



## Healthy Snacks: Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis of Traditional Food Brand Corporate Storytelling

Olsen Ottman<sup>1\*</sup>, Hari Adi Rahmad<sup>2</sup>, Rival Yuhendri<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim, Norway

<sup>2</sup>STKIP Meranti – Universitas Negeri Padang, Indonesia

<sup>3</sup>Universiti Malaysia Kelantan, Malaysia

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### ABSTRACT

This research analyzes how a snack manufacturer uses corporate storytelling on social media to promote healthy eating. The new public health period has developed a market for healthy or well-being-related items. Many firms have emerged to give healthy food options. Social semiotic theory and multimodal critical discourse analysis ask: How do these organizations use corporate stories to make themselves seem superior to their competitors? How do they market healthy, appealing products? How does this marketing encourage healthier product choices? One healthy snack company's corporate story reveal that health discourse colonizes healthy eating for marketing and branding. These companies also claim abstract, symbolic, and commercial health. These company stories may mislead consumers who want to eat healthy into eating less healthful goods.

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### 1. Introduction

Following the conclusion of the COVID-19 period, the most significant thing that will be on the post-COVID-19 agenda in many countries across the world is to work toward improving the people's diets and, as a result of this, the health of such populations. It is regarded as how one can live a healthy lifestyle and tackle the ever-increasing problem of being overweight and obese (Gaur et al., 2020; Kliment et al., 2021; Mandlik et al., 2021). According to the research conducted in the past, this may be accomplished by placing individual responsibility for one's health care (Martindale et al., 2020; Király et al., 2020; Overgaauw et al., 2020). Now, in this so-called new era of public health (Paakkari & Okan, 2020; Ribeiro-Navarrete et al., 2021; Hamilton et al., 2021), health is something that individuals attain through the adoption of self-care routines (Fragoso et al., 2019; Bermejo-Martins et al., 2021; Lawler, 2021) and through adopting an active lifestyle in general. Therefore, individuals are the ones who are responsible

<sup>1</sup>Corresponding author:

Email addresses: [ottman.olsen@ntnu.no](mailto:ottman.olsen@ntnu.no)

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for their health because they implement self-care routines (Butler et al., 2019; Grosjean et al., 2022; Janamian et al., 2022) .

However, the concept of health does not have a unified existence (Sbihi et al., 2019; de Haan et al., 2020; Benis et al., 2021); consequently, deciding which foods are healthy to ingest is not a straightforward endeavor (Polivy et al., 2020; Rao et al., 2021). Despite this, most nutrition researchers may have a consensus regarding the categories of foods that should not be ingested in excessive amounts. Foods that fall into this category include those that have been processed, beverages that are high in sugar content, foods that are based on trans fats, and foods that have added salt and sugar. In addition, most official dietary standards advise following a varied and balanced diet with abundant fresh fruits and vegetables (Herforth et al., 2019; Goh et al., 2020; Martini et al., 2021). However, it is difficult to define the specific nutritional components that contribute to health, and there is no consensus regarding the specific components of a diet that is healthy.

Furthermore, there is no agreement regarding the best way to define the specific nutritional components contributing to health. Additionally, it is impossible to ignore the fact that there is a considerable financial stake in nutrition research, which may impact the study process and how this research drives food marketing. This fact may affect the consumption of unhealthy foods. In addition, past studies have shown that people's views of the healthiness of food vary based on characteristics such as gender, level of education, socioeconomic status, age, and personal experience. These influences can be found in a person's environment.

Like any other form of consumption, food choices carry a richness of potential cultural meanings and ways to adapt to lifestyles. The consumption of food, much like the wearing of expensive clothing and the application of designer fragrances, is a method through which an individual can communicate their status and sense of belonging to a specific group. As a result, companies that manufacture food can convey that they provide healthy options, an essential component of a fulfilling way of life. The conversation that we had about food illuminated what it means to consume food that is both nutritious and mouthwatering. Products that claim to be organic, natural, or high in protein might be markers of healthy eating and may fit a particular way of life better than other products. This form of signaling is important for the marketers of healthy snacks because it provides a mechanism to identify these foods with cultural values and lifestyles to accommodate particular consumption habits. Put another way, and it is a strategy ensuring consumers will purchase their stuff.

## 2. Method

The social semiotics and MCDA theoretical views are used in this investigation (Mosqueda Ramírez, 2021; Tomlinson, 2021). The study of social semiotics focuses on the nature of the connection that exists between semiotic material, political ideology, and authoritative discourse. This is the central concern of the field. It is generally accepted that the selection of semiotic content functions as a channel via which power is transmitted and exercised. His method analyzes the use of semiotic material in forming worldviews; for instance, how some choices implant assumptions that are accepted as true and support a particular ideology. Specifically,

In our inquiry, we are operating under the presumption that social practice can be regarded as a re-contextualization of discourse. This viewpoint theorizes how particular social activities can become "embodied" in representations of those behaviors (Kruzan & Won, 2019). During this exercise, there is a possibility that certain areas of social activity will not be discussed or will undergo transformation. Some qualities can also be added, such as why particular acts are legal or the objective of those activities. Consequently, re-contextualizations produce a

version of reality that is faulty concerning a significant number of the actual particulars of social practice.

When describing a social practice in written or visual form, one is invariably required to make judgements concerning the acceptable way this should be done. To put this another way: Therefore, a variety of semiotic materials will be chosen depending on the purpose, and the analysis of the choices will lead to the production of this result. Our investigation focuses on the possibilities among the linguistic options and how company stories reflect individuals, activities, locations, times, traits, and appropriateness-related factors.

The sample includes one micro, small, and medium-sized businesses that, overall, sell so-called "healthy" snacks. The text is presented on the pages that tell the company's story. On the other hand, the content discovered on social media platforms is not limited to a single page, nor is it restricted to a particular sequence (Slater et al., 2020). Customers, when browsing MSME profiles, can easily browse between content that is situated on the same page as well as content that is available on the following pages. Therefore, we consider the varied semiotic content used throughout the website, particularly that which appears on pages that contribute to the overall story of the organization. When researching websites, one of the most important concepts to remember is integrated design (Danish et al., 2020). These stories contain tidbits of history, information on the items that are the subject of the conversation, and descriptions of the practices and beliefs the organization upholds. These components are divided into numerous sections, which may be contained on a single page or spread out over multiple pages. Utilizing the semiotic resources in such a way that they complement one another allows the overall narrative to have a coherence that would not have been possible otherwise. As a result, information that has been shattered, symbolic, and extracted from its context can be presented as logical without clearly describing the links, causation, and sequences between the individual pieces of information. This is because the information can be presented as if it has been logically constructed.

### 3. Result

The discussion that follows is arranged thematically. In the first part of this, we will talk about the discourse that some of these MSMEs have developed strategically. After this, an explanation of how the re-contextualization of business supports this discourse as extremely genuine, uncomplicated, and kind comes next. In the end, the investigation focuses on how these businesses convey to customers information on the nutritional value of their wares. The accounts uncovered through our investigation shed light on the charitable motivations of businesses and their aspirations to assume responsibility and contribute to the improvement of society, the environment, and public health. In addition, these businesses would appear to adhere to a, though unspoken, code of conduct that differentiates them from the more established businesses in the food industry.

"When it comes to food and processing, our Beronok farmers put in just as much effort as we do here at Kripik Beronok, and we care just as much about the flavor of our chips as we do about the future. [...] ... These farmers are aware that the beronok, which is closely related to sea cucumbers and one of the animals with the highest levels of nutrients, will always be kept. In addition, Beronok is a type of sea cucumber with potential weight loss applications. So let's stick to our diet with some Beronok chips!

They can convey, through abstraction, both concern for the product (and, by extension, concern for the consumers) as well as concern for the environment by employing a rhetorical trope such as "we care as much about the taste of our chips as we do about the future, and so do our farmers squeak when it comes to food and processing it." This is primarily because the future is something that cannot be experienced through the sentence. The statement served a symbolic purpose in that it was a way of conveying the idea that they desired a wealthy future. This was a way that the phrase performed its symbolic purpose. Because the mental processes of caring are not tied to any material results for the environment's future, the topic of what it is appropriate to think about and care about is moot. While these systems do an excellent job of assigning certain positive characteristics to companies, they hide that caring for the future and the environment are exceedingly difficult issues.

The advertising brand and product are displayed in this area of the first graphic. Naturally, consumers have the impression that the marketed product is one that the MSME brand itself produces (Fig. 1). This environmentally responsible method is then graphically idealized by a landscaped field that is emblazoned with the words "100% Halal," which do not only convey the ideal future that is being constructed for its Muslim audience but also evokes feelings of melancholy and longing for a simpler time in Muslim history. The images have been considerably interwoven into the overall design, which helps to inspire optimism while also provoking anxiety for the future resulting from this kind of food intake. In addition, the design indicates that this cuisine has a great deal of promise when set against an advertising backdrop that reaches over the advertising horizon. It does it within a spectacular frame. This is something that the design accomplishes. The narrative uses and reproduces notions by adopting this form of cohesive design. Consequently, fundamental morality is communicated abstractly and symbolically within these contexts.

The story of the sea cucumber chips *beronok* is another illustration that contributes to the widespread misunderstanding surrounding health. According to this story, the sea cucumber boasts many exceptional properties; as a result, chips made from sea cucumbers are expected to be beneficial and eventually evolve into a cuisine high in nutrients. This claim's line of reasoning contains many gaping loopholes. Hence it cannot possibly be true. To begin, there is a possibility that sea cucumbers contain various compounds not found in any other aquatic animal. Some of these substances may not be beneficial for the human body. Second, it is not quite apparent whether it would be advantageous to have a greater number of components already present in the human body. Third, even if the drugs are broken down into their tiniest components, the human body will always include some microcomponents that are advantageous to humans and already have a home there. Fourth, the components that are advantageous to humans and that may be found in the human body can also be found in various materials.

On the other hand, the human body has these components. In conclusion, if one follows this line of reasoning regarding products, almost any food might be considered healthy. People allergic to seafood are one example of those sensitive to foods typically considered beneficial for their consumption. On the other hand, people who are allergic to compounds generally thought of as healthy also have a sensitivity to the ingredients in question. How can they ensure that the product will not trigger allergic reactions in any population members, not even some of them? It is an important term, but there is no logical rationale or justification behind it; instead, it connotes the general and the extremely imprecise idea of health in these stories. Despite its significance, there is no logical rationale or justification behind it.

Images are used to provide information about the manufacturing processes and product quality in this account (Lüdeke-Freund, 2020). On the other hand, the visual gives the impression that things are straightforward and reduces them to their most elemental bits. This suggests that the manufacturing process is designed so every component can be coded, measured, and

overseen carefully to ensure quality output. The meaning of these icons inside the visual is not quite evident, yet, the visual conveys a sense of straightforwardness. The customer is not provided with any information by these symbols that would enable him to judge the quality of the chips based on their nutritional content. It is unclear how combining the two parts could achieve the desired result. Despite this, it is not essential to understand what each of these emblems represents in terms of communication. Customers can create a correlation between the globe and the leafy fork, as well as certain natural and environmentally beneficial implications, as a result of positioning those pictures on social media. One interpretation of integrated design is that it is an example of how the marketization concept might be put into practice (Engen, 2019).

#### 4. Discussion

A market for products marketed as being healthy or linked to welfare has been formed due to the increased emphasis on health (Wood et al., 2021). The food trend that is spreading at the fastest rate right now is being advertised as wonderful and healthy snacks (such as granola bars), and this is the case in many parts of the world (Irwansyah et al., 2022). This consumer market has recently seen the introduction of new companies, such as Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME), which are beginning to compete for customers. These businesses, along with many other organizations that are active in the modern world, are coming into their own by building a story that is singular to their organization. These stories are often told in commercials for a variety of different businesses. They are painstakingly crafted using a variety of semiotic materials, including language (Mulyaningsih et al., 2022), visuals, symbols, and colors, to establish a brand identity (Rahmat et al., 2022), differentiate the companies from traditional food manufacturers, and give the impression that their products are both enjoyable and beneficial to one's health. In this study, we use social semiotics theory and multimodal critical discourse analysis (Van Dijk, 1993; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2012) to investigate the organizations' narratives as mentioned above, with a specific emphasis on the means by which this positioning is accomplished. To be more specific, we investigate the many ways in which the companies compete in the market. How do these companies use the stories that they talk about their company to position themselves as a more attractive option than the ones that their competitors provide? How can they provide the impression to the people who buy their products that they are enticing and healthy for them to consume? How exactly may this marketing style assist customers in making more informed decisions regarding the products they buy that are better for their health? The need for nutritious snacks is growing in many different parts of the world, which is reflected in the findings of this research, which include one narrative from existing micro, small, and medium-sized firms (MSMEs).

During the transition to the new normal, a modern public health system and a particular morality emerged. This morality includes guidelines about how individuals should live their lives and the actions they should take (Brittain et al., 2006). As a result, health has emerged as a powerful symbol, or even a metaphor, for qualities such as self-control, self-discipline, and willpower, and, ultimately, being a decent and effective citizen (Overgaauw et al., 2020). But on the other hand, people who do not follow these health norms are typically considered as lacking in moral strength and having a lifestyle that is not ideal (Husband, 2020). When this happens, harmful dietary habits become signs of a lack of strength and a lack of ambition, and lethargy.

Images play a significant role in conveying information about the quality of the product and the processes involved in its production in this account. Nevertheless, the presentation makes things appear straightforward and reduces them to their most elemental parts. This suggests that the manufacturing process is designed so that each step of the process can be codified, measured, and carefully managed to achieve desired outcomes. The meaning of these icons inside the visual is not quite evident, yet, the visual conveys a sense of straightforwardness. The customer is not

provided with any information by these symbols that would enable him to judge the quality of the chips based on their nutritional content. It is not clear how the combination of two components may provide a result; nonetheless, it is not crucial to comprehend what these icons stand for in terms of the communication process. This is because the combination of two components could produce a result. Customers can create the connection, as a result of the positioning of those visuals, between the globe and the leafy fork and some natural and environmentally good message. The concept of commercialization may be said to be exemplified by this integrated design. Based on the analysis findings, it may be further deduced that the MSMEs in question possesses the wholesome quality that is asserted to be theirs. Our argument is that the ideas of healthy living communicated in these company stories are not concrete but symbolic and geared toward profit. The best that can be said is that these stories provide no relevant indicator of the health of the products in question. In the worst-case scenario, they can cause consumers who aim to eat properly to make decisions that result in them ingesting less healthful items. They merely illustrate the existing balance of neoliberal capitalist forces, contrary to what the mega-food firms claim and contrary to what other large corporations assert.

If one follows this line of thinking about different kinds of products, nearly any form of food might be considered healthy. People who suffer from seafood allergies are an example of those who have a sensitivity to foods that are generally regarded as good for consumption. On the other hand, those individuals who are allergic to healthy compounds also have a sensitivity to the chemicals that make up those healthy substances. How can they ensure that the product will not trigger allergic reactions in any population members, even if only some of them? It is an important term, but there is no logical rationale or justification behind it; instead, it connotes the general and the extremely imprecise idea of health in these stories. Despite its significance, there is no logical rationale or justification behind it. Images play a significant role in conveying information about the quality of the product and the processes involved in its production in this account.

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## 5. Conclusion

In light of the investigation findings, it is possible to see further that these MSMEs possess the healthy quality that is asserted to be theirs. Our argument is that the ideas of healthy living communicated in these company stories are not concrete but symbolic and geared toward profit. The best that can be said is that these stories provide no relevant indicator of the health of the products in question. In the worst-case scenario, they can cause consumers who aim to eat properly to make decisions that result in them ingesting less healthful items. They merely illustrate the existing balance of neoliberal capitalist forces, contrary to what the mega-food firms claim and contrary to what other large corporations assert.

## Declaration of Conflicting Interest

The authors must state that there is no conflict of interest concerning the publication of this paper.

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## About the author

**Olsen Ottman** is a Researcher in Language and Linguistics. Her areas of interest are critical discourse analysis, corpus linguistics, and digital humanities. Email: [ottman.olsen@ntnu.no](mailto:ottman.olsen@ntnu.no)

**Hari Adi Rahmad** is a Ph.D Student in sports nutrition from Universitas Negeri Padang, Indonesia. Email: [hariadirahmad03@gmail.com](mailto:hariadirahmad03@gmail.com)

**Rival Yuhendri** is a Ph.D in Biotechnology from Universiti Malaysia Kelantan, Malaysia. Email: [rivalyuhendri@gmail.com](mailto:rivalyuhendri@gmail.com)