

Selling Sustainability, Concealing Substance: Sustainability Glorification as a Discursive Strategy in Indonesia Digital Advertising

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Abstract. The proliferation of sustainability claims in digital advertising has intensified alongside Indonesia's growing green consumer market, yet such claims are increasingly mediated by algorithmic platforms that amplify visually compelling environmental narratives over substantive ecological practice. This study examines how Instagram and TikTok advertisements for Aqua and Scarlett Whitening construct what this research conceptualizes as sustainability glorification that discursive strategy that elevates environmental rhetoric through hyperbole, nature mythologization, and symbolic appropriation of environmental movements, while obscuring the gap between corporate claims and actual ecological impact. Unlike conventional greenwashing, which centers on explicit false claims, sustainability glorification operates through subtler mechanisms embedded within algorithm-driven content ecosystems that reward emotionally resonant, aesthetically curated green imagery over verifiable environmental accountability. Employing Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis across three dimensions; textual, discursive practice, and sociocultural practice; this research analyzes a corpus of 60 advertisements (30 from each brand) published between 2022 and 2024. Textual analysis identifies linguistic strategies (euphemism, modality, nominalization) and multimodal elements (color symbolism, nature imagery) that construct green authenticity. Discursive practice analysis examines production, platform-specific distribution patterns, and audience reception within algorithmic feed logics that prioritize virality over critical scrutiny. Sociocultural analysis situates findings within Indonesia's green capitalism context, revealing how platform algorithms inadvertently reinforce corporate sustainability narratives by privileging visually persuasive content. Comparative findings between a beverage brand (Aqua) and a beauty brand (Scarlett) reveal sector-specific glorification strategies, yet both demonstrate how algorithmic environments shape advertising discourse toward affective persuasion rather than substantive transparency. This research contributes a novel theoretical framework for understanding greenwashing in algorithmically-mediated communication ecosystems, offering critical insight for advertising regulation, platform accountability, and consumer media literacy in the context of digital sustainability marketing across Southeast Asia.

Keywords: sustainability glorification; green advertising; sustainable communication; advertising; green washing

1 Introduction

Global concern regarding environmental sustainability has intensified as governments, industries, and consumers confront climate change, biodiversity loss, resource depletion, waste accumulation, and plastic pollution. Sustainability has consequently shifted from a peripheral corporate social responsibility activity into a strategic organizational concern that influences competitiveness, legitimacy, stakeholder relationships, and long-term value creation. Companies are now expected not only to deliver quality products and financial performance but also to demonstrate credible environmental, social, and governance commitments through responsible operations and transparent communication. Sustainability communication has therefore become an important organizational practice because it allows companies to explain environmental priorities, report progress, and position themselves in relation to societal expectations. Golob et al. describe sustainability communication as a field concerned not merely with transmitting information but also with negotiating sustainability meanings among organizations, stakeholders, and society [1]. Its credibility, however, depends on whether communicated commitments can be connected to observable practices, measurable outcomes, and transparent disclosure [2,3].

Sustainability communication performs both informational and strategic functions. Informationally, it discloses environmental initiatives, product innovations, resource-management practices, and social contributions. Strategically, it can shape corporate identity, strengthen trust, reduce reputational risk, and differentiate products in competitive markets. This dual role is significant because consumers rarely have direct access to production processes, supply chains, material sourcing, emissions, or waste-management systems. Corporate communication thus becomes a major source through which audiences evaluate environmental responsibility. Agarwal et al. show that sustainability-related content can generate positive consumer responses, while also noting that audiences may remain skeptical when environmental claims are difficult to verify [2]. The resulting tension between reputational benefit and credibility has become a central issue in sustainability communication research [2,4].

Digital platforms have further transformed how sustainability messages are produced and consumed. Unlike annual reports or conventional advertising, social media enables organizations to communicate continuously through short-form videos, visual storytelling, hashtags, interactive campaigns, influencer endorsements, and user engagement. These affordances allow environmental narratives to become embedded in everyday digital consumption. Social media can enhance stakeholder engagement by increasing the visibility of corporate initiatives and enabling interactive communication [2,5]. Yuen et al. found that environmental content, calls to action, hashtags, emojis, and tangible representations of resources influence engagement with corporate posts [5]. Social media therefore does not simply distribute information; it shapes the form, emotional tone, visibility, and perceived credibility of sustainability messages.

Research also shows that social media actors, including brands, influencers, communities, and users, can influence sustainable consumption by circulating knowledge, norms, values, and recommendations [6]. Fang likewise demonstrates that green social media communication affects perceptions of green authenticity and green purchase decisions [4]. These findings suggest that social media can support environmental awareness and behavioral change when messages appear credible and consistent with organizational conduct. Conversely, the same platforms may intensify suspicion when companies exaggerate their contribution or rely excessively on symbolic environmental imagery. Social media is therefore a double-edged environment: it creates opportunities to publicize sustainability initiatives while simultaneously exposing them to scrutiny, comparison, and contestation [4–6].

At the same time, platform algorithms create incentives for simplified and highly symbolic communication. Content that captures attention, produces interaction, and can be consumed rapidly is more likely to circulate. Complex environmental issues are therefore often condensed into short narratives supported by memorable slogans, emotional storytelling, and recognizable symbols. Green landscapes, flowing water, leaves, botanical ingredients, recycled packaging, clean production spaces, and smiling communities may function as semiotic shortcuts that connect a brand with environmental responsibility. Such representations can be persuasive even when technical evidence, lifecycle assessments, supply-chain information, or independently verified indicators are absent. Sustainability communication may thus shift from explaining environmental performance to staging environmental identity, particularly on visually intensive platforms such as Instagram and TikTok [2,4,6].

These developments have intensified concern regarding greenwashing, broadly understood as communication that creates misleading impressions of organizational or product-level environmental responsibility. Contemporary research no longer limits greenwashing to explicitly false claims; it also examines selective disclosure, exaggerated benefits, vague terminology, symbolic corporate actions, and inconsistencies between communicated commitments and actual performance. Santos et al. show that greenwashing research increasingly addresses its consequences for consumers, brands, stakeholders, and organizational legitimacy [7]. Dorfleitner and Utz similarly define greenwashing through the discrepancy between apparent green performance and underlying environmental performance [8]. These perspectives indicate that misleading impressions may arise not only from fabrication but also from selective presentation that produces an incomplete or disproportionate image of sustainability.

The boundary between genuine communication and greenwashing is therefore difficult to determine. A company may accurately communicate a recycling initiative, conservation program, natural ingredient, or packaging innovation while magnifying its symbolic significance beyond the evidence provided. In this situation, the message is not necessarily false, yet it may encourage audiences to infer a wider level of environmental responsibility than the content substantiates. Fang demonstrates that consumer responses depend not only on exposure to environmental messages but also on whether those messages are interpreted as authentic or as greenwashing [4]. Recent

reviews likewise suggest that greenwashing may involve selective disclosure, organizational decoupling, vague environmental language, and image-oriented impression management [7,8]. Environmental communication can thus occupy a conceptual space between transparent disclosure and deliberate deception.

This unresolved space requires greater attention to the discursive and multimodal construction of environmental legitimacy. Analysis should move beyond asking whether individual claims are true or false and examine which environmental attributes are foregrounded, which impacts are backgrounded, how visual symbols expand the meaning of limited evidence, and how repetition normalizes particular corporate identities. Existing studies have established the role of social media in shaping consumer perceptions and stakeholder engagement [2,4–6], while greenwashing scholarship has identified the risks of selective disclosure and divergence between appearance and performance [7,8]. However, further conceptual development is needed to explain communication that draws on authentic but partial practices and amplifies them into generalized images of corporate sustainability. This gap provides the foundation for the concept of sustainability glorification developed in this study.

The Indonesian context offers a relevant setting for this investigation because digital transformation has substantially reshaped consumer-brand interaction. Instagram and TikTok have become important channels for marketing communication, encouraging companies in food and beverages, cosmetics, fashion, and consumer goods to integrate sustainability narratives into their branding. Themes such as recyclable packaging, reduced plastic use, natural ingredients, water conservation, and community empowerment increasingly appear in digital campaigns. Sustainability therefore functions not only as an environmental commitment but also as a persuasive branding resource through which companies seek legitimacy, reputation, and trust [2,4,6].

AQUA and Scarlett Whitening represent two contrasting approaches. AQUA emphasizes institutional sustainability through circular packaging, plastic collection, water stewardship, waste management, and broader corporate environmental programs. Scarlett Whitening more frequently highlights natural ingredients, botanical extracts, environmentally inspired aesthetics, and product-level narratives of naturalness. Although both brands communicate sustainability, they employ different linguistic strategies, visual resources, and persuasive mechanisms. Their comparison provides an opportunity to examine how environmental meanings are strategically produced across industries and platforms rather than assuming that sustainability communication follows a uniform pattern.

Three research gaps remain. First, many studies approach sustainability communication primarily through marketing or consumer-behavior outcomes such as purchase intention, trust, loyalty, and engagement [2,4,6]. This work is valuable, but it often treats communication as an independent variable rather than a social practice that actively constructs environmental meaning. Consequently, less attention has been given to the interaction of linguistic choices, visual symbolism, and platform conventions in producing perceptions of corporate responsibility. Second, greenwashing studies often rely on a binary distinction between truthful sustainability communication and deceptive claims [7,8]. This framework may oversimplify digital advertising, where

organizations frequently communicate genuine initiatives while emphasizing selected elements through persuasive language, visual symbolism, emotional narratives, and repetition. Such communication may broaden perceived environmental legitimacy even when individual claims remain factually accurate. The mechanisms through which authentic but partial information becomes disproportionately influential remain insufficiently explained. Third, relatively few studies integrate Critical Discourse Analysis, multimodal analysis, and communication theory within a single framework. Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis explains how language constructs ideology, power relations, and institutional legitimacy, while Kress and van Leeuwen's multimodal perspective examines how composition, color, framing, typography, gaze, and symbolic imagery interact with verbal language. Signaling Theory further explains how organizations use observable cues to reduce information asymmetry, while the Elaboration Likelihood Model distinguishes central processing based on substantive evidence from peripheral processing based on heuristics such as attractive visuals, emotion, familiarity, and repetition. Integrating these perspectives allows sustainability communication to be examined across message production, visual representation, strategic signaling, and audience processing.

Building on this framework, the study introduces Sustainability Glorification, defined as a strategic discursive process through which organizations selectively amplify authentic but partial sustainability attributes using linguistic, visual, and multimodal communication, encouraging audiences to construct broader perceptions of environmental responsibility than are directly supported by the evidence presented within individual communication artifacts. Unlike conventional greenwashing, the concept does not necessarily imply falsehood. Instead, it focuses on selective foregrounding, aesthetic enhancement, symbolic expansion, and repeated exposure. It therefore provides a more nuanced category for communication situated between comprehensive disclosure and deliberate deception.

Accordingly, this study examines how sustainability is discursively and multimodally constructed in Instagram and TikTok advertisements published by AQUA and Scarlett Whitening between 2022 and 2026. Specifically, it aims to identify the linguistic and visual strategies used to communicate sustainability; compare strategies across two brands and platforms; explain how sustainability cues operate through Signaling Theory and the Elaboration Likelihood Model; and develop Sustainability Glorification as a theoretical contribution extending discussion beyond the conventional dichotomy of authentic communication and greenwashing. By integrating discourse analysis, multimodal analysis, and communication theory in the Indonesian digital advertising context, the study offers a more comprehensive explanation of how environmental legitimacy is strategically constructed on social media.

2 Method

This study employed a qualitative-interpretive design to examine how *sustainability glorification* is constructed in the digital advertising of AQUA and Scarlett Whitening. The research corpus comprised 60 sustainability-related advertisements published on the brands' official Instagram and TikTok accounts between 2022 and 2026. The data were distributed equally between the two brands: 30 AQUA advertisements, consisting of 15 Instagram and 15 TikTok contents, and 30 Scarlett Whitening advertisements, consisting of 15 Instagram and 15 TikTok contents. Purposive sampling was applied to select content containing explicit or implicit claims related to environmental responsibility, recycling, natural ingredients, eco-friendly packaging, resource conservation, or sustainable production. Content focusing solely on prices, product launches, celebrity collaborations, or general promotions without sustainability-related claims was excluded.

The data were documented through screenshots and video archiving, accompanied by captions, hashtags, publication dates, audiovisual elements, and selected audience comments when relevant. Analysis was conducted using Fairclough's three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis, covering textual analysis, discursive practice, and social practice. At the textual level, the analysis examined lexical choices, modality, slogans, metaphors, environmental claims, and other forms of evaluative language. Discursive-practice analysis focused on how sustainability messages were produced, circulated, and adapted to the communicative characteristics of Instagram and TikTok. Social-practice analysis addressed corporate power, consumer-brand relations, green-capitalist ideology, and potential discrepancies between promotional claims and broader corporate practices.

Verbal analysis was integrated with Kress and van Leeuwen's multimodal framework to examine visual composition, color, salience, framing, environmental symbols, human representation, and audiovisual presentation. Signaling Theory was used to interpret certifications, natural imagery, recycling symbols, and environmental claims as credibility signals, while the Elaboration Likelihood Model differentiated substantive central-route arguments from peripheral cues such as aesthetics, influencers, repetition, and emotional appeal. Findings were subsequently compared across brands and platforms to identify dominant and contrasting strategies of sustainability glorification. The methodological design was adapted from the research proposal while updating the corpus period and platform distribution to reflect the final dataset.

3 Result and Discussion

3.1 Sustainability is Constructed Primarily Through Symbolic Rather Than Substantive Communication

Analysis of the sixty digital advertisements reveals that sustainability is predominantly communicated through symbolic representation rather than comprehensive evidence of environmental performance. Across the corpus, 38 advertisements (63.3%) relied primarily on peripheral persuasive cues, whereas only 12 advertisements (20.0%) presented sustainability messages supported by more substantive information. Furthermore, 45 advertisements (75.0%) provided only limited evidence for the environmental claims communicated within the content, while only 15 advertisements (25.0%) demonstrated operational activities, material innovations, or institutional programs that could partially substantiate their sustainability narratives. These findings indicate that sustainability communication on Instagram and TikTok is largely oriented toward constructing favorable environmental perceptions rather than providing comprehensive environmental disclosure, reflecting broader trends identified in recent sustainability communication research where visual storytelling frequently outweighs evidence-based reporting [2,4,7].

The predominance of symbolic communication suggests that sustainability has increasingly become a strategic branding resource rather than merely a mechanism for communicating organizational environmental performance. Previous studies have shown that social media platforms reward communication characterized by brevity, emotional engagement, visual attractiveness, and algorithmic visibility, encouraging organizations to simplify complex sustainability issues into easily recognizable symbolic narratives [2,6]. Consequently, environmental responsibility is often communicated through selected images, emotionally appealing language, and visually salient ecological symbols instead of comprehensive sustainability indicators such as lifecycle assessments, carbon emissions, supply-chain transparency, or independently verified environmental reports. This pattern supports recent arguments that digital sustainability communication has gradually shifted from performance-oriented disclosure toward perception-oriented branding, in which organizational legitimacy is increasingly constructed through communication practices rather than through exhaustive environmental reporting [1,2].

From the perspective of Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis, these findings demonstrate that discourse functions not simply as a reflection of organizational reality but as a mechanism through which corporate environmental legitimacy is socially constructed. Through repeated linguistic choices and multimodal representations, organizations selectively foreground particular sustainability attributes while backgrounding other environmental dimensions that remain absent from public communication. Such discursive selectivity contributes to what Fairclough describes as the naturalization of ideological meanings, whereby repeated representations gradually become accepted as common-sense understandings of organizational identity. In the present study, sustainability is repeatedly framed as an inherent organizational characteristic rather than a multidimensional process requiring continuous evaluation,

transparency, and accountability. This finding is consistent with recent discourse-oriented sustainability studies arguing that corporate environmental narratives increasingly function to construct legitimacy through strategic framing rather than through comprehensive environmental accountability [7,8].

Although both brands communicated sustainability, they employed markedly different discursive strategies. AQUA primarily grounded its sustainability discourse in institutional and operational narratives, including recycling initiatives, circular packaging systems, water conservation, waste management, and community-based environmental programs. Several advertisements referred to identifiable recycling facilities, collection systems, recycled PET packaging, and conservation activities, thereby providing relatively stronger credibility signals than many previous studies have reported for sustainability advertising [2]. Nevertheless, these operational narratives remained highly selective because they predominantly highlighted successful environmental initiatives without simultaneously presenting broader indicators of corporate environmental performance such as total plastic recovery rates, carbon reduction achievements, lifecycle assessments, or independent environmental audits. This selective visibility illustrates how organizations can communicate authentic sustainability initiatives while simultaneously emphasizing only those dimensions that reinforce favorable organizational identity.

In contrast, Scarlett Whitening predominantly constructed sustainability through representations of naturalness rather than institutional environmental management. Botanical ingredients including mugwort, aloe vera, citrus extracts, and herbal formulations appeared consistently across verbal descriptions, visual imagery, and influencer testimonials, functioning as symbolic indicators of environmental responsibility. Rather than discussing sourcing practices, manufacturing emissions, packaging systems, or environmental certifications, the advertisements associated product quality with ecological values through recurring representations of plants, natural colors, and ingredient authenticity. Similar observations have been reported by Fang [4], who demonstrated that consumers frequently associate natural ingredients with broader environmental responsibility even when explicit sustainability evidence is limited. This phenomenon illustrates how ingredient-based communication can extend beyond product functionality and become a persuasive mechanism for constructing environmentally responsible brand identities.

These contrasting strategies can be further interpreted through Signaling Theory, which proposes that organizations communicate observable signals to reduce information asymmetry between producers and consumers. In digital advertising, however, signals differ substantially in evidential strength. AQUA primarily employed operational signals, including recycling infrastructure, circular packaging, conservation activities, and institutional sustainability programs. These signals generally require relatively greater organizational investment and therefore possess higher perceived credibility. Scarlett, by comparison, relied predominantly on symbolic signals, including botanical ingredients, environmentally themed aesthetics, influencer credibility, and visually appealing representations of naturalness. Although symbolic signals may effectively influence consumer evaluations, they generally require

considerably less objective verification and are therefore more susceptible to selective amplification [8]. Recent sustainability communication research likewise emphasizes that consumers increasingly rely on symbolic environmental cues because direct verification of organizational sustainability practices remains difficult within digital consumption environments [2,4].

The predominance of symbolic communication is also consistent with the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM). Instagram and TikTok are characterized by rapid information flow, limited attention spans, algorithmically curated content, and highly visual interfaces that encourage heuristic rather than systematic information processing. Under these conditions, audiences frequently evaluate environmental communication through peripheral cues, including green color palettes, natural landscapes, attractive product design, influencer endorsement, emotionally positive narratives, and repeated sustainability vocabulary, rather than critically examining detailed environmental evidence [13]. The present findings, in which nearly two-thirds of advertisements relied primarily on peripheral persuasive strategies, strongly support this interpretation. Similar conclusions have been reported in recent studies demonstrating that sustainability communication on social media achieves persuasive effectiveness largely through emotional engagement, visual symbolism, and perceived authenticity rather than through detailed environmental disclosure [2,5,6].

Importantly, these findings do not necessarily indicate that the advertisements constitute conventional **greenwashing**. Instead, they suggest a more nuanced communicative mechanism in which authentic environmental attributes are selectively amplified into broader representations of corporate sustainability. Both AQUA and Scarlett communicated sustainability using factual organizational or product-related attributes; however, these attributes frequently represented only limited aspects of broader environmental performance. Recent conceptual discussions distinguish this type of selective amplification from overt greenwashing by emphasizing that organizations may communicate truthful information while simultaneously encouraging audiences to infer levels of environmental responsibility that exceed the evidence directly presented [7,8]. Accordingly, the findings support the argument that **Sustainability Glorification** operates as a discursive strategy through which authentic yet partial sustainability attributes are strategically foregrounded, aesthetically enhanced, and repeatedly communicated until they become representative of broader corporate environmental legitimacy. Rather than relying upon factual deception, sustainability glorification derives its persuasive strength from selective visibility, multimodal reinforcement, and symbolic amplification, thereby occupying an intermediate conceptual position between transparent sustainability communication and conventional greenwashing.

3.2 Platform-Specific Sustainability Glorification: Instagram versus TikTok

The comparative analysis demonstrates that sustainability glorification is not constructed uniformly across digital platforms. Instead, Instagram and TikTok possess distinct communicative affordances that shape how environmental narratives are

produced, circulated, and interpreted. Although both platforms were used to distribute sustainability-related messages, Instagram primarily functioned as a space for institutional branding and curated visual storytelling, whereas TikTok emphasized personalized communication, entertainment, practical demonstration, and repetitive behavioral persuasion. This finding indicates that sustainability communication cannot be separated from the technological and cultural characteristics of the platform through which it is delivered. Rather than merely serving as neutral distribution channels, social media platforms actively influence the form, visibility, rhythm, and persuasive orientation of environmental messages. Recent comparative research similarly shows that green advertising effectiveness varies between Instagram and TikTok because each platform encourages different levels of abstraction, message presentation, and audience interpretation [14].

Instagram advertisements generally presented sustainability through carefully curated visual compositions accompanied by concise textual narratives. Both AQUA and Scarlett employed high-quality photography, harmonious color palettes, balanced layouts, and professionally arranged product or campaign imagery to reinforce their respective environmental identities. AQUA predominantly highlighted recycling initiatives, water conservation programs, circular packaging, and community-based environmental activities through institutional imagery and professionally designed campaign materials. In contrast, Scarlett relied heavily on botanical symbolism, visually clean product arrangements, natural color schemes, and celebrity or influencer endorsement to associate skincare products with natural and environmentally responsible lifestyles. These findings are consistent with recent studies showing that social media-based green communication frequently influences consumer perception through the combined effects of visual presentation, brand image, perceived authenticity, and environmental symbolism [4,15].

From the perspective of Kress and van Leeuwen's multimodal framework [11], these Instagram strategies illustrate the operation of compositional meaning, in which salience, framing, color, spatial arrangement, and information value guide audiences toward preferred interpretations. Environmental elements were not placed randomly within the advertisements; they were foregrounded as visually dominant resources capable of organizing the overall meaning of the content. Green vegetation, flowing water, recyclable packaging, leaves, botanical ingredients, and minimalist product displays repeatedly occupied salient positions, encouraging viewers to interpret sustainability almost intuitively. The persuasive function of these elements did not necessarily depend on extensive factual explanation. Instead, their repetition and visual prominence produced immediate associations between the advertised brand and ecological responsibility. Recent green-advertising research similarly demonstrates that sustainability-oriented visual and branding cues play a significant role in shaping consumer attitudes and perceptions, particularly where audiences encounter environmental claims in brief and commercially oriented digital content [4,15].

This pattern suggests that Instagram facilitates sustainability glorification through aesthetic institutionalization. Environmental responsibility is transformed into a stable visual identity through polished imagery, stylistic consistency, and controlled

brand presentation. In AQUA's advertisements, institutional programs appeared credible partly because they were represented through organized campaign documentation, infrastructure imagery, and corporate visual language. In Scarlett's content, botanical naturalness gained credibility through aesthetically coherent representations of plants, ingredients, product packaging, and attractive endorsers. In both cases, visual professionalism contributed to the perceived legitimacy of the environmental message. However, polished visual presentation may also reduce the audience's motivation to question whether the environmental symbols displayed are representative of wider organizational performance. Sustainability therefore becomes credible not exclusively because it is substantiated by detailed evidence, but because it is presented through an aesthetically coherent and recognizable environmental identity.

TikTok demonstrated substantially different communication dynamics. Sustainability narratives were embedded within short-form videos characterized by conversational language, demonstrations, humor, testimonials, background music, creator-oriented storytelling, and rapidly changing visual sequences. Rather than presenting environmental responsibility primarily as formal corporate information, TikTok translated sustainability into accessible and entertaining everyday narratives. Research on environmental discourse on TikTok similarly shows that the platform accommodates diverse actors and message formats, while its short-video structure encourages environmental issues to be communicated through accessible, personalized, and engagement-oriented content [16,17]. These characteristics make TikTok particularly effective for translating abstract sustainability concerns into familiar practices, but they may also simplify complex environmental issues by prioritizing immediacy and engagement over contextual explanation.

For Scarlett Whitening, TikTok sustainability communication relied extensively on skincare tutorials, ingredient demonstrations, product experiences, and influencer-generated testimonials. The repeated presentation of mugwort, aloe vera, citrus extracts, and herbal formulations transformed botanical ingredients into heuristic indicators of environmental responsibility. Viewers were invited to understand the products through visible textures, application processes, personal reactions, and claims regarding ingredient benefits rather than through detailed explanations of sourcing systems, manufacturing impacts, packaging disposal, or lifecycle sustainability. The communicative emphasis consequently shifted from environmental performance to experiential authenticity. Because TikTok creators often present products through informal, interpersonal, and apparently spontaneous communication, their narratives may be perceived as more relatable than conventional corporate advertising. Nevertheless, this relatability can also transfer personal credibility to environmental meanings that remain only partially substantiated. Recent research confirms that TikTok has become a commercially saturated environment in which influencer narratives, entertainment, and advertising are increasingly integrated, making distinctions between interpersonal recommendation and strategic promotion less visible to audiences [18].

AQUA similarly adapted its sustainability communication to TikTok's participatory and behavior-oriented culture. Rather than relying exclusively on formal

explanations of corporate environmental programs, TikTok content foregrounded reusable gallon systems, recycling behavior, waste separation, and everyday consumption practices through demonstrations and lifestyle-oriented narratives. This approach positioned environmental responsibility as an activity that individual consumers could perform through simple and recognizable daily choices. Compared with Instagram's institutional framing, TikTok therefore shifted part of the responsibility for sustainability from the corporation toward the consumer. Audiences were encouraged to interpret responsible consumption, reuse, and recycling as achievable personal behaviors connected to brand participation. Social media research has shown that digital contact can support sustainable lifestyle adoption by circulating practical knowledge, facilitating value co-creation, and encouraging users to participate in environmentally framed activities [19]. However, such behavioral framing may also narrow sustainability to individual consumption choices while giving less attention to structural issues such as production volume, industrial waste, supply-chain impacts, or extended producer responsibility.

From the perspective of the **Elaboration Likelihood Model**, the findings indicate that TikTok overwhelmingly favors peripheral-route persuasion. The platform's short video duration, rapid content succession, algorithmic recommendation, background music, creator familiarity, emotional expression, and entertainment-oriented storytelling limit opportunities for systematic evaluation while increasing dependence on heuristic cues. Under these conditions, consumers are likely to assess sustainability messages through source attractiveness, perceived authenticity, emotional engagement, visual pleasure, familiarity, and repeated exposure rather than through comprehensive environmental evidence [13]. The prominence of tutorials, testimonials, demonstrations, and botanical imagery in the examined TikTok content supports this interpretation. Studies of green communication on TikTok similarly demonstrate that green brand image, social influence, and platform-mediated interaction can shape environmentally oriented attitudes and behavioral responses [20].

Repetition is especially important in understanding TikTok-based sustainability glorification. Algorithmic exposure allows similar ingredients, environmental phrases, product demonstrations, and behavioral messages to appear repeatedly across different videos and creators. Even when each individual advertisement provides limited substantive evidence, accumulated exposure can strengthen familiarity and make the associated environmental meaning appear increasingly credible. In this process, sustainability is not established through one comprehensive argument but through numerous fragmented encounters that reproduce similar symbolic associations. Botanical ingredients gradually become synonymous with environmental naturalness, while reusable packaging and recycling demonstrations become associated with institutional responsibility. This mechanism extends ELM-based interpretation by showing that peripheral persuasion operates not only through isolated cues but also through the cumulative normalization of those cues across repeated platform exposure.

Instagram, although also relying substantially on peripheral persuasion, provided relatively greater opportunities for central-route processing. Institutional

campaign descriptions, quantified achievements, recycling programs, material innovations, and structured informational graphics occasionally supplied audiences with arguments that could be evaluated more carefully. AQUA's references to recycling systems, recycled packaging, conservation activities, and organizational partnerships provided stronger evidential cues than the ingredient-focused and lifestyle-oriented narratives frequently observed elsewhere in the corpus. Such content potentially allows motivated audiences to assess the relevance and credibility of environmental initiatives rather than relying solely on aesthetic impressions. Nevertheless, these central cues remained selective. They frequently highlighted isolated environmental achievements without presenting comprehensive data concerning total organizational impacts, progress against environmental targets, independent verification, or unresolved ecological challenges. Central-route information was therefore present, but it remained embedded within strategically curated corporate narratives.

This distinction is consistent with recent comparative evidence indicating that sustainability advertising performs differently across Instagram and TikTok. Pittman et al. found that relatively abstract, high-level sustainability messages were better suited to Instagram, whereas more concrete and immediately actionable messages were better aligned with TikTok [14]. The present study provides a complementary discursive explanation for this difference. Instagram supports the construction of broad institutional identity through curated imagery and abstract environmental legitimacy, while TikTok translates sustainability into concrete demonstrations, relatable experiences, and simplified behavioral narratives. However, concreteness should not automatically be interpreted as substantiveness. A TikTok demonstration may be practically understandable while still providing little evidence of broader corporate environmental performance. Likewise, an Instagram campaign may appear institutionally authoritative while selectively foregrounding favorable achievements.

The platform comparison therefore demonstrates that sustainability glorification is platform-sensitive. Organizations do not simply reproduce identical environmental messages across digital media; they adapt sustainability discourse to the dominant affordances, audience expectations, and persuasive conventions of each platform. Instagram facilitates environmental legitimacy through visual professionalism, aesthetic coherence, and curated institutional identity. TikTok amplifies sustainability narratives through entertainment, interpersonal credibility, practical demonstration, and algorithmically reinforced repetition. These differences influence not only the form of message delivery but also the cognitive mechanisms through which audiences construct perceptions of corporate environmental responsibility.

More importantly, the findings show that platform adaptation changes the mechanism of glorification without changing its underlying function. On Instagram, glorification operates by transforming selected sustainability initiatives into visually coherent representations of institutional credibility. On TikTok, it operates by embedding partial environmental attributes within relatable experiences, creator narratives, and repeated behavioral cues. Both mechanisms encourage audiences to extend limited evidence into broader judgments of organizational responsibility.

Accordingly, social media platforms should be understood not merely as channels through which sustainability glorification is transmitted, but as constitutive environments that shape how selective environmental meanings become persuasive, recognizable, and normalized.

3.3 Contrasting Discursive Strategies: Institutional Sustainability versus Ingredient-Based Naturalness

The comparative analysis further reveals two distinct discursive models through which sustainability glorification is constructed by AQUA and Scarlett Whitening. Although both organizations communicate environmental responsibility, they rely on fundamentally different semiotic resources that reflect differences in industrial sector, product characteristics, corporate positioning, and branding objectives. Rather than employing identical environmental narratives, each brand strategically selects particular sustainability attributes that are most compatible with its organizational identity. This finding reinforces previous sustainability communication research suggesting that environmental narratives are rarely universal but are instead adapted to industry-specific expectations, consumer values, and organizational legitimacy strategies [1,2,7].

AQUA primarily constructs sustainability through institutional legitimacy. Across both Instagram and TikTok, environmental responsibility is represented through operational programs such as recycling initiatives, circular packaging systems, waste management, watershed conservation, and community-based environmental campaigns. Lexical expressions including *recycling*, *circularity*, *100% recycled plastic*, *water conservation*, and *waste management* consistently position environmental responsibility as an institutional capability supported by technological innovation and long-term corporate commitment. Unlike product-oriented sustainability narratives, AQUA's communication portrays environmental responsibility as embedded within organizational governance and operational infrastructure. Such institutional framing corresponds with recent sustainability communication literature, which argues that corporations increasingly employ ESG-oriented narratives to strengthen organizational legitimacy and demonstrate long-term environmental accountability to stakeholders [2,7].

From the perspective of Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis, this communication strategy extends beyond merely describing environmental activities. Rather, it constructs a particular ideological representation of corporate authority. Environmental challenges are discursively framed as issues that can be addressed through technological innovation, recycling infrastructure, institutional collaboration, and corporate leadership. Consequently, sustainability becomes represented primarily as an organizational achievement rather than as a complex socio-environmental issue involving governments, consumers, supply chains, and broader systems of production and consumption. Such discursive positioning reproduces organizational legitimacy by foregrounding corporate solutions while simultaneously backgrounding structural

debates concerning plastic dependency, overconsumption, resource extraction, or extended producer responsibility. Similar observations have been reported in recent studies demonstrating that corporate sustainability discourse frequently emphasizes organizational success stories while reducing the visibility of broader environmental complexity [7,8].

The present findings therefore illustrate an important mechanism of discursive selectivity. AQUA does not fabricate environmental information; rather, it selectively foregrounds environmental programs that are visible, measurable, and communicatively advantageous. Recycling initiatives, recycled packaging, conservation campaigns, and community engagement become highly salient representations of sustainability, whereas broader indicators such as total lifecycle emissions, plastic production volume, carbon neutrality targets, or independent environmental assessments receive comparatively little communicative attention. This selective visibility reflects what recent greenwashing literature describes as selective disclosure, in which organizations emphasize favorable environmental information without necessarily providing a balanced representation of overall environmental performance [7]. However, unlike conventional greenwashing, the observed communication remains grounded in authentic organizational initiatives, suggesting that selective amplification may operate independently of factual deception.

Scarlett Whitening constructs sustainability through a markedly different discourse centered on ingredient-based naturalness. Across Instagram and TikTok, botanical extracts, herbal terminology, natural color palettes, influencer testimonials, and product aesthetics consistently dominate both verbal and visual communication. Sustainability is therefore represented not through organizational environmental management but through characteristics associated with product ingredients. Botanical components such as mugwort, aloe vera, citrus extracts, and herbal formulations repeatedly function as environmental signifiers that encourage audiences to associate skincare effectiveness with ecological responsibility. Similar tendencies have been documented in recent studies of green cosmetic marketing, which show that consumers frequently interpret botanical ingredients as indicators of environmental friendliness despite limited evidence regarding sourcing systems, manufacturing impacts, or product lifecycle sustainability [4,15].

This communication strategy exemplifies what may be described as the ingredient halo effect. In consumer psychology, halo effects occur when one favorable attribute influences evaluations of unrelated characteristics. Within the present findings, ingredient naturalness extends beyond perceptions of product quality and becomes associated with broader environmental responsibility. Botanical imagery, natural terminology, and aesthetically "green" product presentation encourage consumers to infer that environmentally friendly ingredients necessarily reflect environmentally responsible organizational practices. Such inferences may emerge despite the absence of detailed information regarding agricultural sourcing, biodiversity impacts, production emissions, packaging sustainability, or waste management

systems. Consequently, natural ingredients operate simultaneously as functional product attributes and symbolic environmental resources.

The ingredient halo effect can be further interpreted through Signaling Theory. Because consumers generally cannot observe manufacturing processes or independently verify sustainability claims, they rely on observable communicative cues that reduce information asymmetry between organizations and audiences [12]. In AQUA's communication, these cues primarily take the form of operational signals, including recycling facilities, environmental programs, and circular packaging innovations. Scarlett, by comparison, relies predominantly on symbolic signals generated through botanical ingredients, visual aesthetics, influencer credibility, and narratives of natural authenticity. Although symbolic signals may require lower organizational investment than operational sustainability initiatives, they remain highly effective because they simplify complex environmental evaluations into recognizable and emotionally meaningful cues. Recent sustainability communication studies similarly argue that consumers increasingly depend upon symbolic environmental signals when evaluating corporate sustainability within digital media environments characterized by limited information and rapid decision making [2,4].

Interestingly, despite employing contrasting communicative resources, both brands ultimately converge in producing the same discursive outcome. AQUA amplifies selected institutional achievements into broader representations of corporate environmental leadership, whereas Scarlett amplifies ingredient naturalness into generalized representations of environmentally responsible branding. In both cases, relatively limited sustainability attributes become representative of comprehensive organizational identity. This convergence suggests that sustainability glorification is not determined by the specific environmental attribute being communicated but by the communicative process through which selected attributes acquire disproportionately broad symbolic meaning. Accordingly, glorification should be understood as a mechanism of discursive expansion, whereby authentic sustainability elements gradually become generalized indicators of organizational environmental legitimacy.

This finding extends recent discussions concerning the continuum between sustainability communication and greenwashing. Contemporary scholarship increasingly recognizes that organizational environmental communication cannot always be categorized simply as truthful disclosure or deliberate deception [7,8]. Instead, many organizations communicate authentic sustainability initiatives while strategically emphasizing only those aspects that reinforce favorable public perception. The present findings contribute empirical support to this emerging perspective by demonstrating that selective amplification operates through different discursive pathways depending on industry context. Beverage brands may rely primarily on institutional sustainability, whereas cosmetic brands may privilege ingredient naturalness; nevertheless, both approaches produce comparable effects by encouraging audiences to construct holistic perceptions of environmental responsibility from relatively partial organizational evidence.

Multimodal analysis further demonstrates that these discursive strategies are reinforced through coordinated visual representation. AQUA repeatedly integrates images of recycling activities, water resources, environmental infrastructure, and community participation with institutional sustainability language, thereby aligning visual and verbal discourse into a coherent representation of environmental stewardship. Scarlett similarly combines botanical imagery, green packaging, natural textures, minimalist composition, and influencer demonstrations to strengthen the symbolic association between natural ingredients and ecological responsibility. According to Kress and van Leeuwen [11], meaning emerges through the interaction of multiple semiotic resources rather than through written language alone. The present findings support this proposition by showing that visual communication substantially enhances the persuasive capacity of verbal sustainability narratives. Consequently, sustainability glorification should be understood as a fundamentally multimodal phenomenon, in which linguistic discourse, imagery, aesthetic design, and symbolic representation operate simultaneously to construct organizational legitimacy.

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that sustainability glorification is not reducible to misinformation or deceptive environmental communication. Instead, it operates through discursive amplification, whereby authentic yet partial sustainability attributes are strategically foregrounded while broader environmental dimensions remain outside the communicative frame. This mechanism enables organizations to construct environmentally responsible identities without necessarily making objectively false statements. Compared with conventional greenwashing, which emphasizes factual inaccuracy or deception, sustainability glorification emphasizes selective visibility, symbolic reinforcement, and multimodal expansion of authentic environmental attributes. Accordingly, the concept provides a more nuanced analytical lens for understanding how contemporary organizations strategically construct environmental legitimacy within increasingly visual, algorithmically mediated, and commercially competitive social media environments.

3.4 Toward a Conceptual Model of Sustainability Glorification

The findings of this study indicate that sustainability glorification cannot be sufficiently explained using the conventional greenwashing framework alone. Existing greenwashing literature generally conceptualizes misleading environmental communication as the dissemination of false, exaggerated, vague, or unverifiable environmental claims that create discrepancies between organizational communication and actual environmental performance [7,8]. While this framework remains valuable for identifying deceptive sustainability practices, the empirical evidence generated in the present study demonstrates a different communicative mechanism operating within contemporary social media advertising. Across both AQUA and Scarlett Whitening, environmental messages were predominantly rooted in authentic organizational initiatives or genuine product characteristics. However, these authentic sustainability attributes were strategically foregrounded, repeatedly emphasized, and multimodally amplified until they functioned as generalized representations of corporate environmental responsibility. This finding suggests that the relationship between

sustainability communication and greenwashing should be understood as a continuum rather than a binary distinction.

Importantly, neither AQUA nor Scarlett relied primarily on fabricated environmental information. AQUA consistently referred to identifiable recycling initiatives, circular packaging systems, waste management activities, and water conservation programs that genuinely exist within its sustainability agenda. Likewise, Scarlett repeatedly communicated authentic botanical ingredients, including mugwort, aloe vera, and citrus extracts, that are legitimately incorporated into its product formulations. Nevertheless, these authentic sustainability elements occupied disproportionately dominant positions within the advertisements, while broader environmental dimensions—including lifecycle assessment, carbon emissions, supply-chain transparency, biodiversity impacts, production efficiency, and independent environmental verification—received comparatively little attention. Consequently, audiences were encouraged to evaluate overall corporate environmental responsibility based upon only selected dimensions of organizational sustainability performance. Recent scholarship has similarly argued that selective visibility has become an increasingly influential mechanism through which organizations construct environmental legitimacy in digital communication environments [7,22,24].

These findings therefore suggest that the persuasive effectiveness of sustainability communication depends not solely on factual accuracy but also on discursive salience. Discursive salience refers to the communicative prominence assigned to particular environmental attributes through repeated linguistic emphasis, visual hierarchy, symbolic representation, emotional framing, and platform-specific repetition. Social media platforms reinforce this process because algorithmic recommendation systems repeatedly expose audiences to similar environmental narratives, increasing familiarity and cognitive accessibility without necessarily increasing substantive environmental knowledge [18]. From the perspective of communication theory, environmental legitimacy is therefore constructed not exclusively through objective environmental performance but also through repeated symbolic exposure capable of shaping public interpretation over time.

The present findings further demonstrate that sustainability glorification operates through four interconnected communicative mechanisms. First, selective representation, whereby organizations foreground favorable environmental attributes while backgrounding less advantageous or absent dimensions of sustainability. This mechanism corresponds closely with Fairclough's proposition that discourse constructs social reality by determining which aspects become socially visible and which remain marginalized [10]. Second, multimodal amplification, in which linguistic discourse is reinforced through coordinated visual elements including natural imagery, green color palettes, recycled materials, botanical ingredients, spatial composition, and aesthetic design. Following Kress and van Leeuwen's multimodal framework, these semiotic resources collectively strengthen environmental meanings beyond the informational content of written language alone [11]. Third, signal reinforcement, whereby selected environmental attributes function as recognizable market signals reducing information asymmetry between organizations and consumers. However, the persuasive strength of

these signals depends primarily upon communicative prominence rather than evidential completeness, thereby extending classical interpretations of Signaling Theory into digital sustainability communication [12]. Finally, heuristic normalization, whereby repeated platform exposure encourages consumers to process sustainability through peripheral cognitive routes, gradually transforming isolated environmental cues into stable organizational identities. This mechanism is consistent with the Elaboration Likelihood Model, particularly under conditions of rapid, visually intensive, and algorithmically mediated information environments [13].

Collectively, these four mechanisms explain why sustainability glorification differs conceptually from conventional greenwashing. Greenwashing primarily concerns the truthfulness of environmental claims, whereas sustainability glorification concerns the communicative proportionality between environmental evidence and environmental representation. In other words, organizations may communicate entirely truthful sustainability initiatives while simultaneously encouraging audiences to construct broader perceptions of environmental responsibility than are directly warranted by the evidence presented. The persuasive effect therefore emerges not through factual deception but through selective emphasis, symbolic amplification, multimodal reinforcement, and repeated exposure. This distinction provides an important conceptual contribution because it recognizes that contemporary sustainability communication frequently occupies an intermediate position between transparent disclosure and deceptive environmental communication.

Building upon these findings, this study proposes Sustainability Glorification as a distinct conceptual construct defined as:

“A strategic discursive process through which organizations selectively amplify authentic but partial sustainability attributes using linguistic, visual, and multimodal communication, encouraging audiences to construct broader perceptions of environmental responsibility than are directly supported by the evidence presented within individual communication artifacts.”

This definition differs from greenwashing in three important respects. First, sustainability glorification assumes that the communicated sustainability attributes are generally authentic rather than fabricated. Second, persuasive influence emerges through selective amplification instead of factual manipulation. Third, environmental legitimacy is constructed cumulatively through repeated multimodal communication across digital platforms rather than through isolated misleading claims. Accordingly, sustainability glorification should not be interpreted as a substitute for greenwashing but rather as a complementary conceptual category that explains forms of sustainability

communication that remain truthful while nevertheless expanding audience perceptions beyond proportional environmental evidence.

Figure 1 summarizes the conceptual model derived from the present findings. The model illustrates that sustainability glorification begins with authentic sustainability attributes, including operational environmental initiatives, natural ingredients, certifications, or organizational sustainability programs. These authentic attributes subsequently undergo discursive selection, whereby organizations determine which environmental elements receive communicative emphasis. Selected attributes are then reinforced through multimodal amplification, integrating verbal discourse,

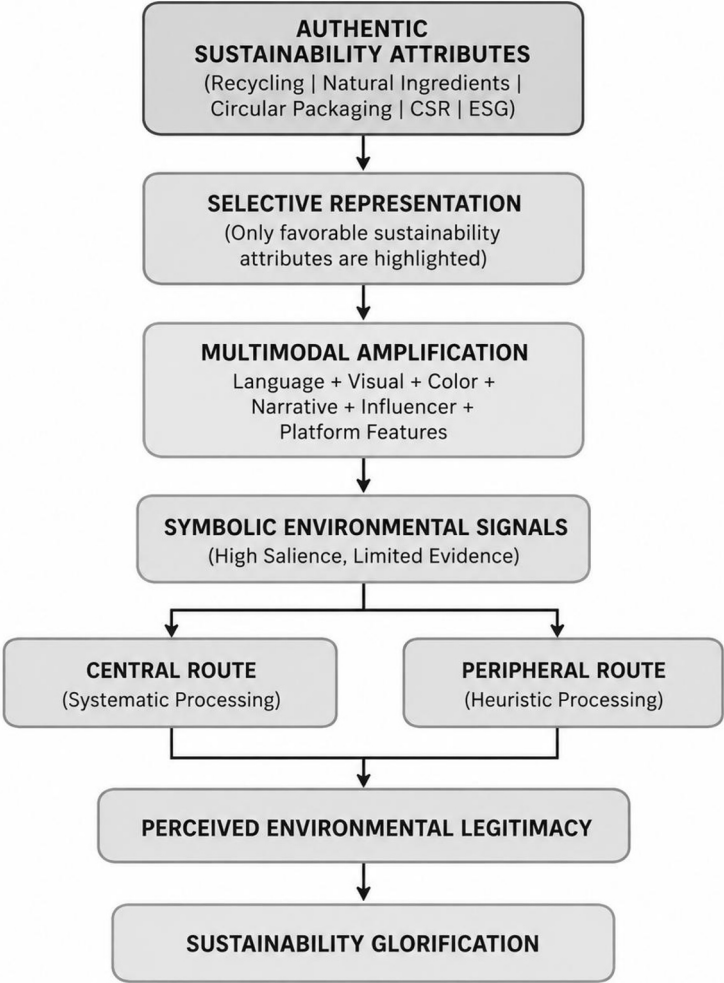


Figure 1. Conceptual model of sustainability glorification

visual symbolism, aesthetic composition, and platform-specific storytelling. This

communicative process produces symbolic environmental signals that are interpreted by consumers through both central and peripheral cognitive routes, although peripheral processing predominates within visually intensive social media environments. Through repeated exposure, audiences gradually develop broader perceptions of corporate environmental legitimacy than are directly supported by the evidence contained within individual communication artifacts. Ultimately, sustainability glorification functions as a communicative mechanism that transforms authentic yet partial sustainability practices into comprehensive representations of organizational environmental responsibility.

Accordingly, the conceptual model proposed in this study extends current sustainability communication scholarship in three ways. First, it shifts analytical attention from the binary distinction between truthful communication and greenwashing toward the proportional relationship between environmental evidence and environmental representation. Second, it integrates Critical Discourse Analysis, multimodal communication, Signaling Theory, and the Elaboration Likelihood Model within a unified explanatory framework for understanding sustainability communication in social media environments. Third, it introduces sustainability glorification as a theoretical construct capable of explaining how organizations strategically construct environmental legitimacy through selective visibility rather than explicit deception. Consequently, the proposed model contributes a more nuanced perspective for understanding corporate sustainability communication within contemporary algorithmically mediated digital ecosystems.

4 Conclusion

This study examined how sustainability is discursively and multimodally constructed within Instagram and TikTok advertisements published by AQUA and Scarlett Whitening between 2022 and 2026. The findings demonstrate that sustainability communication across both brands is predominantly constructed through symbolic representation rather than comprehensive environmental disclosure. Although the advertisements communicate authentic sustainability attributes, these attributes are selectively foregrounded through linguistic choices, visual symbolism, aesthetic composition, and platform-specific storytelling that encourage audiences to construct broader perceptions of corporate environmental responsibility than are directly supported by the evidence presented. These findings reinforce recent scholarship arguing that sustainability communication on digital platforms increasingly functions not only as an informational practice but also as a strategic mechanism for constructing organizational legitimacy and strengthening stakeholder perceptions through symbolic communication [1,2,7].

The comparative analysis further reveals that sustainability communication is highly context-dependent and platform-sensitive. AQUA primarily constructs environmental legitimacy through institutional sustainability narratives, emphasizing recycling systems, circular packaging, water conservation, and corporate environmental programs. In contrast, Scarlett Whitening constructs sustainability

predominantly through ingredient-based naturalness, relying on botanical imagery, natural ingredients, and influencer-mediated product narratives to establish environmentally responsible brand identities. Although these communicative strategies differ substantially, both ultimately perform the same discursive function by selectively amplifying limited sustainability attributes into broader representations of organizational environmental responsibility. This finding suggests that the mechanism of sustainability communication is shaped less by industrial sector than by the strategic selection and amplification of environmentally favorable meanings, supporting previous research that highlights the growing importance of symbolic environmental communication in digital marketing ecosystems [4,15,22].

The platform comparison also demonstrates that Instagram and TikTok facilitate different mechanisms of environmental persuasion. Instagram primarily supports institutional legitimacy through curated visual identity, aesthetic consistency, and professionally organized environmental narratives, whereas TikTok emphasizes interpersonal credibility, creator authenticity, behavioral demonstration, and algorithmically reinforced repetition. These differences influence not only the presentation of sustainability messages but also the cognitive processes through which audiences interpret environmental communication. Consistent with the Elaboration Likelihood Model, the findings indicate that sustainability communication on both platforms relies predominantly on peripheral information processing, whereby consumers evaluate environmental responsibility through heuristic cues such as visual symbolism, natural imagery, influencer credibility, and repeated exposure rather than through comprehensive environmental evidence [13,14,18]. Consequently, platform affordances become integral components of contemporary sustainability communication rather than merely channels through which organizational messages are transmitted.

The principal theoretical contribution of this study lies in the introduction of **Sustainability Glorification** as a conceptual construct that extends current discussions of sustainability communication beyond the conventional dichotomy between truthful environmental disclosure and greenwashing. Unlike greenwashing, which is primarily concerned with false or misleading environmental claims, sustainability glorification explains how organizations strategically amplify authentic but partial sustainability attributes through discursive selection, multimodal reinforcement, symbolic signaling, and repeated communication. In this process, organizations do not necessarily misrepresent environmental information; rather, they communicate authentic sustainability initiatives in ways that encourage audiences to generalize limited evidence into broader perceptions of corporate environmental legitimacy. This conceptualization contributes to recent sustainability communication literature that increasingly recognizes selective visibility, symbolic amplification, and impression management as central mechanisms in contemporary environmental communication [7,8,24].

Methodologically, this study also demonstrates the value of integrating Critical Discourse Analysis, Multimodal Analysis, Signaling Theory, and the Elaboration Likelihood Model within a single analytical framework. Previous studies

have frequently examined sustainability communication from marketing, consumer behavior, or discourse perspectives independently. By combining these complementary perspectives, the present research provides a more comprehensive explanation of how environmental meanings are constructed linguistically, visually, cognitively, and strategically within social media environments. This integrated framework offers a useful approach for future communication research seeking to investigate increasingly complex interactions between corporate discourse, visual representation, platform affordances, and consumer interpretation in digital sustainability communication [2,6,22].

Despite these contributions, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the analysis focuses exclusively on two Indonesian brands operating within the bottled water and cosmetic industries; therefore, the findings should not be generalized directly to other industrial sectors or cultural contexts. Second, the study examines communicative artifacts rather than audience responses, meaning that interpretations concerning consumer cognition are theoretically inferred through the Elaboration Likelihood Model rather than empirically measured. Third, the analysis is limited to Instagram and TikTok content published during the 2022–2026 period, whereas sustainability communication continues to evolve alongside changing platform algorithms, communication formats, and consumer expectations. Future studies could incorporate audience experiments, eye-tracking methods, interviews, or longitudinal designs to examine how sustainability glorification influences consumer trust, environmental attitudes, purchasing behavior, and perceptions of organizational legitimacy across different digital platforms and cultural settings.

Overall, the findings indicate that sustainability communication in contemporary digital advertising should not be understood solely through the binary lens of transparency versus deception. Rather, social media enables organizations to construct environmental legitimacy through selective visibility, multimodal amplification, and symbolic reinforcement of authentic sustainability attributes. By conceptualizing this communicative process as Sustainability Glorification, the present study offers a more nuanced theoretical perspective for understanding how environmental responsibility is strategically represented within algorithmically mediated communication environments. As sustainability increasingly becomes both an organizational commitment and a competitive branding resource, distinguishing between comprehensive environmental disclosure, selective symbolic amplification, and deceptive environmental communication will become increasingly important for advancing sustainability communication research, informing corporate communication practice, and supporting more critical public evaluation of environmental claims [7,22,24].

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