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What it costs to make Ourselves happy instant heroes

— A case study of the ethically packaged water Minewater Barcodrop

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ABSTRACT

Humanitarian campaigns are proposing fun and simpler ways to support their causes with the help of advanced communication technologies and corporate sponsorships. It has become common to do good by shopping, running, texting and playing games. Despite some criticisms, such campaigns proposing simple and fun actions are becoming more dominant in the development and aid sector because of their ability to engage a wider public. This study aims to problematise the increasing role of corporations as moral educators and in the entertaining humanitarian campaigns focused on the Self at the expense of suppressing the Other. It focuses on the potentially destructive aspects of seemingly creative and entertaining humanitarian appeals supported by commercial forces by investigating the case of Barcodrop – an ethically packaged bottled water brand.

This study begins by reviewing the relevant literature on post-humanitarianism, corporate social responsibility, contemporary consumer culture and bottled water. It then moves on to examine three research questions: What types of relationships are mediated and reproduced through the campaign? How does the campaign shape certain social practices and norms? How does this newly emerged post-humanitarian style work to mask political issues and serve particular ideologies? This is achieved by taking a case-study approach involving two qualitative analysis techniques social semiotics and critical discourse analysis. The combined approach illuminates opaque power relations and the ideology embedded in a stylish campaign.

Based on the analysis, the study suggests that the unequal relationship of the heroic Self and the vulnerable Other is reproduced through the campaign. The promotion of simple and fun reinforces the narcissistic nature of contemporary consumers, which requires subordination of

others. In addition, the Barcodrop campaign appears to normalise the consumer choice as an ethical practice by explicitly linking scanning and sharing. It also transforms the act of altruism to a playful activity of consumers while excluding distant sufferers, which makes participants loyal mediator of the brand. Furthermore, post-humanitarian aesthetic techniques effectively prevent the audience from understanding the complexities that surround water issues and legitimatise corporate ideology at the expense of solidarity.

INTRODUCTION

‘Doing good’ never has been more simple and fun. We can take part in causes by shopping, texting, tweeting, running and playing games. It is interesting to observe that many of the charity advertisements resemble advanced commercial advertisement in style, and private companies take a role in delivering humanitarian messages. Such trends make the field of humanitarian communication diversified and competitive. The increasing participation of corporations in seeking to solutions to social issues by sponsoring or partnering with NGOs, seems to have strengthened the trend of making social work appear simple and fun. In particular, I have been fascinated by the frequent use of bottled-water brands, as the tool for cause marketing or commodity activism; from Volvic’s “1L=10L for Africa” (Brei & Böhm, 2014) to very recent One Water’s “Instant Hero”¹. Because of my personal experience of working for an NGO that specialises in water and sanitation in Kenya, it is interesting to see that the purchase of premium bottled water in the Global North is associated with the provision of clean water to Africa.

Since bottled water brands have always been active in linking with the cause of providing clean water in the Global South, their campaigns are ideal resources to understand the tensions and shifts in contemporary humanitarian communication. From a brief comparison of Volvic’s 2005 campaign and One Water’s 2014 campaign, the changes in communication style over the past ten years can be observed. The focus has completely shifted to the Self and the proposed action has become more interesting and fun. During the campaign, One Water propped photo booths at major London stations and invited people to take photos of themselves. The photos were overlaid with hero illustrations and shared through social media.

¹ Instant Hero campaign’s microsite: <http://onedifference.org/instanthero/>

Such low-intensity and entertaining campaigns are popular and considered to be an effective strategy for addressing donor fatigue perceivably generated by the conventional campaigns. The majority of the relevant debates have been focused on and dominated by the West. In this dissertation, I would like to introduce a case from South Korea, the cause-related marketing campaign called Barcodrop initiated by Minewater, which is one of more than a hundred Korean bottled water brands. The campaign has been highly recognised for its unique strategies, which engage consumers in doing good in a simple and fun way.

This study takes this particular case to critically investigate the increasing interventions of corporations in social issues and the strong entertaining force in contemporary humanitarian communication. It seeks to understand the undesirable implications and consequences of increasingly self-oriented entertaining campaigns. There have been inherent struggles in humanitarian appeals as they try to justify their action, take effective action to address faraway suffering, avoid reproducing hierarchies of human life and deal with broader political drivers all at the same time (Scott, 2014). The study draws on Lilie Chouliaraki's (2010) post-humanitarian theory to understand how the new style of campaigns focusing on Self has been emerged as a practical response to the criticisms on the earlier forms of campaigns. It understands the involvement of corporations in development initiatives within a political expansion of corporate power. Thus, it reviews the literature on corporate social responsibility from critical perspectives (Hanlon & Fleming, 2009; Scherer & Palazzo, 2011). Since post-humanitarian style campaigns reveal about the nature of contemporary consumers, the study also borrows theories of consumer culture with focus on ethical consumption. It helps capture the relationship constituted in the process of consuming cause-related products. The literature on the origin and symbolic and material meanings of bottled water is reviewed to understand the key debates around it (Hawkins, 2011; Opel, 1999; Wilk, 2006). Then, the theoretical chapter finishes with offering the conceptual framework built on these intersecting fields of post-humanitarianism, CSR and moral consumption.

Based on the theoretical resources, the study addresses three research questions by examining the Barcodrop case. It adopts a two-layered approach, combining social semiotics and critical discourse analysis to fully capture embedded power relations, preferred practices and ideology in the campaign. While the existing literature primarily has discussed corporate-led or sponsored public campaigns from CSR point of view, either critical or supportive, this

project has different vantage points in mainly following two points. This project attempts to discuss the consequences of companies being moral educators by incorporating examination of its post-humanitarian communicative strategies. It also focuses on the destructive aspects of entertaining campaigns in regard to social relations and practices. At the time writing this dissertation, ALS Ice Bucket Challenge² videos are dominating my Facebook news feed. They are uploaded from Korea, Canada and the UK, but not from any of the developing countries yet. This study seems relevant and timely as it helps scrutinise the implications and consequences of such self-oriented, entertaining social movements, at the expense of keeping Others silenced.

THEORETICAL CHAPTER

Literature review

Simplifying and gamifying humanitarian campaigns

Humanitarian campaigns, mostly initiated by NGOs and development organizations, have been transformed in response to criticisms. Any humanitarian campaign needs media exposure for publicity, but it risks being accused of sensationalizing. Extensive studies suggest that most fundraising appeals by NGOs until the 1980s tried to construct an ‘ideal victim’, particularly those emergency appeals (Benthall, 1993; Dogra, 2007; Escobar, 1995; Höijer, 2004). By depicting the people in the Global South as passive and helpless, they have contributed to perpetuating negative stereotypes of the developing world. Such images were proved to be effective for the fundraising effort, but faced criticisms for trivialising complex issues and sensationalising the people and culture of the developing countries.

In response to the critiques as well as the transition of NGOs’ roles towards advocacy, NGOs began to favour more positive imagery. This accounts for the greater use of images of children with happy smiles since the 1990s (Dogra, 2007). However, positive imagery is also

² ALS Ice Bucket Challenge is a kind of chain letter on social media for raising awareness of the disease amyotrophic lateral sclerosis and encouraging donations to research. It has quickly reached to South Korea in the third week of August in 2014. The challenge involves nominee getting dumped a bucket of ice water and posting the videos on social media, then nominating others.

not free from criticism because it ignores the issues of power and ideology. Whether it is claimed as negative or positive, earlier campaigns relied on photorealism. Since they are essentially Other-oriented, the images produced by humanitarian appeals can hardly avoid the criticism of stereotyping the distant sufferers as either extreme one or the other.

Due to the complex nature of the humanitarian field in general, the institutions have been struggling with conveying messages to the public and calling for their participation. Though the earlier stereotypes are still prevalent in humanitarian communication, some significant shifts are observed. Previously the appeals focused on delivering authentic imagery of distant Other, while the emerging style of humanitarian communication privileges the Self, which Chouliaraki theorises as post-humanitarianism (2010, 2012). This results from the conscious attempt to avoid the criticisms caused by representing any type of Other and conforms to changing tastes of donors and also addressing compassion fatigue (Moeller, 1999). Such campaigns focusing on the Self appear to be undergirded by two salient forces, which are simplification and gamification.

First, recent humanitarian campaigns increasingly propose simple actions to the public as a solution to complex social issues. Post-humanitarian style campaigns tend to favour short-term and low-intensity forms of agency (Chouliaraki, 2010). The full story is filtered by simplifying the complex development issues, so the audiences or potential donors are not overwhelmed. In the process, the real complexities are masked, and Others are suppressed or effectively erased (Kapoor, 2005). Many people with good intentions to help others may not be quite ready to be engaged with daunting and entangled social issues. As Bono, the founder of Product RED said, “not everybody has time to be an activist” (Magubane, 2008). The simplicity of action encourages the potential participants to act since the action is as simple as one click, one Like or buying a bottle of water. This effortless immediacy lends power to (the Northern) individuals, who perceive that they are making a difference in the lives of vulnerable others (Chouliaraki, 2010). Although such appeals do not show Others as much as the earlier ones, the imperial discourse of the South as victims and the West as saviours (Hall, 1997) has not gone away.

Second, the ways to solving social issues are suggested as fun and playful activities, rather than serious social engagements. The ways people participate in social causes have

diversified primarily through corporate sponsorship and the help of technology. Now the audience can help others without sacrificing their limited budget and even without empathy. One of the most popular tools is sports. Sports is increasingly used as a tool to achieve gender and development goals (Hayhurst, 2013). The Nike Women's Race is one representative example. While the participants are enjoying the running and promoting the brand, Nike is making a donation to various causes. The charity apps help smartphone users to participate in good cause while they are playing games. Apps like Tree Planet³ have transformed the process of donation. The users plant a virtual tree and raise it in their hand, and if it has been raised well, a real tree is sent to areas where desertification is serious. The greater use of cartoons and infographics⁴ in a visualisation style, and Nike Foundation's Girl Effect is a typical example, also can be seen as the means to alleviating the Othering.

Expanding corporate power and its increasing role as a humanitarian messenger

The role of corporations has markedly expanded and many social issues are increasingly dependent on corporate power. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) appears to be a Trojan horse to cross the boundary. CSR which used to be a peripheral consideration, has now become a mantra in many perspectives (Ellis, 2010), and it is increasingly considered central to the core business (Bhattacharya, Korschun, & Sen, 2009). CSR is regarded as crucial, particularly for corporate branding. It is a core component that differentiates companies from their competitors (Polonsky & Jevons, 2009; Werther Jr. & Chandler, 2005). Consumers also see CSR as an important factor for forming an image of a company (Schmeltz, 2012).

The majority of the literature approaches CSR as a strategic tool or a marketing fashion and focuses on strategic or ethical implications. Extensive discussion about the benefits of CSR to firms (Knox & Maklan, 2004) has been made within management literature. That has been replicated in Korean literature, which has primarily focused on the impact of CSR on brand loyalty and sales (Choi & Choi, 2012, 2012; Chung & Jeon, 2014). However, the increasing involvement of corporations in social initiatives calls for broader discussion. The critique of

³ Tree Planet is an app which allows users themselves plant real trees through the game involving giving water, fertilizer and potions to virtual trees. 472,000 trees have been sent to 45 forests worldwide since 2010. The company has partnerships with major companies such as Hanhwa, and organizations including the UN and World Vision (website: http://www.treepla.net/about_us.html).

⁴ Infographics are graphic visual representations of information, data or knowledge intended to present complex information quickly and clearly (source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Infographic>).

CSR solely from ethical perspectives (Crouch, 2006; Polonsky & Wood, 2001) is no longer sufficient. Scherer and Palazzo (2007, 2011) contribute to the critical discourse by theorising CSR as a political phenomenon. In the similar vein, Vallentin & Murillo (2012) consider CSR as the business of government. Within a new system of governance, corporations are given a novel role along with the process of neoliberalisation (Harvey, 2005), CSR is becoming a key element of the new neoliberalism (Hanlon & Fleming, 2009). CSR is a part of the larger ideological project legitimizing the power of corporations (Banerjee, 2008; Nickel & Eikenberry, 2009; Shamir, 2004). Consequently, the traditional roles of corporations, states, consumers and non-profits have significantly changed and the boundaries between private, public and civil spheres have become blurred (Schmeltz, 2012). Corporations' engagements in aid and development initiatives have become not only fashionable but desirable.

A blurring of the lines is also significant between non-profit and for profit organizations. It has led to the rise of humanitarian branding (Chouliaraki, 2006) and cause-related marketing (Davidson, 1997; Einstein, 2012). The corporations partnering with charities create explicit links between their product and humanitarian causes. The RED campaign by aid celebrity Bono is one popular example of this kind. There seems to be no sharp distinction between doing good and doing business (Schmeltz, 2012). Cause-Related Marketing (CRM) is suggested as "the most creative and cost-effective product marketing strategy" (Smith & Alcorn, 1991, p.20) for firms because the return can be measured clearly. At face value, CRM benefits companies, NGOs, consumers and causes. CRM is promoted as a cool way of giving, and the celebratory account is dominating among the NGO practitioners and marketing strategists (Adkins, 1999; Kotler & Lee, 2005; Pringle & Thompson, 2001). However, its specific form, depending on the transaction, inevitably risks the overcommercialisation of aid and development. As Richey & Ponte (2011) point out, the linkup of a product and a cause is problematic in that businesses are framed as the only solution to global problems. Brei & Böhm (2014) argue that corporation's linkup with causes is an ideological makeup of contemporary consumer capitalism based on the research on Volvic's "1L=10L for Africa campaign (p.3).

The increasing partnering of corporations with NGOs has made them one of major institutions which communicate humanitarian issues. Companies convey the messages or the

facts related to development issues in their CSR campaigns and packages of cause-related products. In some cases, the Girl Effect by Nike Foundation for instance, the campaign is exclusively dedicated to the cause without any visibility of corporate brands. A more common strategy is to align a cause with brand image or product in the campaign. Yuhan Kimberly, which consumes trees to manufacture their products, has been campaigning for environment protection, and a tobacco brand KT&G has been initiating campaigns for the teenagers. These seemingly paradoxical campaigns can be considered as attempts to offset negative imageries (Andreasen & Drumwright, 2001), yet they have all been highly successful. Corporations seem to be making the aid communication field more competitive. Moreover, in consequence, they are playing an increasingly significant role in moral education for the public. Therefore, this newly emerged mixed genre of product advertising and informative humanitarian communication requires special attention.

The rise of narcissistic ethical consumers

The admirable position of consumption in the contemporary society would be the underlying condition of the prevalence of CRM. Ritzer (2005) rightly argues that “the postmodern world is defined by consumption (rather than production)” (p. 67). Consumption is not only confined to material and symbolic objects, but it embraces the things stabilised in object-like form such as leisure activities (Schor et al., 2010). With the affordability of goods and services, consumption is often equated with (individual) choice. People consume to gratify practical needs, express themselves and build social networks (Wilk, 2001). Furthermore, people who are regarded as socially conscious consumers (Stolle, Hooghe, & Micheletti, 2005) use their marketplace behaviour as a form of political engagement stimulating social change (Micheletti, 2003; Neilson & Paxton, 2010).

In a time when consumption is so central, more ethical and socially conscious consumption may be desirable. Schudson (2007) considers it possible to have altruistic, political and democratic consumption, and Arnould & Thompson (2005) suggests political consumption as a desirable political action within existing market structures, such as Fair Trade. Nevertheless, it may result in promoting individualistic consumerism at the expense of collective solidarity (Shah et al., 2007) and transforming social issues into the matter of individual choices in the market. The individuals are constructed as heteronomous private shoppers rather than

autonomous public citizens (Barber, 2008). Furthermore, even though consumption may be seen as a political action applied for democratic goals, it is not equally available to all (Banaji & Buckingham, 2009).

Although there are various opinions whether the ethical or political consumption is desirable for society, it seems to be generally accepted that some kinds of consumption are good and others are not (Wilk, 2001). Consumption always accompanies moral issues since it involves choices at both individual and collective levels (Zelizer in Schor et al., 2010). Slater also sees consumption as a realm of practical morality (Schor et al., 2010). There have been old and new critiques of consumerism, but scholars condemn particular forms of consumption and consumer culture (Adorno, 1967; Barber, 2008; Baudrillard, 1998; Wilk, 2001). Despite moral ambiguity of consumption, the practical figure confirms that more consumers tend to be socially-conscious (The Nielsen Company, 2012). Today the average consumer in the North appears to be well aware of the inequality in the production and consumption chain and cares about the environmental and social implications of purchasing. ‘Hypercharities’ (Einstein, 2012), such as Fair Trade, RED and TOMS are shaping contemporary consumers’ practices, at the same time, it can be also understood as a response to the changing taste of consumers. It seems that the binary of good and bad consumption posed by moralists is leveraged by clever marketing practitioners working for private companies.

Paradoxically, contemporary consumers who make more ethical consumption choices are characterised as narcissistic. Many scholars incorporate narcissism into their views on contemporary consumption (Bauman, 2007; M. Billig, 1999; Schor et al., 2010). Freud (2004) particularly points out that our relationship can only be understood by possessions and consumption, and we often express narcissistic and destructive behaviour even while we believe altruism is set in motion. The young generation labeled the iGen (Twenge, 2006) tends to be even more narcissistic than earlier generations. This young group of people is very narcissistic in their attitudes towards life, but at the same time they have a well-developed social conscience and a sense of belonging to a community (Ellis, 2010). Schmeltz (2012) reveals that young consumers are guided by self-centred values, rather than society-centred values when perceiving CSR activities. It indicates that consumers, especially young consumers, find self-centred values in their benevolent consumptions. Narcissistic desires are

usually not socially acceptable, but they become an acceptable form in consumption (Cluley & Dunne, 2012).

The narcissistic consumers are elevated through altruistic consumption. The proposal of solving serious problems in the Third World by making a little change in their purchasing patterns would instantly make them heroes. At this moment of purchasing, the people engaged with the cause in the South enter into the consumers' everyday lives in the North, and the unequal relationship between the two is constituted (Slater in Schor et al., 2010). The consumers fundamentally elevate themselves at the expense of the destruction of others (Cluley & Dunne, 2012). The power relations constructed through the practices of this kind of consumption which is perceived as good cry out for critical investigation.

Bottled water: meanings and controversies

Thirty years ago, it hardly made sense for water to be sold in a small plastic container. Political and economic forces created the market and made bottled-water an inevitable commodity in a short period. Bottled water was introduced as an alternative to public drinking water (or tap water) considered unsafe and unclean. It parallels the rise of neoliberalism demonising the state during the 1990s (Opel, 1999). In addition, the rise of bottled water is understood as a part of a broader process of the commodification of nature within a capitalist commodity culture. Invented as a kind of anxiety industry, bottled water is now expected to overtake soft drinks. In Korea, more bottled-water has been sold in 2014 than any other beverage (Ahn, 2014). This market seems to know no limit in its growth, so thousands of brands are competing in the market.

Although the collusions lend support, in this highly competitive market the sales rely on the power of magicians. Water, as a product which is odourless and colourless, relies entirely on branding. The branding magicians transform mundane and abundant water into the symbol of purity, nature, health and ethics through the skilful use of image, language and placement. In most affluent countries, there is clean, safe and as cheap as free tap water available in every home, and there is no evidence that bottled water is more reliable (Olson, 1999). It is the power of branding to get people to pay for things that are freely available and transform the purchase of bottled water into cultural consumption (Wilk, 2006). It certainly embodies

the modern lifestyle. Now bottled water becomes not only inevitable, but also a meaningful part of daily life.

It would be useful to have a grasp of the intense symbolic and material meaning of bottled water for the analyses of the CRM campaigns involving bottled water. Every bottle displayed on the shelf projects rich socio-cultural implications and the practice of consuming water. As Wilk (2006) considers, it manages to transmit the power of nature and the modern technology of controlling it at the same time. Because water has become a commodity which needs packaging and displaying, consumers cannot make direct contact with nature (water), but only through the mediator – the bottle (Hawkins, 2011). For bottled water, the package is exceptionally important. The colourless water is *painted* with the meanings that marketers want to brand. It is not only for protecting and transporting, rather it is a site where the sign exchange value is sustained and reproduced (Opel, 1999).

The material meanings and impacts are relatively less explored in the literature. Hawkins (2011) sees the bottle as a market device and particularly investigates the materiality of the plastic bottle that “helps articulate economic action [and] reconfigures everyday drinking practices” (p.545). The material aspects of the bottle containing water are worth being discussed. The increasing use of light PET plastic as packaging material has made portable, single-serve water possible and rapidly prevalent. The water easily has become something in the hands of people running on the street, and appears everywhere from the office to the football stadium. The consuming practice has become as instant as the purchase. Its transparency and clarity perfectly mirror the product (the lucid water), enhancing its economy of qualities (Callon, Méadel, & Rabeharisoa, 2002).

Bottled water does not seem mundane anymore because of its unusual capacity of carrying symbolic and material meanings and revealing tensions and contradictions in the world system. This commodity clearly projects the face and the logic of modern capitalism. In contrast to the fact that many of the brands associate themselves with nature, the bottles are often criticised for their troubling afterlife which is detrimental to the environment. The ubiquity of branded water has not ended the debate around rights and inequality (Wilk, 2006). Here is a starkly imbalanced world in which people are dying due to water scarcity and water-borne diseases, while other people are privileged to choose between water brands on

the other side of the globe. Furthermore, the privatization and commodification of water initiated earlier in the well-off countries now limit the public water supplies worldwide. Consumption of bottled water is a clear example of how “the pursuit of projects for some entails the subordination of others” (Sahakian & Wilhite, 2014, p.40). Someone’s act of purchasing a bottle of water for its pleasure, could equally be an act of polluting someone else’s water symbolically and physically.

Conceptual framework

This research takes the Barcodrop case as a part of the discursive social process. The corporate-led campaigns linking product and cause engender a specific type of subjectivity and relationships, work to support certain social practices and ideologies. In addition, the emerging style which is self-oriented entertaining effectively renders audience blind to its ideological work and embedded inequality. Therefore, the conceptual framework situates the Barcodrop case within the intersections of post-humanitarianism, CSR, consumer culture and bottled-water.

The literature discussed earlier would help clarify and analyse the complexity of Barcodrop campaign. Contemporary humanitarian campaigns seem to more favour simple, fun, and self-oriented forms in their communication style as well as the proposed action. Such post-humanitarian characteristics (Chouliaraki, 2010, 2012) become more significant when driven by corporate force. Corporations’ increasing participation in social issues can be understood as a part of the broader expansion of corporate power (Hanlon & Fleming, 2009). The mixed genre produced as a by-product of it may serve a corporate and market ideology. At the moment that consumers respond to the proposal of donating by consuming, the consumer choice transforms ethical practice. At the same time, it reveals the narcissistic nature of contemporary consumers in Freudian sense. The altruistic intention and act, in effect, require the subordination of Others. It illuminates what types of social relations are mediated and reproduced through commodities like bottled water. Furthermore, the rich symbolic and material meanings of bottled water and the story of it becoming a successful supermarket item, provide some clues to help us understand the popularity of ethically packaged water, and also question the solutions suggested by many similar campaigns.

The existing literature primarily has discussed corporate-led or sponsored public campaigns from CSR point of view in the Western context, either critical or supportive. This study attempts to contribute to the relevant literature by taking different vantage points in the following three points. First, it pays attention to the role of companies in conveying humanitarian messages. In particular, it tries to discuss the reliability of corporations as moral educators by examining the functions of new aesthetic technique including animations emerged in post-humanitarianism. Second, this project focuses on the destructive aspects of entertaining campaigns in regard to social relations and practices. Third, it provides a non-Western case to the Western dominated literature and a critical account which is unusual in the Korean academic field.

Statement of research objectives

Cause-related products seem to be more than a marketing gimmick. They have benefited concerned consumers by providing easy and creative means to help others in their everyday lives. The more sales, the more funds will be delivered to those people in need. Nevertheless, this study does not intend to examine the effectiveness or authenticity of such campaigns. Informed by the existing literature reviewed in the previous section, my focus is the undesirable capacity of self-centred and entertaining CRM campaigns. Taking a case study of an ethically packaged water campaign, the research attempts to investigate the way in which new ethical practices are introduced and normalised in the supermarket (at the moment of purchase), its ability to engender an unequal relationship in which the act of altruism costs the subordination of Others, and the process of how real political issues are masked by simplicity and fun.

In order to achieve the above objectives, three research questions (RQ) are set out:

- RQ1. What types of relationships are mediated and reproduced through the campaign?
- RQ2. How does the campaign shape certain social practices and norms?
- RQ3. How does this newly emerged post-humanitarian style work to mask political issues and serve particular ideologies?

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Research strategy and challenges

As illustrated, the aim of this study is to understand the consequences of the emerging social phenomenon in humanitarian communication increasingly driven by corporations and deconstruct the opaque power relations implicated in it. Thus, it takes a case-study approach involving two qualitative analytical techniques - Critical Discourse Analysis and Social Semiotics. To preserve the full dynamics of the Barcodrop campaign, Fairclough's three-level discourse analysis (1995) is employed and combined with the visual social semiotics method (Kress & Leeuwen, 1996).

Why a case-study approach and why this particular case?

The current study is concerned with a contemporary phenomenon which cannot be separated from the context. The case-study approach is useful to understand and explain complex social phenomena (Yin, 1989). One particular case (Minewater Barcodrop) was chosen for in-depth analysis. Multiple case studies were considered, but not pursued, because it was determined that focusing on one case and analysing multiple aspects would be more meaningful. Case studies are often discounted because they are perceived to be less rigorous and are deemed less scientific. However, the case study has a unique advantage when the focus is a real-life event as in this project. In addition, since the aim is not to make statistical generalisations but to expand theories, a case study is valid for analytic generalization.

Barcodrop was chosen among many CRM-type campaigns. Apart from the campaign's success, it has three distinct values as a case for this research. First, it shows clear characteristics of post-humanitarian communication which focuses on the Self and promote simple and fun. Second, the product (bottled water) and the genre (combined genre of humanitarian appeal and product advertising) reveal contradictions and tensions in the world we live in. Third, the campaign originates in Korea, and Korean cases have not been explored much in the literature. As a Korean, I can investigate Korean cases with more confidence than some others because the analysis requires a thorough knowledge of history and context.

The campaign seems to be a fertile ground to examine the research questions of this project and reasonable to achieve the objectives.

Justification for using Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is used for analysing the TV commercials and the campaign film of Barcodrop. Although the campaign conveys the humanitarian message in some way (this will be discussed later in the result and interpretation section), its primary aim is to advertise the unique product. Advertising is a powerful force that reflects and reinforces the social and political ideologies that it selectively supports. Advertisements, as part of the culture industry, “convey not only descriptions of the product, but values and meanings about how the product fits in a social context” (Opel, 1999, p70).

CDA aims at revealing the discursive sources of power, dominance, inequality and bias through analysing written and spoken text (van Dijk, 1988). CDA has a unique strength in “unmasking concealed values and strategies” (Paltridge, 2006, p.178). Through discourse analysis, the connections between texts, discourse practices, social practices and social structures can be illuminated (Fairclough, 1993, 1995). Moreover, CDA does not only illuminates what is present, but also what has been silenced in the text (Billig, 1991). Considering its ability to unmask opaque power relations and sociocultural assumptions, CDA is particularly relevant and useful in examining the Barcodrop case. Fairclough’s (2001) three-dimensional analysis – textual, discursive and sociocultural – make a deeper understanding possible.

Nevertheless, some of the pitfalls of CDA should be acknowledged. It is often criticised for its subjective nature. The selection and interpretation of data is inevitably contingent on the researcher’s knowledge and sociocultural background. It should be acknowledged that discourse analysis creates a certain version of reading. Therefore, one should be reflexive in every decision from sampling to interpretation and justify the decision as explicit as possible.

By selecting certain communicative texts for analysis, I have accorded a lot of credit to media text while discounting the agency of audience. Similar texts can be interpreted differently by different audiences (Fairclough, 1995). Thus, CDA practitioners should acknowledge that

different media recipient may respond to same text differently. Nonetheless, average audiences are not trained to be critical readers of media text (Fowler, 1979; Van Dijk, 1991), so it would be fair to make assumptions about the impact of the media on the audience, based on the results of discourse analysis.

Justification for using Social Semiotic approach

A social semiotic approach is employed to further investigate visual aspects of the data, and specifically, the package design. Kress & Leeuwen (1996) expand Halliday's (1978) work on language to images and suggest that visual resources perform three main kinds of semiotic work simultaneously – representational, interactive and compositional. They claim that any image “not only represents the world but also plays a part in some interaction and, with or without accompanying text, constitutes a recognizable kind of text” (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001, p.140).

A visual social semiotic approach studies the semiotic resources in the social context, because semiotic resources are seen to have signifying *potential* rather than specific meanings (Kress & Leeuwen, 1996). It seeks to challenge the normalised view and bring out hidden meanings on the surface. In this regard, the method would be effective in analysing a mundane everyday visual, such as a bottled-water package, and would bring a fresh viewing. In the visual social semiotic approach, “semiotic resources are at once the products of cultural histories and the cognitive resources we use to create meaning in the production and interpretation of visual and other message” (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001, p.136). Social semiotics will provide the sociological explanations by connecting semiotic resources and the real world.

The method itself is an essentially descriptive framework, so it usually cannot work alone (Kress & Leeuwen, 1996). Other methods (CDA, and the theories discussed in the literature review section) will be drawn in the process of analysis. Similar to the critical discourse analysis, semiotic analysis is inevitably subjective in nature and appreciates reflexivity. It is required for the researcher to acknowledge the epistemological position.

The combination of critical discourse analysis and social semiotic would serve as an effective methodological tool to answer the research questions. However, it is worth highlighting that the research embraces reflexivity at every stage of the sampling, analysis and presentation of data. It is not possible to fully eliminate the researcher's epistemological position - history, knowledge and sociocultural background. Limited time and resources might have hindered a more comprehensive interpretation and presentation of the results.

In the earlier stage of the project, interviews with the producers of the campaign were planned to better understand the production side of the campaign. However, the interview requests were not accepted despite several invitations. Alternatively, secondary sources such as magazines and news articles could be obtained and incorporated in the analysis. The reception side of study would bring more dynamic resources in answering research questions, but considering the scope of the study, it was left for future research.

Data collection

The data used for analysis are visual and audio-visual materials produced for the Barcodrop campaign.

1. Bottle package

The package may look small and trivial, but it has fertile semiotic resources. The real bottle was not available for purchase in the UK, so the image of the Barcodrop bottle, obtained from a news article has been used.

As mentioned in the theoretical chapter, the package is an essential part of bottled water. Its role is not confined to instrumental functions such as protection, transportation and information delivery. Every element of the package including the label and the container constitute the very site where consumers interact with the product, choosing one brand over another, and carrying those with them on the street (Opel, 1999). In this regard, the package is a powerful “medium” which has communicative capacity both symbolically and materially.

2. TV commercial

A 15-second long commercial was a major mass communication channel targeting a Korean audience. The advertisement was aired on cable channels only⁵ during the campaign period. A clip of the commercial was downloaded from Youtube.

3. Campaign film

A 2-minute long English video was produced to introduce Barcodrop to a broader audience in the world. The video explains the aim of the campaign, how the campaign works, why the campaign is brilliant and how successful it was.

Operational process

A two-layer of analysis has been conducted in this research – social semiotic analysis of the package and critical discourse analysis of the audio-visual materials. Considering the subjective nature of the methods, explicit steps are designed and followed for systematic research:

1. Social Semiotic Analysis

Following Kress & Leeuwen's (1996) approach, the semiotic analysis for the package design is carried out at three dimensions. The detailed guide questions for each dimension and analysis is provided in appendix 1.

- Representational meaning: analyses the ways in which the visual participants (people, places or things) are depicted, visual syntactic patterns in terms of their function of relating visual participants to each other, narrative and conceptual structure in the picture
- Interactive meaning: involves analyses of contact, distance, point of view, particular relations between viewers and the world inside the picture, the way in which the images interact with viewers, the images suggest the attitude viewers should take towards what is being represented

⁵ In South Korea, the advertisements for bottled water brands were allowed through cable TV channels only until 2013.

- Compositional meaning: focuses on the layout, the placement and relative salience of picture and text, the way compositional work do to constitute a recognisable text (ads, news and etc.)

2. Critical Discourse Analysis

Fairclough's (1995) three-level analysis is employed to analyse TV commercial and campaign film of Barcodrop. Here, both visual and textual elements are treated as texts which co-constitute meanings. The analysis followed the steps below. Appendix 2 provides the categorisation used for the discourse analysis at textual level.

- ① Transcribe and translate the narration of the videos and arranged with the screenshots
- ② The data are examined at three levels
 - Textual analysis: involves linguistic analysis in terms of (functions of) vocabulary, grammar, semantics, constructions of producer and intended audience identities, relationships of producer and audience, relationship of participants in the text, representations and recontextualisations of social practice (and particular ideologies), presences and absences
 - Discursive analysis: analyses discursive practices across text including the production and interpretation of text, intertextual analysis, genre and conventions
 - Sociocultural analysis: engages a wider context and meanings including economic, political and cultural and symbolic, and it covers struggles and conflicts, historical factors, knowledge, and a constructed reality
- ③ The interconnection of textual, discursive and sociocultural level analysis is conducted and presented thematically in attempts to address the research questions

RESULT AND INTERPRETATION

Overview of the Minewater Barcodrop campaign

Minewater is a premium mineral water brand owned by CJ CheilJedang⁶ in South Korea, and it launched a new campaign called Barcodrop on World Water Day (22nd of March) in 2012. This internationally award-winning (Cannes Lions 2012) campaign is basically a cause-related marketing project that connects its product (bottled water) and a cause (providing safe drinking water to Africa). One thing salient about this project is that it asks consumers donate by scanning a special, extra barcode on the bottle. Choosing and purchasing the brand is not sufficient because the donation is not made until scanning that specific barcode.

The Minewater package is deliberately designed to function as a medium to interact with consumers (Lee, 2012). The African child illustration on the bottle attracts an interest and the blue water drop-shaped barcode is located over the head of the child. This special barcode is actually a sticker “Barcodrop” and the campaign title is named after this. To donate, consumers leave it on and scan it, but to not donate, they peel it off. When purchasing 1,000KRW (=1USD) of Minewater and scanning Barcodrop to donate 100KRW (=0.1USD), the retailer (Olive Young and Family Mart) and the manufacturer (CJ CheilJedang) also donates 100KRW each. Thus, in total 300KRW is donated to water purification projects through Unicef Korea with each scanning. 7,000 stores participated in the campaign. The partnership of charity and company is not new, but the co-donation of consumer, retailer and manufacturer is considered as desirable and innovative (Donate through a barcode, 2013).

According to Cheil Worldwide⁷ which designed this campaign, they intended to make donating as easy as scanning the barcode at the counter. In addition, they wanted to satisfy ethically-conscious consumers’ desire and expected that the bottle would be used as a sign of being ethical. Hence, the Barcodrop project considered the product as the most powerful medium through which consumers make decisions about the donation as well as purchase. It also needed to be interesting experience (Donate through a barcode, 2013). The use of TV

⁶ CJ CheilJedang is a subsidy of CJ Group the largest food company in South Korea. It was a part of Samsung Group until 1993 (source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/CJ_CheilJedang)

⁷ Cheil Worldwide is a marketing solutions company under the Samsung Group that offers advertising, public relations, and marketing solutions (source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cheil_Worldwide).

was only limited to a 15 second commercial and PPL through cable channels. The campaign was spread by consumers through social media. Consumers put the Barcodrop stickers on their faces and shared the selfies⁸ on Facebook and Twitter and invited other people to take part. They seemed to take it as a playful activity.

The campaign had a great success. About half the consumers who purchased Minewater decided to scan the Barcodrop and donate. Accordingly, sales volume increased by 3.5 times compared to 2011. In particular, CJ as a late comer, was able to position as ethical water brand in the competitive market (Lee, 2012). The campaign raised 200 million KRW (0.2 million USD) during the first three months after the launch. The campaign is still going on, though the Barcodrop sticker has been replaced as with a QR code and the retailers have suspended their participation. The campaign is praised as the best practice in Korea in terms of the way it introduced a new method of donation, engaging package design and the use of social media.

Making a hero and keeping victims silenced

Social semiotic and CDA illuminate what types of relationships are mediated and reproduced through the package and the promotional videos. Furthermore, the findings suggest that unequal power relations are constituted and normalised in the promotion of simple and fun.

There is a picture of an African child on every bottle of Minewater (Figure 1). This visually appealing illustration, drawn by a capable illustrator Seung Yeon Kim, makes the bottle stand out among many other brands. With black skin, bare feet, thick lips and few clothes, it constitutes a stereotyped imagery of an African child. The child is looking up at the water drop overhead and raising two arms towards it, which indicates that how eagerly it is wanted. The facial expression is ambiguous, neither smiling nor crying. According to the producers, the original plan was to use a real picture of an African child for authenticity, but later it was changed to an illustration to alleviate the risk of depicting the child as too helpless (Shin, 2012). This aesthetic technique cleverly deals with the risk of negative or positive stereotyping. However, the first scene of the TV commercial features an African kid wearing

⁸ Selfie: a photograph that one has taken of oneself, typically one taken with a smartphone or webcam and shared via social media (source: Oxford dictionary)

shabby clothes and drinking dirty water, and it overlaps the illustration on the bottle in the next scene. In addition, it does not show any other faces of Other. Here Africa is extremely essentialised into the child on the bottle. The representation has not escaped from the usage of the typical ideal victim (Höijer, 2004).

Figure 1. The bottle design of Minewater Barcodrop

The material characteristics of bottled water enhance the commodifying effect. Since both content (water) and container (PET) are transparent, it looks like hundreds of identical little bodies of African children are displayed on the shelves in the supermarket. This intertextually associates with other successful beverage brands using caricatures of idol stars or character from animations, such as HOT and Pororo⁹ in Korea. In the same way, this beautifully designed African child is the key element of constructing the brand identity, but the latter is different in that it is used as a call for pity.

The representation of Other as vulnerable and helpless actually implicates intended viewers and their enormous power (Hall, 1997). The small child on the 500ml bottle in one's hand,

⁹ HOT is a soft drink brand named after the most popular idol group HOT in late 90s in South Korea and Pororo is a popular South Korean animation series and the drink mainly targets its children audience.

the Barcodrop's location where the child's eyes look, and the text "Share the water with African children" imply the power of consumers. When peeling off the Barcodrop sticker, an image of muddy water turns up, giving the visual illusion that the consumer is responsible for the contaminated water. Furthermore, the campaign film illustrates that the provision of clean water depends on consumers' power (Extract 1) Then, the campaign treats the viewers as moral agents by inviting them to "change the world" by purchasing Minewater. The consumers also become the heroes because they can do it by "simply by scanning the Minewater Barcodrop" (TV commercial, 00:06).

01:07	01:11

Barcodrop is a sticker, to not donate, pill it off, but we are not mean to take away clean water from them.	How does it work?

Extract 1. Campaign film

The campaign perfectly serves the desire of contemporary consumers who are willing to act and to eager to be shown as ethical. The sticker allows consumers to have the choice, whether or not to donate, and it makes them feel good about their choice (Donate through a barcode, 2013). In contrast to the homogenised Other in fixed images such as an illustration, the Self is portrayed in moving images and is represented as various social actors including children, young couples and students. They are illustrated as actively participating in social good and promoting it via Facebook, which is the prominent activity of contemporary consumer culture.

The assumed relationship between the Other and the Self is revealed in Extract 1 and 2, which explains how the campaign works and how to change the world as it claims. A black African child is looking down with tears. He lifts his head after a huge white hand appears from above and puts the water drop on the child's head (Extract 2). It symbolically constructs

the hero and victim relationship in that the lives of the distant Other depend on consumers' finger tips. The simple act of scanning a barcode in the North can save the lives in Africa.

Given that the illustration is a full figure of the African boy and that he is bound on the bottle as a fixed image, the Other is always being observed and waiting for help. The African child on the bottle does not make direct contact with the viewer, yet the viewer can recognise what he demands from his gesture and the eye line. All the viewer needs to do is decide whether or not to use his or her heroic power. At the counter, through the act of scanning the barcode, the mission is instantly completed. As the campaign says, by the scanning “shared water with African children” (Campaign film, 01:22).

00:00	00:02

You can share clean water	with this African child.

Extract 2 TV commercial

In the analysis of the package design and audio-visual material, not only the unequal power relation has been made transparent, but the potentially undesirable effects of altruistic intention have also been observed. Consumers now encounter Africa represented in an illustration attached on a commodity. They can take part in helping Africa by executing consumer power – scanning the barcode. At this moment, the consumer in Korea may have a virtual link with a child in Africa. Yet in effect, it seems more like an interaction with the product.

The campaign shows how the donation can be a playful activity. The water drop once was illustrated as a scarce resource for African children (see Extract 2). Now it becomes the tool for making fun, as fake tears, for example (Figure 2). The campaign promoting simple and fun clearly features post-humanitarian communication which focuses on Self rather than Other. It clearly privileges consumer pleasure. The unequal power relationship becomes

opaque in this entertaining game, and here the act of altruism costs the subordination of Other (Cluley & Dunne, 2012), while solidarity requires the subordination of Self (Hartley, 2010).

Figure 2. The selfies with Barcodrops on face posted on Facebook, campaign film

Donate simply by scanning and play Our games with the Barcodrops

This section discusses the way in which the Barcodrop campaign makes certain social practices acceptable and preferable than others.

The Barcodrop campaign constitutes a typical case of cause-related marketing or collaboration of charity and company. Yet what makes it far from ordinary project is the barcode exclusively for donation. “Donating through a barcode” is the point that the campaigners proudly highlights. As the name “Barcodrop” indicates, the Barcodrop makes the purchase (barcode) of the water for Africa (drop) possible. While the bottle embodies the commodification of water, the Barcodrop embodies the commodification of the cause. This even echoes the Apocalypse which prophesied that no one can buy or sell without the mark of beast.¹⁰ At the very same counter, consumers “buy” water for Africa, just like they “buy” water for themselves. In so doing, the Barcodrop grants barcode new functions, which are

¹⁰ “So that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name” the mark of the beasts” (Revelation 13:17). In conspiracy bible theories, barcodes are often claimed to include the mark of the beasts
(source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_conspiracy_theories#Apocalyptic_prophecies).

donation and sharing. The Barcodrop serves as a simplification device. In both the TV commercial and the campaign film, the scene of scanning the Barcodrop is zoomed-in (Figure 3). The voice-over “You can share clean water with this African child simply by scanning the Minewater Barcodrop” (TV commercial, 00:06) explicitly links sharing and scanning.

Figure 3. Scanning the Barcodrop zoomed-in, TV commercial

While the existing CRM programmes have made doing good by shopping, clicking and running both possible and acceptable, the Barcodrop has literally transformed donation into a shopping item by separating out that portion (be it 10 % or 1%). In this way, the Barcodrop campaign has introduced a new practice into a supermarket, which is making a choice and acting for donation. In addition, the special barcode for donation makes the very act of scanning the barcode an ethical practice. Further, since scanning a barcode is a mundane everyday activity, such a practice is even more reinforced by its banality.

The campaign portrays the Barcodrop as the new norm to practice morality and the direction of the future by borrowing the power of news media (Extract 3). It complements the craftiness of the method by presenting numbers which are seemingly neutral and objective. The gap between 0.9% (the response rate for a traditional campaign) and 51% (the response rate for the Barcodrop campaign) is huge enough to paralyse our logical sense and perceive the traditional campaigns as useless. Yet, one numerical indicator cannot capture the whole complexity. Again, the campaign evaluates the traditional campaigns as “serous and dull” and suggests a “simple and fun” way of doing good (Campaign film, 01:41).

Extract 3. Campaign film

Simple action is constantly suggested as an appropriate and ideal way of doing good in the campaign. The action needs to be as simple as one scanning or one Like or running a mile because contemporary consumers are busy. The “simple” is favoured not only in the proposed action, but also in communicating the impact it makes. Quick switches between scenes from the African child drinking polluted water, the scanning of the Barcodrop, and the group of smiling African children only provide a simple linear frame of the issue. Just as many other campaigns which focus on the effectiveness of the fund, there is no space for explaining the complexities behind. The contributions that such simplification has made are worth recognition. It provided an easy way for the public to participate in the cause in their everyday lives. Nonetheless, it is clear that there is no such magic that the water problem is solved immediately by scanning a special barcode, but the scanning is designed to make one feel like an instant hero. Furthermore, the emphasis on the speed and simplicity, achieved by a detachable barcode sticker, risks engendering the imbalanced power relations discussed earlier.

Another effective strategy employed in this campaign is gamification. The increasing incorporation of fun elements in the humanitarian campaigns clearly indicates the shift of focus from Other to Self. In particular, many online charitable movements, including the very recent ALS Ice Bucket Challenge which is occupying Facebook news feed seem to resemble games rather than public service campaigns. Such campaigns wilfully serve contemporary consumers who are fundamentally narcissistic (Clulely & Dunne 2012).

Such low-intensity fun campaigns are certainly effective in rapidly bringing wider attention to particular social issues, compared to those traditional “serious and dull” approaches. This study is not intended to evaluate which approach is more effective or more suitable for the cause. It is not to say if the participants are taking part in the fun activity for the cause or more for fun, or both. However, the analysis captures the fact that such playful activities are of and for the Self happening in a space far away from where Others are residing. Here, the playful activity is actually divorced from the cause and circulates exclusively among those who can participate in the game by either sharing the selfies or watching them. Therefore, the combination of entertainment and altruism are potentially dangerous because it may be gradually transformed as entertainment for Ourselves with Other’s suffering as prerequisite.

The participants of these socially inclined games seem to be willing to be exploited as mediators for the campaign and the brand. In the name of being socially-conscious, consumers are transformed into faithful content creators and sharers and offer free marketing to the brand by posting pictures with the Barcodrop and the bottle on their blogs and timelines. Such forms of activities which support social causes in an easy and entertaining way, although often being accused of slacktivism or clicktivism, increasingly accepted as a means of solidarity especially among young citizens. In the real physical world, consumers are the vehicles carrying the Minewater in their hands. The use of an illustration instead of a realistic picture also comes out of the consideration for being more naturally adorable in consumers’ hands (Donate through a barcode, 2013). In this respect, the Barcodrop campaign has not only made the product calls for humanitarian action, but also engages its participants to convey their message in a particular way.

Post-humanitarian aesthetic: its ability to normalise expansion of corporate power

This section attempts to associate the Barcodrop campaign with a broader context. The analysis suggests that the campaign trumpets corporate and market ideology at the expense of solidarity and humanity. The adopted communicative strategies effectively conceal such ideological work and prevent the audience from understanding the complex circumstances around the issue.

The campaign film begins by presenting the fact that 23% of the population is drinking “bad” polluted water. Right after that, Minewater shows up as “good” water. The good Minewater is suggested as a powerful force which can do something against the bad water. It does that by inviting consumers who have “good intention” but are “lazy”. The film portrays the audience as moral agents but at the same time problematise their laziness. Thus, the solution provided is actually to tackle the laziness of consumers while not addressing the causes of water problem in Africa at all. In this respect, the campaign relies on self-reflection rather than emotional engagement with distant others. The justification for acting is completely silenced (Chouliaraki, 2012). It also reproduces an imperial discourse that the lives of the Global South are dependent on the lifestyles of Global North. In addition, as discussed, the campaign celebrates the heroic power of consumers who can change the world by simply scanning the Barcodrop. This particular way of participating in the cause is justified by a simple comparison of response rate “0.9% vs. 51%”. The campaign actively promotes the superiority of their solution and asks consumers to just enjoy it. It parallels the increasing intervention of private companies in social issues and development initiatives.

The idea that such a global political issue like water provision can be narrowed down to the problem of consumer choice in the North needs challenging. As the campaign claims, polluted water is bad, but “bad water” is not only about pollution. More worthy of attention are the stories behind, including bad governance, bad production and distribution. The campaign says it is “Done” when the consumer gets a Barcodrop scanned at the counter (Campaign film, 01:22). In effect, it completely erases the root causes and chronic ills that have produced the situation that “23% people are suffering from bad polluted water”. Instead, as mentioned earlier, it focuses people’s attention on their own laziness and leaves them happily unaware of the real problems.

In fact, the water issue has never lacked attention, and it has always been the most urgent issue among others. It has also been the most popular cause in which organisations and individuals have invested. The reason is not only because the water is so essential to anyone, but also because people are misguided into believing that the solution is simple and the result is clearly visible. This misperception is largely attributed to the practices of water-related humanitarian appeals and their representation in media. The proposed solutions in the appeals are various ways of delivering clean water in a short period. Typical formulas are “26

boreholes benefiting 25,800 people have been drilled ” (Team & Team¹¹), “Help us bring clean water to 100,000 people in the Sahel” (Charity Water¹²), “Just \$1 can provide 40 days of clean water” (Unicef¹³). The water initiatives seem to promote immediacy and a number-driven communication style. Furthermore, according to my experience working for an NGO which specialises in water and sanitation, most projects are necessarily based on a short-term. The water provision can be a competitive cause because individual donors or a group of donors can donate precisely for one pump or one borehole, which makes the result visible. In Korea, Danbi (means Sweet Rain)¹⁴, a TV programme, selectively sponsored and visited water project sites in the Third World also contributed to creating an illusion. In part, the water projects are favoured in the media because of their capacity to produce dramatic scenes, like the moment water spouts from a borehole.

The contribution of the Barcodrop campaign in raising awareness and funds for the water problem in Africa has to be credited. Yet it needs to be pointed out that its contribution is conditioned by the success of the brand in the market, which requires a consumer to choose Minewater and scan the Barcodrop as a prerequisite. The connection of donation and consumption exposes its fundamental weakness and nature. Furthermore, the vision of “changing the world” can be no more be seen as anything but another marketing ploy.

In Korea, TV advertising for bottled-water was banned until 2009. Advertising on cable channels was permitted in 2009, and later in 2013, terrestrial channels were also opened for bottled-water brands. As a result, the competition in the premium bottled water market has been intense in the last five years. The new packaging of Barcodrop apparently paved a new way to success for Minewater which had suffered from sluggish sales. According to the campaign film, the sales volume went up by 244% during the campaign period compared to the previous year and only half of the Barcodrops were scanned. The rest would be deemed as excessive profit for the company.

¹¹ Team & Team Newsletter vol. 17, February 2014

¹² Charity Water Donate page, <https://www.charitywater.org/donate/>

¹³ Unicef Tap Project, <http://www.unicefusa.org/mission/survival/water/tap-project>

¹⁴ Danbi, which means Sweet Rain, was aired in 2009 and 2010 on MBC the South Korean terrestrial TV channel

A series of scenes (Extract 4) in the campaign film shows that the Minewater bottle is changing its package from previous one to Barcodrop one. In a way, it metaphorically yet clearly demonstrates the nature and the limitation of the commercial approaches. The very convenience that transforms the product to a different one by simply changing the package allows many bottled water brands actively conduct ethical marketing (Brei & Böhm, 2011).

00:43	00:46	00:50

Minewater is changing.	So far every product in the world has only one barcode.	But Minewater has two. Introducing the world's first 2 barcode water.

Extract 4. Campaign film

There can be various approaches to solving global social issues. Serious and dull is necessary and equally simple and fun is appreciated. It is a good move that corporations tend to take on social responsibilities. Nonetheless, the way the campaign tells a story leads to suspicion about the consequences and support Brei & Böhm's (2014) claim that CSR is an ideology makeup of consumerist capitalism taking Other's suffering as opportunities

The communicative strategy of Barcodrop was effective in masking its ideological work and real political issues. Its communicative materials including the package, TV commercial and campaign film, have the dual functions of conveying a humanitarian message and advertising the product. This mixed genre has a synergy effect in that the product has an ethical makeup and the cause is communicated in a cool manner. Investigating the campaign film, it constructs an ideal story structured as "Situation → Problem → Solution → Result". The highly sanitised messages, voice-over and sound show how the simplifying effect has been enhanced. This certain version of the story is communicated in a convincing and interesting way by adopting new aesthetic skills which Chouliaraki terms 'playful textualities' (Chouliaraki, 2010) including graphic animations and abstract art. This style is differentiated from conventional campaigns, which are often accused of causing compassion fatigue.

Fictional images, infographic and simple texts particularly convey the intended messages in an intimate and comfortable way. The corporate ideology and embedded inequality become invisible. Such CSR campaigns with advanced aesthetic techniques seem to work as a tool for legitimatising and expanding corporate power (Hanlon & Fleming, 2009), rather than function as qualified moral educators.

Situation	Problem	Solution	Result

23% of people are suffering from drinking bad polluted water.	Even though we have good intentions, good behavior is not always easy, because we are lazy.	At the store, just grab a Minewater, scan the barcodrop. Done. You've just shared water with African children.	In the first two weeks, 51% participated in the sharing.

Table 1. Storyline of the campaign film

The Barcodrop can be a remedy to consumer's laziness at best but sustainable solution to the cause. Critical examination of the campaign incorporating relevant economic and social contexts suggests that post-humanitarian style "fail to educate or inspire sustained commitment from audiences (Scott, 2014, p.157).

CONCLUSION

The entertaining campaigns have apparently been effective in raising awareness and fund. Such campaigns provide various creative ways for socially conscious contemporary consumers to take part in the cause. The gamification and simplification of the action might be out of good intention to help more people do good in everyday life. It would not be right to blame those who share their selfies with Barcodrops or their own ALS Ice Bucket challenge videos. They deserve to be proud of supporting social causes and promoting it in interesting ways. It is not the point to say one form is preferable to another. However, it needs to be

questioned if such over-emphasis on Self costs the silence of Other and to which direction our understanding of solidarity and humanity is transformed. In the Korean context specifically, the way citizens achieve solidarity should not resemble the way it achieved economic growth which was driven by numbers and the sacrifice of equality. One might say these questions throw cold water on the spread of good donation culture, but we need to stop and be reflexive.

The aim of this study was to critically examine the potential dangers and undesirable consequences of self-centred entertaining humanitarian campaigns. The case of Barcodrop reveals struggles in humanitarian appeals driven by commercial forces, the nature of contemporary consumers, as well as embedded power relations and ideology. This study has situated the case in the intersections of post-humanitarianism, corporate social responsibility, contemporary consumer culture and bottled water. The combined approach of social semiotic and critical discourse analysis has been adopted to illuminate opaque power relations and ideology embedded in a stylish campaign equipped with post-humanitarian aesthetic techniques.

The study has suggested that the unequal relationship of the heroic Self and the vulnerable Other is reproduced through the campaign. The promotion of simple and fun reinforces narcissistic nature of contemporary consumers, which requires the subordination of others. The proposed action seems engaging and interactive, but it only constitutes the relationship between Self and the commodity, not the distant Other. In addition, the Barcodrop campaign appears to normalise the consumer choice as an ethical practice by explicitly linking scanning and sharing. It also transforms the act of altruism into playful activities while excluding distant sufferers, which makes participants loyal mediators of the brand rather than the cause. Furthermore, post-humanitarian aesthetic techniques effectively prevent the audience from understanding the complexities around water issues and legitimatise corporate ideology at the expense of solidarity. In this sense, corporations fail to be reliable as moral educators who inspire sustained commitment.

The findings of this study are based on the analysis of one particular case with relatively small amount of data. Although it allowed the in-depth analysis of the case in multiple aspects, it would also have been meaningful to compare and contrast multiple cases in different countries and time periods. In addition, due to the inherent nature of qualitative

methods, the readings of the data would have been affected by my own political and sociocultural positions, as well as personal experiences. It calls for future research on the reception side of the campaign to fully understand the phenomenon. Despite the limitations, this study has opened up critical debate in the Korean development field, which is mostly celebratory about post-humanitarian style. The findings from a case study of the Barcodrop and the methodological framework employed for analysis would be the basis of further critical studies on other cases in the field.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Guide to social semiotic analysis

Dimension	Question
Representational meaning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What or who are depicted? • What / who is excluded from this representation? • How the visual participants (people, places, things) are depicted? (including eyeline, gesture, hierarchy) • How does the vector create narrative structure? • Who are playing the active roles and who are the passive and being looked? • What meanings are implied through the signs represented? • What is the main discourse laying behind these meanings? • What knowledges are being deployed? • Intertextuality: What other images and discourses reinforce and legitimise this representation?
Interactive meaning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Point of view: what is the vantage point of the image and where does it position the viewer? • Who are intended viewers? • With who are we identified as viewers? • What meaning does it produce and what attitude action does it suggest to the viewer? • Contact: How do the participants in the image make contact with the viewer? How demanding is it? (How direct? What does it demand? Or offer information?) • Distance: How close the distance between viewer and the visual participants (close-up/ long-shot or full figure) • What relationship is created between the viewer and the participants in the image?
Compositional meaning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Layout: How are the components of the image arranged? • Framing: framing connects or disconnects elements (using contrasts of color, liners, space) • Information value: the placement of the visual elements (centre/ margins fore/background, left/ right, top/ bottom) • Salience: Some elements are more eye-catching than others? What does stand out and how? (use of colour, spatial organisation, layout) • What genre does it constitute? What are conventions? • Directions

Appendix 2. Categorisation for critical discourse analysis

RQ	Category	Sub-category
1	Representation, identity, subjectivity and relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representation of Self (consumers, lazy, ethical, powerful) • Representation of Other (child, displayed, vulnerable) • Relationship between Self and Other • Relationship between Self and Minewater • Relationship between Minewater and Other
2	Social practices and norms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scanning and sharing • Simple and easy • Fun • Conventional ways vs. Barcodrop way • Consumption and ethical practice • Consumer as mediator • Bad/Good values • Lifestyle
3	Ideology, understanding and framing of the issue, and world views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate and market forces (results, numbers, effectiveness) • Problem and solution (what have been salient/silenced) • Solidarity

Appendix 3-1. TV commercial transcript

00:00	00:02	00:04

You can share clean water	with this African child.	
00:06	00:09	00:13

Simply by scanning the Minewater 'Barcodrop'.		Little water drop changing the world, Minewater.

Appendix 3-2. Campaign film transcript

00:00	00:03	00:08
In the world		
In the world,	23% of people are suffering from drinking bad polluted water.	Then, there is Minewater,
00:09	00:13	00:18
which is good, purified and full of minerals.	Yes it's time to show how good Minewater is.	Our mission, to be a good water to share with 23% of the world.
00:20	00:25	00:28
However, call to action is not easy at all.	89% of people said they would donate,	but only 0.9% donated.
00:30	00:35	00:39
Intention ≠ Behavior	We are lazy!	Let's make a sharing SUPER easy!
Even though we have good intentions, good behavior is not always easy,	because we are lazy.	Let's make a sharing super easy.
00:42	00:43	00:46

Idea.	Minewater is changing.	So far every product in the world has only one barcode.
00:50	00:55	00:58

But Minewater has two. Introducing the world's first 2 barcode water.	We call this a BarcodeDrop,	barcode for donating water to Africa.
01:00	01:07	01:11

With this 10% BarcodeDrop, 300 African children have access to clean drinking water.	BarcodeDrop is a sticker, to not donate, pill it off, but we are not mean to take away clean water from them.	How does it work?
01:16	01:18	01:22

It's simple!	At the store, just grab a Minewater, scan the barcodeDrop,	Done. You've just shared water with African children.
01:24	01:28	01:32

Let's see what the differences we can make.	In the first two weeks, 51% participated in the sharing.	Sales volume went up by 244%.

01:36	01:38	01:41

This idea has eventually changed	the paradigm of CSR.	Not serious and dull, but now simple and fun.
01:44	01:47	01:48

Barcodrop photo-sharing is now booming	via social media.	And now it's the hot trend in Korea.
01:50	01:54	01:55

Minewater became a brand that cares about people	and people care about.	Yes, this small 2-barcode water is changing the world.
01:59

Drop by drop.		