance, the #TBSGreenRamadhan campaign encouraged consumers to adopt sustainable habits, such as reducing plastic waste during iftar gatherings. By

framing sustainability as an extension of religious and spiritual purity, the brand creates a deep emotional connection that transcends mere product utility. Furthermore, holiday-themed campaigns like "Give With Joy" connect eco-friendly gifting with the universal emotion of joy, fostering a positive brand image (Aisya & Febriana, 2023).

2. Incentivized Reciprocity and the BBOB Program One of the brand's most successful persuasive tools is the "Bring Back Our Bottle" (BBOB) initiative. This program operationalizes the principle of reciprocity: the brand provides a tangible reward (points or discounts) in exchange for the consumer's effort to recycle. By lowering the transactional barrier to sustainable behavior, The Body Shop transforms recycling from a complex environmental duty into a rewarding consumer habit. Data indicates that this program has not only reduced plastic waste but also significantly increased customer retention and brand loyalty (Azzahra & Fachira, 2022).
3. Celebrity Ethos and Influencer Engagement To reach the younger demographic, The Body Shop utilizes a peripheral route of persuasion through endorsements from credible local figures like Iqbaal Ramadhan and Tasya Farasya. These influencers are not merely used for advertising; they are presented as "Student Ambassadors" who share personal narratives about their commitment to sustainability. This strategy effectively builds Ethos, as followers perceive these figures as relatable role models, thereby normalizing green behavior among Millennials and Gen Z (Aisya & Febriana, 2023).

Persuasive Strategy of Ecoton Foundation: Non-Commercial Advocacy

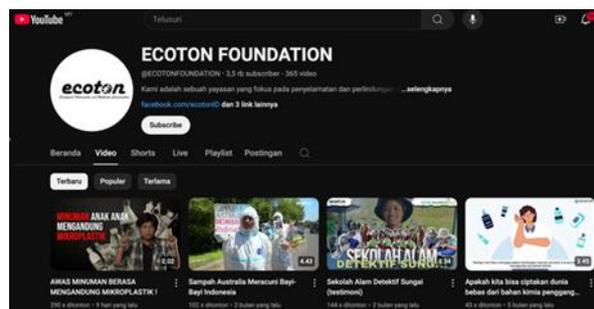


Figure 2. Official Youtube Ecoton Foundation

In contrast, the Ecoton Foundation employs a "Hard Persuasion" model grounded in scientific rigor and grassroots mobilization. Their strategy focuses on the "Inconvenient Truth" of environmental degradation:

1. Visual Pathos and the "Fear Appeal" Ecoton's digital narrative is heavily driven by raw, unedited visual content. By sharing images of microplastic-infested fish and blackened river water, Ecoton triggers a "Fear Appeal" (Yusof, 2021). This tactic is designed to move the audience from a state of apathy to one of urgent concern. Unlike the aesthetic "green" visuals of the commercial sector, Ecoton's imagery serves as a visual testament to the critical state of Indonesia's aquatic ecosystems, forcing the viewer to confront the consequences of mismanagement.
2. Citizen Science as Logical Persuasion Ecoton empowers the community through the "Citizen Science" framework. By involving local residents, particularly youth and children, in water quality testing, Ecoton utilizes Logos to drive persuasion. When individuals observe microplastics through a microscope themselves, the abstract problem of pollution becomes a tangible reality. This hands-on education democratizes scientific data, making it a powerful tool for community-led advocacy and public protests (Subrata & Febriana, 2024).
3. Multi-Platform Educational Narratives Ecoton adapts its persuasive message across various digital platforms to maximize reach. On TikTok, they deliver short, humorous, and critical content designed to attract younger users. Conversely, their YouTube channel serves as a repository for long-form podcasts and in-depth scientific discussions. This multi-channel approach ensures that their message is compatible with the consumption habits of diverse audience segments, from casual scrollers to serious environmental researchers.

Comparative Theoretical Analysis. When analyzed through the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), a clear dichotomy emerges. The Body Shop Indonesia predominantly utilizes the Peripheral Route, relying on visual cues, celebrity status, and rewards to engage the mass market. In contrast, Ecoton Foundation targets the Central Route, demanding a high level of cognitive elaboration from its audience through scientific data and advocacy modules.

Furthermore, applying the Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) theory reveals that both organizations are working to increase the Trialability and Observability of sustainable practices. The Body Shop's refill stations allow consumers to "try" a sustainable lifestyle with minimal risk, while Ecoton's river clean-ups provide a highly "observable" platform for environmental action.

Table 1. Comparative SWOT Analysis of Persuasive Strategies

Indicator	The Body Shop Indonesia	Ecoton Foundation
Primary Route	Peripheral (Celebrity, Rewards)	Central (Data, Advocacy)
Tone of Message	Aspirational, Rewarding, Positive	Urgent, Scientific, Critical
Strengths	High reach, aesthetic appeal, brand loyalty.	Scientific credibility, grassroots impact.
Weaknesses	Perception of premium pricing.	Potential for "Compassion Fatigue" (Fear).
Opportunities	Digital refill station ecosystems.	National curriculum integration.
Threats	Competition from fast-beauty brands.	Legal pushback from industrial entities.

Discussion and Implications. The primary implication of these findings is that environmental change in Indonesia is a collaborative result of both "lifestyle" and "activism" communication. The "Soft Persuasion" of The Body Shop creates a social norm where being eco-friendly is perceived as a desirable identity. This cultural shift provides the necessary public support for the "Hard Persuasion" of Ecoton, which focuses on structural and legal reforms.

However, the study also identifies a "Personalization Gap." As consumers increasingly seek products tailored to their specific needs, The Body Shop may face challenges if its sustainable offerings are perceived as too generic. Concurrently, Ecoton must ensure that its data-heavy content does not lead to "Information Overload," which can cause audiences to disengage from the message. The synergy between these two models where the commercial sector provides accessible alternatives and the NGO sector demands institutional accountability remains the most effective pathway for addressing Indonesia's plastic waste crisis (Subrata & Febriana, 2024).

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