

Branded Social Campaign and the Politics of Representation

Campaña Social de Marca y la Política de Representación

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The low awareness of clean living made a company, through one of its product brands, initiate a social program through a donation campaign to improve sanitation and poor quality of health in the province of East Nusa Tenggara (NTT—*Nusa Tenggara Timur*), Indonesia. An advertisement was then aired frequently in national media to support the campaign. However, this advertisement was protested by the people who represent NTT citizens. **Methodology:** Employing Karatani's (2003) representation theory and Schiappa's (2008) concept of representational correctness with a discourse analysis approach, the research critically analyzes the politics and problems associated with Lifebuoy's social campaigns that sparked protests and denials from various NTT community groups. **Results:** This study found that the landscaping of the representation problems of the advertisement included the problems of 'speak about' and 'speak for.' Also, the power of prejudice or racial stereotypes of eastern Indonesian people was permanently attached to poverty and underdevelopment. **Discussion:** The protest(ers) representation was also problematic and political. There were numerous struggles of agenda and identity politics among protesters. Therefore, Lifebuoy's social campaign did not only serve as the object of protest but at the same time also criticized the protesters. **Conclusions:** This study contributes essential lessons for brands about the urgency of mapping and reading political voices in the field when a social program is launched and implemented so that various obstacles are well anticipated.

Keywords: Social initiatives; Branded campaign; Media representation; Protest; Intertextuality.

RESUMEN

Introducción: La baja conciencia de la vida limpia llevó a una empresa, a través de una de sus marcas de productos, a iniciar un programa social mediante una campaña de donaciones para mejorar el saneamiento y la mala calidad de la salud en la provincia de Nusa Tenggara Oriental (NTT—*Nusa Tenggara Timur*), Indonesia. Luego se emitió un anuncio con frecuencia en los medios nacionales para apoyar la campaña. Sin embargo, este anuncio fue protestado por las personas que representan a los ciudadanos de NTT. **Metodología:** Empleando la teoría de la representación de Karatani (2003) y el concepto de corrección representacional de Schiappa (2008) con un enfoque análisis del discurso, la investigación analiza críticamente la política y los problemas asociados con las campañas de social de Lifebuoy que provocaron protestas y negaciones de varios grupos comunitarios de NTT. **Resultados:** Este estudio encontró que el paisajismo de los problemas de representación del anuncio incluía los problemas de 'hablar sobre' y 'hablar para'. Además, el poder del prejuicio o los estereotipos raciales de las personas del este de Indonesia estuvo permanentemente adjunto a la pobreza y el subdesarrollo. **Discusión:** Sin embargo, los manifestantes de la representación también fue problemática y política. Hubo numerosas luchas con agendas y política de identidad entre los manifestantes. Por lo tanto, la campaña social de Lifebuoy no solo sirvió como objeto de protesta, sino que al mismo tiempo también criticó a los manifestantes. **Conclusiones:** Este estudio aporta lecciones importantes para las marcas sobre la urgencia de mapear y leer voces políticas en el campo cuando se lanzado e implementar un programa social, para que se anticipen bien los diversos obstáculos.

Palabras clave: Iniciativas sociales; Campaña de marca; Representación mediática; Protesta; Intertextualidad.

1. Introduction

Brands face challenges in the tightly competitive environment and the mediated and hyper-networked world that requires adjustments, technology, and strategic breakthroughs in communicating values (Kitchin, 2003; Wijaya, 2019). One trending strategy is creating brand messages through social initiatives commonly practiced in the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) program. The marriage of branding or marketing strategy and CSR initiatives could be seen from two points of view: as an effort to increase the value of CSR to a level that has a strategic implication for branding and market value contribution (Polonsky and Jevons, 2009; Luo and Bhattacharya, 2006; Knox and Maklan, 2004), and as marketing strategy innovation that adopts modes and pathways that had been passed by CSR (Varadarajan and Menon, 1988; Maignan and Ferrell, 2004).

The first point of view is considered corporate initiatives that argue that CSR supposedly gives significant and measurable impacts to a company, such as income, financial advantages, and performance (Piercy and Lane, 2009; Miles and Covin, 2000; Johnson, 2003). Aside from increasing competitive advantage (Porter and Kramer, 2006). The second point of view is (product) brand initiatives that consider social responsibility as an effort to develop trust and good relationships not only in the context of brand relationships but also in the context of more comprehensive relations with society (Kitchin, 2003; Sirgy, 2002). Another purpose is to give additional value to a brand (Melo and Galan, 2011). Hence, it attracts socially conscious consumers who count social implications in their consumption activities (Webster, 1975).

Various examples of brand communication campaigns that raise social or health issues have been studied by scholars, such as bottled water campaigns for African communities (Brei and Böhm, 2013). Another example is the hand washing with soap campaign for Aboriginal communities in Australia (McDonald et al., 2011) or even the Dove global campaign. This skincare product persuades women to take pride in their beauty, regardless of body shape and skin color (Murray, 2013).

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) discourse has long been practiced in Indonesia. Especially since the enactment of Law No. 40 the Year 2007 on Inc. Liability ("Company Law") and Government Regulation No. 47 the Year 2012 on Social and Environmental Responsibility of Inc. ("Regulation 47/2012"), which require companies to implement CSR. However, at the level of product branding, the social responsibility strategy is

"Poverty is used as "billboards, vehicles, and tools of political campaigns" to reap the people's votes.

only performed frequently when a religious commoditization trend emerges, especially during religious holidays. Massive television advertisements have recently employed creative strategies using social themes (Wijaya, 2012).

However, these social initiatives only sometimes run smoothly.

The '5 Tahun Bisa untuk NTT' (5 years can be for NTT) campaign was initiated by Unilever through one of its health bath soap brands, for example, received protests from NTT citizen entities (Astuti, 2013). This campaign is to support the Unilever Sustainable Living Plan (USLP) through the Lifebuoy Berbagi Sehat (Lifebuoy Healthy Sharing) program, which has been implemented in 10 provinces and succeeded in raising IDR 720 million from the support of 7,215,020 consumers who donated IDR 100 for every purchase of Lifebuoy products (Amalo, 2014). Unfortunately, the advertisement, which showed a picture of poverty and unhealthy living habits due to limited sanitation facilities and clean water in Bitobe village, caused controversy, and Unilever apologized.

The erroneous development paradigm in developing countries has been highlighted by Escobar (1988; 1999). Escobar criticized mainstream development discourse for its reliance on power dynamics that dehumanize certain groups and prolong unequal relations between the "First World" and the "Third World." The notion of development as a linear progression toward modernity argues that it needs to consider diverse cultural perspectives and local knowledge systems. Escobar urged for a more inclusive and participatory development approach that respects the agency and knowledge of local communities.

Aside from the Lifebuoy campaign, several brand communications programs carry a social theme and encounter obstacles resulting from community protests or being considered a disturbance to public interests. For example, the advertising campaign of Mie Sedaap, an instant noodle brand themed "*Kerja bakti*" (the social work together in a community), was reprimanded by KPI (Indonesian Broadcasting Commission), who considered the narratives teach lies to children (Himaiko IPB, 2010). Another case is the brand activation program of Walls Ice Cream, which was intended to give free ice cream to low-class society in a city park. The program execution damaged the park, and Walls was involved in a local government lawsuit (Fajerial, 2014). BPJS (A government-based health insurance agency) also got an official protest from an association of doctors related to the BPJS advertisement that showed a doctor figure with a visual of a skull (Zebua, 2016).

In practices of branding and marketing, social issues representation always becomes an ethical debate, significantly that which is associated with the extent to which the commodification of social issues is tolerated (Andreasen, 1996; Andreasen and Drumwright, 2000; Klineciewicz, 1998; Dunfee et al., 1999; Polonsky and Wood, 2001; Cabrera and Williams, 2012; Barnes, 1991). Also, cultural factors make such representation and commodification problematic (Holt, 2002; Arvidsson, 2005; Wengrow, 2008). Alternatively, on the contrary, it becomes a consideration in branding strategy (Lavack and Kropp, 2003; Schroeder, 2009) to minimize social and cultural tension.

Branded or corporate social programs are also considered not sincere rather than just another strategy to gain profit (Kallio, 2007). Another challenge related to the contradiction of 'marketing (communication)' and 'social' is where 'marketing (communication)' is perceived as unfavorable (Jahdi & Acikdili, 2009; Tinic, 1997; Schroeder and Borgerson, 2005), as a strategy that is identical with lies, trickery, and meaningless promise through images and persuasion (Wijaya et al., 2022). 'Social,' on the other side, is identified with kindness, sincerity, and modesty (Tinic, 1997). It seems impossible for "kindness" and "badness" to unite. This contradiction makes brand representation in marketing CSR or branded social initiatives more vulnerable to resistance, cynicism, and societal criticism.

Klineciewicz (1998) observed that problems that often arise related to branded social programs or strategic giving are the program's adverse effects on social issues resources, companies that impose issues, and companies that abuse their authority by failing to submit complete information on the issue. Another problem related to a wrong program tarnished social issues' image. Some program activities will also be problematic if the company

does not carry out the role of social responsibility but instead focuses on the company's benefits. Sheikh and Beise-Zee (2011) found that a less specific social issue made the public sometimes suspect the company only as a ploy to woo consumers. Usually, consumers skeptical of the issues will also try to avoid the company, either in the form of negative preference or negative word-of-mouth. According to Sheikh and Beise-Zee, this avoidance is mainly related to controversial issues, such as gender, racial, and religious issues.

Another criticism of the commercialization of social issues is voiced by Tinic (1997), who examined the controversy related to advertisements and campaigns by Benetton. Tinic explained that the contradiction between public service and commercial purposes triggers the controversy. To those who need help understanding the advertising's creative strategy, the images shown in advertisements are considered exploitation of social problems to increase clothing sales. In addition, the images of social issues separated from the actual context are also seen as a feature designed to gain public attention for companies and product brands. Within this context, the social issues promoted by Benetton become a commodity.

Schroeder and Borgenson (2005) explained that critics of marketing communications are generally associated with capitalism critics and excessive consumption, mainly related to the function of "Images" in communication (advertising) that reduces the empirical verification. Jahdi and Acikdilli (2009) mentioned it as "*the creation of 'hyper-reality' by the media, where imagery replaces reality in the society, i.e., the gap between image and reality becomes indistinguishable*" (p. 108). Therefore, Schroeder and Borgenson (2005) argued that linking advertising only with persuasion is a worn thought. Advertising must be seen as a representative system of strategic and pedagogical functions. The advertisement is considered a discourse that creates certain narratives related to a product (Baudrillard, 1996). This seeing makes the study of media representation essential to deal with protests about advertisements representing a brand or company and their pursued social issues.

Schiappa (2008) said that media representation is always ambivalent. All images are ambiguous because it is not pure, free from someone's perspective. Thus, what is displayed (represented) through popular cultural products such as movies, songs, TV shows, advertisements, branding or brand communication materials, and so on can have different "meanings." The audience could represent them variously, but in reality, they all have influenced the audience.

The media also always has a double standard (Schiappa, 2008). On the one hand, it reinforces a stereotype, and on the other, it strengthens essentialism and polarization. The stereotype is a pejorative overgeneralization. How a stereotype works: When we think about a group, we categorize them based on the same attributes, ethical judgments (good or bad), and physical characteristics. These attributes are attached to the qualifications and characteristics of a particular group. Worse, the stereotypical representation affirms the essential beliefs that these attributes are "natural," "normal," and "inborn." Accordingly, no representation is perfectly accurate, ideologically pure, innocent, or accessible from the potential violation or 'attack' against a represented group, as Schiappa (2008) idealized by the concept of Representational Correctedness (RC). What happened to Lifebuoy, whose advertisement was massively protested by NTT residents because it depicted poverty in NTT, shows that there is a media representation problem.

2. Objectives

This study aims to analyze and critically reveal the politics of representation in Lifebuoy's social initiative campaign advertisement and voices of controversies, protests, and denials of the campaign's content.

3. Methodology

3.1. The Case

Celebrating ten years of the program "Lifebuoy Berbagi Sehat" (Lifebuoy Sharing Healthy Life), Unilever—a multinational consumer goods company, launched a program called '5 Tahun Bisa Untuk NTT' (Help a Child

Reach 5 in NTT) (Mahmudah, 2013). Through this program, Lifebuoy (a family health soap brand) invited all levels of society to empathize and help the children in the province of NTT (East Nusa Tenggara) to live healthily so the children will be able to reach the age of five and beyond. Lifebuoy would distribute the support of the people of Indonesia for health care quality improvement. Indonesian people could give support in various ways by clicking "support" on the official website or clicking "like" on Lifebuoy's Facebook page. They could also purchase Lifebuoy products at the Carrefour hypermarket because by buying a product, they had donated 100 IDR to children in NTT (Ulin, 2013).

Since the program entitled Lifebuoy Sharing Healthy Life was first launched in 2004 with the toilet building program in Purbalingga, East Java, Unilever has actively continued to socialize and educate *Perilaku Hidup Bersih dan Sehat* (Clean and Healthy Behavior) to the public. Especially early aged children, through integrated ads and brand communication programs. The programs also endorsed the government's efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) in reducing child mortality to 32 per 1,000 live births in 2015 (Jacko, 2014).

This program started with adopting a village in NTT, namely Bitobe village, Amfoang Tengah, Kupang district. Farmers mostly populate this village; they plant corn, sweet potatoes, bananas, and rice. Even though they are farmers, they do not have clean water flowing into their houses. To get water, the people, especially the children, must fetch water from natural springs located quite far away. Not to mention, the condition of basic sanitation facilities needs to be improved. Lack of information makes most residents have no clean-living habits, such as bathing and washing hands with soap when necessary. Lifebuoy's program was to construct access to clean water and adequate sanitation facilities so that the people get a thorough education to create clean and healthy living habits, including hand washing with soap to avoid infant mortality in the village.

NTT, with a population of 4.7 million, was selected because there were about 58 deaths per 1,000 live births in the province, with diarrhea as the leading cause (based on Basic Health Research conducted by the Indonesian Ministry of Health). The diarrhea was caused by the lack of awareness of clean and healthy life, the difficulty of access to clean water, and inadequate basic sanitation. NTT is an archipelago province located in eastern Indonesia and consists of 566 islands; there are four mainlands in the particular area: Flores, Sumba, Timor, and Alor (NTTProv, 2015). The majority of the areas in NTT are limestone hills and highlands. NTT is an arid area with overly limited infrastructure.

Lifebuoy launched an advertising campaign to support the program, 'Help a Child Reach 5 in NTT.' The ad portrays the habits of Bitobe villagers who lack awareness about clean living. Due to the unclean habits, as shown in the advertisement (Figure 1), one in four children in the province died of diarrhea. The ad then invited participation in the form of donations to teach clean living in Bitobe so that the children in the village could celebrate their fifth birthday and beyond. The ad was frequently aired on several national television stations and uploaded to YouTube. In addition, Lifebuoy also involved the participation of netizens (internet citizens or active internet users) in disseminating the ad video and reviewing them on blogs, webs, and social media accounts (Gadgetan, 2013; Widjaja, 2013).

It is not surprising then that the impact of the ad was quickly spread, resulting in a short time to become a public debate and attract the participation of the wider community. During the campaign period, people who gave their support totaled 7,215,020. Everyone who supports this program donates 100 IDR, resulting in more than 720 million IDR (Didiet, 2013; Liza, 2014).

Brand manager Lifebuoy said that the fund would be used for infrastructure improvements, clean water, and sanitation facilities to support the establishment of clean and healthy living behaviors, mainly handwashing, in the village (Liza, 2014). The program's first stage, 'Help a Child Reach 5 in NTT', had been implemented and would reach approximately 1,437 Bitobe villagers. CIS Timor, Unilever's non-governmental organization (NGO) partner, organized the program.

However, Lifebuoy's 'goodwill' apparently could have run better. When the ad was published, many protests against the representation of poverty in NTT were suddenly raised (Astuti, 2013; Aruman, 2013; Bere, 2013; Gunawan, 2013; Liza, 2013a; Putra, 2013). Lifebuoy claimed the poverty data referred to official sources (Liza, 2013b). This protest indicated that the 'social' discourse of Lifebuoy carried out through its 'Help a Child Reach 5 in NTT' campaign failed in preventing the emergence of such a massive counter-discourse delivered through news, comments, and petitions in social media and online media (Kaskus, 2013; Krado, 2013; Febrida, 2013a; Wetangterah, 2013). Some of the issues that provoked protests included a picture related to poverty and unhealthy living habits, the claim that 1 in 4 children in NTT died from diarrhea, and Lifebuoy's invitation to help NTT children celebrate their fifth anniversary (Astuti, 2013; Aruman, 2013; Bere, 2013; Gunawan, 2013; Liza, 2013a; Putra, 2013).

A strong counter-discourse eventually 'forced' Lifebuoy to stop airing the ad (Febrida, 2013b). The head of corporate communications of Unilever Indonesia said that Lifebuoy did not mean degrading NTT children. Lifebuoy soap ad with the version of 'Help a Child Reach 5 in NTT' was launched precisely to help raise public awareness about the Clean and Healthy Lifestyle (Berita Satu, 2013; Liza, 2013b). Unilever then formally apologized to the people of NTT (Prayitno, 2014).

3.2. Discourse Analysis

Because the protest voices were not singular, the study interrogated the texts and contexts of protests. Various text materials were used as the source of study, i.e., Lifebuoy's health campaign ads that ignited protests, news article texts that presented the controversy of Lifebuoy ads, and newsreaders' comments related to the issue. One sub-text was taken from a petition submitted by a citizen through the change.org website. Although not a primary text in the unit of analysis, this text significantly served as an additional document to complement the analysis because it successfully drew hundreds of supports and 'forced' Unilever to stop presenting its advertisements in the media.

Moreover, other co-texts as secondary data sources were obtained from blog articles, opinions, web articles, and other relevant document sources, mainly to understand the contexts of the issues in question. The collected documents included nine online news articles from local media (published in East Nusa Tenggara and vicinity) and eight articles from national media (published in Jakarta) and regional media (published in other areas outside of NTT, usually affiliated with national media), 98 comments from newsreaders and 303 comments from petition supporters. Meanwhile, two TV Commercials, i.e., a 90-second teaser version and a 30-second commercial, were downloaded from YouTube.

Concerning the plurality of text in shaping discourse, Wodak (2008) argued that in problem-oriented social research, discourse analysis "allows the integration of different dimensions of interdisciplinary and multiple perspectives on the object investigated" (p. 3). This integration is what makes discourse analysis always involve intertextuality and interdiscursivity methods. Specifically, Wodak (2008) explained intertextuality and interdiscursivity as follows:

Figure 1: *Lifebuoy's campaign presents social 'facts' but was denied by NTT society.*



Source: YouTube.

Intertextuality refers to the fact that all texts are linked to other texts, both in the past and present. Such links can be established in different ways: through continued reference to a topic or main actors, through reference to the same events, or by the transfer of main arguments from one text into the next [...]. On the other hand, interdiscursivity indicates that discourses are linked in various ways. (Wodak, 2008, p. 3)

Furthermore, Wodak (2008) explained that intertextuality “is directly related to the assumption that every text is embedded in a context and is synchronically and diachronically related to many other texts” (p. 9). Therefore, the text is not free from context and is always connected to various relevant texts. Every connectedness always gives a meaning that implies discourse strategies, which form particular knowledge. Intertextuality occurs in what Wodak calls “decontextualization” (p. 3). The arguments and restatement deconstruct the meaning of texts that currently exist. As a result of those arguments, “recontextualization” occurs (p. 3) when the text is placed in a new context to produce new meaning. This recontextualization concept is similar to Saukko's (2003) concept of contextual validity in cultural studies, which puts a phenomenon in sociocultural and political-economic contexts to make data more prosperous and meaningful.

Meanwhile, in interdiscursivity, Wodak (2008) argued, “if we define discourse as primarily topic-related, [...] then a discourse often refers to topics or subtopics of other discourses, such as gender or racism” (p. 3). Automatically, when a topic overlaps with other discourse issues, the deconstruction of meaning occurs in existing discourse and generates criticism, which forms a new discourse. The relation between the topic or subject of discourse and another discourse plays a vital role in the birth of critical interpretation and arguments.

Decontextualization and recontextualization move dynamically in intertextuality during deconstruction and criticism in the interdiscursivity process. It brings us to the metadiscourse level, a discourse above the existing discourses. Metadiscourse is located on metatext, which is formed in intertextuality. Such metadiscourse can be an ideological, political, or power battle that occurs behind and beyond the discourse that emerges. Therefore, the process of analysis in this research was to:

1. Map and analyze primary texts (advertising, news, and audience comments) by identifying the discursive formation of subjects, technologies or strategies, discourse apparatus, and representation elements, meaning related, representative, and represented.
2. Analyze intertextual and interdiscursive relations in the text by identifying and interpreting issues relevant to each context.
3. Decontextualization took place along with intertextual connectedness, which generated a new context so that recontextualization of issues brought us to metatext.
4. Simultaneously, the deconstruction of meaning related to the topic/subject of discourse generated criticism through arguments that brought us to metadiscourse.
5. Hence, the politics of representation play between texts and discourses related to Lifebuoy's branded social campaign, either discourse of advertising, news, and audience comments.

3.3. Sample

The collected documents included nine online news articles from local media (published in NTT and vicinity) and eight articles from national media (published in Jakarta, Indonesia's capital city) and regional media (published in other areas outside of NTT, usually affiliated with national media), 98 comments from newsreaders and 303 comments from petition supporters. Meanwhile, two TV Commercials, i.e., a 90-second teaser version and a 30-second commercial, were downloaded from YouTube.

Table 1. *Sample description.*

Document types	Source	Criteria for inclusion	Criteria for exclusion	Sample
Advertisement	YouTube	Advertising content represents a branded social campaign, communicates program objectives, displays discourse on controversial issues, and is entirely consistent with the original from official sources.	It is not an advertisement, out of the context of the discourse, and the content has been modified.	2 versions
Local News Articles	Online local media	News content contains a discourse on the issue being studied.	Clickbait news (the content is different from the headline), inconsistent issues in one news text, fake media sources	9 articles
National News Articles	Online national media	News content contains a discourse on the issue being studied.	Clickbait news (the content is different from the headline), inconsistent issues in one news text, fake media sources.	6 articles
Other Regional News Articles	Other regional media	News content contains a discourse on the issue being studied.	Clickbait news (the content is different from the headline), inconsistent issues in one news text, fake media sources	2 articles
Blog Articles	Microsites and websites	Blogs from official micro- and websites with clear and traceable names of account owners or institutions.	Blogs with unclear and dubious identities	2 articles
Petition	Change.org	The content of the petition describes the issue comprehensively with clear objectives and is official, with the originator's identity being transparent and traceable.	The content needs to describe the issue thoroughly, and the goals and identity of the initiator need to be clarified.	1 petition text

Newsreaders Comments	Local, national, and other regional media	The content is related to the issue being studied, is consistent with the discourse of protest and rejection of the Lifebuoy advertisement, and provides insights related to the cultural, social, economic, and political context of NTT.	Irrelevant and significant comments, covert or overt promotional content of a product, and out-of-context	98 comments
Petition Comments	Change.org	The content is related to the issue being studied, is consistent with the discourse of protest and rejection of the Lifebuoy advertisement, and provides insights related to the cultural, social, economic, and political context of NTT.	Irrelevant and significant comments, covert or overt promotional content of a product, and out-of-context	303 comments

Source: Author's own work.

4. Results and Discussion

Data obtained from various document sources was analyzed through a coding process of selection (based on the relevance and significance of the issue), categorization (based on prominent discourse), validation (intertextually, both main text, subtext, and co-text), theorization (discussing it using theory relevant), and conclusions.

In the following session, this study presents three critical discourses to be discussed using Karatani's (2003) theory of representation and Schiappa's (2008) representational correctness: the politics of speaking, the power of prejudice, and the politics of protest.

4.1. The Politics and Problems of "Speaking"

The advertisement narrative protested by the people and government of NTT was mainly about Lifebuoy's representation of poverty. Chairman of Garda Bangsa [Nation Guardian] –a local youth organization in NTT, told Kompas.com in Kupang, "Most people of NTT feel disturbed by Lifebuoy ads that are aired on national televisions. We assessed the ad's content, not by the actual conditions. We dare to say that it was a form of exploitation of poverty for business and other certain interests" (Aruman, 2013; Astuti, 2013; Bere, 2013). The constructed subjects of the discourse are "ad content does not match the actual conditions" and "exploitation of poverty for business purposes."

This subject also arose when the governor of NTT, Frans Lebu Raya, expressed his disapproval of this ad, "Honestly, it is ok to help NTT people but do not exploit the poverty for the sake of the business" (Kelen, 2013). As also questioned by the director of WALHI (an environmental NGO) NTT, "is it true that all NTT children are in danger to die before their fifth birthday?" (Bere, 2013).

Wetangterah expressed a more palpable argument from Kupang, who spread a petition titled *Mari Kita Minta Lifebuoy Memperbaiki Iklan '5 Tahun Bisa Untuk NTT'* (Let Us Have Lifebuoy Fixing the Ad of 'Help a Child Reach 5 in NTT') through Change.org. It got 303 supporters and ultimately made Unilever stop the ad. Wetangterah invited the public to ask Lifebuoy to revise the ad, and Lifebuoy could still help children without offending NTT people. Two points were highlighted by Wetangterah (2013), who questioned the ad. The phrases "buy Lifebuoy soap so we can help children in NTT celebrating their fifth birthday" and "lack of understanding for clean living" were considered unethical because they generalized such a condition in NTT.

Various representation problems show that as a global company, Unilever seemed less 'sensitive' to the local community perspective. This problem was evident from Lifebuoy ads created using the lens of capitalism by generalizing the subject, only Bitobe village, to NTT province, which later caused protests. For Unilever, Bitobe was 'too small' and 'less known,' so using the province's name (NTT) would be more marketable because it was more widely known. It was also highlighted by R. Graal Taliawo, one of the responders at Change.org:

This ad reflects the mentality of "modern human beings" and how the capitalistic view perceives reality outside themselves. When particular human group practices do not reflect the reality of their lives, they consider the most appropriate and correct. If they do not fit the category formed, the group will be branded as backward, worse, and may not be civilized. Damn...! (Translated from the original comment posted in Wetangterah, 2013)

Karatani (2003) revealed *Darstellung* (speak about) the representation of discourse driven and controlled by economic class structure and a battle between classes as a 'law of history.' From this perspective, responses to the petition at Change.org implied that the ad dichotomized the capitalist class of "modern human beings" and the proletariat of "reality outside of themselves." That was the people of NTT who were represented through Lifebuoy's TV commercials. With the battle between classes behind discourse ideology that historically had occurred for a long time, it was no wonder when Lifebuoy's representation in advertising and social programs in Bitobe village became problematic and political.

The protests were also associated with who was the most eligible to represent the 'spokesperson' of poverty in NTT. The director of WALHI NTT questioned, "is Lifebuoy the one who makes us able to celebrate the 5th birthday? Is it only Lifebuoy who cares about NTT?" (Bere, 2013).

From this statement, Lifebuoy's role as a representative was questionable. The claim on social concern comes not only from Lifebuoy or Unilever but also from other parties. At the same time, Lifebuoy's advertising discourse 'Help a Child Reach 5 in NTT' is as if only Lifebuoy cared for NTT. Due to this WALHI protest, the implied message was that WALHI also cared for NTT, and they had the right to be published as a representative.

The operational representation agency in the form of an institution that serves as the representative system, according to (2013), is called *Vertretung* (speak for). This institution works to represent the represented. The institution here is sometimes institutional but also non-institutional in the form of social classes. The elite class or the middle class represents the voice of the lower class, as shown by how the middle class of capitalist bourgeois represented the working class and peasants in the era of the French Revolution because they could not represent (express) themselves (Karatani, 2003, p. 146). In the context of Lifebuoy brand communication through the health program advertising campaign 'Help a Child Reach 5 in NTT', the representative was Lifebuoy brand (Unilever), an elite class of capitalists. At the same time, the people of (Bitobe village) NTT were represented as a grass-root class. Of course, problematizing Lifebuoy as the representative means WALHI NTT, based in NTT, was considered more worthy of being the representative. In addition, the representation of Lifebuoy was considered loaded with business interests (Bere, 2013).

Even so, WALHI's claim as the middle class in NTT should be criticized too because, as pointed out

"A brand often communicates the value of something by showing the 'dark side' to raise the image of the organization or the company."

by Marx (in Karatani, 2003), the representative and the represented in this kind of representative system ('spokesperson') will permanently alienate each other. What alienates them? Of course, interests and agendas are always different. Thus, the interests of the Lifebuoy brand and the people of (Bitobe village) NTT alienated each other, and the interests of WALHI NTT and the people of (Bitobe village) NTT. Also, the interests of parties or other middle class who tried or had become the representative of people of (Bitobe village) NTT--as claimed by a reader below:



Gabriel Maumere

Senin, 2 Desember 2013 | 01:00 WIB

LIFEBUOY jangan jadi pahlawan kesiangan yang tidak bisa bedakan mana yang baik dan tidak baik. jauh sebelum anda sok [sosial](#) Masyarakat NTT sudah menikmati kerja keras MISI GEREJA KATOLIK DAN LEMBAGA asing yang membantu NTT secara ikhlas.

Gabriele Maumere

[Do not be a late hero, Lifebuoy. You cannot distinguish which one is good and which is terrible. Long before you become a social snob, NTT has already enjoyed the hard work of CATHOLIC CHURCH MISSION AND FOREIGN INSTITUTIONS, who helped NTT sincerely] (translated from the original comment posted at Kompas.com on December 2, 2013).

Although Gabriele Maumere, an NTT citizen, claimed that the "*Catholic Church and Foreign Institutions have helped NTT sincerely*," the representation of the Catholic Church remained problematic and political because it was not accessible from the interests and agenda playing behind such a representation. In other words, nothing is sincere. Let us map this contestation: Bitobe people's interest was the availability of clean water and an escape from poverty, the interest of the church was a religious missionary, WALHI's interest was the achievement of environmental conservation programs, Lifebuoy's interest was branding through social and health problem concern, Unilever's interest was profit and business sustainability of a multinational company. All these pieces of evidence showed the alienation between the representative and the represented, indicating a political opportunity for parties that became the 'spokesperson' for others.

4.2. The Power of Prejudice

Although Unilever claimed the representation of poverty through the aired ads was based on official data (Bere, 2013), it was undeniable that it could not be separated from the stereotypes attached to the society or region in eastern Indonesia, particularly NTT as an underdeveloped province (Lilijawa, 2012).

This stereotype was also reinforced by the Indonesian Welfare Minister, who revealed that five poor provinces were located in eastern Indonesia, namely Gorontalo, Papua, West Papua, NTT, and Maluku (Kertiyasa, 2011). The criteria for being undeveloped or poor are based on income per capita and access to health, education, facilities, and infrastructure. Meanwhile, information from the Indonesian Ministry of Villages, Development of Disadvantaged Regions and Transmigration showed 62 disadvantaged areas in Indonesia, most of which (89%) were located in eastern Indonesia, including 14 districts in NTT (Firman, 2020). Yuliawati's (2011) research that measured sociocultural dimensions in NTT also showed that education and health were flimsy compared to other factors such as social behavior, harmoniousness, social disease, family, and women empowerment. This phenomenon means the backwardness of education and health is the crucial indicator that supports the stigma about the backwardness of NTT people.

Stereotypes can grow from development paradigms that are constructed unfairly. In *Power and Visibility*, Escobar (1988) critiques mainstream development discourse for its reliance on power dynamics that marginalize certain groups and perpetuate unequal relations between the "First" and "Third World." Escobar saw how the representation of the "Third World" in development discourse often involves a process of "othering," where certain regions and peoples are depicted as backward or inferior. This representation serves to justify interventions by powerful actors from the "First World" and renders certain groups and regions invisible or marginalized within development discourse. Escobar emphasizes the importance of recognizing the agency and resistance of marginalized communities in shaping their development trajectories.

Meanwhile, Schiappa (2008), who referred to the gender lens of Sandra Lipsitz Bem in her theory of the Triad of Prejudice, proposed three categories of beliefs that often underlie the birth of stereotypes: identity beliefs, normative beliefs, and different beliefs. In addition, there are three types of prejudice: sexism, racism, and heterosexism. The stereotype of NTT and eastern Indonesia as poor and underdeveloped is more appropriate to represent the type of racism.

From the biological essentialism lens in identity beliefs, poverty in NTT is considered natural (even as a curse). In some traditional Indonesian narratives, poverty is often juxtaposed with a curse, blackish, and the lowest social class that tends to be marginalized. Coincidentally, the skin color of most NTT and eastern Indonesian people is dark, so this fact unconsciously reinforces the growth of racism and prejudice. This bias is reinforced by the perspective of the whiteness normative beliefs left by the colonial regime, so the colored (dark) nation was considered underdeveloped and low caste. The discourse of fairy tales is also a part of this colonial lens. Princesses of heaven, kings, princes, and the nobility are often described as clean and white, while commoners are dark and seedy.

Today, the media, through TV series, commercials, and movies in Indonesia, often 'support' this colonial prejudice by adoring beautiful and handsome white models who's mixed-race with Caucasian (commonly called 'indo') image (Murtono, 2010; Saraswati, 2010) as the privileged or the rich, but exhibit dark, shabby, and seedy characters as the evil or the poor. Saraswati (2012) found that Indonesian women also internalized whiteness discourse and created a "shameful" culture of having dark-toned skin. Different beliefs that use a racial polarization lens are undoubtedly a commodity for the media and brands to represent the reality of society. Lifebuoy, with an ad campaign 'Help a Child Reach 5 in NTT', was not separated from such beliefs because the media are often stuck in the stereotypical categorization (Schiappa, 2008) instead of representing the truth based on reality. Stereotypes tend to generalize and limit perception through both statistical figures and myths. Therefore, stereotyping and marginalizing are considered castrating the truth and plural reality in representing the truth. Ironically, the media tends to side with the stereotypes in their representation.

4.3. The Politics of Protest(ers)

The rapid protests against Lifebuoy's campaign ad forced Unilever to stop the ad (Febrida, 2013b). Unilever also apologized to the people of NTT (Prayitno, 2014). This fact showed that the brand would eventually have to 'give up on the voices of the people (consumers). The representative should refer to the truth according to the audience or the people it represents (Schiappa, 2008). Then, does it become 'pro' with the audience or the people of NTT, and the representation is automatically corrected? The audience or public is not singular and uniform. Which NTT people or audience should be 'entitled' to be represented? Those who actively expressed their ideas through social media and online news media? Or Bitobe villagers who were targeted by the health program from Lifebuoy?

By observing the growing counter-discourse through protests and public comments by NTT people and the government, we know that the emerged knowledge was not 'naive' and 'meaningless.' Power and politics also played in the issue, displaying political representation through 'who speaks for representational correctness.'

If examined closely, three audience organs (from the elite- middle classes) spoke up or tried to represent the lower-class communities in NTT. First was the formal organ of the NTT local government, the NTT governor

deplored the Lifebuoy ad and considered it was exploiting poverty in NTT. "It is as if the children in NTT could not celebrate their fifth birthday without Lifebuoy soap. Due to the ad, as a governor, I am offended," said the governor when attending reception week for new members of GMNI (Gerakan Mahasiswa Nasional Indonesia [Indonesian National Student Movement]) of Kupang Branch (108Jakarta, 2013; Kelen, 2013). Advertisement is a form of communication to deliver particular messages that are usually explored based on consumers' insights (Stidsen and Schutte, 1972; Wijaya, 2012). In social marketing and brand social responsibility, the cause-related marketing program communicated through advertising campaigns contributes to social change (Kotler and Zaltman, 1971; Olson, 2014) and inspires broader society to do good (Wijaya, 2011). Thus, Lifebuoy's health campaign should succeed because it helped the government's programs.

However, the statement 'as a governor, I am offended' indicated that there were bureaucratic, official, and relevant government institutions' offense related to the Lifebuoy campaign discourse. Although the governor gave reasons related to the exploitation of poverty, it is undeniable that the counter-discourse on the subject of "exploitation of poverty" exposed the governor's 'failure' in terms of the welfare of his people. A brand often communicates the value of something by showing the 'dark side' to raise the image of the organization or the company (Muhr and Rehn, 2014). The dark side of NTT's local government was the people's poverty and the government's failure. Without waiting for an assessment from the central government and the public, the issue raised significantly showed this failure through Lifebuoy's brand communication. The ad was regarded as a judgment; therefore, they must problematize the representation of poverty in the ad. This mode avoided circumvention of the judgment and the reality of the failure. Here is an exciting reflection expressed by a resident of NTT:

If we look at it, the face of NTT's poverty that appears to the public regardless of the good intentions of Lifebuoy Unilever in the ad is already a criticism. Not only for the NTT people but also for the government responsible for the development there. Even for each of us who disagree with the Lifebuoy ads. A bunch of questions then appear: What have we done for NTT? Where will the NTT development be directed? Moreover, what are the impacts on people's social lives? (Claretiano, 2013).

It was reasonable if 'the governor of NTT was offended' (Kelen, 2013). It might not be because of his people's exploited and commoditized poverty, but he was 'slapped' since his 'inability to deal with his people's welfare' was exposed. The opinion expressed by Claretiano, the citizen of NTT, is exciting and shows a productive reflection on the local government of NTT. The below comment shows a similar thing:



Christ Moy

Minggu, 1 Desember 2013 | 17:45 WIB

Saya pikir tidak perlulah seperti kebakaran jenggot menanggapi iklan Unilever ini, melainkan jadikanlah "A wake up call" untuk kita semua bahwa rekan sebangsa kita di Bagian Indonesia Timur seperti NTT hendaknya lebih mendapat perhatian dari pemerintah sehingga terciptalah Indonesia makmur merata.

Christ Moy

[I do not think it is necessary to be in a state of panic in responding to Unilever's ad, but take it as a 'wake-up call' that our fellow eastern Indonesians such as NTT should get paid more attention from the government so that we can create a prosperous Indonesia evenly] (translated from the original comment posted at Kompas.com on December 1, 2013).

Claretiano also highlighted another side of life in the province: the reciprocal reality of poverty: the life of the officials with all their luxurious facilities.

See, for example, many photos in the media and social networking during the last gubernatorial election campaign. They show the candidates doing "blusukan" (impromptu visits) to the slums and poor areas regarding political communication as if they are willing to be part of the suffering people. Poverty is used as "billboards, vehicles, and tools of political campaigns" to reap the people's votes. Nevertheless, after winning the political battle, those selected officials "forget" and no longer perform the impromptu visit as they did during the campaign. Surprisingly, as NTT people, we never complain when we see the reality of poverty made into a "political billboard" by our local politicians. The empowerment programs for the people seem to be 'behind the table and bureaucracy' (Claretiano, December 4, 2013).

Therefore, the protest by the NTT government, represented by the governor, was political. Instead of making the Lifebuoy ad as input, evaluation, and inspiration, the government refused. This bureaucracy mentality is the colonial legacy and the corrupt dictatorial regime, Orde Baru (New Order). In that era, the local governments (the subordinate) tended to cover up their weaknesses. They only reported their strengths and success to the central government (the boss), also known as 'ABS' (Asal Bapak Senang [as long as the boss is happy]). At the same time, the exploitation of people's poverty they criticized was a mode that was also applied by the local government, although in different forms. Tanjung (2007), as a former government official and Golkar politician (a ruling political party in the Orde Baru era), saw that the ABS culture that had become prevalent needed to develop a critical and corrective attitude. ABS culture also reduced the report data because there was a tendency for staff to follow the interest of the boss. Officials were more likely to be happy to see the "good" numbers and disliked finding out that the situation was still wrong (Boelaars, 2005). This mentality is often criticized because the "objective" information is required for leaders to develop the nation realistically.

The second audience was the semi-formal organ, i.e., the local media and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Although the mainstream/national media published news about protests by the NTT people, the local and non-mainstream media still dominated the portions and the frequency of publication. Lifebuoy ads were being protested primarily aired in the national media (mainstream). Economically, the ads have a significant effect on the survival of the media and, of course, generate income for the media owners. Therefore, the representation of the protests in the media was economically political.

In a different case with a similar context, Gual's (2013) research related to the political economy of local media in NTT found that local media affiliated with national media tended to survive more and could develop. Their commodification was more "professional," so it seemed reasonable despite the high dependency on capital owners. In contrast to the local media, whose existence was without capital support from any business groups, it tended to be less known. Journalism practice and their business were also far from the professional impression. Thus, they must find ways to be more exposed and survive in a tight media business competition.

From that research, we can understand why the local media became more provocative than the national media in reporting the counter-discourse of Lifebuoy's social campaign. On one side, this case could become a precious moment to increase media brand awareness through an 'alignments strategy' with the protesters, and also because the public tension was still high towards the case. On the other hand, local media could take advantage of such a situation to attract new customers. Potential in this direction could be seen from the tendency of audience opinions, either through news article commentaries or through petitions at change.org that aligned with the tone of local media voices.

It was similar to NGOs and community groups such as WALHI and Garda Bangsa NTT. Although Unilever had been cooperating with local NGOs (for example, CIS Timor) as a partner in executing the program (Liza, 2014), NGOs and community groups representing people of NTT who were actively protesting in the media were not included in the partnership. This fact implied that, first, economically, NGOs and community groups did not get a piece of the 'cake' of the operational program. Second, they were psychologically marginalized, so their ego of locality rose. It was mentioned several times by the chairman of Garda Bangsa stating that the "*majority of the*

people in NTT objects..." (Liza, 2013a; Astuti, 2013) to affirm the local representation as well as showing, with the statistical rationalization that they were 'the most accurate' in understanding the NTT society.

Similarly, WALHI repeatedly affirmed that "...the reality is not at all like what is portrayed" (Liza, 2013a; Astuti, 2013), implying self-affirmation as the knowledge authority related to the realities of local society in NTT. It might be different if the NGOs and community groups were involved in the program. This premise turns out the below reader's concern.



masTesla

Minggu, 1 Desember 2013 | 14:31 WIB

ada pihak2 yg sedang terzolimii dengan meminta dana lebih untuk CSR dengan dalih di-exploitasi. whatever they are, it makes this brand more famous. Thx's for ter-Zolim-i, you are one of the [stakeholder](#).

masTesla

[Some parties get hurt by requesting more CSR funds under the pretext of being exploited. Whatever they are, it makes this brand more famous. Thanks for getting hurt; you are one of the stakeholders] (translated from the original comment posted at Kompas.com on December 1, 2013).

Practically, NGOs in Indonesia receive funds from private parties, governments, or official institutions, be it a domestic or foreign party, for the operationalization of programs. Only a few NGOs get funded independently (Scanlon and Alawiyah, 2015). Hence, most NGOs in Indonesia rely on funding from aid. Scanlon and Alawiyah's (2015) research on NGOs in Indonesia, with the sampling of national and local NGOs (including the NGOs located in NTT), showed that local NGOs tend to struggle more in funding than national NGOs, which get more aid from foreign parties.

However, the private parties' role is good enough to fund 1-2 local NGOs through a partnership in a project, i.e., CSR Programs, aside from the aid from national-partnership NGOs. Therefore, local NGOs tend to rely on funding from companies, which makes us understand why the stigma, cynicism, and 'suspiciousness' arise from society to the local NGOs that were loud in protesting Unilever-branded social/health programs, as the comment from an audience displayed above.

Meanwhile, the last protesting audience was the non-formal organ, i.e., the general public. By observing the criticisms and comments from the people who represented NTT, either domiciled in or outside NTT, it could be seen that there were efforts to escape from repressing the stigma of NTT as a poor and underdeveloped province. It had been the satirical *plesetan* (a slip of the tongue) like "NTT-Nasib Tak Tentu [unsure fate]" and "NTT-Nusa Tetap Terbelakang [remains undeveloped island]" (Claretianno, 2013). For example, the effort to eliminate the stigma was by lamenting Lifebuoy ads about NTT.

Ayunia Permata Sari DENPASAR, INDONESIA

7 bulan lalu · Disukai 0

Saya juga orang NTT. Tujuan dari pihak Lifebouy memang mulia, tapi jangan mengeneralisir keadaan/kondisi di 1 daerah ke seluruh daerah lain juga. Tidak semua daerah di NTT seperti yang disebutkan dalam iklan tersebut.

Ayunia Permata Sari – Denpasar, Indonesia

[I am also from NTT. The purpose of Lifebuoy is indeed big-hearted, but please do not generalize an area to NTT as a province. Not all regions in NTT are as mentioned in the ad] (translated from the original comment posted at Change.org).

Donald Mangngi KUPANG, INDONESIA

7 bulan lalu · Disukai 0

Saya adalah warga NTT yg JUGA MERASA DILECEHKAN OLEH IKLAN ONI.

Kami bukan miskin. Kami sgt kaya. Kami mampu hidup d daersh kami yg blmntentu anda bisa. Dan KAMI BERSYUKUR UNTUK ITU. JADI STOP SOK KASIHAN PADS KAMI HANYA UNTUK KEPENTINGAN PRIOIT ANDA.

Donald Mangngi – Kupang, Indonesia

[I am a citizen of NTT who ALSO FEELS HARASSED BY THIS ADVERTISEMENT.

We are not poor; we are wealthy and can live in our area that you might not. Furthermore, WE ARE THANKFUL FOR IT. SO STOP PITYING US ONLY FOR YOUR INTEREST] (translated from the original comment posted at Change.org).

Thomas Benmetan SURABAYA, INDONESIA

7 bulan lalu · Disukai 0

Satu pesan saya : "Jangan pernah menggunakan kacamata Jawa untuk menilai orang NTT. Kami sudah cukup sejahtera dengan apa yang kami punya. jangan lebay!"

Thomas Benmetan – Surabaya, Indonesia

[One of my messages: 'Do not ever use the Javanese glasses to see NTT.' We have been relatively prosperous with what we have got. Do not be exaggerated!] (Translated from the original comment posted at Change.org)

El Tjandring INDONESIA

7 bulan lalu · Disukai 0

ketika iklan ini muncul di TV, orang-orang yang ada di samping aku bertanya. Apa benar NTT seperti ini? Saya jawab tidak sama sekali

El Tjandring – Indonesia

[When this ad first appeared on TV, people next to me asked, "Does it correct that NTT likes this? I answer not at all] (translated from the original comment posted at Change.org)

These statements also simultaneously indicated the efforts to construct the identity of NTT as a 'non-poor' or 'not entirely true that NTT is poor.' These identity politics were getting more vital to be voiced by NTT's intellectual communities, who were trying to question the criteria of poverty and the causes of poverty in NTT. For example, by linking poverty and intelligence: 'Is it because they are poor, then not intelligent?' Alternatively, 'because they are not smart, then they are poor?' (Lilijawa, 2012). In addition, the reality of the natural and cultural resources of NTT is always the discourse to avoid the stigma of NTT's poverty (Gunawan, 2013). The association of these identities made NTT people 'emasculated' by a split discourse. On the one hand, the province had natural and cultural richness, but on the other hand, they were mostly poor.

Thus, it could not be the reality of the Lifebuoy ad that became the object of protests by NTT people, but the reality of NTT people and elites themselves that became the object of protest. Moreover, the protester was (actually) a Lifebuoy ad.

5. Conclusions

People's protests against the representation of NTT poverty in the Lifebuoy health campaign through its ad entitled 'Help a Child Reach 5 in NTT' turn out to be not as simple as it seems on the surface of the text. On the one hand, Lifebuoy ad representation becomes problematic because *Darstellung* or 'speaking about' of the ad represents the eastern Indonesian prejudice that tends to be 'racial' by demonstrating the poverty and backwardness of the NTT people, as well as representing the ideology of the capitalist economy class. It is due to *Vertretung* or 'speaking for' about who has the right and proper to 'speak up' about poverty in NTT. Lifebuoy, as a product brand, certainly has an economic interest. However, the rest of the collected donations are given entirely to the program's target, i.e., the people of Bitobe village, NTT.

However, on the other hand, when this representative problem is voiced through public protests, then it becomes problematic when considering which NTT community is entitled to and deserves to be the representative. This problem is because every element of the protesting society and government also has interests, so the representation remains political and problematic. Local government representation is the representation of the subordinate to the superior who does not want their failure and shameful acts to be exposed or their image to be tarnished, especially if the central government knows these. The media and NGOs' representations are an economic representation intertwined with the ego of the locality. In contrast, the general public protest represents the identity struggle held hostage by the repressive reality of poverty and the illusion of natural and cultural richness.

Lifebuoy's brand communication through its social campaign 'Help a Child Reach 5 in NTT' seems to be present to 'wake up the sleeping tiger,' that is, interests and politics of various elements of people and government of NTT.

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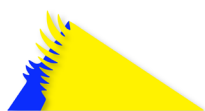
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