

Refill Station as a Strategy in Promoting Environmental Sustainability (Strategic Communication by The Body Shop Indonesia)

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ABSTRACT

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The development of the beauty industry is inseparable from environmental issues, as most of the waste in Indonesia comes from cosmetic product containers. Therefore, cosmetic companies need to respond to this problem in order to reduce the waste generated. However, action in maintaining environmental sustainability cannot be done by the company alone, it is necessary to involve consumers to get more significant results and environmental sustainability. This effort is done by The Body Shop Indonesia through the Refill Station program. Therefore, the researcher focuses on discussing The Body Shop Indonesia's environmental conservation promotion strategy by inviting participation from its consumers. Data was collected using qualitative methods and a case study approach to see how The Body Shop Indonesia conducts its programs. The results of this study show that collective action can be an innovative communication strategy to address environmental crisis issues. This is done by the company with an execution process that involves external stakeholders. In the end, it can be concluded that collective action can be an innovative environmental conservation promotion strategy in the present.

1. Introduction

Indonesia's beauty industry is growing. Referring to data released by international market and consumer data portal Statista in September 2023, Indonesia's beauty industry, which includes skincare and personal care products, is projected to experience market growth of 4.59% per year from 2023-2028. This is supported by an increase in the number of cosmetics industry players in the data from the Food and Drug Supervisory Agency (BPOM) which increased by 20.6% or a total of 913 business units in 2022 compared to 2021 which only amounted to 819 business units (Kompas.id, 2023).

The rapid growth of the beauty industry requires the production process of more and more beauty product *packaging*. The *packaging* is made of plastic which has the potential to become a waste pile. This makes the development of the beauty industry inseparable from environmental issues. Where Lyfe with Less research explains that 50% of waste in Indonesia consists of used beauty products such as cosmetics, *skincare*, and so on. This is supported by Zero Waste Week Research data which says 50% of plastic waste comes from cosmetic containers (Envira, 2023). The environmental issue itself is still a challenge in Indonesia, as can be seen in the data from the National Waste Management Information System (SIPSN) by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (KLHK), the amount of waste in 2022 reached 21.1 million tons from 202 regencies / cities in Indonesia (Kemenko PMK, 2023).

This situation is then responded by companies by showing their concern for environmental issues. One form of corporate response is by conducting CSR programs where companies try to integrate social and environmental issues in their business operations together with stakeholders. (GEC, 2001). CSR is a corporate responsibility program on social and environmental aspects. This is in line with the 3Ps, *profit-people-planet* in the concept of sustainable development (Elkington, 1994).

Based on this idea, CSR programs should support the realization of sustainable development principles. (Beal, 2013, p. 12). In the context of companies, the concept of *sustainability* means that companies no longer only focus on economic aspects but also have an interest in environmental and social issues. Based on this thinking, this research links the CSR programs carried out by The Body Shop Indonesia with the principles of sustainable development itself.

The principles of sustainable development should not only be realized through the company's CSR programs, but also in its communication practices. Therefore, this research focuses on how companies conduct strategic communication practices by considering the context of sustainable development. This means that a CSR project should clearly define from the beginning the purpose of the communication, for whom the information is intended, and how successful communication will benefit the beneficiaries of the CSR program (GTZ, 2006). This is what is called a communication strategy for sustainable development.

In order to discuss communication *strategies* for sustainable development, this research utilizes the principles formulated in the *Environmental Policy and Promotion of strategies for Sustainable Development* (GTZ, 2006). These principles have been used in various studies on community empowerment, environmental communication, and CSR. Research conducted by Ongare (2013) Ongare (2013) used these principles to examine environmental communication in the natural resource management process in Kenya. Then, research on CSR communication conducted by Abugre (2015) also used GTZ's ideas to discuss the tendency of companies to conduct CSR programs on health issues, donations, or education, but neglect CSR on ethical issues.

In this research, the company studied is The Body Shop Indonesia with a CSR program called Refill Station. *Refill Station* allows consumers to refill products by bringing bottles to the *store*. This aims to minimize the *packaging* of beauty products that are immediately thrown away by reusing packaging bottles. The Body Shop wants to make a sustainable lifestyle a new norm in society. Through the presence of The Body Shop Indonesia *Refill Station*, it is estimated that it can save 150 tons of plastic waste per year generated from the sale of beauty care products (Sabandar, 2021).

This research tries to analyze how The Body Shop Indonesia communicates the *Refill Station* program using the principles of communication strategy for sustainable development. The researcher also looks at how The Body Shop Indonesia communicates to the public about the concern for the environment, especially about the dangers of beauty product waste. In the end, this research is expected to contribute to the evaluation of CSR communication practices carried out by The Body Shop Indonesia.

2. Method

This research uses a type of qualitative research. Qualitative research aims to explain phenomena in depth through in-depth data collection (Kriyantono, 2008, p. 26). Qualitative research is an approach used to explore the meaning of reality by exploring data in depth. Through case studies or using various data sources to explain comprehensively about individual aspects, groups, a program, organization or event systematically (Kriyantono, 2008, p.234). Where in this study, researchers will comprehensively explain the sustainability communication strategy carried out by The Body Shop specifically through *Refill Station* products. This research will also not test hypotheses or theories, but rather describe the data findings found in the field. It is important to note that methods must be written in the same order in the results section. The order of writing methods must also be logical according to the type of research. The method for one type of research will be very different from other studies. For example, writing survey research methods is very different from laboratory test research methods that involve a lot of equipment and materials. The method section can be created with several separate subtitles such as materials, tools, and data collection procedures.

3. Result and Discussion

This research in extracting data seeks the application of 4 stages in strategic communication for sustainability development. The sources taken were those who served as policy makers at the national level at The Body Shop Indonesia. Overall, the researcher observed four stages experienced by The Body Shop Indonesia to succeed the refill station program.

Stage 1 is an assessment where the company should take a participatory approach to the problems and needs of the community. From these problems, the communication objectives to be achieved are determined. However, based on the interview with interviewee A, Body Shop did not approach the problem by involving community participation. The Refill Station program was created based on the initiative of the Body Shop management to overcome the waste problem in Indonesia.

Stage 2 is planning, which means that the company design strategies to achieve these goals by involving the participation of strategic groups. In this case, the refill station is designed by renewing the concept of a higher quality and hygienic station. As stated by informant A, the bottles are made from special quality materials so that they have a longer durability period and work with BPOM to ensure the quality of the refilled products. However, Body Shop did not involve the participation of community groups to design this program. To optimize the promotion of the refill station program, Body Shop chose to use Instagram and TikTok social media which are trending and widely used by the public. In addition, to support online promotion, e-corners are used in offline stores which are considered effective for highlighting program visualizations.

Stage 3 is message production where companies design promotional messages effectively and implement multi-media communication strategies to achieve greater opportunities. Based on the results of the interview with informant B, Body Shop utilizes content by using a storytelling approach to its audience. Through the storytelling, Body Shop invites consumers to "Let's Refill, Reuse, Repeat." In addition, there is a pre-campaign to attract audience curiosity about the launch of the refill station. This is supported by the statement of informant C who stated that to succeed the promotion on social media is supported by the selection of buzzers or key opinion leaders (KOL), namely Iqbaal Ramadhan. The selection of Iqbaal Ramadhan is because he is an idol of young people with high spirits so that he is able to "influence" to be more concerned about environmental issues.

Stage 4 is action & reflection, at this stage the company has entered strategy development, namely the implementation process in the field and evaluation of the program that has been running. At the store, each staff informs the consumers who come about the refill station. For approximately 3 years since the Refill Station was launched, this program has been quite successful. Interviewee C stated that the refill station program itself in 2023 managed to sell 19 thousand refill bottles. This is supported by the statements of informants A and C who see the refill station program has been running effectively seen by the commitment of consumers to take action to refill products in the store.

Sustainability communication is about understanding the relationship between humans and their environment and developing a critical awareness of the problems associated with that relationship and linking it to social values and norms (Godemann & Michelsen, 2011). The purpose of sustainability communication is not only to provide a clear understanding of sustainable development but also to involve people in the process of sustainable development and encourage active participation in it. In this research, the refill station is a communication strategy created by the Body Shop to address environmental issues.

Body Shop sees that waste is an environmental problem in Indonesia, considering that 50% of waste in Indonesia consists of used beauty products such as cosmetics, *skincare*, and so on (Envira, 2023). Therefore, Body Shop took the initiative to create the Refill Station program which prioritizes the refill concept so as to minimize cosmetic packaging waste that is thrown away.

However, this action should not be carried out by the Body Shop alone but also involve the community or related parties. In fact, the Body Shop management did the design of this program by themselves. When the company does not involve the community since the planning, it means that the community is only seen as an object or target subjected to the strategy. In this case, the community is placed as consumers who buy refill station products only.

Through the Refill Station, Body Shop is trying to deliver the experience to consumers that by purchasing aluminum bottles consumers can refill soap, shampoo, conditioner, and hand soap

products at affordable prices but get more content while reducing the accumulation of plastic waste. This creates a win-win solution situation where consumers get a more favorable product offering while the Body Shop gains sales and minimizes their use of single-use packaging.

The Body Shop's action to reduce cosmetic waste is a form of cause related marketing (CRM). This means that the company not only sells its products, but also donates part of the proceeds to help overcome or prevent certain problems (Kotler & Lee, 2005). In the Refill Station transaction, the company binds consumers' commitment to continue to refill when the product they have runs out, this is made clear by the invitation "Let's Refill, Reuse, Repeat." The Refill Station concept that prioritizes refill, reuse, repeat is in line with sustainable development itself to meet the needs of the present without sacrificing the needs of future generations.

In practice, the Body Shop itself has prioritized sustainable development. Companies are required to not only pursue profits but also pay attention to the surrounding conditions or what is referred to as the Tripple Bottom Line (TBL). The Tripple Bottom Line (TBL) includes the sustainability of profit (profit), the sustainability of society (people), and the sustainability of the environment (planet). It can be seen that through the refill station, it helps to reduce waste problems that have an impact on the environment (planet), the community gets education or knowledge sharing about good waste management (people), and the Body Shop benefits from product sales (profit).

4. Conclusion

Collective action can be an innovative communication strategy to address environmental crisis issues. Body Shop does this with an execution process that involves external stakeholders or the community through the refill station program. Through Refill Station, Body Shop invites people to be more aware of environmental issues, especially waste from the beauty products they consume. In fact, the community should have been involved from the beginning of the program design, which unfortunately was not done by Body Shop. In the end, it can be concluded that collective action can be an innovative promotional strategy for environmental conservation in the present.

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6. References

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