

**Eco-Critical Discourse Analysis of Social  
Media Products Description of Beauty  
Companies: A Case Study of the Body Shop**

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**Abstract:**

This study presents an Eco-Critical discourse analysis of Social media product descriptions in beauty Companies, focusing on The Body Shop as a case study. The aim is to examine how The Body Shop represents its products in terms of Eco-friendliness and sustainability on social media platforms and to critically analyze the underlying discourses and their environmental implications. The research employs a qualitative approach, drawing on eco-critical theory and discourse analysis. Additionally, the study investigates the alignment between the discourse presented in social media product descriptions and the company's actual practices regarding environmental sustainability. The findings reveal that The Body Shop utilizes various discursive techniques to construct an image of eco-friendliness and sustainability, including the use of natural imagery, appeals to ethical values, and claims of cruelty-free and environmentally responsible practices, and also used nature images for high ratings. They use ideologies according to the people's mindset and erase all the chemicals which use in their beauty products and show images that are very close to nature like the use of fruits and seeds from different countries. The research highlights the importance of critically examining the representations of eco-friendly claims made by beauty companies on social media and calls for more informed and critical consumer engagement.

**Keywords:** *ECDA, The Body Shop, Greenwashing, Social Media Advertisements, Beauty Products, Eco-Friendliness*

## INTRODUCTION

Eco linguistics shows how linguistic analysis can help reveal the stories we live by, open them up to question, and contribute to the search for new stories. The link between ecology and language is that how humans treat each other and the natural world is influenced by our thoughts, concepts, ideas, ideologies and worldviews, and these, in turn, are shaped through language. It is through language that economic systems are built, and when those systems are seen to lead to immense suffering and ecological destruction, it is through language that they are resisted and new forms of the economy brought into being. It is through language that consumerist identities are built and lives orientated towards accumulation, and it is through language that consumerism is resisted and people are inspired to ‘be more rather than have more’. It is through language that the natural world is mentally reduced to objects or resources to be conquered, and it is through language that people can be encouraged to respect and care for the systems that support life. In critiquing the damaging social and ecological effects of financial structures, Berardi (2012: 157) states that:

“Only an act of language can give us the ability to see and create a new human condition, where we now only see barbarianism and violence. Only an act of language escaping the technical automatism of financial capitalism will make possible the emergence of a new life form”.

Despite being a flourishing sector within the tourism industry, ecotourism is regarded as a rather nebulous concept. This is probably the reason why so many definitions of ecotourism have been offered (Fennell, 2001). Nevertheless, the literature does agree on some specific principles that all definitions of ecotourism incorporate: conservation of the natural environment, economic benefits for local communities and recreational, as well as environmental learning activities for visitors (e.g. Ceballos-Lascurain, cited in Boo, 1990; Ecotourism Society, 1991). Thus, eco-tourism tries to reconcile the two traditionally ‘competitive forces of environmentalism (eco-: conservation and environmental learning) and economy (-tourism: economic benefits and recreation).

In the relationship between the material and the symbolic (semiotic); and the textual and the ideological, Peeples (2015) describes the media as a social practice wherein language and signs (images) are deployed subjectively to refer to the “environment or the natural world”. In this light, the function of the media is considered to overlap with that of rhetoric, as both are persuasion-oriented. The texts and textual categories in the media that evoke the environment, in fact, serve as persuasive strategies to effect what Burk (as cited in Peeples (ibid) refers to as reflecting, deflecting or selecting a particular reality or belief. DeLuca 1999, p. 14) perceives language and signs that are ideological referents

as “mind bombs” that shape public opinion, and so, must be checked. In clear terms, the intentions of the ‘stories’ evoked by Stibbe (ibid) take to manifest in the discursive resources and the abusive ecological frames mushrooming from them. In Halliday’s (2001) seminal paper, “New Ways of Meaning”, he forebodes that there are victimizing and dominance-inspiring resources of grammar that coexist “to construe reality in a certain way; and it is a way that is no longer good for our health as a species”. (p. 103) “New ways of meaning”, in essence, underpins the use of novel discourse practices that legitimize inequalities between humans and other bio species. Grammatical constructions, Mühlhäusler (2003) adds, are some of the language habits that have exacerbated the contemporary ecological collapse. Deviant discourse practices that blur an agent(s) or doer(s) of environmental injustice are accused of acting in furtherance of the same act(s) committed by eco-aggressors. The language uses suchlike, in fact, telltale an attitude of domination, and thus, nonchalance towards the conservation and/or survival of the natural environment, thus anthropocentric.

### **Problem statement:**

This research deals with the problem of The Body Shop products how these products are described as natural description and what the adverse facts and ingredients used in these products. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by conducting an eco-critical discourse analysis of The Body Shop’s social media products description exploring the company’s claims of eco-friendliness and sustainability, and critically examining the underlying discourses and their environmental implications.

### **Purpose:**

The purpose of this study is to critically analyze the discourse used to represent or advertise beauty products on social media. This study looks into the adverse facts and ingredients used in these products.

### **Objectives:**

To critically analyze the extent of the greenwashing present in The Body Shop’s online products description.

To critically examine the use of eco-friendly terminology, claims about natural or organic ingredients, or environmentally responsible practices mentioned in the descriptions.

To examine the languages, metaphors, imagery, or narratives used to construct the relationship between beauty products, consumers, and the natural world.

### **Research Questions:**

How are nature and environment represented in The Body Shop’s product

description?

How do Body Shop's product descriptions engage consumers in environmentally responsible behaviours?

What kind of discursive strategies are used in The Body Shop's product description to promote a sustainable and environmentally friendly image?

**Limitation:**

This research is limited by the specific sample of social media product descriptions The Body Shop's Company was chosen for the analysis. Results may not be generalizable on all the beauty product companies but only The Body Shops due to low external validity.

**Delimitation:**

This research is limited due to the Title requirement. This research is only based on a single company The Body Shop.

**Significance:**

The Significance of Eco-critical discourse analysis of social media products' Description of beauty companies, such as The Body Shop, lies in its ability to critically examine the environmental implications and sustainability claims made by these companies. Eco-critical discourse analysis to analyze how language, communication, and marketing strategies shape environmental perception and practice. This analysis can reveal how these companies frame sustainability issues, how they construct consumer identity, and how they encourage certain environmental behaviours.

**Research framework:**

This research aimed to critically analyze the discourse used to represent and advertise beauty products on social media. This research was conducted by using the social media advertisement for beauty products of The Body Shop company. Data were taken from the description of beauty products of The Body Shop company. It will be analyzed by using the ECDA. It will be seen critically as an ecological factor contributing to or destroying ecological factors and all.

**Research type:**

There are three types of Research: Qualitative research, Quantitative research, and triangulation research. Qualitative research is used for this research. This research would be critically, evaluative. Qualitative research involves collecting and analyzing non-numerical data (e.g., text, video, or audio) to understand concepts, opinions, or experiences. It can be used to gather in-depth insights into a problem or generate new ideas for research. Qualitative research is the opposite of quantitative research, which involves collecting and analyzing numerical data for statistical analysis. Qualitative research is

commonly used in the humanities and social sciences, in subjects such as anthropology, sociology, education, health sciences, history, etc.

**Sample type:**

Data was collected from social media descriptions and advertisements about the beauty product of The Body Shop company.

**Sampling Techniques:**

Data was collected by non-random and through purposive sampling.

**Sampling criteria:**

Sampling criteria only of The Body Shop.

**Sample size:**

The size used for the research is 30 beauty products description of The Body Shop.

**Tool for data analysis:**

Model of Arran Stibbe used for data analysis.

**IDEOLOGY** What it is: a story about how the world was, is and should be, in the minds of members of a group What to look for: in discourses, i.e., characteristic language features used by members of a group.

**FRAMING** What is the: use of a source frame (a packet of knowledge) to structure a target domain? What to look for: Trigger words which bring a particular source frame to mind.

**METAPHOR** What it is: a type of framing where the source frame is from a concretely imaginable area of life that is distinctly different from the target domain. What to look for? Trigger words that bring the source frame to mind.

**EVALUATION** What it is: a story in people's minds about whether an area of life is good or bad What to look for: appraisal patterns, i.e., patterns of language which represent things positively or negatively.

**IDENTITY** What it is: a story in people's minds about what it means to be a particular kind of person.

**CONVICTION** What it is: A story in people's minds about whether a particular description is true, certain, uncertain, or false. What to look for: Facticity patterns, i.e., linguistic patterns that represent a description as true, uncertain or false.

**ERASURE** What it is: a story in people's minds that something is unimportant or unworthy of consideration. What to look for: Erasure patterns, i.e., patterns of language which erase or background something in texts.

**SALIENCE** What it is: a story that something is important or worthy of consideration What to look for: salience patterns, i.e., patterns of language

which foreground an area of life.

### **Data analysis and discussion:**

The tool used for data analysis is the Model of Arran Stubbe. The sample size is 30 beauty products described by The Body Shop. The analysis is given below:

The model of Arran Stubbe applies to the Social media products description.

### **Framing:**

The Body Shop Company always used organically related words and also used those types of words that are very close to nature. For example, if we see their beauty product description we can easily analyze that they used this cream is very enriched with babassu oil from Brazil and used the tree plant stem cell, pure community trade aloe from Campeche Mexico, enriched with Vitamin E, and Raspberry seed oil, enriched with Brazilian Guarana and Ethiopian green coffee and community trade Aleo vera from Mexico, enriched with natural lemon essential oil extracted from lemon peels, formulated with bamboo charcoal from the Himalayan foothills and trade tree oil from Kenya, Camomile extract from Norfolk, England. So through the framing of these nature-related words and the use of exact Countries' names, they manipulate the minds of the people very easily and are generalizable in all the descriptions of the products.

### **Metaphor:**

The Body Shop Company used many metaphors in their product descriptions. For example, Youthful-looking skin, Youthful bounce, skin looks fresher, rested and more radiant, skin feels recharged, Replenished, and softer, Indulgent texture, chamomile Sumptuous, nourishing night, creamy cleanser, silk soft clay texture, etc. They used these types of metaphors for their publicity.

### **Convictions:**

The Body Shop Company use very convincing words for their product description. For example, the velvety air-whipped and organic product, 100% vegan, help wash away bacteria and impurities, everyday use, charcoal purifying, vitamin E, and cleansing butter, suitable for all skin type, a luxurious way to remove every last trace of make-up while purifying, dermatologically tested, glow and boosting your skin, 96% ingredients of natural origin, etc. through all these convincing words they manipulate the customer's mind and rating their products.

### **Erasure:**

The Body Shop Company doesn't mention the chemicals which they use in their beauty products. Their descriptions contain only fruity and natural

related words like Strawberry, Oranges, and barriers. They always erase the chemical ingredients from their beauty cream descriptions. They always convey positive discourse in their descriptions.

### **Salience:**

The Body Shop Company always gives importance to nature as a mother-related word used for their descriptions. For example, memory texture, Bouncy, and hydrated skin highlight the strawberry word rather than the Body Gel, juicy oranges extract, Camu Camu berries, natural and organic soap-free body wash, strawberry seed oil, vegetarian, tested on man, not animals, lemon purifying, cleansing butter, etc. they give more importance these words rather than the products Names.

### **Evaluation:**

So, we evaluated that The Body Shop Company always positively represents its products. They always used Organic, fruity, and exact countries' names for publicity and high ratings. They never show the discursive side of beauty products and do not betray user trust by providing them with wrong information.

### **Identity:**

The Body Shop Company identifies its beauty products through the positive representation of nature and trading through differing countries. They claim that it used only organic and natural things added to its products and no use of any artificiality in its products. They didn't mention how they traded legally or illegally with the countries. They use very positive discourse in their descriptions such as the juicy oranges extract used for Vitamin C serum, Strawberry used in Body Gel, the lemon extract used in the face wash, charcoal extract used in Himalayas face wash, seeds of plants used in many products. Through this description, they engage their customers with their products.

### **Ideology:**

A wide variety of products now as in the past are promoted by association with a positive image of nature. The Body Shop Company used positive discourse in their beauty product descriptions. They don't even mention the chemicals in the ingredients they used in their products and how harmful they are to the skin. They used the exact countries' names like the seed from Brazil, seed oil from Kenya, community trading of aloe Vera from Mexico, and community trade of honey from Ethiopia and India. Through this ideology, they also remain very close to the environment and nature. So they highlighted all these Countries' names and fruity names in their descriptions. They developed their ideologies according to the customer's mindset because they know how

they can manipulate people's minds. Expectations of this are special products that are advertised as 'cures' for certain natural hazards, and which in the process might use a 'hostile' nature. They use the ideology of Greenwashing in which customers engage with the environment and natural images.

### **CONCLUSION**

The study might reveal instances of greenwashing, where beauty companies use environmental language and claim to present themselves as more sustainable and eco-friendly than they are. This could involve exaggerated or misleading statements about their products or practices. The analysis may find that social media product descriptions of beauty companies, like The Body Shop, emphasize the use of natural ingredients in their products. This could be seen as a positive step towards reducing the reliance on synthetic chemicals and promoting an eco-friendlier approach. So the conclusion of this study is to critically analyze the beauty products' descriptions and how they use discursive strategies in their products. They maintain their ideologies according to the people's mindset. They manipulate the customers through the use of eco-friendly images and fruity images.

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