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**Advertising Greenness in China: A Critical Discourse
Analysis of the Corporate Online Advertising Discourse**

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DECLARATION

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Abstract

A growing number of companies, both multinationals and local firms, have begun to adopt the idea of sustainability development, and develop and market their green products/services with green advertising in developing countries. However, in the context of China where the idea of commercial environmentalism or green consumption is emerging and transported from the West, it is not clear that how the green consumption is advocated and how consumption practices are connected to environmental protection, and how the meaning of green consumption is constructed by firms operating in China.

This study explores the Internet as a rich text for environmental marketing by analyzing the ways firms showcase details of their green products/services, production methods, business philosophy and other facets of their environmental practices and values. The online promotional information can be seen as corporate green advertising. Focused on the advertisings from corporate websites, and through the analytical framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (e.g., Fairclough, 1992; 1995(a) (b); Wodak and Chilton, 2005), this study presents how a number of environmental conscious firms in China are portraying and promoting their environmental responsible image and green products/services, and aims to examine what firms are really telling and how they are discursively constructing corporate “greenness”.

Based on the analyses of green advertisements from websites of four case companies (two MNCs in China: General Electric in China, Unilever in China, and two Chinese local firms: BYD automobile, and Landsea Real Estate), the study suggests that corporate green advertising discourse plays an active role in defining “reality” of

greenness and imbuing meanings of consumption into environmentalism, as well as in achieving the hegemonic construction of corporate greenness. In addition, the corporate greenness is anthropocentric and embraces consumerist and post-materialist values. Instead of endorsing the environmentalism which appeals for a change of the current over-consumption lifestyle in capitalist development, the corporate green advertising strategically integrates lineages from green discourse of ecological modernization and political discourse of neoliberalism.

In addition to similarities, dissimilarities existing between discourses from MNCs' and Chinese local firms are identified in two aspects: greenness integration and greenness level. The differences in advertising discourses derive from both organizational resources and firms' embedded economic, historical, and social-cultural contexts. Such differences prove the mutual constitutive or dialectical relationship between language and society and develop the argument that although firms play active role in constructing discourse, and green advertising discourse can be seen as corporations' discursive approach to achieve environmental governance, their discourse is nevertheless constrained by both organizational internal and external influences.

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“The English language has never been greener; the Earth has never been more polluted.”

Brad Benz, 2000

Chapter 1 : Research Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces this research aimed at studying corporate environmental (green) advertising. Firstly, the background to the research is provided, and its objectives, purposes and significance are identified. Secondly, the research questions are presented and the methodological approach of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is briefly outlined. In the end of this chapter the structure of the thesis is described.

1.2 Background of Research

Undoubtedly, environmental ideas are now playing an important role in society (Hajer, 1995). Public concerns over environmental issues have produced a dramatic increase in the number of “green” or environmental friendly product introductions (Drumwright, 1994). Scholars (e.g., Ilinitch and Schaltegger, 1995; Porter and Kramer, 2006; 2011; Prahalad and Hammond, 2002) argue that firms leverage their green products and environmental practices to gain economic benefits and market position; “becoming green” is seen as a way to sustain their business. Furthermore, many companies are engaged in environmental marketing (Bahn and Wright, 2001). For example, General Electric has allocated a substantial portion of its \$90 million corporate advertising budget to express and broadcast its eco-stance; its biggest marketing push since the launch of its “Imagination at Work” positioning in 2003 (Creamer, 2005:7).

In this background, corporate green advertisings emerge to manifest the combination of the globalized “green movement” and corporate marketing. “Green advertising” is defined as commercial advertising that uses an environmental theme to promote products, services, or corporate public images (Banerjee et al., 1995). The term

“green” implies an underlying concern for preservation of the environment and a noninvasive lifestyle (Iyer and Banerjee, 1992). In developing economies such as China, marketers also begin to make effort to target the increasingly lucrative green segment of the Chinese population (Chan, 2000; Dai et al., 2011). Like their counterparts in the West, these “green pioneer firms” rely on environmental advertising to communicate the eco-friendly aspects of their green products (Dai, 2010a, b).

While green advertising can be seen as a comparatively new phenomenon, especially in developing economies such as China, advertising has long been playing an important part in all types of contemporary media. There have been criticisms against commercial advertising and believing that advertising poses a serious threat to the environment (e.g., Jhally, 2000; Löwy, 2010). For example, Löwy (2010) argues that advertising fuels the fetishism of commodity production and plays an essential role in the production of consumerist demand by inventing false “needs” and by stimulating the formation of compulsive consumption habits, totally violating the conditions for maintenance of planetary ecological equilibrium.

However, green advertising, by claiming its promoted brand or product as “green”, seems to have removed its negative environmental impacts. But a growing number of studies (e.g., Alcott, 2005; Bäckstrand and Lövbrand, 2006; Banerjee, 2003; Böhm and Brei, 2008; Carvalho, 2001) have suggested, it is still not a fact that business has become reconciled with the environment. Therefore commercial green advertisings are likely to cover the conflict between environmental protection and business production and consumption. And the corporate green advertising discourse connects consumerism to environmentalism and seems to deliver a particular kind of green delusion to consumers.

To be more specific in this research context – China, it has been observed that green advertising is rising phenomenally, despite it being at its beginning stage in this emerging economy (Dai, 2010a). As scholars (e.g., Leiserowitz et al., 2006; Thompson, 2005; Whalley, 2008) argue, environmental concern, in addition to freedom, liberty, and human rights, is becoming an important pillar of global citizenship and a more pressing global issue in addition to expression of global culture. However, existing studies (e.g., Child et al., 2007; Tsai, 2001; Weller, 2005) have suggested that the environmental protection institutions as well as Chinese people’s understanding of the environment vary from its Western counterpart. Similarly, as Corbett (2006) contends, “the social construction of nature or the definitions and meanings, which people tend to build through social interaction about nature, can be quite different from culture to culture”, and furthermore, all environmental messages “have ideological roots that are deep and that are influenced by individual experience, geography, history, and culture” (Corbett, 2006:6). Therefore, firms tend to adjust their environmental messages to their target audience, especially via the use of green advertising. And the representation of the “greenness” constructed by firms operating in China (corporate environmental responsibility practices, environmental features of products/services) is likely to be influenced by Chinese contexts. As both multinational corporations and Chinese indigenous companies are launching their green products and producing green advertisings in Chinese market, the discourses of their green advertisings might be featured differently, based on differences in their understanding and experiences on green marketing.

These concerns discussed above influence the research and lead to the investigation on corporate green advertisings in China.

1.2.1 Investigating Corporate Green Adverting in Critical Discourse Theory

Advertising language is a type of discourse and this research explore the discursive dimensions of green consumption advocated by companies, acknowledging the textuality of meanings of consumption and consumer culture as socially constructed (Arnould, 2006; Arnould and Thompson, 2005). Whilst the discursive perspective sparked by the linguistic turn has been integrated into management and organizational research, it has been slow to be taken in marketing research literature. Among the growing but limited marketing studies with discursive perspective, advertisings are conceptualized as pieces of cultural fiction which has a linguistic texture (Stern 1989, 1991), and consumption is interpreted as a textually constructed cultural discourse (e.g., Schroeder and Zwick, 2004; Schroeder and Borgerson, 1999; Thompson, 2004; Thompson and Tian, 2008). Discourse, according to Alvesson and Karreman (2000), is defined as language use that arranges and naturalizes the social world in a specific way and thus informs social practices. Such practices “constitute particular forms of subjectivity in which human subjects are managed and given a certain form, viewed as self-evident and rational” (2000:1127). Thus, discourse does not only describe the social world; it also creates and organizes social structures within which “specific subject positions” (Lazar, 2000:376) are made available to social actors. As Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) state, discourse is constructed in order to fulfill needs and perspectives. Moreover, discourse constructs meanings and relationships, helping to define common sense and legitimate knowledge (Dryzek, 1997).

Companies use green advertising in both textual and visual forms. The discursive work that language and visuals in green advertisings performs is to represent entities such as environmentally beneficial products/services, and to construct social realities such as corporate environmental responsibility and the values/meanings of green consumption. This process of representation and construction depends on how language is developed and operationalized as well as by whom (Fairclough, 1992).

Based on such viewpoint, advertising discourses are able to favour or exaggerate certain descriptions of reality, and empower certain expected and advertised practices while marginalizing others.

To be more specific, as one type of advertising discourses, corporate green advertising discourse is subtly different from other types of corporate green discourses (such as CSR report discourse) because commercial advertisings aim to promote consumptions and thus potentially involved in materialism, and materialism is intrinsically contradictory to environmentalism (Banerjee and McKeage, 1994). Nevertheless, just as advertisings are not neutral tools but rather a product of discursive manipulation and, in some extent, a discursive struggle (Livesey, 2001) and many firms are adept at shaping consumer attitudes and preferences (e.g., Schudson, 1984; Thompson, 2004), firms seem likely to be active agents in dealing with such contradict and in the making of the “green realities” through corporate discourse of their advertisings. Conceptually in a discourse theoretical perspective, “greenness” can be understood as “contested” and a “floating signifier” (Laclau, 1990), in the sense that while the concept has broad public acceptance, its meaning in corporate advertisings is contested as “competing discourse seek to fill the term with their own particular meanings” (Jorgensen and Philips, 2002:28). Therefore, the meaning of green consumption can be as much a function of what the company chooses to present, lead consumers to believe, as it is of what consumers want or demand (McDounagh and Prothero, 1997). Since “greenness” or environmental responsibility is not only the colour of green as literally understood, but also largely an intangible aspect of products, the challenge for corporate advertising is to cultivate their environmental-responsible image as well as to navigate consumers’ understanding of corporate greenness.

Mass communication and marketing researchers have been studying green appeals in

corporate communication (e.g., Todd, 2004; van Dam and Apeldoorn, 1996; Zinkhan and Carlson, 1995). However, the debates have tended to assume green marketing and communication as an instrumental role which facilitates rather than make meaningful the consumer's environmental responsibility choices, and focus on classifying consumers and determining if "green" appeals have marketing results (e.g., Coddington, 1993; Moisander, 2007; Murch, 1974), while the constructing effects of green advertising as a cultural and political role (Ryan, 2012; Thompson, 2004) helping firms in gaining acceptance as well as actively influencing consumers through discursive manipulation in the greening consumption are seldom discussed (Brei and Böhm, 2011; Budinsky and Bryant, 2013; Caruana and Crane, 2008; Hansen, 2010). Based on Wodak and Meyer (2001:9)'s argument that "suggesting how 'happy' people will become if they buy specific consumer products is also an exercise of power", the commercial green advertising discourse indexes and expresses power. Moreover, Harbermas' claim that "language is a medium of domination and social force and it serves to legitimize relations of organized power...language is also ideological" (Habermas, 1971: 259). From above perspectives, this study on corporate advertising with a critical discourse theoretical perspective is also to investigate the power manifested by and the ideology embedded in corporate green advertising.

1.3 Purpose and Significance of the Study

This study is an exploration of the potential of CDA for analyzing corporate green advertising. It analyzes both the texts and visuals in an effort to understand how companies use language, and explores the types of messages that firms communicate via websites. The overall aim of my research is to provide an in-depth, critical analysis of the discourse of corporate environmental responsibility, and produce critical knowledge that enables people to root out the delusion of problematic greenness.

There are three theoretical contributions in this study. Firstly, this research extends the corporate environmental responsibility literature by showing how corporate environmental responsibility is discursively constructed through corporate green advertisings. Secondly, linked into consumer culture theory and by accepting that corporations are capable to influence the meaning of environmental responsibility, this study advances a critical understanding of how firms influence the nature, meaning, and knowledge of environmental consumption. Thirdly, this research contributes to literature of green marketing by finding out how green advertising practices vary and identifying the characteristics of green advertisings in a developing country context.

In a practical sense, as investigating the uses of corporate advertising language is important to understand how firms represent their green products and themselves, and construct environmental responsibility and meanings of green consumption, it is also important to understand the social implications of corporate green discourses. The way that green companies represent themselves as environmentally responsible and market their green products online has significance for diverse stakeholder groups and practitioners such as investors, public media, customers, suppliers, activists, employees, and academia. Different to traditional mass media, the information presented on corporate websites is not vetted by the gate-keeping function of journalists or barred by temporal restrictions of broadcast and print media. As a consequence, firms have more scope and power to present favourable images of themselves and more freedom and space to apply strategic communication. As corporations begin to adopt and are able to transform the discourses of the environment, the crucial question will be what impact the discourse of business has on shaping the discourse of environmental and development issues, and thus on people's understanding of the environmental problem itself (Livesey, 2001). Overall,

it is significant to understand the implications of corporate green advertising as a discourse and its effects on the process of environmental protection.

1.4 Research Question

It is still not clear about the constructed meanings of commercial greenness, or business' perception of environmental management and environmental problem solving. It is also not clear that how companies make efforts to contribute to the commercial greenness through their green advertisings. The process of firm constructing the meanings of greenness through their advertisings is unclear, especially in the Chinese social context, where the industrial development and people's understanding of natural environment could be very different from the their Western counterparts. In the light of the research gap, the main research question of this study is developed:

- How do firms construct the corporate greenness through green advertising discourse in their corporate websites?

As defined above, "corporate greenness" in the research questions means the representation of firms' green products/service and corporate environmental responsibility, as well as the meaning of green consumption. Since little is known about the nature of green advertising discourse at work on corporate website, the preceding question will serve as a principal guide to investigate the advertising discourse, and it focuses on types of discourses active in corporate green advertisings on their websites.

This research is multidisciplinary and, therefore, requires a methodology that explores and enables emergent themes. Fairclough (2001)'s approach to CDA allows

the researcher to analyze language in use in corporate green advertisings online with different levels of focus, namely textual, discursive and social. In accordance to Fairclough's framework, researchers with a cultural perspective on studying consumption discourses (e.g., Roper, et al., 2013; Thompson, 2004) point that consumption discourse involve three dimensions which are "the linguistic features of texts created by marketers; the conventional ideological modes of cultural meaning; and the constraints of the institutional settings in which these play out" (Roper, et al., 2013:380). So the research question aims to find out how do firms represent their green brands/products/services through green advertising discourse in linguistic, discursive and societal levels. Moreover, Thompson (2004) indicates that the discourse analyst should locate processes of meaning creation within a broader institutional context. Such institutional context and its relationship to firms' responsible practices have been growing, for example, extant literature on firms' varying corporate social responsibility practices and their embedded contexts (e.g., Campbell, 2007; Doh and Guay, 2006; Amaeshi, et al., 2014; Moon et al., 2010) suggests that corporate green advertising discourses, as a manifestation of corporate responsibility practices, can be influenced by their varing institutional environments and therefore the greenness could be constructed differently. According to above arguments, the following sub-questions are developed and they provide a more specific focus for analyses.

1.4.1 Research Sub-Questions

- Are there any similarities and differences between the advertising discourses used to represent greenness within the studied two categories of companies and what are they?
- What are the influential contextual/social factors causing the similar/different features in the discourses?

Based on Fairclough's CDA framework (2001), the first research sub-question is aligned with the textual and discursive dimensions in descriptive and interpretive analyses, and it intends to identify similarities and dissimilarities between the advertising language used to present greenness within the studied two categories of companies. The second research sub-question is in societal analysis and focuses on explanations of interpretation findings by looking into the larger cultural, historical, and social contexts.

1.5 Methodology

This study employs a discourse-analytic framework that sheds light on how the discourses of corporate green advertising are constructed by the firms in the social context in China. I propose to undertake a critical discourse study of corporate green advertising discourse in an effort to better understand how language and other semiotic signs impact the increasingly common phenomenon of green marketing practice, namely green advertising. In so doing, I take the position of Fairclough (1989; 1992) and other critical discourse analysts (e.g., Wodak, 2001; Wodak and Meyer, 2001) who recognize that language use is a "form of social practice in which individuals act upon the world and especially upon each other" (Fairclough, 1992: 63). Fairclough (1992, 1995a, 2001) argued that through the close, careful study of language, it is possible to not only describe and interpret representations, but also to explain the formation of relationships, structures, and processes that affect individuals who are embedded in language.

CDA goes beyond traditional discourse analysis by not only seeking to describe language in use, but also to analyze, interpret and explain the significance of the relationship of representations embedded in discourse (Fairclough, 2001; Gee, 2005; Kress, 2000). The "critical" component to Fairclough's (2001) theoretical approach is

concerned not only with overt or seemingly obvious representations in language, but also with obscured or opaque messages veiled or embedded when given only a cursory overview.

Methodologically, Fairclough (1992; 1993; 1995a; 2001) provides an analytic framework researchers using CDA can employ to illuminate representations within the text. Fairclough's framework (see Chapter 3) provides a systematic set of inquiries to analyze both textual and visual constructs in relation to social phenomena. Richardson (2007) points that CDA goes beyond a simple content analysis and strives to unearth the complex and varied processes of meaning-making manifested in and within texts. In essence, CDA allows for recursive movements between linguistic and social properties with a discursive set of inquires that examine of textual and visual representations and the ability to examine micro-level representations in text that contribute to macro-level explanations of what the representations mean at a societal level (Rogers, 2004).

1.5.1 Data Collection from Corporate Websites and Data Analysis

In the digital era, corporate websites have become a vehicle to market and disseminate advertisements (e.g., Nielsen, 2002; Hwang et al., 2003) and corporate websites have been treated as a type of advertising that not only builds a brand for the company, but also offers some depth of information that could not be provided in traditional media-based advertising (Hwang et al., 2003). In addition, firms can effectively communicate their environmental responsibility initiatives/practices through their own corporate websites (Basil and Erlandson, 2008; Capriotti and Moreno, 2007; Coupland, 2005; Esrock and Leichty, 1998; Gomez and Chalmeta, 2011; Hurme, 2001). The one way style communication features the current corporate online communication and thus makes the corporate website discourse a kind of corporate advertising discourse: firms are the information maker and sender,

and the consumers are the information receiver. The lack of vetting also heightens public distrust of firms' self-presentations and users' skepticism of the reliability of web-based information, but few existing studies apply a critical perspective in examining such discourse (Hurme, 2001). So it is important to examine the online advertising language firms use to represent themselves (Nielson, 2002; Basil and Erlandson, 2008).

In addition, Flick (2009) states that websites make fine examples to study to "show the social construction of reality" (p. 278). As corporate websites serve as one of the main channels and as a form of broadcasting green advertisements, websites provide rich data sets for my research.

It is worth investigating the linguistic or discursive features of corporate online green advertisements (Nielsen, 2002). Despite the primary role of corporate websites in presenting corporate green image and advertising firms' green products/services, limited research exists examining this type of discourse on corporate websites.

For a more practical reason, because that the plethora of print media, TV channels, and websites available across the globe make it impossible to closely follow a company's green discourse at all levels. Therefore, corporate websites are singled out and utilized as data sites for investigating green advertisements.

This study will focus on four companies that advertise their environmental consciousness, image, and product through corporate websites: General Electric in China, Unilever in China, BYD Auto, and Landsea Real Estate. These four companies are categorized into two groups: Category 1 (GE and Unilever as MNCs subsidiaries) and Category 2 (BYD and Landsea as Chinese indigenous companies). Such categorization is based on the similarities within each category pertaining to

their position in green ranking (China's green companies rating¹, company type (transnational, indigenous) and the green impact of their green product/service in Chinese market (market share, market position, and profit from green business). To study these corporate websites in details, I select four types of web pages from which green advertising discourse can be identified for analyses: Home page, Company Introduction page (or About Page), CSR/Sustainability page, and Products/Services Introduction page. The first three pages aims to provide background and general information of the company and its products. To be noted, the products/services page includes more detailed information than other pages, for example, firms' green innovative products/services are presented in multimodal discourses (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001): in addition to textual information found in the other web pages, the product page also features with equal weight on visual information such as video advertisement clips.

1.6 Limitations

Firstly, due to the nature of qualitative research, generalizability is not a primary goal. However, since the unit of analysis is advertisings from a variety of corporate websites in two categories, this study may provide valuable insights to a larger audience. Another limitation is that only a few companies were selected to represent an array of companies who conduct green business in China. Previous research has suggested working with a sample that is small when conducting a close, careful study of language (Askehave, 2007; Pitts, 2004). Therefore, other types of organizations are not represented in this sample (e.g., SOEs, and firms from many other industries). However, as scholarship evolves, future research may focus on other types of firms in order to ascertain the types of language at work on their green advertisings online.

¹ The rating is established by the China Entrepreneur Club as a private non-profit organization committing to nurturing entrepreneurship and business integrity while paving the future of sustainable economic and social development. The rating criteria can be found at <http://www.daonong.com/cec/green/2012baiqiang/2012baiqiang.html> 2013/10/5

Secondly, the nature of qualitative research often positions the role of the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection, analysis and interpretation (Creswell, 2003). Since language is socially constructed and never static, the researcher is not immune to the process and product of these constructions. Therefore, the findings, interpretations and conclusions are limited to that of the researcher. Yet, the utility of discourse analyses, including CDA, is the researcher's ability to make interpretations and explanations through reflexive and rigorous methods of inquiry (e.g., Fairclough, 2001; Fairclough and Wodak, 1997). Besides, from the interpretist perspective, it is difficult to determine whether the metaphysical ontology of this study of corporate greenness is the actual truth or not. Yet, while there is an external reality independent of the human mind, there is also resistance to it (Sayer, 1992). Therefore, interpretists should focus on the epistemic gain about truth no matter how many limitations the research may have, and not to worry about the absolute truth. In Chapter 3, the Role of the Researcher and Researcher's Journal will be elaborated and further detail about the information regarding biases and subjectivities that shape the member resources of the researcher will be discussed.

Lastly, critiques of CDA (see section in Chapter 3 for more detail) and visual analysis have suggested that since both are relatively recent in development, much of the research utilizing methods of inquiry on language remains exploratory and lacks "genuine analytical procedures" (Flick, 2009, p. 246). Nevertheless, research that examines language is crucial to the refinement of such analytical procedures (e.g., Fairclough 2001; Gee, 2005; van Dijk, 1993). In this sense, the research contributes to knowledge by extending CDA and applying it to corporate green advertising studies, specifically in a developing country context such as China.

1.7 Organization of the Study

This section provides a preview of how the chapters are organized. Following

Chapter 1 in which the statement of the problem, background, purpose of the study, research questions, significance, and limitations are presented, Chapter 2 will provide a review of literature relevant to the current study. Chapter 2 includes four parts: the first section presents a historical review on green marketing and advertising and discusses the conceptual framework of corporate environmental responsibility, and its intersection with marketing and advertising research. It provides context and shows the driving forces behind the development of corporate green marketing and advertising in both developed and developing countries. The second section includes an examination of the limited literature on the role of corporate web site in the corporate green communication and marketing, and on how firms represent themselves online. The third section surveys the paucity of literature and research on green marketing and advertising discourse in a critical perspective. So this part briefly introduces CDA as both a theoretical and analytical framework for this study. As CDA origins from Discourse Theory, the fourth section reviews this theory and brings forward research questions.

Chapter 3 firstly provides a brief review of CDA, and its development as a method and theory, as well as its application to this study. It then introduces the methodology, sample, data analysis tools, and role of the researcher.

The data analysis results are presented in Chapter 4, Chapter 5, and Chapter 6. In line with Fairclough's CDA framework, Chapter 4 firstly describes the advertising discourse in a textual level, it is then followed by interpretive analysis and response to the first research sub-question in Chapter 5. Then in Chapter 6 societal analysis is conducted and provides answers to the second research sub-question. Chapter 7 contains a discussion and a summary as a response to the overarching research questions. Chapter 8 gives a conclusion and provides implications for practice and indications for future research.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

2.1 Introduction

The overall goal of this research is to examine how companies use discourse to represent themselves as “environmental responsible”, and how they construct the meanings of green consumption in their green advertisements on corporate website. This chapter reviews the extant literature which leads into formulating the research questions.

There are four parts in this chapter. Part I opens with an overview of the existing studies on green marketing and advertising. It then proceeds to an historical review of green marketing and advertising, and explores both the conceptual framework of corporate environmental responsibility and its intersection with marketing and advertising research. This section considers the context for, and the driving forces behind, the development of corporate green marketing and advertising both in the West and in China. As the research focuses on the role of corporate green advertisements from corporate websites, Part II reviews literature on the role that corporate websites play in corporate “green” communication and marketing. Part III then critically surveys the literature on green marketing and advertising, which informs this research. This part also briefly introduces CDA as both a theoretical and analytical framework guiding this study. In the end of this chapter, Part IV outlines the discourse theoretical approach and summarises the theoretical framework and introduces the research questions.

2.2 Part I: Green Marketing and Advertising

2.2.1 The Development of Green Marketing and Advertising – a Historical Review

2.2.1.1 Advertising and the Environment

In the domain of business, advertisement is a form of marketing communication. In Richards and Curran (2002)'s definition, advertising is a paid non-personal communication from an identified sponsor, using mass media to persuade or influence an audience. In the late 19th century in Western capitalist countries advertising was turned into "an institutionalized system of commercial information and persuasion" (Williams, 1980:170). Modern advertising emerged along with the rise of large scale industrial capitalism, as a part of a wider system of "market-control", which included other tools such as "the growth of tariffs and privileged areas, cartel-quotas, trade campaigns, price-fixing by manufactures and economic imperialism" (ibid: 178).

According to Williams (1980), advertising's goal was to stimulate market demands for commodities. It accomplished this by attaching unrealistic fantasies and wish-fulfillments to material objects, so that these material objects promise, but never fulfill the needs and wishes of consumers (Williams, 1980). By keeping consumers constantly under-satisfied, advertising managed to stimulate consumption and fuel the capitalist economies of mass production and mass consumption (Löwy, 2010).

Moreover, to quicken the process for commodities to go through the capitalism circuit of production, distribution, and consumption, advertising helped create a consumer culture that radically challenged the classical definition of consumption so that profit can be returned (Jhally, 2000; Löwy, 2010). In classical economics, consumption was defined as the "use of goods in the satisfaction of human wants" (Kyrk, 1923:4). This view of consumption conceptualized want or need as a pre-social, biological instinct that must be fulfilled in order to sustain life. Also a proponent of basic "human requirements", Karl Marx (1976) proposed his critique of

the separation between use-value and exchange-value in the mid 19th century and questioned whether the capitalistic exchange system is able to reflect the commodity's ability to satisfy instinctual needs.

Radical challenges to the notion of instinctual needs came from critics in the 20th century, who witnessed the full blossoming of the advertising and consumer culture in Western societies. These critics (e.g., Adorno and Horkheimer, 2002; Featherstone, 1991; Paek and Pan, 2004) pointed out that instead of selling the utilities of the commodities which were addressed to fixed consumer needs, the advertising and marketing industry “attached to them new images and signs which can summon up a whole range of associated feelings and desires” (Featherstone, 1991). The shift from need to desire as a motivational force constitutes the fundamental dilemma of consumerism: while needs are supposedly biological and limited, desires are enmeshed in social and symbolic relations and thus are insatiable. Therefore, turn people with needs to consumers with endless desires for consumption, and bases the consumerism society.

Appealing to insatiable desires instead of the limited needs, consumerism turns humans from users of objects to consumers of products (Williams, 1980). According to Williams, the word “consumption” is originally a metaphor drawn from the stomach or the furnace. The market, in this sense, becomes a gigantic “furnace” and the consumers become the “channels along which the product flows and disappears” (p. 187). And the social symbolic construction from advertising acts as a “digestive enzyme”, sustaining such consumption process. By discursively stimulating desires and constructing meanings of advertised commodities, advertising has come to be professionally dedicated to the stimulation of ongoing consumption and performs the essential role of fueling the consumer economy. This gigantic “furnace”, however, is rapidly burning up the Earth's natural resources.

The dramatic increase in consumption resulting from a culture of excessive production and consumption has led to environmental crises such as resource depletion, waste overflow, air and water pollution, and most importantly to the international community, global warming.

Though consumption related environmental threats originated from developed countries, they are now seen in China, an emerging consumer economy with the world's largest population². Since the economic reforms in 1980s, China has experienced an unprecedented rise in household income and an increased appetite for consumer products. Soon after China's Open Door Policy (Boisot and Meyer, 2008), commercial advertising appeared in public spaces, gradually replacing the state-produced propaganda which had preached socialist ideologies for decades. During this period of economic reform, multinational advertising agencies also started to set up branches in China (O'Barr, 2007). These agencies, as the vanguards of consumer culture, began to launch advertising campaigns that not only exposed the Chinese to Western forms of art, but also generated their unyielding desires for Western consumer goods. In the process, they also constructed the meanings of the consumption lifestyle.

The rapid growth in China's domestic consumer demands indeed drives China's capitalistic economy, whilst placing China's environment at risk. The mix of China's stunning economic growth and its colossal-sized population is, therefore, a major cause of ecological disaster (Smith, 1997). China is frequently haunted by severe crises related to environmental degradation (Rozelle, et al., 1997), for example, water and air pollution, solid waste overflow, desertification, and the reduction of biodiversity (Kahn and Yardley, 2007; Ma, 2007).

² The population in China is 1,343,239,923 in 2012. <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats8.htm> 2014-6-1

The exacerbation of China's environmental conditions raises a critical question about the relationship amongst consumption, advertising and the natural environment: To what extent is the business advertising responsible for people to pursue the Western high-consumption lifestyle? If all six billion people on earth began to live like Western populations, what kind of burden would be placed on our ecosystem? Jhally (2000) argued: it is time for consumer society to look into the future of the human race and start shifting its current direction before it is too late. Furthermore, he claimed that the current commander of our consumer culture – advertising – was inadequate in navigating this necessary change of direction because “the time-frame of advertising is very short-term. It does not encourage us to think beyond the immediacy of present sensual experience. The value of a collective social future is one that does not, and will not, find expression within our commercially dominated culture.” (Jhally, 2000: 58). Therefore, designed to produce instantaneous pleasure, advertising seems to be unsuitable for future projection and long-term strategic planning. Its myopic nature also appears to constrain its ability to express concerns for human welfare on a communal and societal level. In this sense, green advertising and the rise of green marketing advocating for environmental protection seems to be a paradox. But is Jhally correct on his claim that the advertising is short-term time frame and thus inadequate in navigating a change from endless consumption toward environmental concerns and practices?

2.2.1.2 The Rise of Green Advertising and Marketing in the West

In the face of threats to the environment, green marketing, which seems to have disapproved Jhally's viewpoint on commercial advertising, began to advocate the long-term socio-ecological harmony of the planet. Green marketing was defined as: “all activities designed to generate and facilitate any exchanges intended to satisfy human needs or wants, such that the satisfaction of these needs and wants occurs,

with minimal detrimental impact on the natural environment” (Polonsky, 1994: 391). Similarly, Lampe and Gazda (1995) defined green marketing as the marketing response to the environmental effects of the design, production, packaging, labeling, use, and disposal of goods or services. As one activity of green marketing, green advertising seems to be effective in bringing environmental improvements.

The 1960s environmental movements in the Western world fuelled the rise of citizens’ concern about the effects of industrial practices on the natural environment (Rootes, 2008). The background to green marketing can be found in the Environmental Protection Movement, which can be traced back to Europe: the 1960s witnessed the rise of environmental concerns. Although these were primarily elitist, nevertheless in 1961 the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) was established (Rootes, 2008). In the US, the publication of Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* marked a decisive step forward towards the growth of environmental consciousness. In 1988, the first green consumer guide was published in the U.S., signaling the rise of “green consumerism”, which was defined by Irvine (1989) as “the use of individual consumer preference to promote less environmentally damaging products and services” (Irvine, 1989:2). Afterwards, “eco-friendly” claims began to appear on product packages as well as advertisements. Green marketing, over the next two decades, evolved into a multi-layered, diverse media culture, ranging from green product advertisements, green corporate image campaigns, green public service advertisings, to green lifestyle journalism (Irvine, 1989).

With portrayals of ecological harmony, promises of individual wellbeing and preaching of civil responsibility, green marketing became a prominent trend in contemporary advertising culture. Supporters of green marketing not only valorized it for fostering eco-friendly consumption habits, but also praised its ability to raise the public’s environmental awareness, or consciousness. For example, Hailes (1998)

argued that green corporate advertising campaigns use the corporations' international prestige to "green the consciousness" of the American people and thus should be considered as a progressive social movement. Calfee (1998) suggested that advertising is a good medium for reaching out to the general public. Because of its art of brevity, capacity in commanding audience's attention and its use of television, advertising is able to touch the population that the scientific communities or governmental agencies are desperate to reach. Comparing green advertising with popular media's representation of ecological issues, Prothero (2000) pointed out that news accounts always "polarize and simplify the ongoing debate concerning sustainability" and "disable a more detailed analysis of the central issues"; but advertising is "a productive, persuasive and communicative medium that can be used just as successfully by those seeking to achieve environmental enlightenment as it can for those who aspire to ecological martyrdom" (p. 46).

In existing research (Menon and Menon, 1997; Peattie and Crane, 2005), green marketing can be generally categorized into enviropreneur marketing and compliance marketing. Enviropreneur marketing refers to individuals or companies are innovating green products and bringing them to market (Menon and Menon, 1997). These enviropreneurs can be either small and medium companies that make environmental friendly products, or large corporations that manufacture traditional products as well as green ones; for example, Unilever, Sainsburys and Boots supplemented their existing ranges with green brands (Peattie and Crane, 2005).

In comparison, compliance marketing implies that companies' green initiatives or environmental responsibilities are just responses to regulation (Peattie and Crane, 2005). In a passive and more imitative stance, companies with compliance green marketing see their compliance with environmental legislation as an opportunity to promote their green credentials (Bansal and Roth, 2000). Hence there are firms

nominating themselves for an environmental excellence award only because of their compliance with all relevant environmental laws.

2.2.2 The Recent Development in Green Marketing and Green Marketing Research

Green marketing experienced ebbs and flows since its emergence in 1990s. Early market research findings suggested that there were major changes and innovations towards green marketing. For example, Vandermerwe and Oliff (1990) in their survey found that in response to green concerns, the majority of European multinationals has changed their products and production systems. In the US, Ottman (1993) found that introductions of green product introductions doubled between 1989 and 1990, and continued to grow in 1991. Meanwhile in the domain of green advertising, the volume of green print advertisements was found to grow by four times in this period (Ottman, 1993). Menon and Menon (1997) asserted that the green market appears to be real and growing. Such “green trends” have also been reflected in the business literature: in this period, growing studies illustrate how and why green marketing could work.

This optimism did not last long. For example, Mintel’s (1995) research in his samples found the number of green consumers increased slightly since 1990, and a significant gap between concern and actual purchasing was identified. Such findings were echoed by others (e.g., Wong et al., 2005; Crane 2000). Moreover, green products seemed to have limited impact on consumption behaviours (Wong et al., 2005). To be more specific, Despite the continued growth in green products of certain markets, such as food and tourism, there was no sustainable growth in green product introductions across the majority of markets. Researchers then began to explore the reasons why green marketing was facing difficulties and studies indicated that green products faced various barriers, such as negative perceptions that green

goods perform worse than conventional items, and high prices which limit the market size (e.g., Moisander, 2007; Ottman et al., 2006; Peattie, 1999).

In addition to the studies focusing on the difficulties faced by green marketing, previous research in the green marketing has focused on different facets of green marketing. For example, in the 1970s, studies primarily focused on specific issues rather than providing general overviews of the role of marketing: issues such as the impact of increased prices on the demand of nonpollution oil (Kassarjian, 1971) and the distribution problems encountered in recycling solid wastes (Zikmund and Stanton, 1971). In the consumer research field as the main area developed in the green marketing literature, scholars have focused on green consumer buying behaviour and the attitudes, knowledge and behaviour of citizens towards ecological issues; these have been examined for example, by Coddington (1993); Dembkowski and Hanmer-Lloyd (1994) ; Kinnear et al. (1974); and Maloney et al. (1975). This stream of research has continued to the present day (e.g. Cherian and Jacob 2012; Claudy et al., 2013; Connolly and Prothero 2008; Hughner et al., 2007). Other empirical research has focused on the firm side. Specific subject areas such as new product development (Blair, 1992) or particular industries such as chemicals (Peattie and Ratnayaka, 1992) and detergents (Dermoddy and Hanmer-Lloyd, 1995) have been investigated. These studies explore issues such as the targeting of green consumers (e.g. Laroche et al., 2001; Ottman, 1993; Peattie, 2001), greening the marketing mix (e.g. Hashem and Al-Rifai, 2011), and communicating strategies (e.g. Ottman, 2011).

2.2.3 The Rise of Green Advertising

As a communication approach in marketing and a marketing practice, green advertisings refer to appeals including ecological, environmental sustainability, or nature-friendly messages that target the needs and desires of environmentally concerned stakeholders (Carlson et al., 1993; Zinkhan and Carlson, 1995). As new

products are positioned and developed, and as growing firms need to broadcast and inform the pro-environmental aspects of their green products and services to consumers, green advertising is on the rise.

As Iyer and colleagues claim, environmental or green advertising is advertising that meets one or more of the following criteria: explicitly or implicitly addressing the relationship between a product/service and the natural environment; promoting a environmental friendly lifestyle; or presenting a firm's environmental responsibility image/brand (Iyer et al., 1993). For example, the ISO as eco-label can be seen as a type of green advertising. Based on such definition, Banerjee et al. (1995) claims that green advertisements can be mainly categorized as:

- 1) Those that address the relationship between a product/service and the biophysical environment in a direct or indirect way;
- 2) Those that promote an green lifestyle with or without highlighting a product/service;
- 3) Those that present an image of corporate environmental responsibility.

According to Banerjee et al. (1995), among the above defined green advertisings, some play an educational role (e.g., assisting audiences understand the nature of environmental issue). Others are in nature commercial (e.g., promoting company products/services and inducing potential consumers). Then, too, some are image-focused aiming to enhance firms' green image.

As Easterling et al. (1996) claim, the first environmental advertisements appeared when the first concerns about firms' environmental irresponsible practices were discussed by the scientific community, public opinion and consumer activism (e.g., Carlson's Silent Spring). In order to response to the green concerns, companies began to use advertising to promote an environmentally friendly image to

stakeholders (Peattie, 1995). A sharp increase in green advertising took place in 1980s mainly because of heightened public awareness for the environment, stricter government regulations and growing competitive pressures (Kilbourne, 2004). More recently, stronger environmental global stakeholders including international political support, global legislative developments, and public interest worldwide have driven corporate green marketing into a new era of “sustainable development” (Banerjee, 2003; Belz and Peattie, 2009).

2.2.4 The Driving Forces behind Green Marketing and Advertising

Literature has suggested that there are driving forces behind the emergence of green marketing and green advertising. Three social movements that emerged in Western societies since the 1960s need to be considered here - the environmental movement in the political realm; the neoliberal movement in the economic realm; and the New Age movement in the religious and cultural realm. According to Lampe and Gazda (1995), multiple catalysts and pressures were behind the rise of environmentalism and green marketing in Western countries.

Political and economic drivers: First, green marketing rose in response to the waves of the American environmental movement. Initiated in the 19th century by early preservationists like Henry David Thoreau and John Muir, environmentalism took the central stage of American politics in the 1960s and the 1970s. The publication of landmark books such as *Silent Spring* (Carson, 1962), *The Population Bomb* (Ehrlich, 1968), and *The Limits to Growth* (Club of Rome, 1972) drew attention to the impact of human civilizations on the natural environment. As a result of vigorous political struggles, several legislative breakthroughs were made, such as the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, the Endangered Species Act, and the National Environmental Policy Act. In the aftermath of the Three Mile Island accident in 1979, anti-nuclear activism also gained a wide appeal and prompted many mass demonstrations in the

United States. Having watched a few decades of news about ozone-layer depletion, oil spills, and overflowing landfills, the public developed a “general fear of an ecological crisis and a public willingness to act” (Smith, 1998: 97).

In Europe, environmentalism also gained influence and prominence in the political realm. Belgium became the first country to elect Greens to Parliament in 1981. Besides Belgium and Germany, in other European countries such as Italy, Switzerland, Netherlands, and Austria, Green parties had been represented in national legislatures since 1990. Moreover, the British Green Party won strong support (15% of votes cast in 1989), and British political leaders began to promote the environmental cause. The late 1980s had also witnessed that environmentalists had become “Europe’s most formidable and best organized pressure-group” (Knight and Dimmler, 1989, p. 45).

The emergence of green marketing as the global spread is also based on the ideological economic neo-liberalism. During the 1980s, as the wave of “liberalization” swept around the world, “state enterprises were privatized, private businesses were deregulated, and government welfare state initiatives were cut back” (Herman and McChesney 1997:26). The most prominent results of these changes were the cross-border expansions of transnational corporations and the rise of a highly integrated global capitalist economy. Such a dramatic shift in political economy, write Herman and McChesney (1997), was rationalized by corporate ideologies and the centerpiece was the free-market ideology:

“There is a strong tendency in corporate ideology to identify “freedom” with the mere absence of constraints on business (i.e. economic, or market, freedom) [...] it is argued that economic freedom is basic and deserves top billing because in the long run it will allow or even cause political freedom to emerge.” (p.35)

Due to the belief that the market is the best solution to all problems, corporations

became the primary agent in creating political changes and resolving social crises. Guided by this neo-liberalist ideology, since the 1980s, the business world saw the rise of the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Movement. CSR is a form of corporate self-regulation designed to preempt governmental intervention (Wood, 1991). While the themes of corporate social responsibility are many, ranging from public health to social development, environmental issues constitute one of its major causes and attract many environmentally minded consumers (Andereasen, 1995).

Mass media driver: The media coverage of the environment is another driving force in shaping environmental issues and concerns of the public. In the popularized environmentalism in the West, the media broadcasted environmental damage events to the public and fueled public environmental opinion. Popular entertainers, television and film professionals, and non-profit environmental advocacy groups have all used the media to advance pro-environment themes (Blumenfeld and Gilbert, 1990). In the meanwhile, it also reflects the emergent green discourse in society. This widespread effect of fear and the high level of concern from mass media paved the road for green marketing which promised to bring back environmental harmony between humans and nature.

Cultural driver: The final factor that drove the surge of green marketing occurred in the religious and cultural realm—the New Age spiritual movement. Drawing from an eclectic mix of older religious traditions such as Buddhism, Chinese folk religions, Hinduism, and Native American spirituality, the New Age movement took distinct form during the 1960s and 1970s counterculture movements and was strengthened in the following two decades (Melton, 1989). Opposing dualist views on the relation of people to nature and on people's dominance power over the nature, and promoting connectivity, New Age philosophy emphasizes the connectivity between human and the nature, and the sanctity of the Earth and Nature while upholding the importance

of spirituality and magic (Scott and Penaloza, 2006). Neo-Paganism, one of New Age's most important components, challenged the Christian mandate to "dominate and subdue" nature and the "instrumental, cause-and-effect ways of capitalism and Newtonian science" (p. 60). It "gravitates toward the newer visions of science, such as Gaia theory and chaos theory, in which the emphasis is on system connectivity and interdependence rather than on isolated and abstract causes and effects" (p. 61). Echoing with the morals of the environmental movement on multiple levels, New Age philosophy is often adopted as a type of spiritual remedy for the traumas inflicted by industrialization, modernization, and capitalistic expansion. Many of its discursive elements such as harmony, balance, connectivity, health, and well-being have been appropriated by green marketing and have become popular commercial lingos.

Indeed, it was by assembling catchphrases from various strands of discourses drawn from New Age philosophy (harmony, balance), environmentalism (nature, ecology), and neoliberalism (ethics, responsibility) that green marketing was able to build up its vocabulary and discourse which influences the popular imagination.

The large body of literature focusing on the motivations behind the green marketing and the realms from which the current green advertising discourse derives, seems to overlook the greening advertising process in developing contexts, such as China, which holds very different societal, political and economic backgrounds. So in practice, we must ask whether the green advertising discourse developed originally from the West is then directly translates to China market context or the adopted green advertising discourse be reworked and localized at the hands of Chinese advertisers? The following section reviews the development of green advertising in China. Lampe and Gazda (1995) have asserted that the green force for environmentalism has been from institutional pressures such as those exerted by investors and employees, so will

a varying institutional pressure result in different features of green advertising discourse?

2.2.5 The Introduction of Green Marketing and Advertising into China – a Historical Review

Rapid economic expansion, the economic structure, and continued reliance on coal have kept China's carbon dioxide emissions high. Consequently, China will likely become the world's largest greenhouse gases emitter sometime between 2010 and 2025. However, environmental protection policy offers little help to lessen the pollution (Hudson, 1997). It is phenomenal that green advertising is rising in this market, despite it being at its beginning stage (Dai, 2010).

According to Li (2006), the process of introduction of green marketing and advertising to China can be divided into three stages: At its inception (1993-1994), the importance of green marketing was first put forward for academic and governmental discussion. In the growth stage (1995-1997), theoretical discussions in academia mainly focused on the negative effect that international "green trade barriers" had on China's export trade. During the maturation stage (1998-present), the academic discussion broadened to a whole field of green economy (green consumption, green distribution, and green marketing), and the practices of green business began receiving much more governmental support (p. 96).

The Chinese government readily adopted the idea of green marketing because it appeared to be a solution to China's urgent dilemma between economic development and environmental deterioration. Since Deng's economic reform in 1978, the government has faced numerous complaints about environmental problems, most of which have come from residents of China's Eastern and Southern urbanized coastal zones (Dasgupta and Wheeler, 1996). The first nationwide environmental

controversy was initiated during the early 1990s surrounding the construction of the Three Gorges Dam. This event at once made environmental problems the center of national attention (Jing, 1997). In 1992, China attended the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). After this event, official governmental discourse began to shift from simple economic development to a policy of “sustainable development” (Wang et al., 2009).

However, in the following decades, the exponential growth in the Chinese economy and the industrialization and privatization indulged irresponsible exploitation of nature, leading to a drastic reduction of available resources and exacerbation social conflicts. In the face of severe social and environmental conflicts, in 2005 President Hu Jintao put forward a new political slogan at the National People’s Congress—“Building a Harmonious Society”—aiming at directing China away from single-minded economical development towards an overall societal and environmental balance. This political milieu was highly conducive to the promotion of green marketing in China. Thus, the current authoritative definition of green marketing, offered by Wei and Si (2001), runs closely in line with the governmental rhetoric of “harmonious society” and “sustainable development:

“The goal of assuming social responsibilities, protecting the environment, efficient use of resources, and long term development, entrepreneurs take corresponding measures in the whole process of product design, production, sales, after-sale service, in order to ensure the three-way balance among consumer’s sustainable consumption, industry’s sustainable production, and society’s sustainable development” (p.32).

Promoted as a part of the official sustainability discourse, green marketing and advertising are endorsed by the government as a hegemonic strategy to tackle social discontent and at the same time solve environmental problems. Although unhesitatingly embraced by the government and the academic elites, green

marketing's political significance has yet to be translated into economic efficacy. According to recent studies (e.g., Si, 2002; He and Yu, 2004; Dai, 2010b), its current practice in China is very underdeveloped and unbalanced. The majority of Chinese businesses have not learned about green marketing, and the ones that have learned fear the risk of initiating a new market and incurring the high cost of developing new products. Also, most businesses still adopt very backward methods of production and distribution which are far from meeting the "green" standards promoted by the government. Most importantly, business lacks the ultimate motivation to "go green" because the great majority of the Chinese consumers have not developed demands for green products (Ren, 2007).

The soggiess of China's green consumer market can be traced to the country's particular cultural historical conditions which will be explored further in the later chapters. Due to these above differences between China and developed countries, green marketing scholars envision a very different green future for China from the vision that the Western neoliberal economists propose. While the Chinese partially inherited the Western faith in using market forces to solve environmental crises, they believe that the market itself lacks the power to jumpstart a green economy and that the government should play a more dominant and leading role and use more propaganda to educate the public about environmental affairs. For example, Ren (2007) and Dai (2010a; b) propose that the government should use extensive propaganda imperative policies to enhance the "green consciousness" of the people and the companies, because environmental awareness is the precondition to green consumption. Similarly, Chan and Lau (2004) propose that the green marketers should:

“[...] increase their investment in consumer education so as to further raise the environmental consciousness of their target customers [...] they should consider sponsoring environmental education in schools, and forming alliances with the government and/or environmental groups to promote the ethics of “green”

consumption through various propaganda vehicles, such as television and radio broadcasts, exhibitions and seminars.” (p. 307)

In a more radical way, Lv and Yan (2003) distrust businesses’ ability to initiate a structural shift in market economy and envision a “government-led” green marketing revolution that includes the environmental education of the masses, the stipulation of environmental laws, and the innovation of green technologies. It seems that China is the case in which the neoliberal version of commercial environmentalism does not sell. Since the market lacks the ability to solve the environmental crises alone, an external political force—the government—must intervene to support the greening of the business sector. The high ratio of governmental propaganda to commercial advertising in China’s environmental discourse testifies to this common faith in governmental intervention (Li, 2010).

2.2.6 Research on Green Advertising

The above sections give a conceptual review on green advertising, and an historical review on its development both in the West and in China. This next section will consider scholarship on green advertising, and its various research streams and foci.

The developments in green advertising practice have drawn the attention of marketing scholars who follow different research streams (e.g., Ottman, 1994; Peattie, 1995; Fuller, 1999; Leonidou and Leonidou, 2011). They aim to research on various aspects of green advertising, such as its nature, structure, content, and development trends (Leonidou et al., 2011; Leonidou and Leonidou, 2011). In addition to studies focusing on the reasons why firms adopt green marketing and advertising, as reviewed above, the body of literature can be generally divided into four fields: the green washing and misleading green advertising; the green degree evaluation of green advertising; the claims and taxonomy of green advertising; and the effects of environmental advertisements. The following sections will review these streams of

research respectively. The research gap will be identified based on the review.

2.2.6.1 Green Washing in Green Advertising

The first field is that of green washing and misleading green advertising, which involves the validity and deceptiveness of green advertisings (Kangun et al., 1991; Greer and Bruno, 1996; Newell et al., 1998; Gillespie, 2008). The increased volume of green advertising in Western countries as well as their environmental claims in advertising have been widely studied (e.g., Delmas and Burbano, 2011; Iyer and Banerjee, 1992; Carlson et al., 1993; Ottman, 1993). Among the research, one issue often studied is deception in environmental claims (e.g., Carlson et al., 1993; Delmas and Burbano, 2011; Kangun et al., 1991). Carlson and colleagues (1993) analyzed green advertisings in terms of believability of claims. They found that only less than half of the advertisings were unambiguously true, whereas almost half of the claims were vague and ambiguous and some were either outright lies or errors of omission. Similarly, Abt Associates (1990) concluded that the least credible source of information relating to the environment was advertisings placed by businesses. Other researchers have audited environmental claims on product packaging to evaluate the degree of compliance with FTC/EPA guidelines (e.g., Mayer et al., 1992; Scammon and Mayer 1991). Some have proposed a method for categorizing green advertisings in print and TV media (e.g., Iyer and Banerjee, 1992; Iyer et al., 1993). Among these studies, Chang (2011) used survey methods to study consumers' ambivalent feelings about going green and green advertisings. According to Kangun et al. (1991), green washing advertisings can be categorized as having such features as: 1) ambiguity: lacking a clear meaning or with a too broad meaning; 2) omission: essential information is excluded and thus its truthfulness or reasonableness cannot be evaluated; 3) false/lying: information presented is clearly untrue or misleading.

Besides the misleading characteristics indicated in green washing advertisement

research, firms have been found to inaccurately portray and promote their environmental credentials through their green advertising. For example, research by Peattie and Crane (2005) examines the failure of green marketing in achieving the actual environmental improvement. In their study, three types of misconceived forms of green marketing are identified and analyzed. The first one is green spinning reactive approach. With such approach firms mainly focus on reputation management and risk management, and they treat green marketing as the PR function. In such PR function-green marketing, there is little opportunity to affect firms' product, production or policy decision. The second one is green selling, which means a post-hoc identification of environmental features in existing products, thus promoting a usually short-term hop onto the green bandwagon. Again, this is obviously a very opportunistic response to environmental concerns. The third one is green harvesting by which marketers and firms become engaged to the environment issues because they see potential benefits in terms of traditional areas such as production efficiencies in energy and materials input, reductions in packaging, and rationalization in logistics.

2.2.6.2 The Level of Green Information in Green Advertising

The second research stream of corporate green advertising focuses on the level of environmental information, or degree of greenness included in advertisings. According to Banerjee et al. (1995), green advertisements can be grouped into three levels: deep, moderate, and shallow. Similarly, previous studies (e.g., Banerjee et al., 1995; Wagner and Hansen, 2002) identified five levels of "greenness", ranging from less to more green: brown, green-brown, light green, green, extra green. A number of studies have revealed that most of green advertising claims had a shallow or moderate level of environmental information, and lacked substance, comprehensiveness, and credibility (Manrai et al., 1997).

2.2.6.3 Green Claims and Taxonomy of Green Advertising

In addition to green washing and greenness level studies on advertisement, a number of green advertising researchers devote their efforts to studying different environmental claims and taxonomy in green advertisings. For example, Carlson et al. (1993) classify green advertising claims as product-oriented, process-oriented, image-oriented, and environmental fact. Different types of claims have been used to communicate environmental messages over time; image-centered and process-related claims were popular in the early years of environmentalism whilst product-centered claims became so in recent years (Easterling et al., 1996). Iyer and Banerjee (1992)'s anatomy of green advertising develops a four-dimensional analysis framework and taxonomy to study the structural features and claims of green advertisings. The first item, advertising target, is used to identify the target of the advertising and they identify three targets including personal health preservation, wild animal life preservation, and natural environment preservation. The second item is advertising objective, which is used to identify whether a corporate image or the product/service itself is promoted. The third item involves the economic chain, which is used to identify activities in an economic system. Such activities included production, consumption and disposition. The final item in the taxonomy refers to advertising appeals, which is to categorize the types of appeals employed in advertisings. Iyer and Banerjee (1992) identified five sub-categories of green appeals: zeitgeist (mere statement and bandwagon); emotional (fear, guilt, "You Can Make a Difference"); financial (save money; cause subsidy); euphoria (healthy, natural), management (control, social responsibility); and others (Iyer and Banerjee, 1992). In a different way, Kilbourne (1995) characterized the "green" in green advertisings as a two dimensional concept with political (reformism to radicalism) and human positional (anthropocentric to ecocentric) dimensions. Based on these dimensions, Kilbourne argued that there are at least five different types of green discourses, including "environmentalism, conservationism, human welfare ecology, preservationism, and

ecologism” (Kilbourne, 1995: 7).

2.2.6.4 The Effect of Environmental Advertising

The fourth stream of green advertising research focuses on the advertising effects. There are mainly two angles examining green marketing and advertising literature: one focuses on green marketers and the advertisement itself from the company side, as reviewed above; and the other focuses on green consumers or the relationship between advertisers and advertisement receivers. The effect of environmental advertisings on consumer behaviour is thus the focus of another stream of green advertisement studies. In this stream of study, mainly in a quantitative approach, researchers focus on consumers’ responses to and attitudes toward green advertisings, and find out which kinds of green advertising appeals are the most effective for consumers (e.g., Balderjahn, 1988; Schwepker and Cornwell, 1991; Obermiller, 1995; Schuhwerk and Lefkoff-Hagius, 1995; Thorson et al., 1995; D’Souza and Taghian, 2005; Chan et al., 2006).

2.2.6.5 Green Marketing and Advertising Research in China

These above studies of green advertising were mainly conducted in the context of developed economies and lack investigation in the context of developing nations. Since advertising and promotion are important parts of the marketing program of firms competing in the global marketplace (Belch and Belch, 2004), and that environmental awareness is rising in the developing world such as China, it is important to understand the development of green marketing and advertising in a different context. Among the scant studies of green marketing and advertising in China, Chan and Lau (2000) conducted surveys to study the antecedents of green purchases in China’s green market. Chan (2004) examined Chinese consumers’ responses to environmental advertising. Dai and colleagues studied the development of green advertising in the Chinese automobile industry (Dai et al., 2011).

Today, green advertising in different forms have been commonly found in China (Chan, 2004). Ye's (2000) survey indicates that more than 90 percent of surveyed firms are interested in selling green products in Chinese market, and in the market there have already been about 3,000 different kinds of eco-friendly products (Ye, 2000). Ongkrutraksa (2003)'s study shows that the majority of advertisers in China seek to use mostly green messages (promotion of a green company image) and attempt to project a green corporate image, rather than focus on the environmental benefit of their product or service. The existing literature on Chinese green advertising, however, mainly stays in a surface level and focuses on the constitutive factors in the content of green advertisings, while the constructive characteristics and constructed meanings of green advertising discourse have not been paid attention.

2.2.6.6 The Research Paradigms on Green Advertisement Studies

As the literature reviewed above, in research on green marketing and advertising, most studies - and nearly all Chinese context studies - are from a positivist perspective and a quantitative methodology. In line with the mainstream of the studies on Western green marketing and advertising, this approach claims that first, green advertising is driven by and focused on the green segment of the population, and the need to project a public image of environmental responsibility is an indication of the influence of the external green trends on firms' green advertising. Secondly, advertisers are able to highlight the environmental benefits of their products and services to tap the green segment of markets, as well as to portray an image of corporate environmental responsibility in order to enhance their overall corporate reputation/brand. Furthermore, from this approach, corporate green advertisings are dissected into different facets and examined within a structured framework. Such positivist research is abundant: e.g., Banerjee et al.(2005)'s analytical framework consists of five major categories: advertising characteristics,

advertising greenness, advertising objective, advertising appeal, and advertising issues to evaluating the success of green advertising, by studying and finding the match amongst green consumer's preferences, environmental attitudes, intentions, and behaviours and green advertisements' appeals.

In addition to the studies exploring the characteristics of green advertising content, green advertisements researchers applying content analysis explored the functional dimension of green advertisements and examine if the green advertising can induce consumers' purchase decision. For example, McGowan (2000) attempted to determine whether environmental advertisers provided consumers with informational cues such as whether marketers provide consumers with an environmentally "pretty picture" of their product, service, or organization (e.g., value-expressive appeals) or whether they are trying to inform consumers of the key benefits of their greenness (e.g., utilitarian appeals). His content analysis of 100 environmental advertisements in the US revealed that the majority are product related that provide consumers with utilitarian claims, which focus on key product benefits. On the consumer side, such studies aim to measure consumer attitudes toward green advertising and environmental attitudes (e.g., Haytko and Matulich, 2008); others have further investigated the attitudinal and behavioural decision factors to purchase green products (e.g., Chan and Lau, 2000; Jiménez and Yang, 2008). In this paradigm of research, the green advertising is assumed to be an instrumental role and the method of content analysis is mostly used to comprehend the nature of green advertisements. However, the work of the green academic world is not complete and there is a greater need for further investigations into the construction process and constitutive components of the green advertisements, for example, to see how corporate green advertising discourse employs nature to construct corporate greenness, and how firms construct meanings in green consumption.

Noticing the incompleteness in structuralist approach research on green advertising, some scholars recently began to examine the phenomenon for its meanings by using, for example, a qualitative and discursive research approach, Garland et al. (2013) studied the configuration features of hybrid car advertisings and found that using ambiguous messages in the green advertisings can promote socially and politically charged products for consumers' understanding and imagination. Ryan (2012) considered advertising not only as a method of mass communication which merely reflecting society and introducing new products, but also a socio-political agenda. Drawing on findings from a rhetorical analysis of advertising and branding efforts by an environmentally conscious cleaning product company, Ryan (2012) claimed that the role of advertising was shifting. Ryan argued that advertising no longer only projected a fantasy world of which consumers aspire to become a part. Neither is advertising simply informing consumers of new products. The advertisements nowadays, besides disseminating material lifestyle aspirations and product information, has been utilized as Agenda-Setting socio-political tools enabling private firms to incorporate social issues, such as the environmental movement, into their advertising messages (Ryan, 2012: 73).

Such literature suggests that green advertising has gone beyond its traditional role in promoting corporate products/service and enhancing corporate brand. It has become a socio-political tool. The green advertising discourse is to some extent similar to corporate social reporting which is a way firms demonstrate that their actions are legitimate and that they behave as good corporate citizens. To do so, firms are willing to present or report "good news" but reluctant to disclose "bad news", implying that social and environmental communications and disclosures are to a large extent self-laudatory (Hackston and Milne, 1996; Deegan and Rankin, 1996). According to the legitimacy theory (Gary et al., 1995), corporate social reporting aims at providing information that legitimizes firms' behavior by intending to influence stakeholders'

and eventually society's perceptions about the company (e.g. Neu et al., 1998). In such a way, companies are no longer in a passive position responding to external pressures and requirements, but hold an active stance to shape their legitimacy through communication and, thereby, influence public perceptions. As a result, firms are regarded as a "good corporate citizen" and its actions justify its continued existence (Guthrie and Parker, 1989). In this respect then, corporate social reporting, as well as corporate green advertising as a way of corporate communication, can be seen as "a public relations vehicle" aimed at influencing people's perceptions (e.g., Dutton and Dukerich, 1991): it is possible to emphasize particular aspects of company behaviour by means of communication because communication is the most flexible medium and can be used tactically (Hooghiemstra, 2000). Besides, the corporate communication discourses "help to manage an organization's relationship with relevant publics through the shaping of external perceptions – by "echoing, enlisting and harmonizing with other discourses" (Neu et al., 1998: 266).

Elsbach (1994) also stresses on the importance of communication and symbolism and sees them as self-presentational devices. According to him, an important function of management is a symbolic one, in that management is able to create an image that the organization's activities are legitimate; management does this by providing explanations, rationalizations, and legitimation for the organizational activities (Pfeffer, 1981; Neu et al., 1998). Language and symbolism thus may be used as responses to legitimacy threats (e.g., Carter and Dukerich, 1998). Similarly, Dowling and Pfeffer (1975) claim that:

"The organization can attempt through communication, to alter the definition of social legitimacy so that it conforms to the organization's present practices, output and values... [or] the organization can attempt, again through communication, to become identified with symbols, values, or institutions which have a strong base of social legitimacy" (p. 127).

As one of the major corporate communication approaches, corporate green advertising is such a self-presentational device. It is not just an information transferring and broadcasting channel, but also a self-laudatory one which indicates the use of enhancements and entitlements. The concept of “entitlements” refers to a tactic that maximizes the actor's responsibility for the event and is used when that responsibility is either ambiguous or unclear (Schlenker, 1980). Similarly, Duimering and Safayeni (1998) propose that

“Organizations compensate for negative information by attempting to construct images that overemphasize the positive aspects of their activities and by attempting to manage and control the flow of organizational information received by these constituents” (p. 63).

Based on the arguments above, it can be assumed that the main goal of these green advertisings is not only to promote their corporate brands and products, but also to show that the firms are legitimate. In addition and similar to the corporate social disclosure, green advertising also intends to inspire confidence among the company's stakeholders (as well as consumers) and secure their contribution to the organization.

2.2.7 Advertising as a Cultural System and the Constructive Role of Green Advertising

Advertisings are generally assumed to exist in two forms – passive and active. Passive form advertising assumes advertising provides of sheer information, in word-of-mouth transmissions regarding quality or convenience, or in the linking to an exchanged good to the social identity of maker or trader. This is a positivist view of advertising and the majority of reviewed green advertising literature is based on this assumption. The other form or assumption of advertising is in any intentional investing of goods with symbolic meaning in an effort to increase their exchange value (Sherry, 1987). This form of advertising assumes a constructing role and is designed to both remove goods from the realm of the undifferentiated commodity

and to transform them from functional products into psychosocially significant branded products.

Schudson (1984) describes advertising as capitalist realism and a set of aesthetic conventions. Its goal is to promote and celebrate a particular political economy. It is also argued by him that advertising may be more powerful by producing dependence on, not acceptance of, its version of reality (Schudson, 1984). According to Geertz (1973), advertising is a system of symbols seeking to establish powerful and pervasive moods and motivations in people. This is done through formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and weaving such conceptions with an aura of factuality, so that the moods and motivations become uniquely realistic (Williamson, 1980).

Following the above discussions, companies engaging in environmental marketing for their market share through green advertising, should send their messages to two kinds of audiences: the existing green consumers who already hold an environmental awareness and conduct green consumption practices; and other potential customers who need to be convinced that green consumption are significant and important to them (Todd, 2004). In addition, according to Evernden (Hansen, 2010: 135), “nature is used habitually to justify and legitimate the actions we wish to regard as normal, and the behaviour we choose to impose on each other.”

From the discussion above, it can be seen that the role of advertisements in shaping consumers’ perceptions (its cultural role) has gone beyond the facilitating and instrumental promotion of a product. In fact, advertisements “act as a representational system” that creates reference and connection “outside the realm of the advertised product” (Schroeder, 2002: 25). The representations and messages in advertisements offer a realm of referential associations and experiential possibilities (Stokes and

Hallett, 1992). In doing so, they are meant to have a semiotic effect on action (Silbey, 2009), to generate meaning and build value for their products and brands. In such way, the advertisings become cultural and political terrains in which individuals negotiate and engage in order to create their own experiences and understand their choices (Vargo and Lusch, 2004).

Corporate advertising's cultural/political role and its semiotic effect have been neglected in the field of green marketing and advertising research. As Caruana and Crane pointed that, to date, the majority of studies on consumer responsibility have relied on the assumption that responsibility is "an objectively identifiable trait of sovereign consumers" (Caruana and Crane, 2008:1496). However, informed by consumer culture theories and applied with discourse analysis approach, some studies began to emerge in recent years. For example, Hansen (2010) addressed the cultural aspect of the green discourse and the possible issues that might provoke. Livesey (2001) treated Shell UK's eco-discourse in communication as an instrument of corporate sensemaking. Caruana and Crane (2008) examined the role of corporate online communications in constructing consumer responsibility for the environment. Böhm and Brei (2008) analyzed the role of marketing in the construction of what can be called the hegemony of development. Saint (2008), in a critical discourse analysis approach, explored the discourses, and discursive practices concerning corporate environmental harms. Eyles and Fried (2012) examined how the Canadian nuclear industry has used various communication strategies to diminish or remove perceptions of any environmental health risks that emanate from its activities. Ryan (2012) used rhetorical analysis to examine the green marketing and advertising and suggested that green firm may be putting forth a soci-political agenda invoking green consumer-citizen. Following this stream, the literature review in Part III will introduce critical and cultural perspectives and discourse analysis towards marketing and advertising researches. Before that, as this study focuses on advertising texts

from corporate websites, it is necessary to review existing studies on online advertising. The following discussion reviews the research literature on online advertising.

2.3 Part II: Online Advertising Research

Part II presents a review of literature on the role that corporate websites play in corporate green communication and marketing. It also considers the ways in which firms represent themselves online. Limited research about the role of websites in corporate green marketing exists. Even more limited is the body of critical analysis research into firms' online green advertising discourse.

2.3.1 Website Advertising Research

A company's web site may be its principle point of contact with key audiences (Silk et al., 2001). A corporate web site itself is a type of advertising because the corporate web site is able to build a brand while offering some depth of information that could not be provided even in traditional media-based advertising (McMillan et al., 2003). There is mounting evidence about the importance of corporate websites as a vehicle to market and disseminate advertisements (e.g., Nielsen, 2002; Hwang et al., 2003). In order to promote their green products and enhance green identity, companies use green advertising as a means to accomplish this end, and embed green advertisings in corporate websites serving as a primary outlet to represent these efforts.

Recent years have witnessed a growing number of studies on the Internet as a new way of mass communication, this follows discussions about company websites in terms of their design and content. Many studies have identified what are important factors in attracting web users (e.g., Hoffman and Novak, 2000; Zhang and Dran, 2002; Heinze and Hu, 2006). Some researchers have defined web advertising. Singh and Dalal (1999), for example, argue that corporate websites "meet the conceptual

definition of advertising, they resemble advertisings in physical appearance, and they perform the same basic functions – to inform and to persuade” (p. 92). There have also been studies examining the corporate website itself as advertising (e.g., McMillan et al., 2003). McMillan and colleagues claimed that the corporate website is able to build a brand and provide information in depth that could not be obtained from other traditional approaches of advertising.

These reviewed existing studies on corporate website, however, seem to focus on its technological properties or tend to serve practical purposes only, but they ignore the linguistic or discursive features of company websites. A limited number of studies focusing on rhetorical features of web communication exists (Nielsen, 2002). Although the significance of corporate websites for advertising practices has been widely recognized by both practitioners and scholars, a dearth of scholarship exists. To be more specific, empirical studies of the ways firms use website to communicate their responsibility initiatives are limited. Among such existing studies, Maignan and Ralston (2002) have investigated the extent and content of businesses’ communications about CSR in US and Europe; Esrock and Leichty (1998) have studied how Fortune 500 companies use Internet to present their social responsible practices and advance their policy agendas; Similarly, Pollach (2005) have investigated how Fortune’s “global most admired” list of companies use language in their websites to establish relationships with their audiences. These studies indicate that companies treat online communication as a means of creating a positive image and a dialogue with their stakeholders. In addition, as Maignan and Ralston (2002) point, the messages firms communicate online and their motivations differ depending on the industrial backgrounds and country origins of firms.

Given the importance of corporate green advertisings in websites to both consumers and the companies, it is timely to conduct investigation on how firms represent their

environmental responsibility through the use of language on corporate website advertisings. Language use on the web is not a widely discussed issue within marketing communication research (Nielsen, 2002). In essence, conclusions about green advertising practices in the online context remain extremely limited stemming from empirical research. So to fill the gap, my study intends to examine green advertising discourse in corporate websites. It aims to investigate how firms represent their environmental responsibility and green practices/products in their green advertising messages; and it focuses on the linguistic and discursive features of the advertisings from company websites through discourse analysis.

2.3.2 Choosing the Websites

The World Wide Web offers a great scope for companies to manage their public relations and sales promotion. As Chaffey et al. (2000: 42) put it: “So a company having its own web site becomes its own media owner and has the opportunity to publish any kind of material without an intermediate review from a publisher or television company”. Such self-presenting features suit my research intentions. My research is not intended to study if the corporate website is the most suitable marketing medium, but to focus on the construction of corporate greenness in advertising discourses. Thus, corporate website discourse ought to be the best data source since it is purely from the firms without any filtering processes involved by other parties such as publishers or television companies.

Kotler and Armstrong (1998) distinguish between two types of company websites: corporate website and marketing website. The former can be seen as electronic company brochures and the latter as a direct marketing site which has online-shopping facilities, as Kotler and Armstrong define them respectively:

Corporate website: “A site set up by a company on the Web which carries information and other features designed to answer customer questions, build

customer relationships and generate excitement about the company, rather than to sell the company's products or services directly. The site handles interactive communication initiated by the consumer".

Marketing website: "A site on the web created by a company to interact with consumers for the purpose of moving them closer to purchase or other marketing outcome. The site is designed to handle interactive communication initiated by the company".

(Kotler and Armstrong, 1998: 563)

Kotler and Armstrong's first type of company website (corporate) seems to be the most common type which includes general information about the company, such as its history, mission, vision, market performance, employee profiles, and introduction of products and services. By contrast, the marketing website is a website establishing online communication to direct customers, this website is especially found in business-to-business communication and it includes documents such as product catalogues, sales events and coupons. However, things have been constantly changed and the two types of company websites as identified by Kotler and Armstrong (1998), have more or less merged into a new and a more complex type which covers both interactive and non-interactive communication (Nielsen, 2002). Nevertheless, my study does not intend to analyze the structural characteristics or discuss the merging and evolving process of corporate and marketing websites. Instead, it focuses on the linguistic and discursive features of advertisings from company's websites. Thus, the research chooses the first type of company website, namely the corporate website. Four types of web pages are selected to study: home page, introduction page, CSR/Sustainability information page, and products/services information page. Among the different types of web pages the first three pages aim to provide general information about the company and its products; while the products page includes more detailed information of the products and services firms advertise. For example, in addition to textual information found in the other web pages, the product page also places equal weight on visual information such as video advertisings.

2.4 Part III: Critical Marketing Research on Green Advertising

2.4.1 A Cultural and Critical Perspective on Marketing and Advertising

In Part I of this literature review, I have indicated the necessity of discerning the cultural role of green advertisements in motivating green consumptions. From this direction, a number of studies from a cultural and critical perspective have been conducted to understand the effects of marketing and advertising on both consumer and society. This part will now provide a review of the intersection between consumer culture theory, critical theory and green and marketing and advertising researches.

2.4.1.1 Consumer Culture Theory and Critical Marketing Theory

Different to the positivist assumption that consumer preferences objectively exist and need to be identified by marketers, consumer culture theorists position that consumers and certain markets do not pre-exist as *a priori* categories, instead, they are created via “market mythologies” (Thompson, 2004). Such market mythology serves as cultural repositories of meaning for consumer’s interpretation of self-identity (Caruana and Crane, 2008). The marketing process can partly manage the mythological resources and its consumer positioning. As Schouten and McAlexander (1995) put it:

“By understanding the process of self-transformation undergone by individuals within a subculture of consumption, a marketer can take an active role in socializing new members and cultivating the commitment of current ones”. (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995: 57)

The opinion that marketers can “create” consumers or “construct” markets based on consumer culture theory has encouraged the examination of the power implications associated with highly institutionalized market discourse (Thompson, 2004). For

example, research in constructivism tradition has suggested that firms not only play a central role in constructing markets and shaping consumer behaviours (Arnould and Thompson, 2005; Thompson, 2004), but also can dominate the debate around social responsibility (Crane, et al., 2008; Livesey, 2001).

Similarly, organizational discourse researchers have shown that market niches can be enacted and responsible consumer categories constructed by organizational discourse (Caruana and Crane, 2008). For example, Livesey (2001; 2002)'s study on the discourse of oil companies, such as ExxonMobile and Shell, shows that the firms' green identity is reinforced and the meaning of social responsibility is shifted from categories of responsible citizenship to that of positive consumption, through the novel contestation of identity-categories.

In line with such stream of research, the green marketing theory has connected marketing and social development and the focus of marketing research has moved from the formulation of an integrated theory of marketing system per se to a problem-oriented analysis of marketing processes' wider impact on developed and developing societies (Layton and Grossbart, 2006). Such macromarketing approaches³ include studies on the relationship between social responsibility and economic development, as well as analyses of the impact of different legal, political and social value systems on marketing and vice versa (Hunt et al., 1981).

In the studies from a macromarketing perspective (e.g., Rostow, 1971; Arndt, 1981; Joy and Ross, 1989; Taylor and Omura, 1994; Layton and Grossbart, 2006; Böhm and Brei, 2008), in terms of their visions about the relationship between marketing and development, two streams of research can be identified. The first stream is

³ Böhm and Brei (2008) pointed that there were both studies of micromarketing and macromarketing: the traditional micro-marketing approach in a narrow and managerial focus was challenged by a macromarketing perspective which analyzes the role of marketing systems in wider economic development processes (Fisk, 1981).

pro-marketing and the second is anti-marketing. In the pro-marketing stream, it is assumed that a positive relationship exists between marketing and international stability as a result of conflict reduction caused by trading nations' prosperity (e.g., Alderson, 1965; Layton and Grossbart, 2006). In addition, marketing can stimulate the development of the Third World, for example, corporate marketing can assist in information networks organization, efficient distribution channels development, and promoting consumerism values which brings innovation and an entrepreneurial practices (Hosley and Wee, 1988). Some scholars have concluded that marketing plays a role of catalyst to development in less developed countries (e.g., Dholakia and Sherry, 1987; Wood and Vittel, 1986) because marketing stimulates consumer culture and strengthens trade (Droge et al., 1993). Furthermore, in a political aspect, marketing system can promote global inclusion, community cohesion, sustainable development and quality of life, which altogether help build bases for peace (Shultz et al., 2005).

Compared with the above "evangelical" view on and positive effects from the role of marketing, the other stream of literature of marketing suggests that marketing has brought a number of negative consequences. For example, marketing as a part of the wider global economic system has been argued to have a significant impact on a country's ideology (Darian 1985). In addition, van Dam and Apeldoorn (1996) have claimed that marketing has had an inherent drive toward environmental unsustainability. Layton and Grossbart (2006) have argued that marketing contributes to disparities amongst communities and the concentration of wealth in societies, thus creating inequalities and uneven development. Hill and Dhanda (2004) warned that marketing scholars had defined the "quality of life" construct mostly in relation to developed nations, but it had not yet been adequately studied when applied to the context of developing countries. Similarly, Kilbourne (2004) believed that if all of developing world apply a single neoliberal development model, their development

process could be problematic and unstable. A common point of such studies from radical and critical approaches, according to Kilbourne (2004), is that they do not believe social, economic, political and individual advantages derived from globalization processes can be shared equally by all.

The stream of marketing studies adopting such anti-marketing viewpoints of marketing and its impact has been termed as “critical marketing”. This is in line with Habermas who redefines critical social theory as a theory of communication, paying especially attention on distorted communication. More specifically on critical theory, according to Burton (2001), it is based on three elements: demystifying the ideological basis of social relations; questioning positivist methodologies; and the asserting the importance of self-reflexivity of the investigator and the linguistic basis of representation. In this field of critical marketing research informed by critical theory tradition, Böhm and Brei (2008) argued that critical marketing researchers need to not only focus on marketing’s impact on development as “negative” or “problematic”, but also and more importantly, question the marketing way of “seeing things”. This means that marketing should be seen as part of a wider social formation characterized by specific power relations and specific development discourses. Also, critical marketing researcher should assist and inform the movements of resistance against dominant power regimes by exposing gaps in the hegemony of the marketing discourse and giving voice to marginal groups and territories (Böhm and Brei, 2008). Similarly, Brownlie (2006) claimed that critical marketing research adopting a more reflexive approach accept the idea that marketing discourse and technology do not provides a neutral way of looking at the world; rather, it aims to uncover the conflicts, problems, and fallacy in the alleged neutrality of marketing theory and practice (Brownlie, 2006).

Despite the emergence of critical marketing studies, critical perspectives had not

been widely embraced by scholars in marketing research and it was apparent that critical marketing theory was still in its infancy (Böhm and Brei, 2008). Marketing studies in critical perspective was “largely a minority interest comprising different factions” (Burton, 2005: 11). Yet, the field has been expanding, as a growing number of scholars have begun to emphasize the importance of applying a critical perspective to the study of marketing discourses and/or corporate practices (e.g., Alvesson, 1994); Burton, 2001; 2002; Saren et al., 2007; Tadajewski and Brownlie, 2008).

2.4.1.2 A Critical Perspective on Advertising

As the above discussion (in *Section 2.4.1.1*) suggested, the significance and power of marketing is not so much economic, but cultural. Similar in advertising, “advertising is not just a business expenditure undertaken in the hope of moving some merchandise off the store shelves, but is rather an integral part of modern culture” (Leis, et al., 1986:7). For instance, in Schroeder and Zwick (2004) stated that through its images, advertising conveyed assertive “masculine” behaviour and images of well-groomed and fashioned men. In this case, advertising presents proper and improper images of behavioural and role models for men, as well as a consumerist lifestyle glutted with advertised commodities (Schroeder and Zwick, 2004). Similarly, Haug (1986) argued that the advertising-fuelled “commodity aesthetics” shaped the values, perceptions, and consumer behaviour of individuals in contemporary capitalist societies so as to integrate them into the lifestyles of consumer capitalism.

In line with consumer culture theory and critical marketing research, studies examining the role of advertising within contemporary capitalist societies have emerged since 1970s (Harms and Kllner, 2013). Different to the “administrative” media and advertising studies that focus on ways that firm communicate to influence audiences and promote consumption, critical research of advertising has focused on

advertisings' social and cultural effects and their role in shaping and maintaining an unjust social order (e.g., Goffman, 1979). One focus of this kind of critical analysis of advertising is to examine the content and structure of advertisings for their distorted communications (which will be reviewed in a next section) and their ideological impact and results, such as the over-consumption culture and environmental problems. By employing semiotics and/or discourse analysis, these critical studies have examined how advertisings persuade or manipulate consumers (e.g., Garland et al., 2013; Goldman, 1987; Williamson, 1981). In addition, in a broader historical analysis, other scholars (e.g., Schiller, 1969; Ewen, 2001) have explored and presented the advertisings' impact on the larger social and political economic structure, and investigated how advertisings and mass media contribute to concentrate cultural power into the hands of corporations and thus develop and reproduce an undemocratic social order.

With the help of advertising and its culturally constructed commodity aesthetics, capital was capable of colonizing the "public sphere": a public of rational citizens who discussed political and social affairs of common interest was replaced with atomized consumers who passively viewed the spectacles of mass culture in the privatized spaces of their homes (Habermas, 1989). Consequently, the space of potential political opposition began to be filled with consumerism and the ideological scenarios of the culture industries (Horkheimer and Adorno 1972). In such way, the society became gradually commodified and consumption was seen as a solution to all kinds of problems. Finally, consumerism would turn itself into a way of modern life: the "good life" in contemporary capitalism.

The literature discussed above suggests that advertising has not only short range efforts of inducing individuals to buy specific products, but also long range functions of shaping consumption as a way of life. As the notions such as "corporate

environmental responsibility” and “responsible consumer” are not pre-existing categories but articulated as meaningful by corporate discourses. Advertising should, therefore, be theorized as part of an expanding capitalist mode of production and consumption. It follows, then, that, it is not only the economic functions of advertising should be analyzed, but also the ideological force and result from advertising, since advertising as an indispensable force in the reproduction of consumer capitalism plays an important role in the maintenance of capitalist hegemony.

Based on this cultural and critical assumption of advertising and its influence on current capitalist social life, empirical studies with a specific focus on advertising have been conducted. For example, Williamson (1981) undertook a study of advertising which combined semiological and ideological critiques in a close reading of individual advertisings. Goldman (1987) studied MacDonald advertisings (1983/84) and examined the way in which MacDonald’s packaged history and memory to sell products that enlist its audience in the commodification of memory and celebration of basic ideological values of U.S. society (e.g., patriotism, the continuity of history, family, and consumption). There have also been studies of perfume advertisings (Goldman and Wilson, 1983) and drug advertisings (Goldman and Montagne, 1986) demonstrating how the semiotics of advertising associated the products advertised with socially desirable values and signs, and provided commodity solutions to individual and social problems. Goldman and Papson’s study (1991) showed how recent Levi’s advertisings utilized a pseudo-individuality and populism to sell its jeans, while recent Reebok campaigns incorporated postmodern imagery and cynicism to sell shoes. In the more specific field of green advertising studies, Garland et al. (2013) examined how the activity of imagining in relation to advertising structure influenced audiences’ knowledge and perception of climate change as well as their sense of responsibility for anthropogenic climate change. In

addition, using a multimodal critical discourse analysis, Budinsky and Bryant (2013) analyzed three representations from green advertisements and analyzed how specific advertisements operated and contributed to problematic environmental discourse.

In the extant literature, some have started to study the emerging phenomenon of green marketing and advertising in a post-structural and cultural perspective. For example, besides the above mentioned studies, Banerjee and McKeage (1994) have claimed that green advertising represents an attempt to promote environmentally-friendly consumption and bring environmentalism to the realm of consumption in the post-materialism era (Inglehart, 1981; Knutsen, 1990). Previous studies have indicated that corporate communication is able to “create and maintain systems of shared meanings that facilitate organized action” (Smircich and Stubbart, 1985: 724). However, this stream of research is very limited and limited to the developed economies context. While in the current transition period in China, both its economic, environmental, and socio-cultural structures are undergoing the integration into the globalization, firms’ green advertising is possibly bearing distinctive features. As more and more firms in China begin to adopt environmental practices and green concepts from the West (such as “Sustainability”), it is still not known how the corporate environmental responsibility is represented and the meaning of green consumption constructed in corporate communication and how do firms use commercial advertising to facilitate green consumption. Therefore, the way that consumption is related to commercial practice in corporate green advertisements is thus worth investigating.

2.5 Part IV: Theoretical Framework and Research Question

2.5.1 Advertising as Discourse and Critical Discourse Analysis Approach on Advertising

As mentioned above, when scholars using a cultural and critical perspective argued

that advertising was a manipulative tool by corporations to manufacture mass consumption, they firstly supposed that the desire for commodities was not natural but socially/culturally generated and symbolically structured (e.g., Baudrillard, 1998; Haug 1986; Leis, et al., 1986). Therefore, as the essential part of communication in advertising materials, language use goes beyond the transmission of simple information and it further performs to represent natural objects or social realities (Wetherell, 2001), as well as construct meanings. Since language is socially constructed and its use (or so called discourse) is shaped by cultural, economic, historical, political and social contexts, the construction of meaning is never neutral.

The existing cultural and critical studies on advertising suggest that researchers of advertising should draw on the most advanced work from semiotics, post-structuralism, hermeneutics, and other methods of interpretation and ideology critique, such as discourse analysis. This kind of close examination should combine microanalyses of advertising's specific texts and methods with macroanalyses of the advertising's broader social functions. In the meantime, scholars such as Elliott (1996) have argued for the application of discourse analysis to the discipline of marketing. According to Elliott, it is time for marketing to adopt new theories and methodologies, particularly from other disciplines. From this direction, Discourse Theory appears to provide viable theoretical framework for studying commercial advertisings and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) informed by and developed on Discourse Theory can be a suitable research approach because CDA claims that discourses are not only expressions of social practice, but are also ideological tools (Wodak, 2001). Thus, by focusing on the uses of language in green advertising, CDA can help to uncover the construction process of corporate greenness and embed the examination of corporate environmental communication in a web of domination, power, discrimination and control (Wodak, 2001).

CDA is developed and informed by discourse theorists, such as Gramsci (1971), and Laclau and Mouffe (1985; 1999; 2001). This research adopts Fairclough (1992)'s CDA approach. Despite Fairclough's rejection of Discourse Theory's tendency to overstate the contingency of social practices, Fairclough advocates the use of several concepts from Laclau and Mouffe. In *Discourse in Late Modernity* (1999), as he argues:

“Laclau and Mouffe provide valuable resources for theorising and analyzing the openness and complexity of late modern social life – they capture the instability and flux of social practices and identities, and the pervasive dissolution and redrawing of boundaries, which characterise late modernity... We regard Laclau and Mouffe as providing valuable conceptual resources for the analysis of change in discourse – in particular their conceptualisation of ‘articulation’ and ‘equivalence/difference’” (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999: 124).

The following section will review its theoretical background and useful concepts informing this research on green advertising discourse.

2.5.2 Discourse Analysis as Social Theory

A discourse is formed by symbols (language) in contexts. As stated by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001), “discourses are developed in specific social context and in a specific manner which will keep the needs of the social actor, inserted in the context” (p. 4). A discourse is not neutral but value and ideology laden. Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) suggest that the discourse is constructed in order to fulfill needs and perspectives. Dryzek (1997) posits that discourse constructs meanings and relationships, helping to define common sense and legitimate knowledge. According to Jorgensen and Phillips (2002),

“Our access to reality is always through language. With language, we create representation of reality that are never mere reflections of a pre-existing reality but contribute to constructing reality. That does not mean that reality itself does not exist. Meanings and representations are real. Physical objects also exist, but they

only gain meaning through discourse [...] Language, then, is not merely a channel through which information about underlying mental states and behaviour or facts about the world are communicated. On the contrary, language is a ‘machine’ that generates, and as a result constitutes, the social world.” (p. 9).

One of the major goals of discourse analysis is to understand and interpret socially produced meanings. According to Phillips and Hardy (2002), discourse analysis examines the processes whereby the social world is constructed and maintained. Within the framework of discourse analysis, researchers seek to highlight the “historically specific rules and conventions that structure the production of meanings in particular historical contexts” (Howarth, 2000:128). Given the specific focus, here, on the strategic use of advertising language by companies to communicate, persuade, and promote the particular issue of corporate greenness, a discourse analysis approach appears to be the most appropriate methodology.

Discourse analysis is not only a methodology but also a stream of social theory (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002). The foundations of Discourse Theory draw upon key ideas from post-Marxist social thought and post-Saussurian linguistics (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). As post-Marxists, they critique the strict division between material economic conditions and the ownership of the means of production, (referred to as the material-economic base), and the meaning-producing cultural and political institutions of the state, judiciary, church, media and education system (referred to as the superstructure).

Furthermore, whereas within Marxist historical materialism the base was viewed as the key determinant of the superstructure, with people’s consciousness created by the economic structure of society, post-Marxist theorists such as Gramsci (1971) softened this stance to account for the ability of groups, such as the working-classes, to recognize their own oppressed position within society and begin to politically work against it. Gramsci (1971) argued that the dominant classes within society use

discursive processes within the superstructure to manufacture popular consent for the unequal distribution of power and wealth. He used the term *hegemony* (the term will be reviewed later in next section) to describe this discursive construction of consciousness and identity.

Laclau and Mouffe (1985) develop Gramsci's idea of hegemony further by dissolving the division of society into base and superstructure, and they argue that the discursive and non-discursive worlds, or the superstructure and the base, cannot be separated. As Laclau and Mouffe (1985: 108) write:

“The fact that every object is constituted as an object of discourse has nothing to do with whether there is a world external to thought, or with the realism/idealism opposition. An earthquake or the falling of a brick is an event that certainly exists, in the sense that it occurs here and now, independently of my will. But whether their specificity as objects is constructed in terms of natural phenomena, or expressions of the wrath of God, depends upon the structuring of a discursive field. What is denied is not that such objects exist externally to thought, but the rather different assertion that they could constitute themselves as objects outside any discursive conditions of emergence.”

The most crucial aspect of Discourse Theory—for this study's purposes – is the idea that, since social phenomena are mediated through discourse, their meanings can never be permanently fixed. A variety of discourses exist and each discourse structures reality in a different way, competing to define what is true within a particular aspect of the social world. Therefore, people's understanding shaped by these discursive aspects is contingent upon the ongoing struggle between discourses. And people's perceptions of society and identity always open to new representations since meanings are constantly changed, revised, and reconfigured as a result of competitions among discourses. Based on the above arguments, discourse analysis is not to discover the truth about reality (for instance, to find out green consumer groups/market exist) but to describe how discursive practice constructs this reality

(for instance, how people and firms perceive their identities as environmental responsible) so that it appears natural and neutral.

If social reality is constituted by ongoing discursive practices over meaning, a set of conceptual tools with which this struggle can be described is needed. For this, Laclau and Mouffe (1985) modify the structural linguistics of Saussure (1960) in line with the post-structuralist view and treat language use as alterable through the day-to-day interactions of social actors. Laclau and Mouffe (1985) argue against the study of language as a fundamentally synchronic entity, since (in terms of the metaphor) signs cannot be fixed definitively into position. Instead, the position of signs is always up for negotiation, and it is this constant negotiation of meaning that accounts for the contingency of discourses. However, despite their rejection of Saussurian principles, Laclau and Mouffe retain the notion that signs strive to acquire fixed meaning from their relation to one another. They argue that, although this is ultimately impossible, discourses attempt to fix signs into certain positions. Discourse analysis – as understood here – attempts to map out the processes by which the meaning of signs can become relatively fixed (and unfixed), and Laclau and Mouffe’s Discourse Theory introduces analytical concepts with which these processes can be analysed and described. A number of concepts drawn from their Discourse Theory and informing this study will be reviewed in the next section.

2.5.3 Conceptual Tool and Theoretical Framework from Discourse Analysis

Theory

The first concept from Discourse Theory is discourse itself. According to Laclau and Mouffe (1985), a *discourse* is an attempt to fix a web of meanings within a particular domain. Put it in another way, discourses “do not just describe things; they do things” (Potter and Wetherell, 1987: 6). This is done through discourse making sense of the world, and giving it meanings that generate particular experiences and

practices (Fairclough, 1992; van Dijk, 1997). The constitution process of a discourse refers to the structuring of signifiers into certain meanings to the exclusion of other meanings. It is a reduction of possibilities, and thus can be seen as an exercise of power (Howarth and Stayrakakis, 2000). All other possible meanings excluded by a particular discourse constitute the *field of discursivity*. Thus, “any discourse is constituted as an attempt to dominate the field of discursivity, to arrest the flow of differences, to construct a centre.” (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 112)

Since no discourse can fix a web of meanings completely or permanently, the field of discursivity makes possible the *articulation* of a multiplicity of competing discourses (Torfing, 1999). A signifier that is allocated a certain meaning in one discourse may be given another meaning in a different discourse, and since signs derive their meanings from their relation to one another, all other signs within the discourse will be configured differently as a result.

In a discourse, there are attempts of articulation to fix webs of meaning through the constitution of *nodal points*. Nodal points organize the discourse around a central privileged signifier or reference point. They bind together a particular system of meanings or “chain of signification”, assigning meanings to other signifiers within that discourse. According to Žižek, a nodal point possesses no density of meaning – quite the opposite, it is an “empty signifier, a pure signifier without the signified” (Žižek, 1989: 97). It only acquires meaning through its positioning relative to other signs. The positioning happens through articulation. *Articulation* is thus described as “any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practices” while a discourse is “the structured totality resulting from this articulatory practices” (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 105). An *element* in this sense is a sign within the discourse whose meaning has not yet been fixed. Through articulation, a discourse establishes a closure, a temporary halt

to the fluctuations of meaning of elements. Signs that have had their meaning fixed by a discourse are called *moments*. However, this closure is never permanent: “the transition from the ‘elements’ to ‘moments’ is never entirely fulfilled” (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 110).

Elements which are particularly open to different ascriptions of meaning are known as *floating signifiers*. Nodal points themselves can be thought of as floating signifiers, but as Phillips and Jorgensen (2002: 28) explain, “whereas the term ‘nodal point’ refers to a point of crystallization within a specific discourse, the term ‘floating signifier’ refers to the ongoing struggle between different discourses to fix the meaning of signs.” They provide an example: the word or signifier “body” is a nodal point in the clinical medicine discourse and a floating signifier in the struggle between such discourse and other discourses from alternative treatments. Similarly in my study, the word green is a nodal point in the corporate advertising discourse and a floating signifier in other discourses. In the corporate discourse, through the articulatory practices of advertising discourse, “green” as a sign should have acquired commercial meanings which are different from discourses from other domains such as governmental and NGO institutions.

Closely related to the process of articulation are ideas of *Intertextuality and Interdiscursivity*, which imply the multiplicity and dynamic nature of discourse. The term “intertextuality” implies “the insertion of history (society) into a text and in doing so helps to make history and contributes to wider processes of change” (Fairclough, 1992:102). Links amongst texts can be made in different ways: “through continued reference to a topic or main actors; through reference to the same events; or by transfer of main arguments from one text into the next” (Krzyanowski and Wodak, 2008:205). While social actors are always constrained by the discursive conventions of particular social settings, there exists space for creative social actors

to draw upon the resources from other discourses associated with other social practices (Candlin and Maley, 1997). One of the aims of discourse analysis is therefore to look for ways in which the “lexico-grammatical, semantic and textual discursive options available to and chosen by individuals serve to construct, reinforce, perhaps question, social roles and social behaviour” (Candlin and Maley, 1997:202).

Interdiscursivity means articulation within and between orders of discourse, the configuration of macro-level discourse the producers of the text consciously or unconsciously draw upon; it is “the use of elements in one discourse and social practice which carry institutional and social meanings from other discourse and social practices” (Candlin and Maley, 1997: 212).

Fairclough (1993) argues that intertextuality and interdiscursivity can contribute either to the reproduction of, or the challenge to, the established status quo. When discourses are mixed in conventional ways, this works towards the stability of the dominant order of discourse and, thereby, the dominant social order. If, however, they are combined creatively, creating new or hybrid discourses, this can act as a challenge to the status quo. This relates intertextuality and interdiscursivity to processes of social and organizational change, relations which have been well-documented in a number of discourse analysis studies (e.g., Bazerman, 1999; Bhatia, 2010; Chreim, 2006; Fairclough, 1995; Rahm, 2006). In order to effect lasting change, social agents must operate not only on a material or structural level but also on a discursive level, too, by creating significant and stable meanings within the terrain they are competing for (Bazerman, 1999). Cook (2001) has stated that advertising is naturally a discourse with a multitude of elements that constitute existence. Therefore, advertising discourse can be seen as intrinsically intertextual and interdiscoursal; and advertisements not only inform and remind, but also persuade, influence and change opinions, emotions and attitude (Cook, 2001). One implication

of the nature of advertising is that it not only helps to sell products, but also brings about change.

Another two important concepts from Discourse Theory are *ideology* and *hegemony*. *Ideology* is a central discourse theoretical concept which has been adopted by critical theorists and critical discourse analysts. According to Gramsci (1983; in Titscher et al., 2000: 144), ideology is the means used in a political society to achieve the agreement of the majority. Ideologies also play a major role in establishing and maintaining unequal power relations (Wodak, 2001). The interest of discourse analysis in ideology highlights the ways in which meaning is constructed and conveyed in a social context (Thompson, 1990; in Wodak, 2001). Meanings are produced and reproduced in a dialectic process of negotiation (Titscher et al., 2000: 145). The effects of power and ideology on the production of meaning are obscured and acquire a stable form, so that they are consequently taken as given (Wodak, 2001). This is why dominant discourses appear to provide a rational and sensible set of assumed truths beyond doubt (Jager, 2001). Discourse analysis, especially Critical Discourse Analysis, investigates those discourses, reveals the contradictions within, and exposes the means used to make those truths accepted (Jager, 2001).

The ideological workings of discourse in maintaining or transforming relations of power are facilitated by another condition, grasped by the important concept of *hegemony*. This concept refers to one of the predominant organizational forms of power in contemporary society. Gramsci (1971) argues that hegemony is intellectual and moral leadership used by the dominant groups to maintain their dominance by securing the “spontaneous consent” of subordinate groups and by persuading them that the relationship of domination is natural and inevitable. Drawing on Gramsci, Fairclough (1989; 1992) argues that dominant groups exercise power through constituting alliances, integrating rather than merely dominating subordinate groups,

and by winning their consent through discourse and through the constitution of local orders of discourse. He further combines the concept of intertextuality with hegemony and argues that hegemony not only naturalizes unequal power relations but also builds them into people's common sense understanding.

As a discourse is an attempt to fix a web of meanings within a particular domain via the articulation process, hegemony are always open to de-articulation and re-articulation. Moreover, the outcomes of such discursive practices are never entirely predictable because the continual interaction between varying discursive practices continues and resources for resisting hegemony are always available.

Fairclough's CDA as a Conceptual Framework

The review of Discourse Theory provides conceptual tools for this study. In addition, a critical discourse analysis model outlined by Fairclough (1989; 1992; 1993) directs analyses on three interrelated levels (or dimensions) – linguistic, discursive societal. Fairclough, similar to other CDA theorists (e.g., Wodak, 2001), stresses on the role of social context in which discourses are deeply situated. He conceives contextual factors as the “history” of existing and surrounding discourses, social structures, cultural and institutional norms, and physical legacies that the construction of new discourses occurs within. In order to comprehend the representations and meanings in a discourse studied, researchers need to understand its contexts. In addition, Fairclough (1989; 1992) identifies three aspects of the constructive effects of discourse. First, discourse contributes to the construction of “social identities” and “subject positions”, interpellating social actors in a certain way. Secondly, discourse helps to construct social relationships between people. Thirdly, discourse contributes to the construction of systems of knowledge and belief. These three aspects correspond to Halliday's (1978, 1994) notion of language functions: “identity”, “relational” and “ideational” functions of language. Fairclough defines them as:

“The identity function relates to the ways in which social identities are set up in discourse, the relational function to how social relationships between discourse participants are enacted and negotiated, the ideational function to ways in which texts signify the world and its processes, entities and relations” (Fairclough, 1992: 64).

Thus, texts can reproduce, sustain, threaten or overturn dominant or hegemonic notions of identity; social relations or systems of ideas and beliefs, have a genuine “physical” impact on the social world. In addition, within texts there exists evidence of struggle amongst competing social actors, interest groups and their differing ways of viewing the world.

What this means is that the study of discourses is not merely an exercise in abstract lexico-grammatical description but an analysis of a key tool in the reproduction or reformation of the wider social world. This is particularly true of political discourses since they are often designed and produced to achieve the hegemony of a particular point of view with the explicit aim of creating change within other non-discursive aspects of social practice (Rear and Jones, 2013).

In this study, corporate environmental advertising is seen as a specific type of corporate discourse aiming to both sustain and achieve the hegemonic construction of corporate greenness, as well as to create change towards green consumption. By exposing the processes by which such hegemonic practices are achieved within texts, researchers with critical discourse analysis methods could, as producers of texts themselves, contribute to the dissolution of those same hegemonic practices.

According to CDA theorists, as mentioned above, all discourses are treated as historical and, therefore, it is impossible to strip discourse from its broader context and it is important to mention the broader discourse and the location of individual

texts in larger bodies of texts (Phillips and Hardy, 2002), and culture, history and ideology characterize the context of the discursive event. Consequently, discourses are indeed intertextually linked to other discourses (Titscher et al., 2000: 146). Intertextuality or interdiscursivity refers to the perspective that every text or discourse is part of a series of texts to which it reacts and refers, and which it modifies (Titscher et al., 2000: 146). Such arguments imply that the commercial green advertising discourse as the object of this study does not emerge out of void; instead, it has legacies or discursive elements from existing discourses. Therefore, it is necessary to review existing green discourses before investigating corporate green advertising discourse.

2.5.4 A Variety in Green Discourses and the Meaning of Greenness

From the discourse theoretical perspective, the green discourse like all other kinds of discourses, represents an attempt to fix a web of specific meanings within a particular domain and it is developed in different social contexts and in a specific manner which will keep the needs of certain social actors. To be more specific, green discourse articulates people's understanding of the natural environment. And the green discourse should be treated as heterogeneous and its embodied meanings as diversified. As Banerjee et al. (1995) claim, although the green discourse was initially rooted in environmental activism, it has been undergone semantic broadening and disseminated through other domains of public discourse (such as social media and corporate marketing). In this sense and in lots of cases, the meaning of "greenness" has been extended, or even transformed, and thus appears much less evident in its link to environmental issues. For example, "green dating" means people "recycle" people they have previously dated; the "green" in this term has nothing to do with environmental concerns. In order to conduct discourse analysis on green advertisings as a discourse, and detect if and how corporate green advertisings extend the meanings of green, it is helpful to review relative "green discourses".

Following Mühlhäusler and Peace (2006), “green discourse” is defined as environmental discourse as comprising the linguistic devices articulating arguments about the relationship between humans and the natural environment. And there is a variety in environmental management and governance discourse as green discourse. From a politics viewpoint, Bäckstrand and Lövbrand (2006) argue that environmental discourse can be generally categorized as ecological modernization, green governmentality, and civic environmentalism. Each category of green discourse has different perspectives towards environmental problem solving and environmental protection. These green discourses have impact on corporate green discourse. The following sections will briefly review these three green discourses.

1. Ecological Modernization – Sustainability Development

The discourse of ecological modernization firstly appeared in Western industrial societies in the 1980s. One of its distinct features is its claimed compatibility of economic growth and environmental protection. Besides, it promotes a liberal market order which is believed to achieve sustainable development. This discourse disagrees with radical environmentalism which in line with fundamentally restructuring in response to the environmental crisis, instead ecological modernization advocates a graduate transformation of the state and a mild reform to the market order. Such reform can be adopting green technologies and green regulation. The underlining implication of ecological modernization approach is that environmental problems can be decoupled from and even resolved by economic growth. Besides, the current capitalism and industrialization can be reformed to be more environmental friendly and even a solution to environmental problems (Hajer, 1995). Such positive assumption from ecological modernization assumes a win-win outcome can be built upon more advanced industrialization and market mechanism, innovative technologies for more efficient pollution control, market-driven strategies to

internalize environmental costs, as well as a changing role of government towards more flexible, decentralized, cost-effective and collaborative policy-making.

However, as Bäckstrand and Lövbrand (2006) points out, the predominant focus of ecological modernization, or the widely adopted idea of sustainability, is in nature a flexible technocratic and cost-effective oriented environmental problem-solving approach. Moreover, such technocratic greening of industrial production seems to be problematic on the experiences of developing countries, and it has been silent in equity and poverty issues. In conclusion, the ecological modernization as a kind of green discourse is neo-liberal political economic discourse, and it in fact does not involve any fundamental rethinking of societal institutions (Harjer, 1995).

2. Green Governmentality – Rationalism and Scientific Environmental Administration

Along with ecological modernization as a green discourse which brings in a market-oriented approach to ecological problems, green governmentality represents another variety of green discourses and predominates in industrialized societies. “Green governmentality as a green discourse epitomizes a global form of power tied to the modern administrative state, mega-science and big business” (Bäckstrand and Lövbrand, 2006:54). Governmentality, according to Michel Foucault, is defined as a multiplicity of authorities, rationalities, and agencies that seek to shape the conduct of human behaviours (Lemke, 2000). “By affecting the choices, aspirations and lifestyles of individuals and groups, these disciplining practices involve the power over and through the individuals” (Dean 2004:19). Knowledge and various forms of expertise are intrinsically linked to idea of management. In recent years, facing the global environmental problems, the new set of “eco-knowledges” that extend government control to the entire planet began to rise (Luke, 1999). Meanwhile, a new set of “discursive truth” has emerged in the name of sustainable development

and environmental risk management. Such discursive truth wears clothes of eco-knowledges and helps shape common understandings of the environmental reality and enforce “the right disposition of things” between humans and nature (Luke 1999:134, 146). Also during the past decades, numerous environmental advisors and scientific experts have emerged on the environmental arena, they play an authoritative role in the construction of these eco-knowledges. Relying on a notion of sound science, according to Rutherford (1999: 60), “these environmental professionals provide credible definitions of environmental risks as well as legitimate methods to measure, predict and manage the same risks”. In addition, a world-wide techno-scientific infrastructure has been developed and “enables environmental experts to monitor and manage the Earth’s biogeochemical cycles, hydrological flows and human patterns of pollution and environmental degradation” (Bäckstrand and Lövbrand, 2006: 54).

In conclusion, green governmentality discourse can be seen as an elitist and technocratic expression. This discourse however marginalizes alternative understandings of the natural world (Fogel, 2003). In addition, nature in the articulation of green governmentality is approached as a terrestrial infrastructure subject to state protection, management and domination (Litfin, 1994).

3. Civic Environmentalism – A Participatory and Democratic Approach

The civic environmentalism discourse is originated from the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), where the language of participation entered the green agenda. The civic environmentalism discourse advocates the “democratic efficiency” in order to build more effective environmental multilateralism groups who are affected by environmental problems. These stakeholders including both major groups and non-state actors (such as commercial organizations and NGOs) should have a voice and actively participate in finding

solutions and work together to create a more polycentric and global governance arrangements in environmental issues. Thus, this approach to environmental problem solving is “bottom-up” (Elliot, 2002: 60).

The discourse of civic environmentalism is neither homogenous nor uncontested. According to Bäckstrand and Lövbrand (2006), there are two competing versions of such discourse: a reformist and a radical version. These two versions differ based on their diverging views on the role of the sovereign state and the capitalist economy. The reformist civic environmentalism discourse stresses on the vital force of a transnational civil society complementing state-centric practices (Elliot, 2004). It also promotes a pluralistic environmental order and affirms the rise of public-private partnerships among governments, business and NGOs in environmental problem-solving. Besides, the reformist civil environmentalism believes that civil society participation can raise the green profile of the green profile of the global economic order, as well as speed up the greening of business agenda. Compared with such viewpoints, a more radical civic environmentalism discourse in a deep ecology standpoint is skeptical of the promise of stakeholder environmental governance.

The radical edge of civil environmentalism discourse highlights the relations of power and powerlessness in international institutions and negotiation processes. In addition, it advocates a radical green agenda and a fundamental transformation of existing consumption patterns and institutions in order to realize environmental protection. Such radical voice from civic environmentalism argues against the claims of environmental governance that bases on the liberalization of markets. This is because radical civil environmentalism believes that multilateral financial institutions and UN agencies with a neo-liberal bias only promote market-oriented policies, and privatization and deregulation thus take place at the expense of environmental protection. In conclusion, the radical civil environmentalism discourse contests the

reformist discourse and its route to environmental protection.

In the view of radical civil environmentalism discourse, partnership agreements and stakeholder participation represent the retreat of the state and the rise of transnational corporate power; they also mask relationships of power and domination underpinning global environmental politics. Thus, this discourse asks for global social movements which are able to challenge and resist inequitable power structures, and the global institutional framework defined by such structure.

2.5.5 The Corporate Green Discourse

Since the environmental concerns are seen as legitimate in the international business greening process, the nature environment has also come into the mainstream domain of management in the form of corporate environmentalism/green discourse. Informed by elements from these meta-discourses regarding the relationship between people and the environment, especially the ecological modernization discourse and green governmentality discourse, the corporate environmental discourse is developed for guiding and legitimating business green practices. Prasad and Elmes (2005) argue that a remarkable feature of the business green discourse is that it stresses on practicality:

“Being practical is equated with maintaining economic growth and success (for individual firms and societies), entering into alliances and agreements with specific stakeholders and ensuring low levels of societal confrontation. Environmental management’s practicality ultimately appears to rest on a narrow platform of economic instrumentality and on a philosophy of convenience that emphasizes minimum socio-economic disruption and maximum conflict avoidance” (p. 863).

They further describe the business green discourse:

“Distancing itself from the so-called ideological stances of both Deep Ecology and Anti-Environmental Corporatism, the discourse of environmental management

positions itself and its adherents as reasonable, well-intentioned individuals of action, committed to repairing the ecological damages of the past several decades, and taking over the guardianship of nature for the benefit of future generations” (p. 846).

This rhetoric of “green management” as well as corporate environmental discourse has been questioned. For example, Welford (1997) argue that the business greenness in fact promotes corporate interests over environmental ones. Similarly, Greer and Bruno (1996) claim that business green discourse gives nothing more than symbolic reassurance. Entine (1994) who studied the “environmentally progressive” companies (such as Ben and Jerry’s and The Body Shop), finds that these firms profit from the “green” label, but they are actually engaging in practices that are harmful to the natural environment.

The variety within green discourse in society and its incorporation into business green discourse have been discussed by above literature, but it is still not clear about the emergent green marketing and advertising discourse in a developing context. It is expected that corporate green marketing discourse recruits elements from existing meta-green discourses, such as ecological modernization discourse and green governmentality, but it is not clear that in what way such discursive elements are arranged into corporate green advertisings and how companies make efforts to contribute to the commercial meaning of green through their green advertisings. Especially in the Chinese social context, both the industrial development and people’s understanding of natural environment are very different from their Western counterparts (Mol, 2006; Tsai, 2001; Weller, 2006).

It can be hypothesized that green advertising discourse as a sub-category of green business discourse bears the same characteristic of practicality. However, as commercial advertisings are for promoting consumptions and thus potentially involved in materialism, and materialism is intrinsically contradictory to

environmentalism⁴ (Banerjee and McKeage, 1994), how do firms compromise the conflict in their green marketing discourse? In addition, as discourse plays a vital role in representing firms' green brand and products and constructing meanings of green consumption for consumers, and commercial advertisings can be seen as a manifesto of companies' perceptions towards environmental issues, it is important to understand the representation of commercial greenness. In sum, the discursive process of firm constructing the meanings of greenness through their advertisings, as well as this process how green advertisings help firms play their authoritative role in the construction of eco-knowledge and informing consumption practices dealing with environmental degradation is worth investigating.

Therefore in this research, I apply discourse theoretical perspective to examine the representation of greenness in corporate advertising discourse. By focusing on active discourse in corporate green advertisings on websites, I will look into the representation and meaning constructed by corporate green advertising discourse and aim to answer the overarching research question as below:

- How do firms construct the corporate greenness through green advertising discourse in their corporate websites?

As a discourse is defined as an attempt to fix a web of meanings within a particular domain (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001), this research question aims to identify the hidden ideology in corporate green advertisings and explore the meaning construction of greenness embodied in green advertising discourse. Reviewed literature suggests that varying environmental discourses articulating the relationship between human and the nature (such as ecological modernization, green governmentality, and civic

⁴ "Environmentalism" here refers to beliefs that current environmental conditions are a serious problem facing the world (Murch, 1974), and beliefs that some radical changes in current lifestyle and economic system may be required to prevent environmental damage (Catton and Dunlap, 1982).

environmentalism) exist. As an emerging type of environmental discourses, commercial green advertising may bear similar constitutive features of other kinds of environmental discourses. In addition, because there are very limited studies on the nature of green advertising discourse on corporate website in the context of China, the research is exploratory and therefore the above question serves as a principal guide to my investigation.

In order to understand discourses, the context in which they arise must be understood. van Dijk (1997) posits that discourse studies should deal both with the properties of text and talk and with the context of discourse, because the social situation may systematically influence text or talk. So “discourse studies are about talk and text in context” (van Dijk, 1997:3). Similarly, Fairclough (1995)’s analytic model not only includes a description and interpretation of discourse in context, but also provides an explanation of why and how discourses work. Fairclough sees the macro social structures as both the conditions for and the products of the micro discourses events. In conclusion, the discourse as well as discursive practices is subject to institutional and economic conditions. Therefore, in order to explain the discourse, its social and historical contexts should be considered. The focus in analyses in this research is derived from Fairclough’s Three-dimension analytic framework which pays attention to textual, discursive, and societal components of studied discourse. Therefore, the overarching research question is going to investigate how do firms represent their green brands/products/services in linguistic, discursive, and societal levels.

Based on Fairclough’s CDA framework (2001), the investigation focus is aligned with the textual and discursive dimensions in descriptive and interpretive analyses, and it intends to identify how corporate greenness is represented textually and meanings discursively constructed and what are the similarities and dissimilarities in such representations from the studied two categories of companies. In addition, a

societal analysis will be conducted and it focuses on explanations of interpretation findings by looking into the larger cultural, historical, and social contexts. To be more specific, the descriptive analysis is to describe the representations of corporate greenness; the interpretive analysis is to interpret how meanings of green consumption are constructed; and the explanative analysis is to explain contextual socio-cultural influences on corporate constructions. Each level of analysis is interrelated and together contributes to the discussion of the ideology and hegemony embedded and embodied in corporate green advertisings.

As discussed above, the overarching research question about discourse and its context cannot be answered solely by discourse theories; it is necessary to draw on other theories – for example, sociological or cultural theory – that help to provide explanations on the social practice in question (Fairlough, 1992; Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002). Therefore, in order to better understand the context of corporate green advertising discourse in China, I draw on the explanation power from other theories, especially institutional theoretical insights. Besides, institutional theoretical perspective and literature, together with Fairclough’s critical discourse analysis framework, help to shape the focus of this investigation, which are the similarities and differences in studied discourses and their contextual influences.

Institutional theoretical lens helps to understand the phenomenon of corporate green advertising in China, where the environmental protection and governance institutions are different from the West (Carter and Mol, 2006; Mol, 2006; Tsai, 2001; Weller, 2002). In the following sections, I will firstly introduce institutional theory, especially Scott (1995)’s Three-Institutional-Pillar framework. I will then review literature on the relationship between institutional contexts and corporate discourse by reviewing the relative studies on corporate social responsibility practices in different institutional contexts. Specifically, studies on green discourse and literature

about convergence versus divergence of corporate social responsible practices in developing countries and studies on China's environmental protection institution provide an empirical background for developing my research sub-questions and their foci.

2.5.6 Institutional Theory: Impacts and Implications of Institutional Contexts to Corporate Green Advertising Discourse

Literature on China's environmental policies and environmental governance has suggested that the Chinese context for environmental governance is different from the West. For example, scholars (e.g., Mol, 2006; Carter and Mol, 2006) have argued that:

“To some extent, China is indeed catching up with more developed countries in designing and implementing a more advance system of environmental governance to meet current and future challenges...but China is still different from the EU and the US in its environmental governance system as the system carries the consequences of the national particularities of a transitional state with different cultural background” (Carter and Mol, 2006: 333).

In order to better understand the environmental governance and management system in China and its influence on green discourse in details, it is useful to introduce the concept of “institution” and understandings from institutional theory, especially Scott (1995)'s framework of “institutional pillars”. The term of “institution” has been used to describe specific customs and practices as well as rules and laws. It refers to arrangements that are fixed, established, or enduring, as in institutionalized practices. Therefore, the concept of institution denotes stability and persistence (Scott 1995:78). Institutional theory suggests that institutional contexts influence the rules and understandings by which organization operate (Morgan and Kristensen, 2006), and posits factors that make organizations similar (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983) and different (Kostova, 1997; Rozenzweig and Singh, 1991). Scott (1995) develops a

framework of three institutional pillars in examining different institutional contexts and institutional forces and pressures on firms: regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive pillars. The regulative pillar refers to both formal rules, such as statute law and regulations, and informal rules, such as conventions, norms of behaviour, and codes of conduct. The normative concepts addresses the actions and conventions that are legitimate for people, by being what they consider as appropriate and morally correct (March and Olsen, 1998; Scott, 1995). The cognitive pillar means the cultural, taken-for-granted social knowledge, or people's common frames of reference, attitudes and stereotypes based on their cultures (Kostova and Roth, 2002; Scott, 1995). These pillars are independent, mutually reinforced, and interact (Kostova and Roth, 2002; Kim et al., 2013).

Recent years have observed a growing body of literature focusing on the relationship between corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices and their institutional contexts in an institutional theory perspective (e.g., Campbell, 2007; Doh and Guay, 2006; Husted and Allen, 2006; Jamali and Neville, 2011; Moon et al., 2010). Campbell (2007) argues that regulatory pressure for CSR directly impacts firms' CSR activities through government regulation and industrial self-regulation. In addition, individual governments generate various regulatory pressures on CSR, endorsing and/or facilitating particular practices (Moon et al., 2010). Multinational companies, as well as their local counterparts, need to respond to local regulations and quasi-legal demands (Rodriguez, et al., 2006), in order to maintain legitimacy with their global customers, stakeholders and peers (Dunning, 2003; Kostova and Zaheer, 1999). Besides, in the normative institutional domain, corporate social responsibility practice also needs to follow or respect social norms, values and expectations (Sethi, 1975). Therefore, national normative pressures lead to different corporate social responsible practices in different countries (Maignan and Ralston, 2002; Miles, 2006). In addition to regulative and normative institutional influence,

cultural-cognitive pressures also enable or constrain corporate actions (Campbell, 2007). For example, Welford (2005) claims that business social responsibility activities are based on cultural traditions.

It can be assumed, from the body of institutional literature, that as one aspect of corporate social responsibility practice, firms' environmental responsibility practices are influenced by its embedded institutional contexts and thus present different features based on their differing institutional contexts. Since green advertising either communicates firms' environmental responsible practices or can be seen as a form of corporate environmental action to green consumers' consciousness (Hailes, 1998), the national institutions in regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive pillars should have impacts on corporate discourse, and the discourse of green advertising is influenced by its institutional context.

2.5.7 Convergence and Divergence in CSR and China's Contextual Influence

In an institutional theoretical perspective, there are studies suggesting that both convergence and divergence exist in firms' green discourse. A growing number of studies have investigated how isomorphic mechanism may transcend national borders via various transnational linkages to foster cross-national environmental convergence (Levy and Kolk, 2002). For example, Potoski and Prakash (2004) claim that trade ties lead to the transmission of coercive pressures from high-regulating to low-regulating nations and potentially foster convergence in private or public environmental standards in a trading-up effect. Mendel (2002) identifies mimetic-type processes in which the more ambitious environmental practices and policies previously adopted in developed countries are replicated and emulated by civil, market, and state actors in developing countries. Frank et al. (2000) also find that international contact has created demand for environmental protection through the spread of norms of environmentalism. In addition, Chia et al. (2007) argue that

the business ideologies of the US and UK, such as neoliberalism and consumerism, have been increasingly adopted in many developing countries, and lead to convergence towards international homogeneity.

These above isomorphic pressures suggest a convergence not only in corporate environmental practices and standards, but also in their green discourse. This is because the discourse both reflects firms' environmental understandings and communicates their green practices. So it can be propositioned that similarities exist between corporate green advertising discourses from MNCs and Chinese indigenous firms.

Besides convergence, the literature also suggests that these institutional pressures can be contradictory: some may induce one type of corporate environmental practice, and others might pressurize in a different way. For example, MNCs and local indigenous firms might face different institutional pressures. For MNCs, they face the contradictions between the cultural demands on their headquarters and local operations (Andrews and Chompusri, 2005), or between cultural pressures and local political or economic demands (Gardberg and Fomburn, 2006). For example, in many countries profit is widely accepted as business motive, but in others, a social justification is required for the pursuit of profit (Macfarlane, 1987). Such different normative pressures can lead to divergent CSR practices.

In China, there are domestic regulations, normative and cultural-cognitive settings which differ from Western markets. For example, from cultural perspective, Kahn holds the belief that specific nations have specific cultural traits that are difficult to change in any basic fashion (Kahn, 1999). Similarly, Hofstede contends that "no management activity can be culture-free" and the national cultural differences can be represented and measured by "cultural dimensions" (Hofstede, 1984:81). Taking into

account of the cultural side of management presupposes an understanding of the way people's minds are programmed differently by their different cultural background and life experiences. In accordance to Hofstede's "cultural dimension" theorization, Fei (1992) from a sociological perspective points that, different from Western mindset of organizing, Chinese people normally hold an "egocentrism" mindset. For example, "once something is deemed by the Chinese as a public belonging, it means that everyone can take advantage of it without obligations" (p. 70). And the natural environment can be seen as one type of public belongings. Based on the above literature, as the environmentalism as well as corporate green marketing and advertising as one of corporate management practices origins in the West and comes to China recently in a globalization process, its adoption to China's context is assumed to lead to more divergent and localized practices. More specifically, there have been studies on the Chinese environmental institutions and how they differ from the Western ones. For example, Weller (2002) points that "the modern term 'nature' (in English or in contemporary Chinese) had no real equivalent in classical Chinese, although it has now achieved a dominant position in Chinese discourse" (p. 8). He further argues that "earlier ways of thinking about humanity and the environment in China did not wash away when Western ideas about nature became entrenched in the early twentieth century" (p. 8). Child et al. (2007) find that the formation of the Environmental Protection System (EPS) as an organizational field in China is different from the one in U.S. Different from the "bottom-up" approach in the U.S., China's EPS is built up in a "top-down" approach and is characterized by a "made order" in which the regulative system came first and the state and its agencies dominated the process.

Despite the growing number of studies on environmentalism and environmental practices in China, it still is not clear about whether the institutional differences are influencing firms' advertising discourse in China, and what differences exist among

firms' green advertising discourse.

Although discourse and institution are mutually constitutive (Phillips et al., 2004) and more recent institutional theorists begin to argue that discourse plays a role for the maintenance and change of institution (e.g., Oswick and Grant, 1996; Phillips et al., 2004), this study is not intending to place its focus on the environmental institution in China or base its analysis of the discourse on an institutional theoretical framework⁵. Instead, it treats the discourse of firm's green advertising as a reflection of and a result of interaction with its institutional environment. The institutional theory is borrowed to analyzing my data and assist in societal dimension of Fairclough's Three-dimensional CDA analysis framework (details see Chapter 3 Methodology). And the institutional theory, especially the Three-Institutional-Pillar framework can help to explain my research findings in a macro level. The institutional theory and studies also help to shape my focus in answering research sub-questions. Based on the literature review above, both similarities and differences are expected to be identified in corporate green advertising discourses from multinational subsidiaries in China and Chinese local firms. Accordingly, the research sub-questions are developed as below:

- Are there any similarities and differences between the advertising discourses used to represent greenness within the studied two categories of companies and what are they?
- What are the influential contextual/social factors causing the similar/different features in the discourses?

The first research sub-question is aligned with the textual and discursive dimensions

⁵ Such studies are exemplified as Greenwood and Suddaby (2006), Munir and Phillips (2005), and Suddaby and Greenwood (2005).

in descriptive and interpretive analyses, and it intends to identify both common and different ways in the studied advertising language presenting greenness and constructing discursive tissues of meanings. The second research sub-question is seeking answers from societal analysis and focuses on explanations of interpretation findings by looking into the larger cultural, historical, and social contexts.

2.6 Conclusion of Chapter 2

This chapter has described the development of green marketing and advertising in both the West and China. By reviewing studies of green marketing and advertising, research gaps in the literature have been identified.

First, within green advertising research, a majority of the studies have been conducted in the context of developed countries. The reason for this might be that the phenomenon of green marketing and advertising has existed in these countries for a longer period than in developing countries, such as China. As the environmental problems became severe and businesses influenced by environmentalism in conjunction with globalization, a growing number of companies, both multinational subsidiaries and local firms, began to adopt the idea of sustainability development, and develop and market their green products/services with green advertising. However, research on green advertising in developing context lags behind.

Secondly, existing research in this field has mainly followed a positivist approach which treats advertising as facilitating and informing, and green consumers as pre-existing and need to be identified. Such an approach lacks attention to the constructive role of advertising in modern societies and the dialectical relationship between social contexts and advertisings. It looks at the overt representations in language, however cannot help researchers to discern obscured or opaque messages veiled or embedded in advertisements. In addition, data from traditional mediums

such as newspapers and television channels also cannot provide updated versions of current communications applied by companies in this digital era. From this point, web site green advertisings deserve further investigation.

Moreover, to examine the advertising as language use, it is helpful to employ an alternative perspective which sees advertising as both a cultural and ideological tool for shaping public perceptions and influencing social realities such as environmental responsibility and green consumption. Critical theory, together with Discourse Analysis as both a theory and methodology, has informed a rich number of empirical studies on marketing and advertising (e.g., Williamson, 1981; Goldman and Wilson, 1983; Goldman, 1987; Papson, 1991). Nevertheless, the literature is very limited and does not wholly focus on the types of advertising discourse used by companies to construct their “greenness” and the meaning of green consumption while promoting their green products and/or corporate image.

An overview of critical theory and Discourse Analysis on marketing indicates that CDA, drawing on ideas from semiotics and ideology critiques, and a branch in Discourse Analysis, can be a viable way of filling the research gap. It also helps bridge my investigation to the current developments in green advertising. Methodologically, CDA provides a systematic set of inquiries to analyze both textual and visual constructs in relation to social phenomena. Specifically, Fairclough (2001)’s three-dimensional framework facilitates analysts with a means to explore the relationships between the “text and social structures” (p. 117). The CDA approach will be discussed in more details in the next chapter.

This chapter has also raised the issue of the increasingly importance of the Internet in the green advertising of firms. The corporate web site as a digital broadcasting platform to advertise is itself as a new type of advertising. It can supply advertising

discourse which is not filtered by third-parties and thus provides research data which better represents the advertiser's intentions.

In closing, this chapter brings out the overarching research question and research sub-questions. The main research question is informed by the gap in extant literature on corporate green communication and green advertising. And the foci of the research sub-question are derived from Fairclough's Three-Dimension CDA framework to respectively examine textual, discursive, and contextual components of studied discourses. In addition, the extant research on CSR with institutional theoretical perspective suggests that both similarities and differences possibly exist in discourses from different types of organizations. This suggestion will be investigated with two research sub-questions. In next chapter, the methodology and research framework will be introduced.

Chapter 3: Methodology: Critical Discourse Analysis

3.1 Introduction

The theoretical and methodological approach adopted in this study is that of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). This chapter is going to survey the key concepts and philosophical assumptions of CDA. It will firstly introduce the philosophical assumptions guiding the research process and methodology. This is essential because theoretical concepts guide this study, and philosophical assumptions underpin the choice of methodology and information gathering techniques. There then follows a close discussion of a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework and its theoretical underpinnings. Then, the research method, data collection and analysis framework are introduced.

The concepts from Discourse Theory developed by theorists such as Gramsci (1971), and Laclau and Mouffe (1985) inform the development of discourse analyses. However, Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) have argued that in emphasizing the contingent nature of discourses, Laclau and Mouffe overestimate the ability of social groups to bring about change through the rearticulating of elements into new social order. Discourse Theory, therefore, “is unable to explain which social forces have greater capacity to effect articulatory changes and why” (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999: 125). They further claim that not all groups have equal access to key discourse genres that make such attempts at hegemonic intervention possible. Social actors are subject to constraints that do not emanate from the discursive level but from structural relations of dependency, such as class, ethnicity, and gender (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999).

While drawing upon the useful concepts introduced by discourse theorists, this study

accepts the gist of the critique of Discourse Theory as above. The adopted ontological assumption in this study differs with the one of Discourse Theory. If Laclau and Mouffe treat discourse as being entirely constituted by social practices, and the historical materialism of Marxist theory takes the opposite extreme position of discourse being entirely constituted by economic materialism, the Critical Discourse Analysis approach adopted in my study would be somewhere between the two. In epistemological terms, Critical Discourse Analysis offers a more persuasive view on the relationship between discourse and its social context. Fairclough briefly introduces the Critical Discourse Analysis in the following way:

“Discourse analysis which aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony” (Fairclough, 1993: 135).

Following such arguments, a research framework for this study underpinned by Critical Discourse Analysis will be introduced. While before I justify my chosen methodology, it is helpful to also consider alternative methodologies.

3.2 Alternative Methodologies

Among the wide range of methods available to the social scientific inquiries, my choice was set on discursive methods. The most pragmatic reason is that the firms' online advertisings as communication material provide a very rich source of information which deserves enquiry in its own right. My philosophical stances and my areas of interest (critical approaches) also direct my attention towards research focusing on discourse, power and ideology. Besides, the relative sensitivity of the topic (investigating the constructive process potentially refers to studying on the manipulative nature of discourse producers) demands a reflexive recognition and

transparency of my political stance. Any claim to objectivity, or lack of reflexivity for that matter, would be met with suspicion and doubt. For such contextual reasons, based on the nature of the research itself, and because of the analytical framework's rigour of critical discourse analysis, CDA has been chosen as the most appropriate method for my study.

It is nevertheless interesting to consider other popular discursive methods, such as content analysis, which represent a more positivist and quantitative approach to analyzing discourses.

3.2.1 Content Analysis

The difference between content analysis and CDA arises from the nature of analyzed object. Different from CDA which is a linguistic method and analyzes both coherence (meaning constituting in texts) and cohesion (components of the textual surface) (Titscher et al., 2000), content analysis comes from a non-linguistic tradition and focuses on coherence. According to Titscher et al. (2000), content analysts ask concrete questions about the content and use rather precise and narrow research questions for the purpose of hypothesis formation. Content analysis is more limited in its focus. As content analysis focuses on denotational dictionary meanings or connotations from extended meaning evoked by literal messages, its weakness is the common practice of only coding small portions and facets of discourse, thereby omitting many important themes and nuances, and limiting examination on meanings (Graber and Smith, 2005). As a result, content analysis, when compared with CDA, is incapable to provide a more complete picture of a given phenomenon and its socially constructed process.

3.3 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Following the review of the important theoretical concepts of Discourse Theory and

a brief introduction of CDA in Chapter Two, this section brings more details about CDA as variants of discourse analysis. Here, its philosophical background, important theoretical concepts and assumptions, and research frameworks will be considered.

Discourse analysis on its own does not necessarily set out to be critical. Mangueneau (2006:230), however, makes a distinction between the “weak” and “strong” discourse analyses: the former entails a “simple description of structures of texts and talks” (such as content analysis), and the latter involves analysis of the connection between discourse and social structures (such as CDA). Similarly, Fairclough (1992:9) claims that “‘Critical’ implies showing connections and causes which are hidden; it also implies intervention, for example providing resources for those who may be disadvantaged through change”. So according to CDA researchers, the hidden things in researched discourses should be exposed, since they are not evident for the individuals involved, and thus cannot be fought against (e.g., Fairclough, 1992; Wodak and Meyer, 2001). To be more specific, Batstone (1995) has summarized the aims of CDA research:

“Critical Discourse Analysts seek to reveal how texts are constructed so that particular (and potentially indoctrinating) perspectives can be expressed delicately and covertly; because they are covert, they are elusive of direct challenge, facilitating what Kress calls the ‘retreat into mystification and impersonality’” (Batstone 1995: 198-199).

With a political stance, CDA explicitly explains the dynamics of power, knowledge and ideology that surround discursive processes (Phillips and Hardy, 2002:20). CDA also focuses on the role of discourse in the way that the abuses of power are constituted and sustained. Moreover, CDA explores the nature of persuasion, ideology, and conflict (Elliot, 1996; Fairclough, 1995; Fairclough and Wodak, 1997; Phillips and Hardy, 2002; van Dijk, 1996). In addition, CDA aims to analyze the “dialogical struggle (or struggles) as reflected in the privileging of a particular

discourse and the marginalization of others” (Phillips and Hardy, 2002: 25). In a more practical way, CDA is useful for analyzing how communicative strategies are shaped by and help shape contexts.

This approach is very relevant to the study of corporate green communication and advertising discourses. In particular, CDA is useful in order to analyze the connection between power and meaning, and to grasp those processes by which social constructions lead to taken-for-granted social realities (Clegg, 1989; Phillips and Hardy, 2002). CDA is expected to help hunt down and challenge the taken-for-granted “truths” or “realities” (Phillips and Hardy, 2002) which, it is argued here, are the common materials of the corporate green discourse. For example, the traits and potentials of green products, or pseudo-arguments about the benefits of green consumption, are presented by the companies as facts and used to justify their constructed commercial greenness and corporate environmental responsibility. Apparent truthfulness is an important feature of a persuasive discourse. The presented “facts” are unsubstantiated and claim to “confirm” what people are already predisposed to believe as the truth (Jowett and O’Donnell, 1999:158). For example, the so called “green packaging” is advertised as a feature of a firm’s “green products” in which none other virtually environmental benefits can be identified in its green advertising discourse. Therefore, as a matter of fact, the firms adopting “green packaging” might be suspect as solely for the ends of cost-saving, instead of genuine changes towards environmental protection. In addition, one of the studied company states in its green product advertisements: “the world-leading solar energy technology in our automobile products will fundamentally solve the energy crisis.” Such over-optimistic argument encouraging green consumption assumes the well-known clean technology of solar power as a panacea, but chooses to ignore the fact that besides fuel, the production of cars still consumes other resources, such as steel, and cause pollutions, such as the battery scraps. By looking into such

advertising discourse through the lens of CDA, we can better understand the intent behind the green advertisements and find out the problematic representation in green discourse.

The next section sets out to provide a thorough description of CDA: its philosophical assumptions, approaches and methods of data analysis.

3.4 Basic Philosophical Assumption of CDA: Critical Realism

CDA is developed in line with the assumption of critical realism. According to Fairclough (2005), the critical realist position is moderately or refined socially constructivist but rejects the tendency that reduces the “the social” to discourse. The critical realism position adopts a dualist epistemology, which gives primacy to researching relations between agency (process, and events) and structure on the basis of a realist social ontology.

3.4.1 Comparing with Other Philosophical Assumptions

According to critical realism, “both positivism and social constructivism are superficial, unrealistic and anthropocentric” (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000: 39). Different to positivism in which theories are human-made linkages, critical realism assumes that there is a world independent of human beings, as well as deep structures in this world that can be represented by scientific theories. Critical realism has been presented as a possible successor to social constructionism (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000).

Critical realism approach is different from that of positivism, which seeks to establish predictable patterns and the exact relation between cause and effect. In the understanding of critical realism, relations are complex and causality exists on different levels. According to (Bhaskar, 1975), there are “tendencies” which are

“generated” rather than inevitable, specific and measurable conditions. Critical realists, therefore, examine the different mechanisms which generate different effects and events, as well as the forces and characteristics that mechanisms produce; meanwhile, they examine the intricate connections amongst different structural levels, that contribute to the complexity of causal forces, and that make possible the treatment of these as single, isolated factors (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000). Therefore, as Bhaskar and Lawson (1998) argue, causality should not be understood in terms of universal, predictable patterns, but rather as contextual and emergent, in changeable societies. In addition, although the change of social reality is slow, it is still “emergent and varied as a consequence of the different processes that are part of producing it” (Bhaskar and Lawson, 1998: 13).

3.4.2 Ontology and Epistemology

In critical realism, social reality is seen as produced and social phenomena are seen as different from those studied in the natural sciences. Critical realists argue that the natural and social worlds differ in that the latter is dependent on human action for its existence; it is conceived as socially constructed. Individuals as social actors are active in the construction of social realities, and the structures that guide the reproduction and transformation of social activities should be studied in their own right (Collier, 1994). According to critical realism, despite the fact that the social reality is pre-constructed, human beings might have limited or mistaken knowledge of the social world and its socially constructed nature. Bhaskar (1975) claims that critical realists should distinguish ontology from epistemology, and the “epistemic fallacy” of confusing the nature of reality with people’s knowledge of reality should be avoided. Moreover, Bhaskar (1975) assumes a “stratified ontology” which sees processes/events and structures as different strata of social reality with different properties. There are distinctions among the “real”, the “actual”, and the “empirical”: the “real” is the domain of structures with their associated “causal powers”; the

“actual” is the domain of events and processes; the “empirical” is the part of the real and the actual that is experienced by social actors (Bhaskar, 1975). The “actual” does not straightforwardly reflect the “real”: the extent to which and ways in which the particular causal powers are activated to affect actual events is contingent on the complex interaction of different structures and causal powers in the causing of events (Bhaskar, 1975).

3.4.3 Critical Realism and Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical realism claims that the relationship between structures and processes/events needs to be accounted by mediating entities. These mediating entities as “social practices” refer to articulations of diverse social elements. Such elements include discourse which is durable and stable (Fairclough, 2005). Based on critical realism, Fairclough’s critical discourse analysis is not only focusing on languages and orders of discourse, but also concerned with texts as (elements of) processes, and with the relations of tension between the two (Fairclough, 2005). As such, critical discourse analysis bases itself on a dialectical-relational social ontology: in the one hand, such ontology sees objects, entities, persons, discourses, organizations and so on as socially produced “permanences” which arise out of processes and relations; in the other hand, the “permanences” constitute a pre-structured reality with which social actors are confronted, and sets of affordances and limitations on processes (Fairclough, 2005). He further points that elements of social events and practices are interconnected with other elements. According to such viewpoints, the focus of discourse analysis is not only on discourse per se, but also the relations between discourse and non-discoursal elements of the social, in order to reach a good understanding of these complex relations. Furthermore, these elements are not discrete, since other elements of the social in being socially constructed through discourse, come to incorporate particular discursive elements without being reducible to them. In conclusion, the relations between them are dialectical (Chouliaraki and Fairclough,

1999; Fairclough, 2003).

3.4.4 Epistemological Differences between Discourse Theory and Critical Discourse Analysis

While Laclau and Mouffe view the social world as being wholly constituted by discourse, CDA, in line with critical realism, distinguishes between discursive and non-discursive social practices. As Phillips and Jorgensen (2002) conclude:

“Viewed on a scale, if the historical materialism of Marxist theory occupied the extreme position of discourse being entirely constituted by economic materialism, Laclau and Mouffe would be at the opposite end, while CDA would be somewhere between the two.” (p. 20)

Following Mouzelis (1999) and Coombe (1998), Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) have argued that Laclau and Mouffe emphasize on the contingent nature of discourse but overestimate the ability of social groups to bring about change through the rearticulating of elements into new social order. Discourse Theory in Laclau and Mouffe’s perspective therefore “is unable to explain which social forces have greater capacity to effect articulatory changes and why” (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999: 125). Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) further argue that not all groups have equal access to key discourse genres that make such attempts at hegemonic intervention possible. Social actors are restricted by external contexts, and such constraints do not only emanate from the discursive level but also from structural relations of dependency, such as gender, class, and ethnicity.

3.5 The Features and Theoretical Assumptions of CDA

Although the precise method of conducting CDA differs amongst some of its principal architects – mostly notably, Teun van Dijk’s (1993) socio-psychological model of, Ruth Wodak’s (1996) discourse-historical model, and Norman Fairclough’s (1992; 1995a; 2005) textually-oriented three dimensional model – each method is

based on a number of common features that characterise the approach of CDA as a whole. Such features also distinguish CDA from other qualitative methodologies and other discourse and text analysis approaches, and there are several theoretical assumptions and specialties which need to be reviewed. These features can be summarized as bellow:

3.5.1 Language and Society – a Dialectical Relationship

The first feature of CDA is that, as discussed above, it “is not interested in language *per se*, but in the linguistic feature of social and cultural processes and structures” (Titscher et al., 2000: 146). According to Van Leeuwen (1993), discourse is seen as the instrument of power and control and as the instrument of the social construction of reality. Therefore, CDA analyses “language in use” to investigate interpretation, reception and social effects of discourses (Titscher et al., 2000: 146).

CDA sees language as a form of social practice (Titscher et al., 2000; Fairclough, 1995; Fairclough and Wodak, 1997) and holds the assumption of mediation regarding the relationship between language and society (Meyer, 2001). Put simply, language determines society but is also determined by social reality. Similarly, Wodak (2001: 66) argues that discourse “can be seen as constituting non-discursive and discursive social practices and, at the same time, as being constituted by them”. Via discourse, social actors are able to constitute knowledge, situations, social roles as well as identities and interpersonal relationships amongst social actors (de Cillia et al., 1999: 157). So, there is a dialectical relationship between a particular discourse or discursive events and the their context (situation, social structure, institutions, and so on) (de Cillia et al., 1999; Fairclough, 1995; Fairclough and Wodak, 1997). The dialectical relationship emphasized by CDA approach claims that both discourse and its social context need to be examined in this study on corporate green advertising discourse.

3.5.2 Ideological Discourse and Political Involvement of Discourse Researcher

As noted earlier, language is a medium of domination and social force (Habermas, 1977), and power relations are legitimated through language (Wodak, 2001). In a similar vein, Jäger (2001) sees discourse as:

“the flow of knowledge – and/or societal knowledge stored – throughout all time (Jäger, 1999; Wodak, 2001) which determines individuals and collective doing and/or formative action that shapes society, thus exercising power” (p. 34).

So the second difference between CDA and other discourse analysis approaches is that CDA assumes that language repeats and legitimates injustice and inequality (Titscher et al., 2000), and discourses are not only expressions of social practice (Jäger, 2001), but also ideological (Wodak, 2001). CDA, by revealing the contradictions and the discursive means used to make truths accepted (Jäger, 2001), seeks to uncover the web of domination, power, discrimination and control existing in language (Wodak, 2001). This particular assumption of CDA should prove particularly useful for the study of discourse with powerful ideologies, yet with hidden effects and hidden power relations (Meyer, 2001). Such discourse is not hard to find in advertisings, both in types of political ideologies (i.e., to promote neoliberalism) (e.g., Havey, 2005) and commercial ideologies (i.e., to promote green consumption and consumerism, for example in corporate green marketing campaigns and green advertisings) (e.g., Banerjee et al., 1995; 2003; Ottman, 2011).

Based on this assumption that discourses are political and ideology embedded, CDA researchers adopt an explicit political stance (Wodak, 2001:5). So, the critical discourse analyst plays an advocatory role for those suffering from social problems (Meyer, 2001: 15; Titscher et al., 2000). In addition, the CDA research findings are expected to have practical applications (Meyer, 2001; Wodak, 2001; Titscher et al.,

2000); and the researcher should act as a facilitator for change and ultimately be seen as “a guide for human action” by revealing the problems (Wodak, 2001:10). This orientation of CDA towards political involvement and application of the research findings can be witnessed in the fields of, for example, gender, media discourses, identity, prejudice, racism, anti-Semitism and sexism (Wodak, 2001; Titscher et al., 2000). Because CDA makes explicit power relations which are frequently hidden (Meyer, 2001:15), it can make people aware of hidden alienating forces (Wodak, 2001; van Dijk, 1993; Fairclough, 1989) and, through this awareness, empower and emancipate them (Titscher et al., 2000:147). In sum, “one of the goals of CDA is to ‘demystify’ discourses by deciphering ideologies” (Wodak, 2001:9). Thus, the ultimate goal in studying corporate environmental discourse and their advertising in CDA is to understand, and expose, the intentions and strategies of companies as they purvey ideals that frequently exclude problematic but ongoing corporate environmental practices.

Because of the political orientation, being not value-free is accepted in CDA researches. Therefore, the readers should be made aware of the authorial contribution as researchers inevitably influence their findings (Watson, 1994). In CDA, value judgments are acceptable in the choice of object and questions of enquiry, but are forbidden in the “context of justification” (Meyer, 2001:17). The way in which the researcher using CDA arrives at the conclusions must be made intelligible and recognizable (Titscher et al., 2000). Besides, acknowledging the “biography” of the researcher for this research project is necessary along presenting research findings. The “biography” of my own will be presented in a below section as “Research’s Journal”.

3.5.3 Linguistic Categories

Another fundamental difference between CDA and other discourse analysis methods

is its focus on specific linguistic categories. While other methods do use linguistic categories, CDA pays special attention to linguistic elements such as deixis (e.g., demonstratives, adverbs, pronouns), of prime importance for the critical approach (Meyer, 2001), because their analysis highlights the characteristics of cohesion and coherence in texts and discourses. CDA holds that the operationalisation of discourse depends on linguistic concepts such as actors, mode, time, tense, argumentation (Meyer, 2001: 25), because they are the basic working components constituting texts and discourses (Titscher et al., 2000).

3.6 Approaches and Analysis Frameworks of CDA

CDA as developed by various scholars is not a homogenous model, nor a school or a paradigm, but a shared perspective on doing linguistics, semiotic or discourse analysis (van Dijk 1993:131). There are different approaches in CDA. Among such approaches, there are mainly two models informing this study. The first one is Wodak's discourse-historical approach, and the second one is Fairclough's three-dimensional model approach. Applying discourse-historical approach, scholars have studied the organization of the European Union (e.g., Iedema and Wodak, 1999), or the discursive construction of national identities (e.g., de Cillia et al., 1999; Wodak et al., 1999).

Although my study is mainly following Fairclough's CDA approach, both discourse-historical analysis and three-dimensional approaches can inform my research and help frame its data collection and analysis. This is because there is not a standardized CDA approach and different CDA approaches overlap in certain extent.

The discourse-historical approach combines in its analysis with historical, socio-political and linguistic perspectives, which can definitely brings a more comprehensive insight into the researched green advertising discourse: the

advertising discourse can be seen as a result of interaction of organizational, socio-political, and historical influences, therefore the research data, including both textual and contextual data, can be collected accordingly. In addition to the method informed by discourse-historical approach, the three-dimensional/level approach provides a data analysis framework in which the collected data will be described in textual level, interpreted in discursive level, and explained in a social level. The following sessions go on to review the CDA approaches and their guiding frameworks.

3.6.1 Characteristics of the Discourse-historical Approach

There are three essential and interrelated characteristics of the discourse-historical approach. They are interdisciplinarity, triangulation, and fieldwork and context of discourse.

Firstly, the discourse-historical approach is characterized by its interdisciplinarity. For example, in their analysis of the discursive construction of Austrian nation and national identities, de Cillia et al. (1999) combined historical, socio-political and linguistic perspectives. The content of an utterance must be confronted with historical backgrounds and organizational facts in order to highlight intertextuality. Texts must be interpreted by specialists in other subjects, to stay true to the principle of interdisciplinarity, which is an important characteristic of the approach (Wodak et al., 1990:57). In my study, an eclectic mix of approaches is used, for example besides discourse theory, institutional theory (e.g., Scott, 2001) lays a framework to explain the institutional contexts in which green advertisings are produced, and Fei (1992)'s sociological theory on Chinese society is drawn to account for the feature of Chinese green advertisements, as well as Havey (2005)'s political economy argument on neoliberalism for the MNCs' green discourse characteristic identified in the study.

The second characteristic is the principle of triangulation. The validity of the favoured interpretations of discursive events must be theoretically justified (Wodak, 2001:65). This is another reason why Wodak (2001) advocated triangulation in the discourse-historical approach, where, through different approaches and methods, along with varied empirical data and background information, bias is minimized. Triangulation permits exploration of the interconnectedness of discursive and other social practices as well as structures (Titscher et al., 2000:157). Thirdly, the study should always incorporate fieldwork to study the subject of the research from the inside, as a precondition for any further analysis and theorising (Wodak, 2001:68).

Informed by the requirements of discourse-historical approach and considering the importance of context in the understanding and interpretation of the discourse, my study also contextualizes the advertisings and their analysis within their socio-political and historical contexts. In my study, besides the main data from online advertisings, I have conducted fieldwork in companies to collect interviews and documentary data. Other supplementary data sources are used in order to improve the validity of my analysis results as well as complement findings. For example, documentary data is analyzed to study the meaning of “sustainability”, a concept which is prominent in MNCs’ green advertising discourse; interview data is analyzed to understand the institutional context in which green advertisings are produced.

The emphasis on context of discourse in discourse-historical approach is consistent with Fairclough (1995)’s three-dimensional method of discourse analysis which sees a piece of discourse is embedded within socio-cultural practice at different levels: “in the immediate situation, in the wider institution or organization, and at a societal level” (Fairclough, 1995:97). This CDA approach will be reviewed in the following section.

3.6.2 Fairclough's CDA Approach: A Three-Dimensional CDA Framework

Fairclough's CDA approach focuses on studying discursive events; an event is an "instance of language use, analyzed as text, discursive practice, and social practice" (Fairclough, 1993, p.138). Therefore, a discursive event involves both texts, discursive practices (production and interpretation of the text), and social practices (including situational, institutional and societal practice).

Based on this idea and within a critical discourse tradition, Fairclough in his several influential works including *Language and Power* (1989), *Discourse and Social Change* (1992) and *Critical Discourse Analysis* (1995), proposed a three-dimensional framework that could be employed to relate micro levels of language use to wider aspects of social practice. Social practice can be analyzed using the construct of "order of discourse", which refers to the sum of all discourses that are in practice within a specific social domain or institution (such as the media, or the university, or in this study, the corporate advertising) (Fairclough, 1993). Every communicative or discursive event consists of three dimensions - text, discursive practice and social practice - and should be analyzed accordingly:

1. Text: the linguistic features of the text, including lexicalisation, grammar, cohesion, and text structure.
2. Discursive practice: processes related to the production and consumption of the text, including the "force" of utterances, coherence, intertextuality and interdiscursivity.
3. Social practice: the institutional and organizational circumstances of the discursive event and the constitutive effects of discourse.

(See **Exhibit 3.1**)

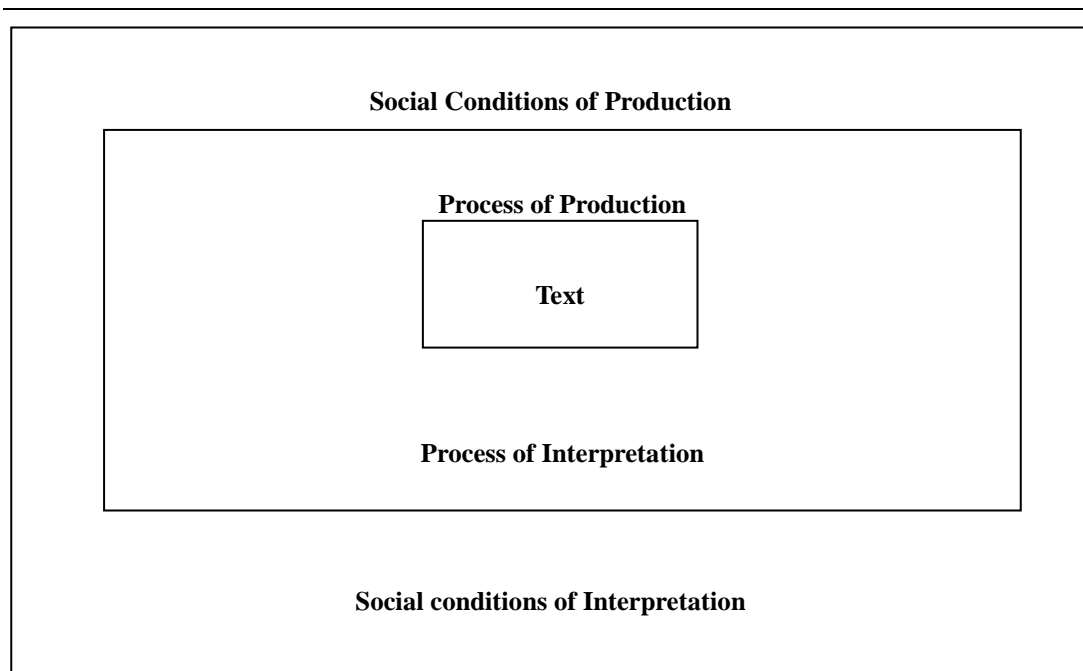


Exhibit 3.1: Fairclough’s Three-dimensional Model (Fairclough 2001: 21)

Drawing on systematic functional linguistics (Halliday, 1978), in Fairclough’s three-dimensional model the textual dimension focuses on how discourses are realised linguistically. Discursive practice analyses how producers of texts draw on already existing discourses to create a text, and on how recipients of texts apply available discourses to interpret them and render them meanings. This level of analysis mediates the relationship between text and social practices. The dimension of social practice itself examines how texts reproduce or challenge wider aspects of society, particularly how they relate to the “production, reproduction, or transformation of relations of domination” (Fairclough, 1992: 87). Fairclough’s method is based on the three dimensions of description, interpretation and explanation.

For Fairclough (1992; 1995), the three dimensions of discourses respectively correspond to three analytical traditions: the linguistics tradition with close textual and linguistic analysis; the macrosociological tradition with an emphasis on social

structures; and the interpretivist or microsociological tradition that stresses individual action and agency. A synthesis of these three dimensions is characteristic of Fairclough's CDA approach and he aims to address the weakness in each domain. Meanwhile, such theorization locates his CDA in the current sociological debate on structure and agency (Giddens, 1984). By arguing that discourse engages in a dialectical relationship with situations, institutions and social structures, that is, it is shaped by society and goes on to shape it, he takes a constructivist position which emphasizes that social reality is constructed by discourse. However, his ontological perspective tends to be more realist than idealist. Different to Laclau and Mouffe, Fairclough assumes that discourse is only one aspect among many others of any social practice. Such difference between discourse and non-discourse represents a moderate version of constructivism. As Fairclough holds,

“We need to distinguish ‘construction’ from ‘construe’, which social constructivists do not: we may textually construe (represent, imagine, etc) the social world in particular ways, but whether our representations or construals have the effect of changing its construction depends upon various contextual factors – including the way social reality already is, who is construing it, and so forth” (Fairclough, 2003: 8-9).

The emphasis on the dialectical relationship between discourse and society, structure and agency provides two important insights for empirical analysis. First, examining the impact of discursive practices of discourse in terms of constructing social realities and meanings, and social relations requires looking at its interaction with preconstituted reality. Second, subjects are not completely constituted and controlled by discourses; on the contrary, there are possibilities for them to act as agents and to engage in resistance and social change.

3.7 Applying CDA to This Study

My study applies Fairclough's three dimension discourse analysis model on linguistic

level, discursive level and social level. Furthermore, in line with Fairclough (1992)'s argument that discourses are constrained by and situated in social contexts and both reflecting contexts and constituting them, the discourse-historical approach places emphasis on the contextual factors of discourse. In addition, according to Wodak (2001), in order to comprehend how language is used in a given context, it is necessary to conceive contextual factors including the "history" of past events, and to understand the social structures, cultural norms, and physical legacies that discourse occurs within. Based on such arguments, my research approach is developed. In addition to the main data from online advertisings, this study also draws on interviews and documentary data to triangulate the finding from discourse analysis. Analyses on such empirical data provide a more comprehensive understanding on the studied advertising discourse in a historical perspective and on the socio-cultural contexts in which the corporate green advertising discourse is both constructed and constructing.

The main focus of this study is on discourses active on corporate websites, and aims to find out in what ways do companies use both texts and visuals to represent their green products and themselves as environmentally responsible. This responds to the overarching research question as presented in last chapter - *How do firms construct the corporate greenness through green advertising discourse in their corporate websites?*

As few is known about the nature of environmental discourse on corporate advertisings in the websites, Fairclough's approach is helpful to guide me to analyze bot textual and visual informations discursively. Within the framework of Fairclough's CDA approach, the other two research sub-questions can be answered in correspondence with the three dimensions of discourse: the similarities and dissimilarities can be examined through linguistic description dimension and

discursive interpretation dimension analyses. The analysis supposes to find out the common and different structural factors/features of the corporate green advertising discourses. Specifically, it focuses on the objects, subjects, and relations in green advertisements discourse and the meanings of corporate greenness constructed by such discourse. In addition, the reason behind the identified similarities and dissimilarities will be discussed with social explanation dimension analysis.

The following sections of this chapter will present research design and data collection methods, protection of subjects, sampling (including sample descriptions), sample rationale, criteria for scientific rigour, the role of the researcher, and the researcher's journal.

3.8 Research Design and Data Collection

To investigate the language that companies use to construct corporate “greenness” on corporate websites, the qualitative research paradigm is appropriate. The qualitative research paradigm is well geared to understand the context that affects the social practices and meanings that are socially constructed by participants and institutions like companies (Fairclough, 1995). One feature of qualitative research process is that it is often iterative. According to Creswell (2003), “qualitative research is emergent rather than tightly preconfigured” (p. 181).

Analysts using online data can be seen as “interpretative bricoleurs” and such research is an interpretative process (Denzin, 2004). As the aim of CDA are to understand the multiple dimensions and social context of language use as social practice, research employing CDA is rarely linear (Fairclough, 2001). Informed by this, data collection for this study takes many interconnected paths (Janks, 1997).

Online data were collected at different times: October 2011, July 2012, and January

2013. The data were collected in these times because these are the months when the researched firms began to release “green innovation products” and actively broadcasted their new “green campaigns”.

Besides collecting online website data as the main data, as informed by the discourse-historical CDA approach, I also conducted on-field interviews with studied firms and archival data as subsidiary data (See **Appendix A**). The reasoning behind the multiple data collection sources is twofold: it permits the researcher to examine motivations behind representational language and image construction, and to check the consistency between the researcher’s interpretation of discourses and company interviewees’ interpretations and understandings of their firms’ green products and practices. By providing multiple sources of data and triangulating the data, these methods strengthen internal validity (Flick, 2009). Besides the subsidiary background data, all of the online data used in this study are available on publicly accessible websites.

3.9 Human Subjects Protection

The analyses units of this research are green advertisings from corporate websites, supplemented by company interview data. The Web pages from corporate websites are all available for public consumption. Therefore, the online data are not collected through interaction with the individual and do not provide identifiable private information. Therefore, the data does not have potential risks to human participants. For the on-field interviews data, all participant interviewees’ information has been concealed and interview practice under purview of the Research Ethics Procedures at the University of Edinburgh.

3.10 Selection of Cases

A purposeful sampling technique is adopted in this study. Purposeful sampling

allows the researcher to select samples with intention. Such selection method allows the researcher to focus in great detail on a certain issue, subject, or phenomenon (Flick, 2009; Patton, 2002; Silverman and Marvasti, 2008). According to Patton, 2002:230): “the logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth.” Previous studies (e.g., Creswell, 2003; Flick, 2009; Gee, 2005) have proved that the idea of purposeful sampling is appropriate for investigations on online materials. In order to select the most suitable samples, companies are selected according to the following four criteria:

1. The company should have a series of green products (products are communicated as having environmental protection features, such as pollution reduction or energy efficiency enhancement), and should have launched its green campaigns for advertising their green products in the Chinese market. Furthermore, this campaign and advertising information should be found abundant in their corporate websites in the Chinese language.
2. The firms should be from resources-based industries which have received the most environmental pressure and have had prominent environmental impact. Such industries can be real estate development, automobile manufacturing, chemical industry or machinery manufacturing.
3. The company should have a strong environmental performance in its industry and should have been rated as the top green firms in China for consecutive years (from 2010-2012) according to China’s Green Company rating⁶. In addition, the ratings of corporate environmental protection practice and green innovation indices in the rating evaluation should be consecutively higher than the average rating.
4. The green products/services of the firm should be profitable and thus successful

⁶ The rating is established by the China Entrepreneur Club as a private non-profit organization committing to nurturing entrepreneurship and business integrity while paving the future of sustainable economic and social development. The rating criteria can be found at <http://www.daonong.com/cec/green/2012baiqiang/2012baiqiang.html> 2013/10/5

in the market.

Sample Selection: A manageable sample is necessary in CDA for conducting a close analysis with indepth (Askehave, 2007; Pitts, 2004). According to Rogers (2005), researchers utilizing CDA should repeatedly and recursively reexamine data in an effort to fully analyze the obvious and embedded representations in language and image. Four companies are selected in this study. The companies are all from the 2008-12 China Green Companies list.

The selected companies are placed into two categories – MNC subsidiaries operating in China and Chinese indigenous firms. Such sample construction allows the researcher to examine similarities and differences among researched companies. Similarities within each category pertain to their position in green ranking (China's green companies rating⁷, company type (transnational, indigenous) and the green impact of their green product/service in Chinese market (market share, market position, and profit from green business).

The studied websites are from four companies in two categories. The companies in Category One (C1) are: GE and Unilever. Those in Category two (C2) are Landsea and BYD. In the selected companies as research objective, there exist a number of variances. The two multinational subsidiaries share many characteristics in their corporate sustainability strategies and green advertising, as do the two indigenous firms in China. Yet, the multinational subsidiaries and local firms are two vastly different kinds of organizations. It is possible that MNCs in their green advertisings use language and image regarding environmental issues quite differently. However, there are few studies explicating this assumption. In essence, the selection of companies within each type was purposeful due to their environmental performance

⁷ Ibid

admitted by third-party evaluation⁸. The companies were categorized to examine how the text and image in use on the websites of companies compared among each type.

In C1, the two firms have an equivalent level of high environmental performance, and are essentially the flagship green pioneers in each industry. Additionally, each shared competitive market shares and has very high research activity in their green innovation products. Both companies in C1 also have high brand recognition in the market. Besides, both of the large MNCs have launched their sustainability projects and integrate the greenness into their corporate development strategy. These green projects have also been localized into their Chinese operations. For example, having developed its business for decades in China, GE has extended its operations ranging from healthcare to finance. It has launched a campaign that is aimed to invite more outsiders to join the company's green path in China and coined the word "Ecomagination"; this is a revolutionary strategy insofar as it encompasses improvement along the profit margin as well as enhancing GE's environmental performance of products and services. Similar with GE, Unilever also has a prominent image in China market and is actively establishing its green image. In 2010 Unilever demonstrated its commitment to sustainability when it launched its "Unilever Sustainability Living Plan" (USLP) (see **Appendix B**). This plan committed the firm to a ten year journey towards sustainable growth. According to the China's Green Company rating⁹, both firms have been rated as the top ten green foreign firms in China for consecutive years from 2010-2012.

The differences within C1 relate to industry and home-country background, with one from the US and one from UK. The second area of difference deals with marketing

⁸ The third party is China Entrepreneur Club (CEC), a non-profit organization established in 2006 and consisting of some of the most influential business leaders, academics and diplomats in China. Its aim is to nurture entrepreneurship and business integrity to pave the future of sustainable economic and social development.

⁹ Ibid

models. GE is mainly of B2B branding, while Unilever is B2C branding. However, GE now also takes a B2C approach for advertising their green products and enhancing their brand recognition in the China market. For example, both TV and social media channels have been used in GE's marketing and advertising. In addition, in the context of communication and marketing, as the social media has been widely applied, there has seen a convergence between traditional B2B and B2C marketing strategies. For example, GE has launched its new "Ecomagination" program on its website and the potential audience was planned to be both business corporation customers and mass consumers. In the same time, Unilever is actively collaborating with other corporations such as Walmart and Carrefour in its "Sustainability Living Plan"; the advertisements of this newly launched green campaign can be found in Unilever China's corporate website as well.

The C2 includes two Chinese indigenous companies: BYD and Landsea. BYD mainly specializes in automobile manufacturing and new energy technology development, and its business is subordinated by IT. It is committed to developing new green energy and green products. For example, it has the largest market share for Nickel-cadmium batteries. It has launched the first dual mode electric car product, pure electric vehicle product, and pure EV taxis in China.¹⁰ Landsea is a Chinese leading green-tech building developer and operator. It engages in green housing technology development and has thirteen projects which have won the highest green building certificate – Three Star Green Label from the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development.¹¹ Both BYD and Landsea have been ranked among "China Top 100 Green Companies" and recognized as green pioneers among Chinese local firms.

Sample advertisement content is available on and collected from websites of these 4

¹⁰ <http://www.byd.com/aboutus/profile.html> 2013/9/10

¹¹ <http://en.landsea.cn/About/Introduction.aspx> 2013/9/10

companies. Data has been collected from the web pages including advertising information on the corporate websites:

1. Advertisement from Corporate Home Page (e.g. <http://www.unilever.com.cn/>).
2. Advertisement as the “About” page that describes the company (including About Company and About Our Business, i.e., location, founding year, mission/vision, size of employees/business, brief introduction of provided products/services) (e.g. <http://www.unilever.com.cn/aboutus/>).
3. Advertisement from Web pages describing the company’s responsibility to environment, and “green” strategy/philosophy. Such web pages include CSR/Sustainability page (such as GE’s Ecomagination page; Unilever’s Sustainability Live Plan page; BYD’s new energy page; Landsea’s corporate citizen page) (e.g. <http://www.unilever.com.cn/sustainable-living-2013/>).
4. Advertisement from Web pages describing “green” products/services/technologies (e.g., GE’s wind turbine, BYD’s eco-car) (<http://www.bydauto.com.cn/energy.html>).

The central inquiry is not focusing on the configuration of the corporate websites but aims to describe, interpret, and explain the companies’ discursive practices on their corporate websites.

3.11 Description of the Corpus

The selection of green advertisings is informed by Iyer et al. (1995)’s definition of green advertising and Banerjee et al. (1995)’s categorization of green advertising. In addition, in the process of data collection from corporate websites, as the websites include discourses more than green ones, the “green” terms in Chinese (See **Table 3.1**) are used as a coding guideline in identifying green advertising discourses. The coded and selected green themed advertisings will then be translated into English and discursively analyzed according to Fairclough’s three-dimensional analysis

framework. For example, in the About Page of Landsea, a green words imbued paragraph as below has been selected for analysis:

“Landsea takes ‘an everlasting green company’ as its vision and ‘green innovates future’ as its mission. In accordance with the values of ‘Advocate humanity, Respect innovation’ and the spirit of ‘Landsea always on the way’, Landsea will, progressively get itself transformed into a diversified green conglomerate taking green-tech capacity as the core and integrating green technical services, green real estate development, green old-age care services and green finance services in the coming decade according to changes in our resource endowment, especially external environment. That is exactly our green strategy.”¹²

Lexical Categories	Examples
Nouns	Greenness (绿色), environment (环境), environmental protection (环保), ecology (生态), nature (自然), sustainability (可持续发展), conservation (保护), biodiversity (多样性).
Adjectives	Green (绿色的), environmental (环保的), environmental-friendly (环保的), ecological (生态的), natural (自然的), sustainable (可持续的), bio-degradable (可降解的).
Adverbs	Environmentally (环保得), sustainably (可持续得).
Verbs	Re-cycle (循环), protect (保护), preserve (保持), purify (净化), reduce (降低).

Table 3.1 Green Terms

(Each term should have its corresponding Chinese term)

Besides the data in textual form, visual data is also collected from the websites for two reasons: firstly, visual information is always inseparably presented with textual information. Secondly, visual information such as pictures/images in advertisement is a distinctive feature of advertising and help to persuade the audience (Phillips and McQuarrie, 2004). Thus, information in visual form has also been collected. For example, the below picture is from Landsea’s Home Page and is constituted by both textual and visual information. It is selected because its green feature is distinct: besides the word “greenness” appears in the caption of the picture, a clear blue sky and a pitch of clean green grassland both set out the advertised building products in

¹² <http://www.landsea.cn/About/Default.aspx> 2014/4/2

central position and represent the greenness (See **Exhibit 3.2**).



Exhibit 3.2: A Visual Advertisement Sample from Landsea's Home Page

(Transcription: Landsea, greenness creates the future.¹³)

The green advertisements composed by such above information are collected from each type of corporate websites. The unit of advertisements should be either an advertisement introducing a green product or technology in several textual paragraphs, or an excerpt from a Home Page news report focusing on the company's new green achievement, or an advertising presented by multimodal discourses including both textual, visual, and vocal information (such as a video clip embedded in the web site), or one paragraph introducing the company's environmental responsibility and its overall green businesses (such as the above example from Landsea's About Web Page), or simply one screenshot picture presenting an array of corporate products, activities of corporate actors, and links to additional content single picture (especially from Home Page) or an image with inserted texts (such as the above example from Landsea's Home Page) (see **Table 3.2**). In sum, there are 76 advertising samples collected for analysis.

¹³ <http://www.landsea.cn/> 2014/3/2

Firms	Forms of advertisings	Sources/number of the advertisings				Total number: 76
		HOME	ABOUT/INTRO	CSR/SUSTAIN	PRODUCTS	
GE	Textual	1	3	1	6	11
	Visual	0	2	1	4	7
	Multimodal	1	0	0	3	4
Unilever	Textual	1	1	2	2	5
	Visual	0	0	0	4	4
	Multimodal	2	0	1	1	4
BYD	Textual	1	1	0	0	2
	Visual	0	2	0	0	2
	Multimodal	1	1	4	8	14
Landsea	Textual	0	0	1	2	3
	Visual	0	0	0	5	5
	Multimodal	4	3	0	7	14

Table 3.2: Advertisements Collected from Different Types of Websites.

The data set is large enough to allow the identification of patterns but small enough to reveal multiple, rich levels of meaning. For example, Fairclough's study on the privatization of the public universities, in addition, the two categories of data source allows me to have a comparative approach which adds a valuable perspective to our understanding of the sample advertisements (Berger, 2011) and help to develop conceptual themes in the green advertisements.

Drawing on Fairclough's three-dimension CDA model, this study employs a multi-staged data analysis approach: it firstly organizes the data sample by describing the data content according to data sources which are different types of web pages (e.g., Home page, CSR/Sustainability page, Product Intro and Advertisings page, the web page type is used as categories to sort the advertisings), and then, using interpretive analyses to identify the discursive purposes informed by the description of both textural and visual data, and in the end link the interpretations with context of

broader social and cultural themes in explanation analysis. The descriptive analysis is consistent with the content analysis approach which aims to identify the main layouts and linguistic features in advertisement data. In the first stage of content descriptive analysis, I firstly code textual elements for the inclusion of words such as “environment”, “green”, “energy/fuel efficiency”, and “pollution reduction” in the web site page content. Three main advertising layouts are then identified: (1) A narrative layout (normally found in Home/intro page and CSR/Sustainability page) (2) Sale and instrumental advertisings that featured pricing and financing information, and consisting of small image with large body of text (usually found in product advertising web pages); (3) Images with tagline or minimal text (usually found in product advertising web page) and. All the three layouts are used among the corporate web site advertisings discourse these help to guide the descriptive analysis of the data.

The analysis does not stop with traditional content analysis, because content analysis is incapable for capturing meanings or nuances and its straightforward reading of the signs and symbols could not support interpretant analyst in identifying intention and sense-making in discourses (Schroeder et al., 2006). Therefore, to complement the content descriptive analysis in which advertisings elements are presented, the analysis goes further to interpret the aims of, and links between elements to see how different elements work together to achieve certain aims in the discourse. Such aims represent the themes of the studied discourse. This process of data analysis involves developing descriptive write-ups for each category and then, as categories are grouped, it employs an interpretative approach, to elicit connotative meanings and layers of meanings, for each theme (Charmaz, 2006).

3.12 Analysis Method

Data set is large enough to allow the identification of patterns but small enough to

reveal multiple, rich levels of meaning. Despite the amount of data I collected and analyzed, the data analysis chapters only select to present a number of the advertising discourse samples, and two criteria are used to determine their selection – the accessibility and the representativeness. Accessibility refers to the principle that all the corporate advertisings should be updated online and open to all internet users in China; the advertised products by the companies should be present in Chinese market. By representativeness, I refer to the type of advertisements that display certain visual or textual features which are also observed in other advertisements of the similar category. For instance, the GE wind turbine developed under “ecomagination” (see **Exhibit 4.1**) portrays the green product in the place of a natural landscape. Its nature-protruded feature is shared by many other green advertisings issued by these two MNCs.

CDA’s strength is that it is capable to show the power relations of apparently neutral discursive artefacts in both textual and visual forms (Luke, 1996). The next part describes the research tools relating to both textual and visual analyses for this study.

3.12.1 Textual Analysis

In order to make the analysis of textual data systematic, Janks (2005)’s linguistic analysis rubric is utilized in this research. Based on Fairclough’s CDA approach, Janks (2005) provides an analysis framework which can be used to examine the discourse on organizational websites and allow analysts to recursively converge on the signifiers that make up the text, the specific linguistic selections, their arrangement, layout, sequence, and juxtaposition (Janks, 2005). The coding process also follows selected aspects of Janks’ (2005) linguistic rubric (see **Appendix C**).

3.12.2 Visual Analysis

In addition to textual analysis, visual data is analyzed. Visual analysis in this study

follows Kress and van Leeuwen (2006)'s analytic framework. The framework developed by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) provides a systematic means to examine discourses in visual form. According to Hodge and Kress (1988), images are always open to different interpretations; therefore, analysts need to apply approaches that fit specific research questions. Visual data are coded for analysis based on Kress and van Leeuwen (2006)'s rubric (see **Appendix D**).

3.13 Research Process

This study firstly selected Web pages containing green advertising information. Such pages are then printed and followed by a paper-and-pencil analysis of the website advertisings, which are then aggregated electronically (Strong and Gilmour, 2009). For preserving the representations of these analyzed advertisings and for a recursive analysis (Bergman and Meier, 2004), the relevant information and appear online and data are saved in HTML form. Some visual information is recorded by web page or video snapshot.

In the analysis process, it is often found that visual information occurs simultaneously and in conjunction with textual information. This is a feature of studies examining advertising discourse, which is always a combination of both textual and visual artifacts (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006). In addition, the interpretations in this study need to be made based on both analyses of language and images (Janks, 2005).

3.14 Criteria for Scientific Rigour and Validity of CDA

CDA has origins in the recognized traditions of discourse studies, and draws strength from critical linguistics. Regarding the validity of CDA, Gee (2005) provides the most current discussion. According to Gee (2005), research with any kind of methods has an agenda and thus validity is a social construct. In line with constructivism, Gee

(2005) claims that critical discourse analysts taking a reflexive position admit that researchers' interpretations can be varying depending on the interpretive frameworks and lens, and therefore the meaning-making from one researcher may be different from the others. This, however, does not admit that only subjective conclusions can be drawn by CDA, instead, the research process can be facilitated with multiple interpretive tools by CDA (Gee, 2005; Rogers, 2004). In the end, the value of the result of CDA can be achieved by systematic analyses informed by existing theoretical and analysis frameworks. In addition in this research, in order to ensure rigour, both Janks' (2005) linguistic analysis rubric and Kress and van Leeuwen (2006)'s visual analysis framework are used in the research process. Moreover, the process of research has been recorded and documented in a journal.

3.15 Limitations: Conversation Analysis and Criticisms of CDA

There are several limitations to this study. First, the nature of qualitative research limits a great level of generalizability. However, because the studied advertisings as units of analyses are from a variety of corporate websites and from different categories of leading green firms, this exploratory study is able to provide valuable insights to different stakeholders and inform future studies in this field.

The second limitation of this research is that, as this study is exploratory in a new research context, only a few green pioneer companies were selected. However, CDA theorists (e.g., Fairclough, 1992; Wodak, 2001) have suggested that analyzing with a small size of data is realistic for CDA researchers to conduct a close and careful examination of language. Thus, some other types of firms were not selected to the research samples (e.g., SOEs, and firms from many other industries). It is expected that future scholarly investigations will include and focus on other categories of firms. In addition, my work is presenting a comparison between firms from MNC subsidiaries and Chinese indigenous firms, while future studies can focus on the

relationship between green discourse and firms' country origins as well as their industrial backgrounds.

In qualitative studies, the researcher is positioned as the primary instrument of data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Creswell, 2003). In discourse studies, as discourse is socially constructed and constantly changing, it is impossible that researchers can be immune to the influences from their surrounding discourses and other social constructions. Therefore, it has to be admitted that the research findings, as well as the interpretations and conclusions within, can be limited to some extent. Nevertheless, the reflexive and rigorous methods of CDA inquiry enhance researcher's ability to generate valuable interpretations and explanations (e.g., Fairclough, 2001; Fairclough and Wodak, 1997; Halliday, 1985; Rogers et al., 2005).

Besides, there have been critiques of CDA which suggest that its methods of inquiry remain largely exploratory and compared with quantitative methods they lack "genuine analytical procedures" (Flick, 2009:246). It is true that CDA methods are still evolving; however, this should not prevent the research with CDA methods. The ongoing application of CDA is crucial to the refinement of such analytical procedures. In this sense, this current research can help develop CDA and contribute to its methodological development as well.

In addition, most of the criticisms directed against CDA come from conversation analysis which is considered as social scientific approach (Meyer, 2001). According to Arminen (1999), in conversation analysis, discursive interaction, such as talks and dialogues, is treated as a sufficient object for analysis, rather than as a window onto wider social processes. According to Schegloff (1998), CDA does not consider seriously the discursive material of its analysis. He argued that conversation analysis should be carried out first if CDA wants its critical analysis to be linked to data.

Otherwise the analysis is merely ideological (Schegloff, 1998). The perceived ideology-laden stance of researchers adopting CDA poses problem and provides ammunition to the opponents of the method.

Furthermore, Widdowson (1995) critiques that CDA constructs a biased interpretation. He views the bias of CDA as from researchers' ideological commitment, which inevitably results in purposeful selection on texts that will support researchers' preferred interpretations (Widdowson, 1995). To respond to Widdowson's critique on CDA, Fairclough (1996) argues that Widdowson's opinion does not take into account that, within the CDA approach, researchers are always explicit about their positions, contrary to other social research methods, such as content analysis in which, according to Titscher et al. (2000), the underlying assumptions held by researchers are often more implicit, or simply not determined in advance. By contrast, in the CDA framework, "the critical analysts must make transparent their choices in the research process" (Wodak, 2001: 65). My own position as the researcher in this study and my personal experiences will be illustrated. The following section will present the Role of the Researcher.

3.16 Role of the Researcher

3.16.1 My Stance, Experience and Motivation

The role of the researcher is crucial in qualitative researches (Strauss, 1987). The researchers rely on their own in the whole process of qualitative research from data collection to analysis, and they are the main instrument for data interpretation (Guba and Lincoln, 2005); thus, the researchers' personal assumptions, bias, and member resources need to be disclosed, especially in CDA (Gee, 2005). To analyze discourses in a critical paradigm, as the interpretation is both derived from data analyses and influenced by researchers' members' resources, it is necessary for researchers to acknowledge their subjectivities (Fairclough, 2001).

My personal perspectives, as well as my professional history and academic interests, shape my subject of inquiry of this current study. In my individual experience, environmental issues have always been drawing my attention. My father worked as a director of an Environmental Protection Agency in my hometown, a city locates in northern China. I remembered him often telling me about how difficult and puzzling his work was. On the one hand, he needed to fulfill the duties of his job to fine polluting companies or shut down factories which violated environmental regulations/laws. On the other hand, as a local environmental protection bureaucracy closely tied to the economic interests of the municipal government, he always faced conflictual situations when the local government promoted industrial growth while the central government demanded environmental cleanup. He said his work progressed with difficulty because it received very limited support in the local context.

During my summer internship in the municipal Environmental Protection Agency years ago, I had the chance to consider the causes of my father's dilemma. From my personal observation I understood that for the government in my hometown, its primary focus was on economic welfare, not the environmental for its own sake. Most large local businesses had maintained very close ties to government officials including very high ranking people who supervised and checked the work of the Environmental Protection Agency. Their backroom network thus protected the business and constrained the implementation of environmental protection regulations and laws.

During that period (2004-2005) of my experience working in Environmental Protection Agency, I was aware that the central government had managed to increase the power and influence of the Environmental Protection Agency, passed or

strengthened new laws to protect endangered species improved the quality of air and water, and cut back on extractive industries like paper making and mining. Striking as these changes were in the aspect of policy making, examining actual implementation of these policies exposed a much more complex and ambiguous situation.

Local governments may connive with business by looking the other way as factories pollute water and air. Furthermore, the hardship of local environmental improvement and protection derived from the poor communication of, and education about, environmentalism in China. In my memory, I vividly recall the heavily polluted and stinking river flowing across my hometown for years. However because of the poor knowledge about environmental protection and the absence of environmental awareness, people kept living with pollution and only became used to it; few took serious actions against the pollution or to fix the problem. Then too, people, including myself, at that time believed that the pollution of the river did not cause any serious problems to our own lives. Therefore, elaborate legal provisions seemed to have little effect on making people realize the importance of environment and the harm caused by industrial pollution. Even a massive governmental propaganda campaign appeared to reach few people. Besides mandatory supervision, the local Environmental Protection Agency did not have the prescriptive role in communicating awareness/knowledge on environmental protection, although its experts and officials had detailed information about the enormity of the pollution. The environmental discourse stemmed from the state was hardly able to permeate into civil society.

My father's working experience and my own internship at Environmental Protection Agency afforded me insight into the background of China's environmental protection system and the context of Chinese environmental communication.

My motivation: I then came abroad to the UK pursuing my degrees. My overseas study and living experience made me aware of the differences between Western and Chinese understandings of the natural environment. For example, the much cleaner air and rivers in a developed country also let me begin to worry about the deteriorating environment of my home country. A strong wish began to grow out from bottom of my heart: to let my compatriots also realize the critical situation and change their insensitivity to the environment.

From my working experience in Environmental Protection Agency, I was aware that a major polluting source was from businesses, especially China's high labour density and low efficiency industries. At the same time, as the legal system put more and more pressure for sustainability development and forced firms to both develop environmental friendly products and enhance their environmental performance, companies began to pick up their responsibility and take proactive stance towards the environmental protection. I found that the company played an essential role in bridging Chinese people with environmentalism discourse. In the commercialized society, commercial organizations themselves might bring a solution to the problem they cause. Therefore, the manner in which companies market their green products and themselves as "green" players is worthy of further exploration, especially in the context where "environmental awareness" was largely lagging behind.

My multiple-perspective: During my time working as a research assistant and a case writer at the China Europe International Business School, a leading business school in China, I had a good platform from which to know and access various companies. Here, I experienced the numerous ways in which firms attempted to market themselves as "environmentally responsible" and their products "green" or "eco". To write cases with these companies, I collected corporate opinions about environmental

responsibility and produced a range of cases based on companies' told stories. Such working experience provided me with a position to understand and interpret studied discursive phenomena. In addition, I had been working as a management consultant with one of the "green" companies studied. This experience instilled in me further knowledge and afforded an "insider" view of the managerial aspects involved in the corporate green ideas.

Both the understanding of the pollution problems and comprehensive collaboration with commercial organizations ignited my interest and motivated me to investigate how firms establish their green identity and represent their green products as a solution. The working experiences in a governmental agency, as well as providing firms consultancy service and working closely with firms for case writing, uniquely brought me multiple perspectives, positioned me and fuelled my desire to examine how companies use language to communicate the "greenness" on corporate websites.

Formal contact with the fields of semiotics and textual discourse analysis came during my doctoral experience. Due to the lack of research examining how companies in China harness their online green advertisements, the current study offers a contribution to the exploratory work on the subject and may serve as the foundation for future research.

3.17 Researcher's Journal

The researcher's journal plays an important role in qualitative research. The researcher's journal can help the researcher keep awareness of his/her biases. Specific to CDA, analytic decisions and be recorded and documented by using a research journal (Rogers, 2004). Moreover, research journal plays a necessary role in the explanatory stages of CDA as it helps to ensure research reflexivity (Fairclough, 1995b). In this current study, the researcher's journal is used especially as a record of

questions and problems encountered and decisions made in the research process. It also allows me to organize and review data analysis, adjust and revise interpretations, review understandings in different stages of the research process, and mitigate factors that shape preconceptions regarding the themes that stem from the data (Chiseri-Strater and Sunstein, 2006). Overall, taking a researcher's journal represents an effort to ensure validity, trustworthiness and the rigour in social research.

3.18 Conclusion of Chapter 3

This chapter reviewed both the theoretical background and philosophical assumptions guiding the research process and the methodology adopted. It discussed and compared influential approaches to the study of discourse and their ontological/epistemological differences. It has been argued that the CDA approaches including historical-discourse CDA and Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA are able to provide a conceptual framework as well as an analytical construct for guiding this study. In particular, the three-dimensional analytic framework by Fairclough's CDA approach and the constructs informed and related to Laclau and Mouffe's concept of articulation, as well as key discourse theoretical terms such as nodal points, elements/moments, floating signifiers, and the logic of equivalence/difference, can be employed to enrich my own discourse analysis of corporate green advertising, linking the advertising discourse in a micro or organizational level under study both with other texts and with wider macro-level discourses and social practices and contexts. The following chapters will present the data analysis process and findings. From Chapter 4 to Chapter 6, the results of descriptive/textual analysis, interpretative/discursive analysis, and explanatory/societal analysis will be respectively presented.

Chapter 4: The Descriptive/textual Analysis

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to understand how companies use language, both textual and visual, to represent themselves as green firms and to market their green products on their corporate websites. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a detailed analysis of the ways firms use texts and images to present corporate environmental responsibility. The analysis is in descriptive/textual level.

The findings focus on the emergent themes from the data. Previous research on green marketing and germane linguistic features from the literature on corporate advertising informs the analyses of the themes (see Chapter 2). The presentation of these findings is organized around evidence from four specific Web pages within the corporate websites:

1. Advertisement from the Corporate Home Page.
2. Advertisement as the “About” page that describes the company.
3. Advertisement from Web pages describing the company’s responsibility to the environment, and its “green” strategy/philosophy.
4. Advertisement from Web pages describing “green” products (and/or services and technologies).

4.2 Preview of the Structure of Analysis

Examining advertisings from the four types of corporate web pages allows for a cohesive presentation on how companies use advertising language online, with particular reference to the similarities and differences that occur among them, and the definitions and representations of corporate greenness. The chapter firstly introduces the case companies. Then it reviews the data analytic framework offered by

Fairclough's CDA model which helps to describe, interpret and explain the data. Following the framework, and different levels of analyses overlap in practice, a preliminary analysis will be presented of both the textual and visual representations. That data will then be interpreted and explained. An extended analysis of data findings in discursive and societal levels and responses to research sub-questions will be developed in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6.

4.3 Review of the Cases and Research Data

The websites examined in this research are from four companies in two categories. Case companies in Category One (C1) are: GE and Unilever; those in category Two (C2) are Landsea and BYD.

Similarities within each category pertain to position in green ranking (China's green companies rating¹⁴), company type (transnational, indigenous) and the green impact of their green product/service in Chinese market (market share, market position, and profit from green business). The C1 includes two multinationals subsidiaries in China: General Electric and Unilever. Both of the large MNCs have launched their sustainability projects and integrated environmental responsibility into their corporate development strategy. For example, having been developing its business for decades in China, GE has extended its operations ranging from healthcare to finance. It has launched a campaign that is aimed to invite more outsiders to join the company's green path in China for which it coined the word of "Ecomagination"; this makes GE revolutionary insofar as it encompasses improvement along the profit margin as well as enhancing GE's environmental performance of products and services. As with GE, Unilever also has a prominent image in the Chinese market and is actively establishing its green image. In 2010 Unilever demonstrated its

¹⁴ The rating is established by the China Entrepreneur Club as a private non-profit organization committing to nurturing entrepreneurship and business integrity while paving the future of sustainable economic and social development. The rating criteria can be found at <http://www.daonong.com/cec/green/2012baiqiang/2012baiqiang.html> 2013/10/5

commitment to sustainability when it launched its “Unilever Sustainability Living Plan” (USLP) (see **Appendix B**). This plan committed the firm to a ten year journey towards sustainable growth. According to China’s Green Company rate¹⁵, both firms have been rated amongst the top ten green foreign firms in China for consecutive years from 2010-2012¹⁶.

The C2 includes two Chinese indigenous companies: BYD and Landsea. BYD specializes in automobiles, new energy and IT. It is committed to developing new green energy and green products. For example, it has the largest market share for Nickel-cadmium batteries. It has launched the first dual mode electric car product, pure electric vehicle product, and pure EV taxis in China.¹⁷ Landsea is a leading Chinese green-tech building developer and operator. It engages in green housing technology development and has developed 13 projects which have won the highest green building certificate – Three Star Green Label from the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development.¹⁸ Both BYD and Landsea have been ranked amongst “China Top 100 Green Companies” and are recognized as green pioneers among Chinese local firms.

Corporate green advertisings are divided into three categories according to the different functions they perform: 1) product promotion; 2) image enhancement; and 3) image repair (Cox, 2010). Product promotion advertisings use environmental claims and eco-labels to add a symbolic edge to products that are otherwise similar in quality. Image-enhancing and image-repair advertisings attempt to change the overall public perception of a brand or a company, because a positive public image can provide a general platform from which to sell various products. In website green advertising, the first two categories of green advertisings can be identified.

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ <http://www.byd.com/aboutus/profile.html> 2013/9/10

¹⁸ <http://en.landsea.cn/About/Introduction.aspx> 2013/9/10

Specifically, the product promotion green advertisements can be found in the “product introduction” web pages, whilst the image enhancement green advertisements can be found in “introduction”, “about”, and “CSR/Sustainability” web pages. The last two categories of advertisements do not have an immediate goal to sell any particular products but they represent the corporate understanding of environmental responsibility and thus play an essential role in constructing corporate greenness.

4.3.1 Review of Fairclough’s Analytic Framework

Before I analyze the data, it is helpful to review the analytical framework based on Fairclough’s (1993, 1995, 2001) CDA approach. Based on Fairclough (1972; 1992)’ theoretical perspective, the constructive effects of discourse can be examined in three dimensions or levels, whereby each dimension includes a distinctive type of inquiry: textual (descriptive), process (interpretative), and societal (explanative).

The first dimension of Fairclough’s approach to CDA is textual analysis and it focuses on the texts and visuals. The objective of textual analysis is to describe the properties of representations in both textual and visual forms. For textual data, the analysis focus is on aspects such as, descriptors (e.g., selection of wordings, construction of sentence), selection of verbs (e.g., existential, material, relational), use of voice (e.g., active, passive), selection of modality (e.g., possibility, uncertainty), and sequencing of information (Fairclough, 1993, 1995a, 2001; Halliday, 1985, 1994). Based on such foci, Janks (2005) developed a Linguistic Analysis Rubric (see **Appendix C**), which serves as a textual data analysis framework for this study.

For visual data analysis, the focus is at the descriptive level and at examining general attributes (e.g., actions of actors, location, and setting), types of actors (e.g., company employees, consumers, female, elderly people), image composition (e.g.,

angles, colors, focus, framing, vectors), and page design (e.g., layout, navigation, graphics, background, header/footer, spatial relationships) and so forth (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006). A visual analysis framework is developed for this study based on Kress and van Leeuwen (2006)'s visual analysis rubric (see **Appendix D**). The goal at this descriptive level of analysis is to ascertain the formal properties of the data (Fairclough, 1993, 1995a, 2001). The textual/descriptive analysis results will be presented in this chapter.

The second dimension of CDA is process analysis and emphasizes on the interpretation of data. The analysis objective is to unpack the message, which refers to identify the constructed “social identities”, “social relationships”, and “knowledge” and “concepts”, and to understand and interpret the relationship between the data and its producers (Fairclough, 1992; 2001). In this process analysis, the focus is on the interactions among the various aspects of discourse such as its production (e.g., design), distribution (e.g., World Wide Web), and consumption (e.g., listening, reading, viewing). Interpretations are then made based on the relationships evident in the message, and what discourse practices speak to larger societal structures are identified (Fairclough, 2001). At the process level of analyses, an interpretive framework should be enacted by systematically determining the dimensions of the content situated in the data (Fairclough 1993, 1995a, 2001). Informed by such framework, this study will respectively focus on the (a) content of the language, (b) its subjects, (c) the relationship between subjects, and (d) the connections between the role of language and the greater social structures it reflects and supports (See **Table 4.1**).

Content	Subjects	Relations	Connections
What's Going on?	Who's Involved?	In What Relations?	What's the Role of Language in What's Going On?
Activities, Topics and Purpose (e.g., verbs, modalities, voice)	Subjects (e.g., companies, products, consumers) and Features (e.g., function, price, environmental benefit)	Composition (e.g., angle, position)	Themes and Genres that connect to larger social structures

Table 4.1: Fairclough's Interpretive Analysis Framework
Adopted from: Fairclough (2001)

The third dimension of CDA analysis is at the societal level. Societal analysis focuses on explanations of larger cultural, historical and social discourses and aims to find out how the interpretations of the data are embedded into those discourses. By moving through this framework, analysts can use micro-level linguistic analyses to inform larger macro-level discourses. Looking into the above three dimensions, CDA can provide the means to examine everyday language in an effort to discover the unspoken/suppressed. By doing so, it help raise awareness about issues of problematic social constructions (Fairclough, 1993; 1995; 2001).

Inevitably, there are overlaps amongst the levels of data analyses. For example, as I attempt to identify the linguistic features, certain patterns and structures of discourse types can emerge. Therefore, in the textual/descriptive analysis of each type of web page, some preliminary interpretations or explanations will be presented, which help to lead to further analyses in subsequent chapters. (Chapter 5 of the interpretative analysis will present the formation of discourse types leading to the construction of genres or themes. These genres or themes serve as overarching units of analysis at the societal level, which we discuss in Chapter 6.)

4.4 Textual/descriptive Analysis

4.4.1 Green Advertising Discourse from Corporate Home Page

4.4.1.1 Descriptive Analysis

According to the definition of advertising in this study (Chapter 1), any discourse aiming to promote the company product/service or image can be seen as corporate advertising. Thus such information from the corporate home page can be seen as advertising discourse and collected as research data.

The company website is generally introduced by a homepage. The Home Page can be seen not only as a new medium but also as a new genre which has emerged from the World Wide Web (Nielson, 2002). As most website users see the homepage as the first thing on a given site, it has a very important function. It aims to provide relevant information about the content of the web site. It is also designed to attract the audiences' attention and make it stay to explore more. As a point of entry, it gives the audience the first impression of the overall information. It also has a navigational feature. The green advertising discourse on the Home Page focuses on the array of corporate products, activities of corporate actors, and access to additional content. In essence, a company's Home Page functions as advertising billboard for its current achievements and to establish its identity.

Representations feature a prominent corporate position and a series of products and company accomplishments (in both green and traditional areas; and in the past and present), and corporate recognition. For example, Unilever trumpets an achievement by its green projects, "*a hundred million of Euros have been saved by the green projects.*"¹⁹ Similar constructions appear in BYD as the home page states, "*BYD's electric-automobile products come with an ultra-long 4-year guarantee period.*"²⁰ Likewise, GE and Landsea announce their commendations in their green business.

¹⁹ Retrieved from <http://www.unilever.com.cn/> 12/09/13

²⁰ Retrieved from <http://www.bydauto.com.cn/> 08/10/13

Landsea states, “*Landsea’s deep greenness has successfully accessed the capital market in Hong Kong.*”²¹ And, from GE, “*GE provides energy solutions which are the cleanest and most advanced in the world...a quarter of the world’s electric power is supplied by us.*”²² These items feature near the top of the Home Page and function as the primary content on the page, often appearing as a caption for a large primary image.

Secondary content, in the form of, news, and, events, appears and functions as complementary evidence to showcase the breadth and depth of the activities going on in the company. Frequently, these items describe a new launched green product or green project involved with multiple stakeholders, and are accompanied by positive comments about green practices made by, for example, consumers and the community. For example, on the Unilever page, the following appears: “*Unilever has established collaboration with China’s Science Academy, to join hands supporting the research on sustainable chemical products.*”²³ Landsea’s website home page includes press reports such as “*Landsea’s Green Island Housing project passes Level-A Housing Certification.*”²⁴ One of BYD’s homepage news release includes “*BYD’s independently researched new eco-car wins the ‘Energy Breakthrough Award’.*”²⁵ The association of the notable works, awards and products of the company, with prestigious industrial and market recognition, functions as tangible evidence to distinguish the company from competitors; a company’s green practice is said to help achieve these results. Companies draw referential power from the “green accolades” as supporting materials used in the construction and promotion of corporate green identity.

The data also reveals representations of how companies engage in a range of

²¹ Retrieved from <http://landsea.cn/> 10/10/13

²² Retrieved from <http://www.ge.com/cn/> 07/07/13

²³ Retrieved from <http://www.unilever.com.cn/> 04/09/13

²⁴ Retrieved from <http://landsea.cn/> 04/09/13

²⁵ Retrieved from <http://www.bydauto.com.cn/> 08/10/13

activities, which often are “Research and Development” on green technologies and business environmental responsibility practices. Three themes emerge from the green discourse on the Home Page: to describe the green endeavour of the companies, the corporate writ large (as mentioned above), the leading role in developing new technologies and implementing these technologies into their green products, and the business concern to environmental protection, and corporate commitment and belief to sustainability. An example from Unilever represents the broad theme of ongoing green endeavours by the company: *“Unilever has long strived to expand existing knowledge in the field of sustainability development in China’s market. For us, sustainability is integral to how we do business.”*²⁶

Representations on the GE Home Page best illustrate an environmental technology-leading and environmental responsible firm: *“GE developed the innovative and highly efficient airplane engine which helps China’s aviation to reach a new height.”*²⁷ Sample data as an example of corporate environmental responsibility at Landsea follows: *“For ten years, Landsea has been walking on its green road. Facing new challenges, Landsea believes greenness creates the future and we focus on the ‘deep-green’.”*²⁸ Such use of language demonstrates a conscious effort to make the audience understand that companies care about the environment. Not only does the Home Page content show the firm’s own concern for the environment, but it also attempts to convince audiences by stating that the firm has the ability to change. All sample case home pages have presented that the firms are not only dreaming and striving for a green future, but are also capable of change. An example appears as a concise caption to a primary image on the GE page: *“to think about it, and to do it,”*²⁹ while the original version of this corporate saying

²⁶ Retrieved from <http://www.unilever.com.cn/> 04/09/13

²⁷ Retrieved from <http://www.ge.com/cn/> 07/07/13

²⁸ Retrieved from <http://landsea.cn/> 04/09/13

²⁹ Retrieved from <http://www.ge.com/cn/> 07/07/13

transplanted from headquarter website is even more bold and concise: “*GE works*”.³⁰

In the form of hyperlinks, the text on the Home Page frequently provides access to other Web pages on the corporate website. Much of the language is very concise and appears in a word (e.g., Our Business, Our Company, News Release, and Talent Development).

Different ways of presenting and lexicalizing can also be found in words such as “*Introduction*”, “*Brand*”, “*Technology*”, “*Quality*”, “*Responsibility*” and “*Honors*”. These words serve as the captions to images or, in many cases, hyperlinks to additional content on the topic. Writing in “headline style” invites the audience to explore the content in more depth (Richardson, 2007).

In addition, a great extent of information on the Home Page is presented in visual form; a vivid organizational image is constructed by both textual descriptions and pictures such as corporate buildings, products, consumers with the company’s products, and employees in uniform working in a laboratory.

4.4.1.2 Preliminary Interpretation and Summary of Home Page

The content on the Home Pages for the corporations in the sample can be seen as a way of advertising corporate greenness because the language exhibits promotional discourse by repeatedly touting the distinct accomplishments of current companies in green products development and environmental protection practices. The prominence of the firm’s green technology and products provides areas of distinction and enhances the profile of the firm. Concurrently, such recognition provides tangible evidence that firms can use to build identityadvertisings. The use of short, descriptive phrases that link to other parts of the corporate website works to generate awareness

³⁰ Retrieved from <http://www.ge.com/> 07/07/13

or exposure to an element on the Web page (Krug, 2006; Lynch and Horton, 2009). Repetition of corporate characteristics, such as the name of the company, its products/services, and the companies' achievements, demonstrate an attempt to build brand identity (e.g., Anctil, 2008; Toma et al., 2005). In essence, the Home Page is the place where companies repeatedly showcase their distinctive and prestigious activities in environmental responsibility and practices.

4.4.2 Green Advertising Discourse from About Web Page

4.4.2.1 Descriptive Analysis

The About page gives an overall introduction to the company background in aspects such as the firm's history, products and services, and founding values and missions. The self-promotional language contained in this page extends the notions of prestige foregrounded on the corporate Home Pages. The language speaks to the environmental contributions of the firms. The data contains numerous examples of past accolades functioning as tangible proof of corporate achievements especially in the field of environmental protection practice and responsibility. The companies use prior achievements and green records as capital that will serve as currency for its green credibility establishment. The discourse underscores the firms' unique abilities to provide the green products which represent not only as environmental friendly but also and more importantly as leading technology based. Such green products in advertisements seem to be able to not only solve the current environmental problems but also enhance product performance and thus meet future energy challenge. The research ability presented in the description of firms' "R&D" often relates to green experiences and green credentials of the firm (e.g., awards-winning of the green products, extensive collaboration network with other stakeholders in their green/sustainability projects, and result and return from these projects). For example GE states:

"The environment and the energy have always been the vital focus for GE. For the

past century, GE has devoted itself to the most challenging fields and provided extensive solutions with outstanding talents and world-leading technologies.”³¹

MNCs mainly specify their status as a “world-leader” or their extensive impact and prominence. In comparison, the indigenous Chinese firms, not only promote their relevance on national and regional levels, but also stress their leading position as experienced green players by referring to their adoption of international standards and recognized legitimacy, despite their shorter history and comparatively weak research resources. In the “voice” selection, an active voice is always used to construct firms as doers. For instance, Landsea states:

*“Established in 2001, Landsea is one of the top 100 real estate developers in China. By integrating and localizing the **world-leading technologies**, Landsea has developed 13 **innovative** green housing projects which win the top-level certification – Green Three Star Badge – granted by China’s Department of Housing.”³²*

A similar excerpt from BYD Home Intro Page writes:

*“BYD is the **world’s largest** manufacturer of batteries with mass production of Nickel batteries and mobile phone batteries. In 2003 BYD moved from IT into the automotive industry and quickly became the fastest growing Chinese domestic car manufacturer with leading edge electric car technology.”*

This kind of wording and voice selection helps to promote their relevance not only on national and regional levels (national ranking), but also substantiate their international standards. It is interesting to find that MNCs only state their extensive and international influence, whilst the Chinese local firms not only stress their “international standards” but also try to emphasize their contribution in pushing forward the “Chinese standards” into “international standards”; this signals Chinese desire to be admitted into the Western mainstream in environmental issues. An

³¹ Retrieved from www.ge.com/cn/company/history/1878-1904. 12/08/13

³² Retrieved from www.landsea.cn/about/introduction.aspx. 12/08/13

example can be found in BYD emphasizing that “*China wants to be a green technological leader [...] It is 180,000 people’s beliefs and 1.3 billion Chinese people’s dream*”. The comparison in this language representation reflects the local firms’ will to be recognized as “world-leader”, despite their smaller influence at an international level.

The firms position themselves as the primary conduit for a green future, while not giving detailed explanations for reasons why the future should be green. It seems that the companies and their websites’ viewers already share the same assumption that going green is a necessary path. In the meantime, in a promising view, greenness is about companies’ technological advancement and endeavour for changing to be greener. And the discourse of corporate tradition and environmental responsibility places companies as the central role in leading this green trend. For example, BYD states,

*“Others are chasing the current profits, we are thinking of the future. As a reputable car manufacturer company in China, BYD deeply understands its social responsibility...We work for the planet earth, for the human beings, for the future[...]BYD has both captured the zeitgeist and had farsightedness, it navigates its business for the bright and green future.”*³³

The discourse is seemingly environment-centered, but the emphasis is not on the environment itself, but on the company: instead of the others, such as the government, NGO, or civil society, it is the company that serves as the environmentalist revolutionary leader: it provides a good natural environment and bright future, brings opportunities for change, and coordinates and allys different parties.

4.4.2.2 Preliminary Interpretation and Summary of About Page

In the statements in the About Page, each company attempts to expand on the notions

³³ Retrieved from www.bydauto.com.cn/introduce-responsibility.htm 02/09/13

of corporate greenness and enhance their role as environmentally responsible leaders by focusing on the past and the future. When discussing the past, companies typically mention their founding value, mission and vision. Besides, their green achievements, such as green innovation products/technologies, as well as their environmental impacts in global, national, or regional are mentioned. This type of self-promotional discourse is common in representations by corporate advertisings (e.g., Stuart and Jones, 2004). The language works to establish the companies' records of environmental responsibility and accomplishments in environmental protection.

The discourse then turns to a discussion about how the technology developed by firms paves the way toward green ends. The terms of “*most advanced*”, “*highly efficient*”, “*high quality*”, and “*innovation*” frequently appear with greenness terms such as “*environmental protection*” and “*green solution*”. Such discourse helps to link technology and rationalism to environmentalism. In addition, the terms of “*leading*”, “*leader*”, “*leadership*”, “*world-leading*”, “*global*”, “*international*” and “*environmental responsibility*” frequently co-exists in one sentence or a statement paragraph; such discourse is found not only in MNCs but also in Chinese local firms even though the local ones' claim that international relevance should be considered doubtful. Evidence of national pride and national responsibility is also found in the local firms' self presentation. One example can be found in BYD's patriotism statement:

*“As China's reputable automobile manufacturer, BYD deeply understands its social responsibility... We aim to make the national brand into a world-leading brand, revitalize China's national automobile industry and build a great company belongs to Chinese people!”*³⁴

These multiple discourses function to establish firms' legitimacy, and claims to corporate greenness are staged by those other discourses (Munir and Phillips, 2005).

³⁴ <http://www.bydauto.com.cn/introduce-responsibility.html> 2013/11/7

In the end, the corporate self presentation language from the About Page shapes a perspective which hones the viewers' focus on the corporations' capacity to navigate a green future. The discourses which appear on the Home Page and About Page come together to present a broad view of the continuum of distinct and relevant elements of the companies' history. Furthermore, the companies are naturally represented as sincere green players with consistency in taking up responsibility for the environment in the past, and a commitment to the future with corporate leading technologies and green products.

4.4.3 Green Advertising Discourse from CSR/Sustainability Page

The reason for choosing Sustainability as a category is because the company's discourse involves the sustainability talk as one of the main strategies for its environmental discourse. In addition it expresses that companies' main goal, which is to be known as a global benchmark for sustainability. For the same reason, the CSR webpage discourse is selected for research. CSR is the strategy whereby the company explicitly displays its green discourse. The CSR/Sustainability webpage serves as an important advertising medium to show the environmental practices and it is also where the green discourse is organized.

4.4.3.1 Descriptive Analysis

The companies studied for this research have all designed web pages titled and themed as CSR or/and Sustainability. These pages are specially to introduce information of companies' social responsibilities or sustainability projects and practices in history and in current time. Such pages include GE's Ecomagination Page³⁵, GE's Corporate Citizen Page³⁶, Unilever's Sustainability Action Page³⁷,

³⁵ <http://www.ge.com/cn/company/ecomagination> 2013/11/7

³⁶ <http://www.ge.com/cn/company/citizenship> 2013/11/7

³⁷ <http://www.unilever.com.cn/sustainable-living/> 2013/11/7

Unilever's CSR Page³⁸ Landsea's Corporate Citizen Page³⁹, and BYD's Responsibility Page⁴⁰.

The information from the corporate CSR/Sustainability page resembles the one from corporate social and environmental or sustainability annual report, but the discourse from the website is more concise and tries to tantalize the viewer with promotional language, compared with the descriptive language from the annual reports. Based on the lexicalization analysis, it can be found that firms from both categories present in a active voice their contributions to environmental protection, using positive adjective and adverbs to indicate a high degree of presented objectives, such as in the excerpt: *"In GE we[...]have passed the **strict** auditing and reached **very high international** standards...**largely** enhanced environmental performance."*⁴¹ BYD similarly states, *"Relying on our **advanced** iron-battery technology, BYD is able to solve the **worldwide** problem...We innovate **audaciously** and explore **actively** in the field of new energy[...]with our progress, we are able to lead the green development **internationally**."*⁴²

Such wording represents a promotional discourse with a prominent agent, high certainty and authority. The promotional discourse can be seen as a firm's communication strategy to highlight its prominence and credentials as a green leader. In addition to this, the "green credential" is composed by firms drawing upon their honor certificates awarded from third-party evaluations. Interestingly, although all studied firms have obtained their green certificates such as "China's Green Companies" for consecutive years, only the Chinese firms have a detailed introduction to green prizes such like that: on their CSR/Sustainability web pages, these firms establish a link directing web visitors to another independent web page

³⁸ <http://www.unilever.com.cn/aboutus/unilevercsr/> 2013/11/7

³⁹ <http://landsea.cn/About/Citizens.aspx> 2013/11/7

⁴⁰ <http://www.bydauto.com.cn/introduce-responsibility.html> 2013/11/7

⁴¹ <http://www.ge.com/cn/company/citizenship> 2013-12-30

⁴² <http://www.bydauto.com.cn/introduce-responsibility.html> 2013-12-30

titled as “Honour and Prizes”. Different to the emphasized description on third-party awarded “green prizes” and green certifications on Chinese firms’ web page, the MNC subsidiary firms’ websites have rather brief information on such issue, for example, GE only mentions that its Chinese factories are nominated as the “Global Star” prize⁴³, while Unilever does not list any of its prizes on CSR/Sustainability web page. This implies that MNCs already deem themselves as the authority on green credential recognitions; in comparison, Chinese firms are striving to gain their green legitimacy through such green prize discourse.

Text on the CSR/Sustainability pages speaks of agency through a discourse constructed around the tent poles of eco-efficiency, socio-efficiency, and economic-efficiency. MNCs address all poles while Chinese local firms do not present on economic efficiency. MNCs integrate the three into a version of sustainability reporting, whilst the Chinese local companies show CSR report version and present their philanthropy activities which are not directly making business sense (e.g. tree planting, money donating to primary schools in remote and deprived regions in China). Both categories of cases show their concern for the environment. However, the MNCs present a more integrated green approach to their development strategy and stress the economic return and strategic importance of becoming green, whilst the local Chinese firms treat environmental responsibility with less business interpretations. The green discourse from Chinese local firms’ CSR/Sustainability text appears to be alluring but largely rhetorical (Kallio, 2006). For Chinese firms, their green discourse reflects a higher level of altruism. By comparison, the MNCs green discourse always makes connections to business sense. For example, GE put “*green is green*”, which means the environmental value as the first “*green*” brings business value as the second “*green*” (U.S. dollar is in colour of green). Unilever claims that its sustainability plan is to double its business. So for MNCs, what is

⁴³ <http://www.ge.com/cn/company/citizenship> 2013-12-30

done for the environment is also done for the corporation. The business-centered green discourse from MNCs supports the fact that the business advocates wish to slim down the “ethical fat” from business activities (Eden, 1999; Fineman, 2001), thus wanted their operations to be founded rather on “solid” rationality and science than “fussy” morality and emotivity. This point will be further discussed in Discussion Chapter.

The discourse also stresses the continuous growth for business, as well as the continuous improvement in technologies. Additionally, the discourse treats green technology as a panacea for all problems including environmental problem. This is expressed, for example, in Unilever’s Sustainability Living Plan discourse, which sets its goal to reduce their environmental impact by half and in the same time double their business. This attracts skeptics since continuous growth seems to be impossible in a finite world; even though green technologies have been advanced, the consumption of human society is hardly to be changed. Although the “sustainability development” is doubtful, it has been advocated by firms and accented in the corporate green advertising discourse.

The difference between the MNCs category and the Chinese indigenous category on CSR/Sustainability webpage is that MNCs have Sustainability Development web pages and CSR web pages respectively established introducing sustainability development as making business senses (such as sustainability business models/products/services) and CSR as fulfilling other social responsibilities in addition to environmental responsibility, while Chinese indigenous firms only have CSR webpage in which the idea of sustainability idea is briefly mentioned here as a concept without any explicit business practices regarding to it. Besides, although the notion of sustainability is deemed as complex, difficult to understand and sometimes disengaging (Kallio, 2004), there is no detailed information on the definition of this

concept in the web page of Chinese firms' websites.

In the CSR/Sustainability web page, all four companies publicize and advertise their community involvement and their promotions go further than encouraging product purchases. Furthermore, on their websites, they provide opportunities for both local community involvement and industrial development, promote actions to protect the environment, and search contributions to conservation efforts. In the CSR/Sustainability web page, there are common words that show a business perspective to bring (the best standards), provide (opportunities for development), understand (the local needs), and benefit (for both company and environment), which shows a corporative paternalistic perspective. This perspective implies that corporations are responsible for providing something to society and even to nature.

In the discourse on CSR/Sustainability page, motivations are presented for the company's adoption and practice of sustainability and CSR: GE's main cause is to push forward aviation industry development in China; Unilever raises funds for conservation of the wilderness and ecosystem in China's Tibetan region; BYD invests its resources to set up the electrical infrastructure for local public transportation; and Landsea initiates the Green Association for promoting higher environmental standards in the real estate industry in China. Through their emphasis on community involvement to build healthy communities and enhance industrial standards, all four firms analyzed here make connections amongst business, corporate practice and environmental activism.

4.4.3.2 Preliminary Interpretation and Summary of CSR/Sustainability Page

The corporate green advertising discourse on CSR/Sustainability web pages shows that corporations are not only profit-driven but also stakeholders driven – they care about the environment as well as social development. This implies that corporations

are aware that currently society is more aware of environmental issues. This CSR/Sustainability discourse has not emerged suddenly. It is the result of decades of social struggles that involved a very strong green movement in Europe – particularly in places like Germany, France and Scandinavia, starting in the 1960s (Tully, 1989; Flattau, 1990; Smith, 1998). The victories that were won in that struggle resulted in higher environmental costs for companies in the North. There were stricter laws and controls in place that prevented pollution from happening. Hence, many of these companies have been forced by the environmental movements to clean up their act. However, intensified globalization processes from the 1970s and 1980s onwards have enabled polluting companies to increasingly relocate their production to developing countries where the environmental standards and controls are often less stringent, in order to attract foreign investments. Many developing countries welcome these companies because they promise employment opportunities, and, economic and social development (e.g., Banerjee, 2003; Böhm and Brei, 2008).

4.4.4 Green Advertising Discourse from the Product Introduction Page

The Product Introduction Page provides detailed textual information on firms' green products and services. Besides, compared with other types of web pages, visual and video advertisements largely feature in the presentation in the Product Intro Page; visual and textual information should be seen as interdependent in delivering both implicit and explicit messages. Therefore, the analyses on both textual and visual data are conducted in the meantime. The visual discourse that appears in green advertisings has been analyzed, using Kress and van Leeuwen (2006)'s Visual Analysis Rubric (see **Appendix D**). This rubric pays special attention to visual constitution factors such as “descriptors”, “actors”, and “sequencing of information” etc.

Each web page introducing and describing the products in both textual and visual

information is analyzed and presented in this research. The text of the advertisement videos are extracted word by word and translated before describing and analyzing. The visual information is snapshotted and recorded for my analyses.

4.4.4.1 Descriptive Analysis and Preliminary Interpretation

The language that appears on the Product Intro page overflows with discourse that both emphasizes the products themselves and the consumer experience. Both the green products and the potential green consumers are positioned and constructed in the corporate green discourse.

For the green product presentation, the language has a persuasive and promotional tone and it shows an inclusive feature of the green products. Both categories of MNCs and local Chinese firms not only stress the “environmental-friendly” facet of their products, but also include other aspects of the green products to make each product an ideal choice for customers. For example, GE shows its wind turbine as something that “(p)rovides a reliable, cost-effective, high-performance solution”.⁴⁴ Unilever describes its environmental friendly washing liquid OMO as “(featuring) neutral PH value and delicate fragrance without any harm to hands and the environment. With innovative formula, it enhances the cleaning effect by 50% and can remove 99 types of stains.”⁴⁵ BYD highlights its hybrid car by stating: “BYD’s Dual Mode technology not only reduces the hybrid car’s fuel consumption, but also enormously increases its power and improves its operation.”⁴⁶ The green house product from Landsea Company is advertised as “a house that is not only spacious, elegantly designed and offering all the requirements of a modern family life in a perfect location, but also facilitated with ‘green technologies’ which provide the family with a high quality and healthy life.”⁴⁷

⁴⁴ <http://www.ge-energy.com/wind> 2013/11/22

⁴⁵ <http://www.unilever.com.cn/brands-in-action/detail/omo/298629/> 2013/11/22

⁴⁶ <http://www.bydauto.com.cn/energy.html> 2013/11/22

⁴⁷ <http://landsea.cn/Group/Product.aspx> 2013/11/22

The promotional texts of the product advertisements also emphasize the facet of “hi-technology” in their green products. Such technological advancement is always linked to innovation, improved efficiency and economic advantages. For example:

*“We are working on the new generation of engine: LEAP-1C. This project is for developing the **most advanced technology**[...]it can be **25% more efficient** than the current engines.” “We don’t talk about innovation, we live on innovation, and our products speak for themselves and the technology and solutions we provide help to solve our customers’ green challenges.”⁴⁸ “The most energy saving plane engine, **most innovative and efficient** train engine locomotive, the best turbine, all of them are leading green technologies in the industry and thus we are the greenest company.”⁴⁹(GE)*

*“We are doing research on a **new technology** on product packaging and waste disposal. We believe such technology can bring higher return of investment and a more sustainable business model.”⁵⁰ (Unilever)*

*“Battery power for an electric car must meet the necessary requirements in terms of safety, energy density and **low cost**[...] Compared with a normal motor, the rear drive axle system in the BYD eco-bus has no gear box, no transmission shaft, and no differential mechanism. The power from the motor is directly transmitted to the wheels, so that **significant improvements are achieved in transmission efficiency** and reductions in noise and vibration.”⁵¹ (BYD)*

*“We are not going to compete with money-saving plan with cheap materials; our products represent the **hi-tech** in housing.”⁵²(Landsea)*

Besides the emphasized aspects of “hi-technology”, “improved efficiency” and “economic advantage”, additional functional facets of green products are often found in the green advertising discourse, such as “safety”, “convenience”, and “coziness”. For example, BYD advertisements state:

⁴⁸ <http://www.ge.com/cn/company/research> 2014/1/30

⁴⁹ *ibid* 2014/1/30

⁵⁰ <http://www.unilever.com.cn/brands-in-action/index.aspx> 2013/11/18

⁵¹ <http://www.bydeurope.com/innovations/technology/index.php#motor> 2013/11/18

⁵² <http://landsea.cn/News/Default.aspx> 2014/01/17

*“A high ceiling and wide open space inside the bus make for a **comfortable journey** for standing passengers...A wide aisle with step to the raised rear passenger area has handrails installed to ensure **safe movement** for passengers. ...Battery power for an electric car must meet the necessary requirements in terms of **safety, energy density and low cost.**”⁵³⁵⁴*

Similarly, as one of GE’s green products developed under China’s ecomagination project, the airplane engine is features noise-reduction which can bring an enjoyable flying experience to passengers. Unilever in its green advertising stresses the convenience of its green packaged products. Landsea’s repeatedly advertises its green housing products as providing indoor “*constant temperature*”, “*constant humidity*”, and “*constant oxygen*”, and is thus seen to contribute to a comfortable living environment. Such presented green product features might be indirectly related to environmental protection, but they are more directly linked to functional and pragmatic qualities (i.e., efficiency, cost-saving, safety, convenience, coziness) and of the product itself.

In addition, it can be found that new green words have been coined by the MNCs to name their green products/service or green projects. For example, GE coins the word of “*ecomagination*” and Unilever brings forward its “*Sustainability Living Plan*”. In the Product page of GE’s website, all green products are introduced as a subfield category under the main theme of “*ecomagination*”. GE launched their “*ecomagination*” campaign in 2005 in order to promote their energy-efficient technology products and services, and to construct the company’s public image as a leading socially responsible company. According to GE’s Ecomagination Report⁵⁵, this campaign became highly successful: GE reaped \$ 85 billion in revenue in 2010 by providing its “green” locomotive production, wind turbines, clean water solutions

⁵³ <http://www.bydeurope.com/innovations/technology/index.php#motor> 2013/11/18

⁵⁴ <http://www.bydeurope.com/vehicles/ebus/index.php> 2013/11/17

⁵⁵ <http://www.ge.com/globalimpact/ecomagination.html> 2013/11/17

and other energy saving facilities and services.⁵⁶ The success of this campaign served as powerful proof of how its advertising discourse chimed with the general expectation from the market.

In comparison, the Chinese firms are less innovative in constructing words for “green vocabulary”. In their advertised product names, the green factors are literally presented by existing green words and the green words are more directly linked to the aspect of being environmental friendly. For example, the advertised green cars from BYD are named as “*pure electric car e6*”, “*DM dual-mode electric car*” and “*K9 pure electric bus*”⁵⁷. Landsea simply named its green housing products according to their different market sectors, such as “*green house for first-time house buyers*” and “*green residence for the aged people*”⁵⁸. In the following section, both the textual and visual discourses in companies’ green products and advertisings page are to be analyzed in more detail.

GE’s green Products Intro and its advertisings are presented under the theme of ecomagination. The slogan of the campaign is intriguing. It welds together the popular term “*eco*” and the word “*imagination*” – one of those “*i*” words (“*imagination*”, “*ideas*”, “*innovation*”, or “*invention*”) that regularly appear in environmental corporate discourse.

⁵⁶ http://files.gecompany.com/ecomagination/progress/GE_ecomagination_2010AnnualReport.pdf
2013/11/17

⁵⁷ <http://www.bydauto.com.cn/energy.html> 2013/11/23

⁵⁸ <http://landsea.cn/Group/RealEstate.aspx> 2013/11/23



Exhibit 4.1 “Wind Turbines” Ad 1 for GE

Websites addresses: <http://www.ge.com/about-us/ecomagination>⁵⁹;
<http://www.ge-energy.com/wind>⁶⁰

Slogan: *“Imagination at work.” (Ecomagination products and solutions are at work — building, powering, moving and curing the world. Not just imagining. Doing.)*

Copy: *Wind Turbines. Product evolution. It’s one of the things GE does best. Especially when it comes to the next generation of wind turbines. Building on a strong power generation heritage spanning more than a century, our onshore wind turbines deliver proven performance, availability and reliability—creating more value for our customers. As one of the world’s leading wind turbine suppliers, GE Energy’s current product portfolio includes wind turbines with rated capacities ranging from 1.5 MW–4.1 MW and support services extending from development assistance to operation and maintenance.*

⁵⁹ Accessed 2013/11/18.

⁶⁰ Accessed 2013/11/18



Exhibit 4.2: “Wind Turbines” Ad 2 for GE

Websites addresses: <http://www.ge-energy.com/about/index.jsp>⁶¹

Visual Description

Visual description: the “Wind Power” features a close-up shot of a beautiful view of nature. In the foreground, clean and trimmed grasses, standing in the grassland, waive gently in the breeze. In the background, the sky is blue and clear. The two wind turbines stand on the horizon and the line between the grassland and the sky. All the features combined together in this advertising signify a harmonious relationship between the life on Earth and “wind power” generated by human technology. Besides, as the human made participants (two wind turbines) are placed behind the other visual participants (natural objects: trees, grasses), this sequencing of information suggests a sequencing of importance (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006).

Visual interpretation

(Naturalization and dematerialization): a simple semiotic reading would argue that this ad tries to construct a utilitarian fantasy of technology putting natural resources to use. These two wind turbines represent the scientific power which intrudes into the natural territory and frames it as a resource for human use. The sky and the invisible

⁶¹ Accessed 2013/11/18

wind which are made visible through the presentation of gently waving grasses are presented as a tamed object of consumption, capable of providing “*proven performance, availability and reliability.*” It also turns into a commercial and privatized sense which brings “*more value for our customers.*” Corbett (2002) illustrates this point of green advertisement: “Advertising commodifies the natural world and attaches material value to non-material goods, treating natural resources as private and ownable, not public and intrinsic” (p. 146).

However, the green products and technology here in the advertising are structured a little differently from the usual fashion, especially compared with the portrayal of technology which appears in traditional advertisings or advertisings from C2 companies (which will be presented later). In this green advertising, the intrusion of human technology, the two wind turbines, is played down and naturalized by placing them into the secondary position to the primary natural landscape in the foreground and background (See **Exhibit 4.1**). This is very different from many other new technology product advertisings in which technology or the product, as well as their function description, is usually represented in the central position of the advertising.

The setting in the GE green advertising also tries to de-materialize the technology and green product – the wind turbine – by presenting simplicity in the visual composition: there is neither sophisticated technological description nor information about the products. Instead, the wind turbines in the picture look like natural objective. Similarly, another advertising picture of the wind turbine is positioned together with coconut trees (See **Exhibit 4.2**); the contrast between GE’s products and the natural trees sends a message to the audience: the green product is just another object in the eco-system, same as the trees standing on the sea, and it causes no harm to the natural environment. This parallel strategy, together with the overall campaign theme of “ecomagination”, can be read as a corporate defense against the

environmentalist critique of technology – how could the green technology such as the wind turbine possibly cause harm to nature if it can exist in such a perfect and tranquil scene?

A very similar presentation of the green product from Unilever can be found in Unilever’s green product (See **Exhibit 4.3**). The product is even invisible in this advertising; the purifying effect of the product is visually shown in a purifying process, and the “U” shape water represents the brand of Unilever. The invisibility of advertised products further reduces people’s concern about the technological intrusion into the natural environment – how can technology cause harm if it has nothing but a purifying effect?



Exhibit 4.3: Unilever’s Water Purifier Ad 1

Websites addresses:

<http://www.unilever.com.cn/brands-in-action/detail/pureit/332166/>⁶²

The Localization of MNCs’ Advertisings

Some localization features are found in MNCs’ green advertisings on their products. Returning back to “Ecomagination” advertisement campaign, on the product web

⁶² Accessed 2013/10/9

page, the Chinese subsidiary of GE also creates some imaginative print advertisings that promoted GE’s environmentally friendly products and services. It employs a version of Ecomagination in the Chinese context. They used Chinese wisdom (in the form of Chinese character fortune telling – known in Chinese as Chaizi – 拆字).(See **Exhibit 4.4**) This series of GE green advertisings promotes products such as GE Internal Combustion Engine, GE Aeroplane Engine, and Train Operation and Optimization System (See **Appendix E**).



Exhibit 4.4: GE’s Train Operation and Optimization System

Slogan: “Reduce fuel consumption, to save more money”

Website address: <http://www.ge.com/cn/b2b/transportation>⁶³

Such localization feature is also reflected in GE China’s “GE Works” digital campaign which includes four animation advertisings under the mythos of “*make the past serve the present*”. Each of the advertisings links GE’s eco-products with Chinese ancient inventions such as paper, silk, wax, and china-making. In the storyline of the animation, Chinese ancient inventions have inspired GE to create green technologies and products. For example, in one of the four animation

⁶³ Accessed 2013/11/8

advertisings: GE Works—paper, the rustic atmosphere of the advertisement animation is created by the traditional Chinese art of water and ink painting. In the animation, several parallels were presented: parallel between an ancient landscape and a modern industrial world; the parallel between the ancient invention of paper and the modern technology of GE's healthcare product; the parallel between people's need for convenience of paper in ancient time and people's need for portability of healthcare products in modern time. By these parallels, GE's green products are connected with Chinese ancient invention and the advertisements help to embed GE's green image into the knowledge background of Chinese audiences.

Similar localization strategy is also used by Unilever to advertise its water purifier as a green product. In this advertising, the environmental problems, especially China's water pollution from its industrialization is presented as a setting. The water purifier product then comes into sight as a solution to such a health threat (See **Exhibit 4.5**). The localization feature from both GE's and Unilever's green advertisings reflects the intention of advertisers to take in other discourses of the local context, such as Chinese historical discourse. The interdiscursivity as discursive strategy in green advertisings will be analyzed in next chapter with more details.



Exhibit 4.5: Unilever’s Water Purifier Ad 2

(Picture is a snapshot from website video advertising.)

Website address:

<http://www.unilever.com.cn/brands-in-action/detail/pureit/332166/?WT.contenttype=view%20brands>

The Decoration in Green Advertisings

The promotional nature of advertising discourse is reflected in its effect of decoration which glorifies the promoted corporate greenness. For example, GE’s “*ecomagination*” campaign advertising videos represent the utopian version of corporate green advertisings which are replete with of “imagination”, “invention”, “ideas”, etc. To give another example, Unilever’s Sustainability Living Plan advertisings feature a similar slogan: “*Sustainability needs to be innovative. Through innovative product and solution, we can develop new markets, save costs and drive employees.*” The BYD ad states “*We dare to imagine what others do not dare, we are able to make what we imagine[...]/from energy saving to inventing new energy, from enhancing power to changing power, our green technology changes the life and the world.*” Similarly in one ad of Landsea, “*Green invent the future [...] we respect innovation*”.



Exhibit 4.6: BYD’s Pure Electric Bus “K9” and “e6”

Website address: <http://www.bydauto.com.cn/energy.html>

Exhibit 4.6 shows two advertisements presented in BYD’s Product and Advertisings page, which introduces the pure electric bus, the K9, and the pure electric car, the e6. In these advertisements, the car’s physical presence takes up nearly 1/3 of the advertisements (the bus takes 1/2) and is in the very central position. Its chrome outlook appears shiny and sleek. It is also surrounded by radiating “swoosh” lines, suggesting extreme speed. The fluorescent lines with the light green of the enveloping city background make the green bus/car look technologically advanced; the green leaves decorating and surrounding the bus/car replace its emission pollution.

Coupled with the streamline design of the bus, these features suggest futurism – a significant Western artistic style employed in, for example, painting, film, architecture, industrial design, and fashion. Futurism stresses speed, technology, youth and the triumph of humanity over nature. It is marked by a radical break from the past (Marinetti, 1973).

The textual information of the green car advertisings read as:

“BYD: as the very first pure electric car in the world, e6 has the most advanced technologies. Its energy transforming rate reaches 90%, which is much higher than the one from traditional cars; the battery can be re-charged with more than 4,000 times while still keep its capacity of 80%”⁶⁴.

Thus, one can see that the environmental value of the electric is rarely represented in the product introduction texts. In the abstract sketch of the background of the advertising, one sees a slightly green city outline and bright sky; the environmental protection factor is positioned as a sort of decoration - nature is down-played and only presents itself through the scattered leaves flying around the bus/car driving in the highway.

So, in the sequencing of information which appears in such advertisements, the product itself is presented as “high” while the environmental factors are “low” (Kress and Leeuwen, 2006). In the background, the fictitious sketch of the city as the car’s embedding environment also help to play down the environment in the background. The same tendency to trivialize environmental values can also be observed in the product introduction: The BYD is called “*the car of tomorrow*,” but the ad does not specify what kind of “tomorrow” it is. Is it the “tomorrow” of environmental harmony? Or economic prosperity? Or technological development? The answer is unclear. But whatever it is, the advertising suggests that it “*has not stopped amazing*

⁶⁴ <http://www.bydauto.com.cn/energy.html> accessed 2013/11/21

the automobile world.”

Here it seems that “tomorrow” is simply an empty signifier (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001) that stands for whatever lies ahead on the road of modernity. But whatever lies ahead is to be judged by the “automobile world”—namely, the affluent, car-centered character of Western consumerism. “Tomorrow” is presented as a perfect and “always getting better” perspective enabling harmonious relationships of people to nature. The advertising continues by describing the car’s features that benefit the individual driving experience (“*smooth and powerful acceleration*” and “*quiet and harmonious driving atmosphere*”) and mentions only in passing its environmental value (low “*gas consumption and car emission*”). Putting individual welfare before social good is a deliberate choice by the advertiser to address the rise of individualism in the Chinese society. This seemingly “selfish” individualistic appeal is at least open about the true motivation for eco-consumption, which is to make the individual “feel good,” instead of hiding the narcissistic nature of consumption under the name of social good.

The second advertising (see **Exhibit 4.7**) is for the BYD e6 SUV, an electric SUV, combining elements seen as both “environmentally friendly” and detrimental to the environment. Despite the dramatic decline of SUV sales in the U.S., they saw a 73% rise in China in 2013⁶⁵. Other large, high-emission gas-guzzlers also fared well in China. Chinese drivers do seem to love SUVs⁶⁶. A Hummer H2 owner told a reporter from the Washington Post that: “*In China, size matters. People want to have a car that shows off their status in society. No one wants to buy small cars*” (Cha, 2008). His words show that the body of the car functions as an extension of the driver’s ego; owning a large car becomes a statement of power and social status.

⁶⁵ <http://auto.people.com.cn/n/2013/1115/c1005-23550190.html> accessed 2013/11/24

⁶⁶ <http://news.163.com/09/0714/11/5E68R005000120GR.html> accessed 2013/11/24



Exhibit 4.7: BYD's e6 SUV

Website addresses: <http://www.bydauto.com.cn/energy.html>⁶⁷

To address Chinese consumers' obsession with "big", this advertising displays a full-sized image of the SUV. The design of this vehicle also evokes futurism: it is silver, has shining windows, and a streamlined shape. Different from the green metropolitan background in the BYD car and bus advertising, the SUV is presented in a laboratory-like background (the left) and a show room (the right). In the laboratory background advertising, one can see the interior arrangement and motor system of the SUV. In fact, Chinese advertisings have a general tendency to emphasize product appearance, a trend which has been attributed to China's tradition of pragmatism (e.g., Zhao and Shen 1995, Chan 2004). For example, Chan (2004) argues that pragmatism makes the consumers care more about the utilitarian value of the product than the abstract idea attached to it. Thus the advertisings tend to hyper-represent the appearance of the product. The environmental aspect of electric technology which focuses on protecting environment itself is not mentioned at all in the image portion of this SUV advertising, but is addressed in words. The slogan reads as, "*The energy consumption is only 19.5 kWh per kilometers, and the energy cost is just 1/4 of the one of traditional fuel.*"

⁶⁷ Accessed 2013/11/3



Exhibit 4.8: Landsea’s Green Houses: Landsea Countryside-shire

Websites addresses: <http://landsea.cn/Group/RealEstate.aspx>⁶⁸

The character that protruding product as the central while marginalizing natural environment can also be found in the green real estate developer’s product advertisements (See **Exhibit 4.8**). In the visual part of the advertising, it shows a view overlooking the whole architectural complex. The advertising does highlight the “environmental value” of the housing complex, but the “environmental value” is not aligned to notions of environmental protection or pollution reduction. Instead it shows it as an environmental aesthetic value. The houses are situated at the foot of a green hill and beside a tranquil stream. Ironically, the vast mountain covered by forest and the fantastic view of a clear river in the advertising seems to be unrealistic for ordinary Chinese consumers living an urban life, although the housing product in the ad is targeting them.

In addition, the name of the green building complex (“*Landsea Countryside-shire*”) is also implying an unrealistic sense of a pleasant bucolic lifestyle. The slogan on the top left of the picture – “*healthy technology houses*” – suggests the functional aspects of the product: it can bring health and housing technologies. Again, the issue of

⁶⁸ Accessed 2013/10/10

environmental protection is not mentioned.

By calling on the urban or new urban rich to live in the not-yet-polluted land of the rural region or the rural poor, this advertising exacerbates the already serious environmental inequality along class and geographical lines. It seems the green house is presented in the advertising as a way to escape the pollutions of city life: as long as you can afford to buy this “green” house, you will live in a clean environment.

Compared to the last two advertisings, this green house advertising contains more explicit environmental references, in both images and words. The building complex is named as “*Countryside-shire*”, which explicitly implies its connection with the countryside, or the bucolic lifestyle. The “*shire*” is originally a noun defining an administrative district of England. The direct translation and application of this English word into the name of Landsea’s green product is emblematic for a desired “Western lifestyle”. The green mountains, blue sky, and the clear river construct a fantasy of eco-utopia—a “pure world” into which people from severely polluted cities can escape. This eco-utopia contrasts sharply with Chinese ordinary urban people’s familiar, polluted environment.

However, while this advertising addresses the public’s increasing environmental concerns, it proposes an extremely individualistic solution – to run away. Escape into pristine nature all by yourself, simply through purchasing an advertised “green house”. In this sense, instead of marketing the house as a solution for saving the environment, the green product is portrayed as a “parachute” or “escape pod” in which the urban rich can flee from pollution. They can then explore their private eco-utopia, which is to be enjoyed alone or/and with families. The utopia portrayed here constructs a fantasy of human nature harmony to cover the rising social anxiety

about environmental pollution. And the utopia is envisioned through the expansion of consumption: to consume more and consume the advertised green products.

4.4.4.2 Product Introduction Web Page Analysis and Summary

In the product web page, I have analyzed advertising discourse in both textual and forms. Through a close examination of the verbal and visual strategies used in these advertisings from corporate green product introduction page, it can be concluded that the “displacing” or “hijacking” of environmental responsibility is taking place under a pragmatic mixture of environmental values and utilitarian values, and a utopian vision of greenness is constructed symbolically by green advertising. The pragmatism mixture is achieved by presenting green products as not only environmentally concerned, but also, and more importantly, as functional and able to meet traditional customer expectations, such as cost-saving, better efficiency, and coziness. There have been a number of scholars (e.g. Luke, 1997; Smith, 1998; Monbiot, 2002) criticizing green consumerism for hijacking the effects of radical environmentalism and channeling public energies into apolitical, consumptive activities. In the utopian vision of corporate greenness, green advertising constructs a hopeful and exciting vision of a utopian society in which everything exists in ecological harmony. This utopian discourse is an important component of what Buell (2003) describes as the “culture of hyperexuberance” and is also symptomatic of the green consumerism phenomenon emerging in the modern society.

4.5 Conclusion of Chapter 4

This chapter contains the descriptions of the green advertisings on the websites and describes the way the sample companies represent themselves and their products as environmental responsible. The analyses focus on the linguistic features of both textual and visual data and help to address one aspect of the research question – how do firms construct representations in greenness? In addition, preliminary

interpretation on descriptive analysis reveals the themes of different pages and anticipates the interpretative discussion in the next chapter.

I can briefly review the themes in green representation which have emerged from my descriptive analysis: The Home Page for the companies focuses on present events and serves as the hub for information about corporate social responsibility for the environment. The green advertising discourse on the Home page functions as a billboard to announce its prominence and distinction in environmental responsibility and achievement, which enhances the green profile of the firm. Concurrently, such recognition provides tangible evidence that firms can use to build their green identity. The green advertising discourse on About Pages expands on notions of prestige by detailing the companies' long record of accomplishments and noteworthy achievements. Each company attempts to expand on the notions of corporate greenness focusing on the past and future. The language works to establish the companies' records of environmental responsibility and accomplishments in environmental protection. The companies used past kudos to position themselves as well-suited to address the future based on the significant endeavours ingrained in the tradition of the institutions. The language is aspirant and self-promotional.

The discourse also links technology and rationalism elements to environmentalism. In addition the discourse shapes the firms as green pioneers and leaders. Evidence of national pride and national responsibility is also found in the local firms' self presentation. Moreover, the corporate self presentation language shapes a futurist perspective which places viewers' focus on the corporations' ability to navigate a path towards a green future. The discourses which appear on the Home Page and the About Page come together to present a broad view of the continuum of distinct and relevant elements of the companies' history, and the companies are naturally represented as green players who have consistent responsibility for the environment.

The green advertising discourse from the CSR/Sustainability web page utilizes language to communicate corporate social responsibility practices and sustainability practices. The corporate green advertising discourse on the CSR/Sustainability web page shows that corporations are not only profit-driven but also stakeholders driven – they care about the environment as well as social development. This implies that currently society is more aware of environmental issues and their power of transformation, thus influences and steers firms' discourse. In the meantime, the discourse shows a corporate paternalistic perspective and implies that corporations are taking the directions and responsible for providing something to society and nature. It is described as part of their role: firms provide the planet and it is not the other way around. Through the constructed green discourse, the firms try not only to gain social acceptance and legitimacy but also to regain their position as a benchmark for measuring environmental issues. From a critical perspective, the objective of the multinationals' sustainability efforts and logics, reflected in their green discourse, is to achieve a position of global environmental governance (Lister, 2011).

The Product Intro Page applies both textual and visual forms of information to represent the corporate understandings of greenness. The green discourse not only presents the “environmental-friendly” facet of companies' products directly, but also includes and stresses other aspects of their green products, such as “hi-technology”, “high-efficiency”, “cost-saving”, “safety”, and “coziness”. Some of such functional aspects are indirectly related to environmental concerns, i.e., “high-efficiency” and “cost-saving. But some of the advertised aspects of green products are solely utilitarian, i.e., “safety” and “coziness”.

Although the functional or utilitarian greenness has been found in both categories of

firms' online green advertisements; a utopian and harmonious vision of greenness is found specifically from C1's green advertisements. The peripheral position and decentralization of products invites the audience to think the green technology/product as a dematerialized solution to the environmental challenges instead of a technical and corporate intrusion. In this way, green advertisings help to conciliate the tense relationship between humans and nature, and signify a harmonious relationship between man-made products and the nature.

Following the textual and visual features found in this chapter, the next chapter will present discursive analysis.

Chapter 5: the Interpretative/discursive Analysis

5.1 Introduction

Following the textual level analysis in the previous chapter, this chapter proceeds to a discursive analysis of CDA. This interpretative/discursive analysis is based on, and expands, the findings from the preceding descriptive analysis on textual and visual data. The purpose of discursive analysis is to identify the narrative themes of the online green advertisements discourse. Specifically, the organization of the interpretative analysis and findings will proceed within the framework provided by Fairclough (2001)'s interpretive framework (see **Table 4.1** in Chapter 4).

5.1.1 Fairclough's Interpretative Analysis Framework

Before an interpretive analysis of the data, this section reviews its analysis framework. According to Fairclough (2001), the interpretative/discursive analysis framework includes four interconnected aspects that analysts can use to interpret data and decode the tissues of meaning in the narrative construction. These are: (a) the contents of the language (What is going on? Activities, topics and purposes), (b) its subjects (Who is involved? Subjects and characteristics), (c) the relationship existing among the subjects, and (d) the Themes and genres (What is the role of language in what is going on?). In the following subsections, a description of interpretative aspects will be provided, as well as sample examples which demonstrate the utility of Fairclough's CDA at its interpretative analysis level.

Contents of the language: The "contents of language" relates to the answering of the question: "what's going on?" (Fairclough, 2001: 122). The purpose of a message is formed by both activities and topics, and certain activities serve certain topics. Components of language which represent these activities and topics, such as verbs

and modality, help analysts with their interpretations (Halliday, 1994; Fairclough, 2001). For example, on advertisements presenting the companies' environmental responsibilities and practices, one expects to see a capable organization which can and is willing to solve environmental problems.

Subjects: the analysis of the subjects of the message is another dimension of the interpretative framework. At this level, the analysis is for answering the question of "who is involved?" (Fairclough, 2001: 122). Different types of actors and identities are used by message producers for specific purposes. Fairclough claims, that "(t)he institution ascribes social identities to the subjects who function within it" (p. 123). In this study for instance, green advertising shows consumers who use green products to guard their families from pollution. In such a way, the consumer is assigned with two identities: that of green consumers who have environmentally responsibility, and as family carers who are concerned with their families' health.

Relations: Another dimension of the interpretative framework is about relations. Here subject positions can assist analysts to understand power and social relations reflected and enacted in discourse. In this study, as preliminary analysis from Chapter 4 demonstrated, two types of relation between green products and nature can be identified: product centralized and nature centralized. These two relations represent two different kinds of intentions which naturalize green product or decorate green products.

Connections: The final stage of the interpretive framework is to analyze connections and its aim is to answer the question of "what's the role of language" (Fairclough, 2001: 148). Essentially speaking, the manner in which texts appear in situational contexts and how they relate to larger discourse genres can be reflected in connections. For example, representations of green products as multiplicity more

than concerning environmental protection signify an attempt to shift consumers' attention away from environmental activists' notion of deep ecology, a standpoint which argues for consuming less OF the environment, and more FOR the environment (Mühlhäusler and Peace, 2006). Thus, such language plays a role in promoting consumerism.

According to Fairclough (2001) the value of text only becomes real when it is embedded in a social background, and different texts are produced and interpreted with member's resources (MR) (See Chapter 3, Role of the Researcher), or a background of cogent assumptions. The idea of MR refers to the social, linguistic, and visual attributes a discourse analyst can possess in the analyses and interpretations of identities and meaning (Fairclough, 2001). Essentially, a researcher's background knowledge and dispositions are constituted by MR. It is necessary to use analysts' MR in their data analyses (Fairclough, 2001). Moreover, analysis process with MR inevitably needs judgments. Nevertheless, my experiences with various institutions are diverse and relevant to this investigation (See Chapter 3, Role of the Researcher). In addition, in order to ensure rigour, this research involves the systematic analytic frameworks along with triangulation method and multiple points of data collection. Moreover, the Role of the Researcher and Researcher's Journal have been disclosed in Chapter 3. I also admit there can be alternative plausible interpretations.

5.2 Content of the Language

The purpose of a message can be analyzed with focus on the contents of language (Fairclough, 2001). The verbs and voices are important elements in the contents of language. Analyses on verbs and voices thus bring insights into the intent of the message producer (Fairclough, 2001). This section considers definitions of "verb" and illustrates the uses of verbs with examples.

5.2.1 Activities

Verbs

Verbs and the use of verbs play an important role in the content of messages (Halliday, 1994; Fairclough, 2001; Janks, 2005). The sense of being (relational), doing (action), and sensing (mental) can be emitted by the verbs (Halliday, 1985, 1994). The use of a number of action verbs have been revealed after the data carefully examined. For example, “*meet/achieve/build* (the international environmental standards)”, “*change/transform* (the lifestyle/habits)”, “*solve* (pollution problems)”, “*lead/commit* (to the green norm establishment)”, and “*make/bring* (greener products/green future)”. Such frequently used verbs help to position the companies as a powerful actor. The action verbs also help to enact the promotional feature by presenting a number of capabilities that derive from the corporate greenness. Below is one example from Unilever’s Sustainability Living Plan advertisement illustrates the point:

*“With Unilever’s Sustainability Live Plan, we are going to **make** our environmental impact reduce by half and in the meantime double our profit... We continue to **make** good progress in transforming into a sustainable growth company and by focusing on sustainable living needs, we can **build** brands with a significant purpose. By reducing waste, we **create** efficiencies and reduce costs, which **helps** to improve our margins. By **taking** a long-term view, we can reduce risk, for example, securing raw material supply through sustainable sourcing. And we have found that once we start looking at product development, sourcing and manufacturing through a sustainability lens, it opens up great opportunities for innovation.”⁶⁹*

Such message serves to construct the company as an organization which is not only responsible and aware, but also has the ability to make a difference to the environment.

5.2.2 Purpose

⁶⁹ <http://www.unilever.com.cn/sustainable-living/uslp/> 2013/11/24

Recolouring the Greenness:

In essence, achievement is normalized by the variety and multiplicity of green products from the company. Via the lens of CDA, companies are constructed as the provider of the achievement, thus they obtain power to control what is needed/desired for green consumption and green consumers.

Verbs and the aims of the practices the verbs represent work together to construct the message of corporate greenness, and greenness has been constructed by the purposes of corporate advertising. First, green advertisements aim to re-colour the greenness. The studied firms are all found to communicate green in a more-than-green way and their green products are not only marketed on their eco-friendliness (to protect the planet earth) but also on attributes such as products' property of pleasantness, high-technology, fuel efficiency and the likelihood of reduced fuel costs. A few quotes mention the eco-benefits for the environment, and in many cases the green discourse blur the boundary of between conventional and green product; this in order to give more breadth to the idea of commercial greenness, and to fit green products into an hi-tech, and holistic designs which are deemed more about nature than just their 'greenness'. For example:

*"We work on **things that matter.**" (GE)*

*"We found out what **the world needs**, and proceed to invent it." (GE)*

*"Our housing products bring customers **coziness, health, and cost-saving.**" (Landsea)*

*"Around 16 per cent **fuel efficiency**, solid number, you cannot lie on things like that. And 16% more fuel efficiency which transfers into less emission and **noise reduction.**" (GE)*

*"To us green means **sustainability and healthy development**...we also focus on the **health issue**, we are trying to change people's **living habit** with our green products as well." (Unilever)*

*“We are global citizen, and we **share the same human destiny in development**. That is what we are trying to do with green branding.”(BYD)*

*“People talk about innovation, or green, but we talk about **integrity**: you do the right thing; you don’t do it just for making money. You do the right thing for the people of the country.” (GE)*

The explicit unbalance between environmental-protection or eco-benefits for the environment of the green products and other features in green products in the descriptive texts reflects the discursive strategy which embeds greenness in the context of functionality, or to enrich the meanings of green consumption.

In addition, by analyzing the green advertisings discourse, the research finds that it tries to hide certain information of green product/service. To reach this objective the communication in green advertising emphasizes the facet of “hi-technology” in their green products. In the meanwhile, the price information is largely absent in the discourse around green products. For example, GE’s advertisings on its green products state:

*“We are not going to compete with those cheap material based cost-saving plans; our products represent the **hi-tech** and the green technology helps us to save cost.”*

*“We are working on the new generation of engine: LEAP-1C. This project is for developing the **most advanced technology**...it can be 25% more efficient than the current engines.”*

*“This is a **cutting-edge design** in the market, none of our competitors ever applied it.”*

*“The most energy saving plane engine, most efficient train engine locomotive, the best turbine, all of them are **leading green technologies** in the industry and thus we are the greenest company.”*

*“We don’t talk about innovation, we live on innovation, and our products speak for themselves and the **technology and solutions** we provide help to solve our*

customers' green challenges."

The second communication purpose in green advertisings can be found in the fact that while prices for green products might be higher, but the costs are outweighed by the benefits which green products can provide, namely clean energy, better efficiency, cost reduction (in energy) and health protection. Being green is seen as having foresight—as the advertising excerpt from Unilever's Home Page states:

*"... We are having **the great foresight**... People say when they are trying to save money, they will go to cheap materials; but we spent billions and billions working on innovations, working on green-related, environmentally friendly technology because we know **down this road it will bring benefits for both of us and our stakeholders.**"⁷⁰*

In concurrence with the avoiding, or fading out, information on price, firms strategically stress the calculated economic benefits in adopting green products. There is information about the statistical cost calculation on green products' effectiveness across the advertising discourses:

*"The green product design makes more sound sense and we try to educate consumers to lead a **rational** life style with our green products."*(Unilever)

*"In the green system of the house, the electric cost is 5 cent per square meters per day, so a house sized as 100 square meters will cost $0.05*100*30*12=1800$ Yuan RMB, and saves **3600 Yuan RMB** in all." (Landsea)*

*"Each day the air conditioner in a guest room works for 5 hours and the air conditioner in a bedroom works for 8 hours, it will cost **375.36 Yuan** as electric fee each month, excluding the hardware cost and maintenance cost; whilst in our green housing, the air-conditioning system **only costs 160 Yuan** each month."(Landsea)*

*"Around **16 per cent fuel efficiency**, solid number, you cannot lie on things like that."(BYD)*

⁷⁰ <http://www.unilever.com.cn/> 2013/11/23

*“Our water technology will help customers to save **up to 25%** more water resource.” (GE)*

*“The new packaging can **reduce 20% carbon emission** and the cost **reduces by 0.35 Yuan.**”(Unilever)*

*“The green packaging helps our supplier **save up to 17 million Yuan.**” (Unilever)*

Shaping the Future:

In addition to presenting the technological competitiveness and economic advantages with statistical data, the advertising discourse ostensibly portrays the commercial greenness as a must-take option for consumers by forecasting future standards. In shaping green products as a necessary solution to consumer’s problems and a contributor to everyday life, advertisings are found as:

*“The **economic growth** is slowing down, which will bring to an end to the golden-ten-year growth. And the previous inefficient model of economic growth **will be replaced by intensive growth and sustainability development.** In the same time, obsolete energy-consuming production and products **will give place to green production and green products.**” (BYD)*

*“Our green products **look into the distance** and think of the **future...**” (GE)*

*“The Chinese government has become serious to environmental problems and **will be ironhanded** towards those who cannot meet the national or provincial standards of environmental protection.” (Landsea)*

*“We are not afraid to say it because what we do very much **align with China’s next 5 years plan.** For example, both **energy** and healthcare are very important to China; we are **hand in hand with China for the next five years.** What we do, what we are facilitating to help, to make the world better, we can say that because we have proven that we have done so in the past 120 years.” (GE)*

In the above statements, corporate communication discourse strategically poses the environmental and resource-related challenges as undoubted upcoming realities and thus presents their green products as the inevitable choice for the audience. For

example, in order to meet the government's rising standards, GE's green products play a role as saviour helping solve clients' environmental pressure; by relating to and stressing the macro environment threats such as the slow-down of economic growth, the endangering natural environment, and the depletion of resources, being green and consuming greenness seems to be the only choice left. The discursive effect of future tense such as "will", "be going to" used in the sentences is to centre the green products and green consumption as an essential approach for consumers to achieve this end: choosing greenness means choosing the future.

Relating to the Current Situation:

In addition to using the future tense statements which shape greenness as necessary for the future, firms also strategically place discourse which highlights that the greenness has become a fad in society and draw on the contextual background.

For example, China's pollution problem has threatened people's health and everyday life. Recently, China's central government decided to improve the air quality⁷¹. And soon after this decision, the corporate advertisings began to incorporate PM 2.5 into the discourse (see **Exhibit 5.1**). Similar example can be found in Unilever's Water Purifier Advertising (see **Exhibit 4.5**) and Lansea's Green Housing Advertising (See **Exhibit 5.2**).

⁷¹ the aim of the decision is to bring tiny particulates widely known as PM 2.5 into national air quality standards.

**人体空气检测仪
你值得拥有**

三秒钟变专家
小绿来教你检测空气污染指数：
一张面巾纸，
一个没人注意的moment，
然后……面巾纸放入鼻孔，看颜色！

Level1 无色
Level2 灰色
Level3 黑灰相间
限制级 黑色带结晶！

敢不敢分享
你检测到的空气是第几级！

朗诗·田园绿郡，恒温·恒湿·恒氧，
健康科技住宅，向您和家人倡导健康生活方式！
近期空气污染严重，建议您外出佩戴口罩！

朗诗·田园绿郡
LANDSEA GARDEN AND GREEN TOWN
健康·上海河畔·健康科技公馆

Tip: 0571 8684 0555

Landsea
朗诗·田园绿郡·不用空调的房子
www.lansea.com/landseagroup

Exhibit 5.1: Landsea's Green Housing System

Website address: <http://www.weibo.com/landseagroup>

Advertisings transcripts: *PM 2.5 can cause health problems such as asthma, cardiovascular diseases and lung cancer. Below the description of deteriorating environment with PM 2.5 problem, the promotional text on the green product is listed in the ad: Landsea's house is equipped with green technologies which can effectively filter the dirty air and bring you a clean and health habitation environment.*

In addition to the contents of the language which provide insight into the purpose of the discourse, the types of subjects the corporate green discourse chooses to represent at the green advertisings can be examined to interpret the meaning in the message (Fairclough, 2001).

5.3 Subjects

As the subjects of the message can indicate the intent of the message (Fairclough, 2001), this section discusses the use of subjects and the subject positions structured in the sample. In the process of constructing greenness and creating green markets,

corporate green advertising discourse defines the green consumer subject as well as the green product object. In defining the subject, the texts inform their audience that being green is not just about being responsible for the environment, but entails multiple roles: they are not only consumers, but also “environmentally concerned contributors”, “responsible participants” and “caring family members”.

5.3.1 Making Value Salient and Shaping New Roles for Green Consumer

In the studied corporate greenness discourse a recurring theme can be identified, it is the subversion of objects associated with “the marketplace”. The companies did not explicitly refuse to define consumers, instead they avoid this category by re-framing targeted consumers as non-commercial. One subject that companies particularly frame and align with consumers is the value-advocate/contributor/participant/patron of responsible and savvy practices. The semantic power in advertising discourse leads interpretations that the audiences are not just consumers. Below provides a manifest references in Unilever and Landsea’s green advertisings:

*“In our Sustainability Living Plan, our role as a company is **no longer solely in marketplace** but also to help society to achieve sustainability development...our green products become a channel to transmit our message and consumers by purchasing our green products can **join us** for more sustainable **living styles**.”⁷² (Unilever)*

*“Our products stand for both green and humanity; the greenness bears our **value on environmental responsibility** and a **harmonious relationship** between human beings and the nature.”⁷³ (Landsea)*

The texts present value that distance commercial sense, meanwhile they act to construct consumer subjects who choose the products as a responsible and caring citizen and promoter of high-tech, highly-personalized and highly responsible value-embedded products.

⁷² <http://www.unilever.com.cn/sustainable-living/> 2013/11/12

⁷³ <http://landsea.cn/About/Citizens.aspx> 2013/11/8

Another example is from the online advertising for Lux brand named as “*Go Lux, Go Green*”⁷⁴ by Unilever in China. The campaign calls on consumers to join the green movement in steps toward a brighter future for China. On a mission to provide China’s consumers with green products, Unilever utilizes its widely-used Lux brand as a tool to reach consumers and create a green impact. The campaign web site states:

*“The ‘Go Lux Go Green’ research finds out that if all the 1.3 billion people in China **purchase** Unilever’s 650ml green packaging products, it will **save** 21,000 kilograms of plastics and **reduce** carbon emission by 23,940 kilograms.”*⁷⁵

In step with informing consumers about environmental impact by consuming green products, the promotional consumption discourse produces the possibility of an “ideal self” of consumer culture (Holt and Thompson, 2004; Thompson, 2004) and implies to the audience that being a consumer can also be a contributor in environmental protection, as long as consumers choose the advertised green products. And, the more you consume, the more you can contribute to environmental benefits. In this way a subject role of “green consumer” is constructed and the firm is able to connect green products to its brand. The discursive strategy in the above excerpt also helps to solve the tension between consumption and conservation, and the promoted green product is mythologized to turn consumers into contributors to, and protectors of, the environment.

5.3.2 Shaping the Consumer as Health Defender and Family Carer

Another purpose of discursive strategy in green products advertisings is to reify and present the deteriorating environment, and its threat to health. An example can be found in the advertising below (see **Exhibit 5.2**).

⁷⁴ <http://www.unilever.com.cn/brands-in-action/detail/lux/299123/?WT.contenttype=view%20brands>
2013/11/6

⁷⁵ Ibid

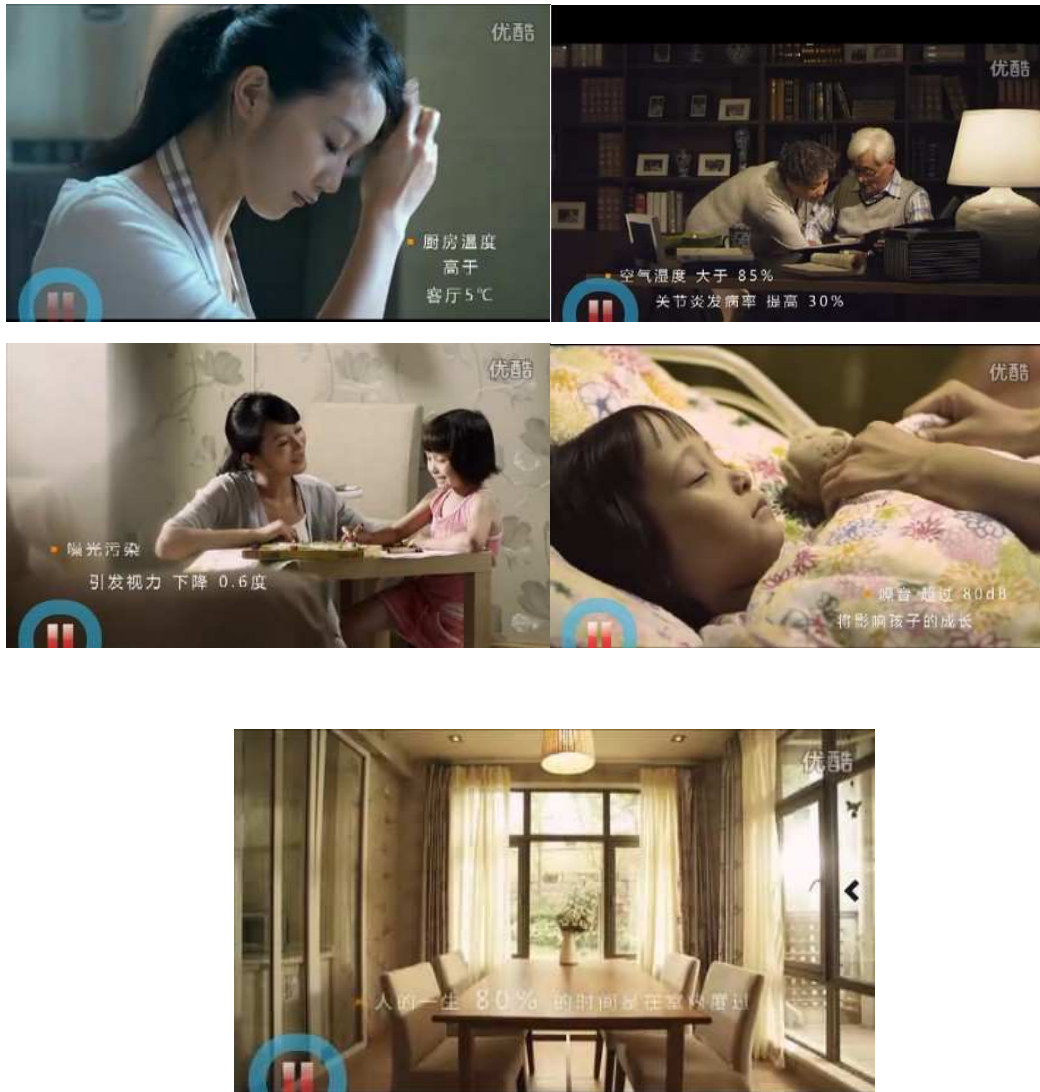


Exhibit 5.2: Landsea's Green House

(Pictures are snapshots from website video advertising.)

Website address: <http://flash.landsea.cn/green/videolist.aspx> 2013/11/02

The above advertisings respectively present a housewife working in the fuggy and smoke-polluted environment of a kitchen; an aged parent whose wellbeing is compromised by arthritis because of the moist environment (ad subtitle: *air humidity above 85% increase incidence of arthritis by 30%*); a child studying and sleeping in light and noise pollution (ad subtitle: *the light pollution reduces (check original) child's degree of visual acuity by 0.6; noise with volume above 80 dB interrupt*

child's growth). And the last segment of the ad says that about 80% of people's time is spent indoors.

The representation of the family and health discourse in the text functions suggests that the living environment is closely related to families' wellbeing and health. A sense of threat has been conveyed. However, the text does not steer the audience away from the environmental threats and leave them without choice, but it actively directs the audience to the advertised green products and provides the green house product as a weapon with which to resist those threats and defend family health. Significantly, through the invocation of a health discourse to convey a strong sense of environmental threat, the would-be house holder is semantically woven into the metaphorical position of something like a fighter defending his families' health in a battlefield; This presented living environmental threats act to define the nature of the relationship between the object of green product and the subject of consumer: by adopting the green house product, the consumer is playing the role of a health defender and family care-giver instead of a person solving problems of environmental pollution. A subject position is offered to the audience of the ad as someone whose role as a family member is to defy pollution. Consequently, the green house becomes an idealized object of interest.

In this constructed subject position in the advertising, consumer concerns for green are NOT based on a desire to deal with ecological destruction or to protect the environment itself, but to be ready to live in the house – the green product – to escape from the threat of pollutions. The health-threatening “environment” in the corporate green advertising discourse apparently has been turned into an urge for green consumption, and the green product has been turned into a green protector, shielding consumers from pollution. In this way, green consumption has incorporated into its message, certain other meanings such as guarding family member's health,

and gaining a healthy lifestyle. Therefore, other identities besides the identities of “responsible consumers who care about the environment” are created, and the advertising discourse helps to enlarge the meaning of greenness and frame subjective categories: the subject of caring husband to wife/son to parents/parents to children.

5.4 Relations

The consumers are engaged in a relationship with the advertising firms and their products and services by relational constructions in advertising genre discourse (Fairclough, 2001). In addition, the feature of advertising discourse is its use of multimodal (e.g., text, image) language, therefore both visual and textual elements need to be analyzed in advertising discourse studies (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006). This section will examine data in both visual and textual forms and how relationships are portrayed in the sample data.

5.4.1 Visual Representation of Relationships

According to Kress (2000), studies examining the ways in which companies use advertising language to attract and influence consumers must pay special attention to the importance of images. As the previous chapter indicates, the visual constitution of different green advertisings represents differences between two categories of companies. Based on Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) analysis framework on reading images, special attention has been paid to the aspects of “angle”, “distance”, and “size”.

The relationship with the image viewer can be revealed by the angle of a subject. For instance, as Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) stated, the height of an angle can indicate issues of power in an image: “an image shown from a low angle directs the viewer to either consciously or unconsciously look up to the subject. Images constructed in such manner give the depicted actors/subjects a ‘symbolic power’ over the viewer”

(Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006:140). In comparison, the power over the depicted subjects can be given to the viewer if an image is shown from a high angle, and an equal relationship can be demonstrated if the subject is shown at the same level (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006). In this study, the most appeared subjects in the samples are at the same level as the viewer (e.g., **Exhibit 4.3** in Chapter 4 and **Exhibit 5.5** as below).

A type of relationship can be signified not only by the visual aspect of angle in an image, but also by the distance between actors/subjects and viewers. For example, an arm length can describe a close social distance (Kress and van Leeuwen (2006). In addition to the distance in images, the intent of the image producer can also be revealed by the image size. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), large visuals which hold a third of an image or more, signal the producer's intention to direct the viewer to focus attention on the image. For example, the large primary images in Exhibit 5.5 (BYD) and Exhibit 5.6 (Landsea) both signify a high level of importance and communicate a high information value (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006).

Applying Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) visual analysis framework on reading the advertising images from aspects of angle, distance, and size, it can be found that both categories of firms in their green advertisings depict the relationship between the green products and viewers as an equal relationship. An equal relationship is always found in advertising discourse, which sends a welcoming and friendly message to the viewers (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006). However, there are differences existing between the two categories of firms' advertisings. As indicated by preliminary analyses in Chapter 4, C1 advertising visuals tend to naturalize the green products while C2 ones tend to centralize the green products. Naturalization is achieved by both distance and size visual strategies. With regard to distance, the C1 firms either

position green products and natural objects in an equal position (See **Exhibit 5.3:** Unilever), or position natural objects in a closer position than products, to viewers (See **Exhibit 4.1, 4.2:** GE). Similarly, the natural objects appear to be a larger size than products in C1 firms' green advertisings. Conversely, C2 firms apparently give prominence to products instead of natural objects by positioning products in the middle and closer to viewers, and by presenting products in a larger size (See **Exhibit 5.5, 5.6**). Such differences also signify the different relationships between green products and nature/environment: C1 advertisings treat products and nature as equal and relate green products closely to the natural environment while C2 advertisings value products more highly.



Exhibit 5.3: Unilever's Green Advertisings

Website address: <http://www.unilever.com.cn/brands-in-action/detail/pureit/332166/>



Exhibit 5.4: GE's Green Advertisings

Website address: <http://www.ge-energy.com/wind>



Exhibit 5.5: BYD's Hybrid Cars

Website address: <http://www.bydauto.com.cn/car-360-F3DM.html>



Exhibit 5.6: Landsea's Green Advertisings

Website address: <http://landsea.cn/Group/RealEstate.aspx>

5.4.2 Textual Representations of Relationships

The application of personal pronouns, such as “you” and “we”, can help construct and form textual representations of relationship. For example, “we” are normally used when individuals are supportive to and other parties agree with the main actors’ actions (Askehave, 2007). In the data sample from GE’s ecomagination statement, “We are going to develop the new innovation model, which will both grow our business and reduce the negative impacts on environment.”⁷⁶

Another way green advertising discourse forming relationships is the use of “others”. Through the discursive strategy of juxtaposition with others, the corporate greenness is related to other’s greenness; this deliberate comparison helps to idealize the corporate greenness.

Previous studies have shown that corporate discourses help to contrast positive and negative categories (Caruana and Crane, 2008, 2011; Hogg et al., 2009; Thompson and Haytko, 1997). Similarly in this study, firm’s green discourse constructs a genuine (positive) greenness, and meanwhile it constructs an imagined (negative) other as fake greenness, such as green wash practices, which ostensibly lacks a long-term goal and integrity, and only passively conforms to the external pressures. This juxtaposition is made to construct the object of green products. The following passages transcribed from green advertising videos demonstrate the juxtaposition discourse:

*“**People** talk about innovation, or green, **but we** talk about integrity: you do the right thing; you don’t do it just for making money. You do the right thing for the people of the country; you do the right thing for the planet. That is another thing that **people** are still trying to catch up. **Whilst we** are thinking that we are ‘game changers’, **we** are basically changing the whole game of how to do things. When*

⁷⁶ <http://www.ge-energy.com> 2014-5-6

people talk about innovation, we have done it a hundred years ago; people talk about green we have done about 20 years ago.”(Unilever’s Sustainability Web Page⁷⁷)

“One of my favourite things about GE is that we are very forthright and honest about things we are doing. We have the saying: ‘green is green’: the first green is eco, the second one means dollars [...]; we are very honest about things, because we are having the great foresight. People say when they are trying to save money, they will go to cheap materials; but we spent billions and billions working on innovations, working on green-related, environmentally friendly technology because we know down this road it will become profitable for us.”(GE’s Ecomagination Web Page⁷⁸)

In these texts, the firm explicitly juxtaposes “people” as other and “we” as strategic thinkers and genuine green leaders, and rebukes the (stereotyped) “other” people who seems to only “talk” about green. Implicitly, the green advertising discourse aligns firms with new roles and virtues such as rule-maker, a market leader with integrity. In such way, firms are imbued with a moral character. In discourse analysis, such explicit juxtaposition is called “discursive contrast”. For example, in Roper et al (2013)’s study, they identified consumers’ discourse deliberately contrasted themselves with an opposing one. In the discursive contrast, a “discourse marker” help to make the contrast visible. Such discourse marker can be words including “but”, “however”, “though”, “on the other hand”, and “whereas”. These words as linguistic devices can serve two main purposes: the first one is to indicate that two strands of discourse exist. The second purpose is to promote one strand of discourse over the other. In the studied green advertising discourse, it is apparent that such promotion happens and its purpose is to present and construct an upgraded and subjective view of corporate greenness.

To look further, content and meaning are given to the discursive contrast by sentences such as “we talk about **integrity**: do the right thing; **don’t do it just for**

⁷⁷ <http://www.unilever.com.cn/sustainable-living-2013/> 2013/11/02

⁷⁸ <http://www.ge.com/cn/company/ecomagination> 2013/11/02

making money” and “*we know down this road it will become profitable for us*”. These seemingly contradicting sentences provide a platform for the company to align with the audience’s interest, not just to be morally superior to the “other”, but to be approachable to consumers and to mingle with the “other” (making business sense of green and making money out of greenness). For example, the Unilever Sustainability Living Plan introduction web page stresses:

*“Our business matters because it would be curing the world. But at the same time, some of our green technology also has to cure the world in sense of environment, we are not saying we are great, but we are saying that we are here to help, to identify the need and to co-create solutions”.*⁷⁹

At the same time, the discourse distinguishes the advertising firm from the “other” and sends a clear message: “we are the genuine greenness for your choice”, and “we are the strategic player and game leader who you should follow”.

In conclusion, the presented corporate greenness is constructed via discursive dualisms: we/ (other) people, leader or game changer/follower or stickers, curer/grabber, spending millions/cheap materials, foresight/buzz. Such constructed dualisms and built boundaries can be interpreted as playing a role to mythologies and idealize the greenness in the green products/firms (Thompson, 2004).

5.5 Connections (Themes/genres)

Following descriptions and analyses of representative green advertisings in different sectors of corporate websites, the above section focuses on analyzing the data in an interpretation level. In the production of corporate green advertising discourse, three common themes can be identified. The themes also lead analyses from interpretation level to the explanation/societal level and connect organizational meso and societal macro levels. The connections are the final stage of the interpretive framework. The

⁷⁹ <http://www.unilever.com.cn/sustainable-living/uslp/> 2013/12/6

connections as common themes encompass the previous three stages (content, subject, and relations).

First, the corporate green advertising discourse informs a naturalization process through enriching or re-colouring the greenness: there is not a singular meaning (the meaning of environmental protection) or a unified version of greenness. The objective of green product/service is not presented as radical environmentalist; instead it is described with reference to links to existing products/services. Accordingly, the components of corporate green advertising discourse are found as not entirely separate. The discursive components of green discourse (e.g., utilitarian functionality, responsibility, environmental challenge) are always interacting and overlapped in the discursive process. Indeed, the discursive practices of corporate green advertising rely on the interaction of these discursive elements to construct the meanings of green consumption and make it interpretable to consumers. Through the interconnections, the corporate green discourse re-colours the greenness by dissecting the traditional implication of greenness in environmental-protection and conservation and imbuing it with an additional variety of components. Compared with the “deep green” asked for by environmental activists, the advertised greenness is the “in-breadth green”, which helps to balance consumerism with environmental conservation. Therefore, the components in green products are presented both horizontally via interdiscursivity and vertically via intertextuality (See **Exhibit 5.7**).

In the horizontal level or in the form of interdiscursivity of corporate green advertising discourse, the advertising discourse embeds greenness into functionality and links greenness to utilitarian and functional aspects such as coziness, cost-saving, fuel efficiency, economic benefits and holistic performance enhancement. Furthermore, to expand the greenness into more breadth, the discourse emphasizes green products features such as safety, health, and property of pleasantness.

In the vertical historical level or in the form of intertextuality, the advertising discourse constructs a parallel between greenness with historical context. Such intertextuality can be found in that green products are contextualized in firms which are described as responsible organizations which have always been concerned with the environment; their greenness is grounded in their values and traditions. Meanwhile, in all firms' advertisings, the green advertising discourse shapes the companies as having a green tradition. Such green tradition or history embodies corporate green authority. Besides, corporate green products are presented as future-oriented: not only help to solve current environmental problems but also to meet future challenges. In the corporate green advertisings, corporate green technologies, as well as their advertised green products/services, are assumed as a way to solve current environmental challenges and move towards a greener future. In addition, some advertisings contextualize the green products in the Chinese historical contexts. For example, GE's green advertisings apply a localization approach under the mythos of "*make the past serve the present*" and re-contextualize its green products in Chinese history by presenting a parallel between GE's green innovation and the Chinese characters and Great Inventions of Ancient China⁸⁰ (See Chapter 4).

Such process of meaning construction is enabled by the "intertextuality" and "interdiscursivity". Intertextuality means new texts are drawn from fragments of existing, conventional ones; and interdiscursivity refers to texts or properties of one new discourse include texts from other domains of discourses. Both intertextuality and interdiscursivity enable the audience to draw upon references from macro social-historical backgrounds. Such themes echo with consumer culture theory (Thompson, 2004). According to consumer culture theory, companies' brand branding is consistent to consumers' need for meaning. And the meanings can be

⁸⁰ The inventions of ancient China that GE's green advertisements draw analogies to its green products are papermaking, printing, sericulture, and the Silk Road.

developed by firms through their marketing practices in order to convey their own attributes and relate such meanings to those of potential consumers as audience. The green marketing is no different: its aim is to develop meanings to greenness through discourses.

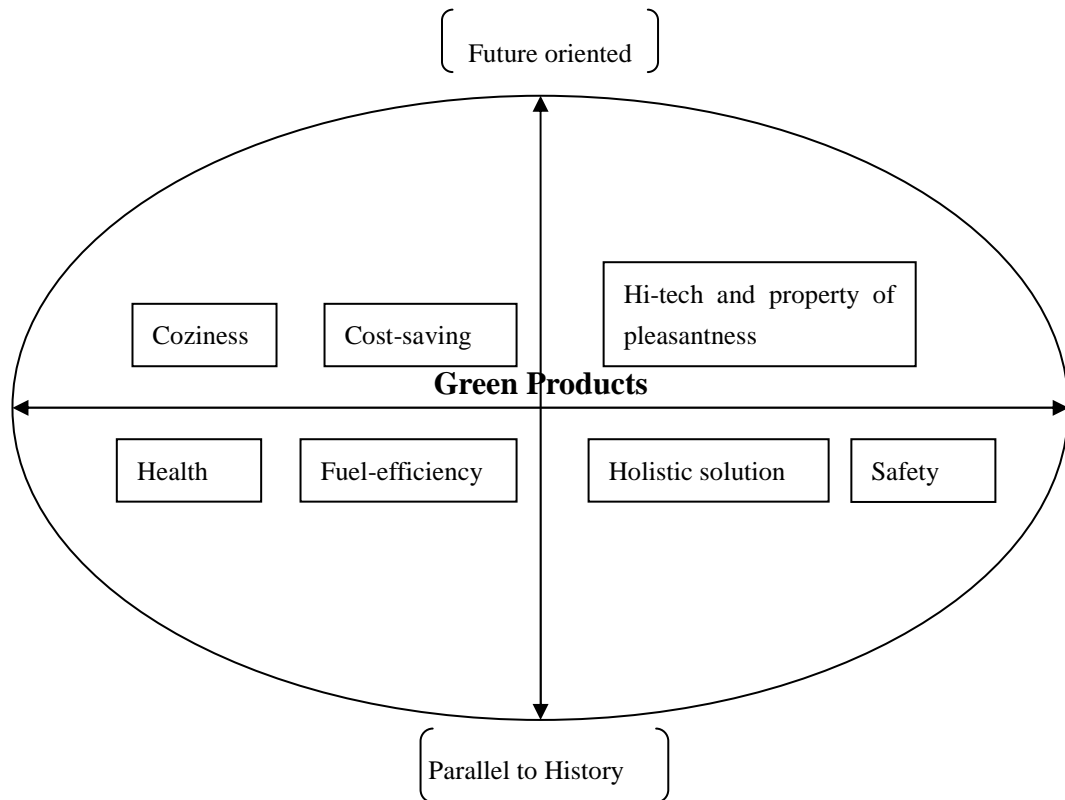


Exhibit 5.7: The Intertextuality and Interdiscursivity of Corporate Greenness

Secondly, via pacification and topic avoidance strategies (Deetz, 1992), the discourse tries to hide or minimizes the negative sides of green products and green consumption, such as higher prices and problematic “greenness” (i.e., batteries from electric automobile products). In the meanwhile, it emphasizes the economic benefits of adopting green products. Companies would rather stress the potential benefits of the green products with discursive strategy of presenting statistic data, and convey the moralistic and strategic choice relating to greenness.

Cultural critics have pointed out the fantasist, illusory nature of advertising. The

advertising industry as “magic system” is notoriously known to manufacture unrealistic promises which are instantly broken in the buyer’s remorse (Williams, 1980). However, according to Williams, having grown immune to this critique, modern advertisings openly acknowledge their illusory nature and purposefully exaggerate their diversion from reality. In addition to the pacification strategy, a perfecting strategy is applied. This can be found in the green advertisings shaping a utopian version of the consumption world in which advertised corporate greenness helps to meet environmental challenges, and corporate green product/technology serves as a panacea for environmental threats.

Thirdly, purposive juxtapositions have been used to construct a discursive dualism and contrasting categories of ideal and problematic greenness. This is to idealize their constructed greenness (see **Exhibit 5.8**). These “staged boundaries” between the “genuine green” and the “fake green” help to provide an ideal category for a given green product object and green consumer subject to occupy, and enable the advertising firms to promote themselves as green leaders/pioneers:

Ideal object of greenness		Problematic other
a) Genuine green	VS.	Fake green/Green wash
b) Spending millions innovation	VS.	Cheap materials,
c) Product with foresight	VS.	Product in buzz;
Ideal subject of green producer and consumer		Problematic other
a) Leader/Game changer	VS.	Catch-ups/Conformist
b) Active/Strategic	VS.	Passive/short-sighted
c) Contributor/Participant	VS.	Solely commercial

Exhibit 5.8: Ideal and Problematic Greenness

“Greenness” in the advertised green products/services is presented as an ideal and green consumption as problem-free. This is done through purposive tensions and

contrast with problematic green categories. Such tensions have also been found in other fields of consumption and their advertising discourses, such as the consumption of “responsible travelling” (Caruana and Crane, 2008), Luxury brand consumption (Roper et al., 2013), and cosmetic product consumption (Thompson, 2004).

In the descriptive and interpretative analysis on the corporate advertisings, both similarities and differences can be found among the discourses from the two categories of firms. As the above common themes represent similarities, the following section presents the differences between green discourses from MNCs and Chinese indigenous firms.

5.6 Comparing the Discourses from the Categories

The above section has introduced the common themes of the green advertisings from both firm categories. This section, based on the data analyses in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, will consider the differences between the discourses from the two categories of firms. The results of this data analysis address one of the sub-research questions of this research:

- Are there any similarities and differences between the advertising discourses used to present greenness within the studied two categories of companies and what are they?

The Chinese local firms (C2)’ online advertising discourse for their green brand (such as discourse found in Home page and CSR page) appears to highlight the companies’ spirit of altruism and philanthropy as their corporate responsibility practices, which inform an environmentalism discourse. However, in the case of green product discourse (such as discourse found in Product Intro page), it is interesting to find that the previously mentioned corporate concern for environmental

protection or the environmentalism discourse has largely disappeared and been replaced by other discourses such as the functional, utilitarian and economic. Furthermore, the environmental protection value of corporate greenness is placed in a peripheral position and becomes simply decorative in the composition of the product advertisement. In this sense, the discourse seems to be self-contradicting.

Such paradoxical discourse found in the advertisings cannot be simply concluded as “greenwash”. In Lyon and Maxwell (2011)’s definition, “greenwash” refers to “the selective disclosure of positive information about a company’s environmental or social performance, without full disclosure of negative information on these dimensions, so as to create an overly positive corporate image” (p.5). In the example of this study, however, the corporate green discourse is not found to hide negative information such as side-effects⁸¹ of the corporate greenness. Instead, what it does is to purposely highlight certain kinds of discourse in certain areas. For example, as mentioned above, utilitarian and functional facets of greenness centralize the corporate green discourse while the aspect of environmental protection has been downplayed, even though the green advertised products have environmental-protection features. This discursive arrangement is different from that found in MNCs (C1)’ green advertisings.

Compared with Chinese indigenous firms, MNCs (C1)’ green advertising discourse presents a more consistent approach. Different from the Chinese firms’ highlighted and advertised philanthropy practices, MNCs adopt and present the concept of “sustainability” in their green discourse: this concept not only stresses eco-efficiency and environment impact reduction, but also emphasizes on growing business and increasing consumption. Moreover, the linguistic novelty such as coinage of new green words and terms (e.g. GE’s ecomagination, Unilever’s Sustainable Living Plan)

⁸¹ An example of “side-effect” can be found in some case that firms reported electric utility reductions in their greenhouse gas emissions but their actual emissions rose.

reflects a higher level in sophistication in C1 firms which have integrated greenness into their development strategies. For example, GE's Ecomagination and Unilever's Sustainability Living Plan both represent a strategic purpose which not only talks about protecting the natural environment but also makes business sense. Such linguistic novelty can be seen to demonstrate an intention for change, a change from a singular focus on environmental protection to a joint (and more importantly) concern for business gains and market/consumption growth. For instance, GE claims that their green innovation products/services developed under the ecomagination is for business growth and market exploitation. It also boldly states: "*Green (stands for environmental protection) is Green (stands for U.S. dollar)*". Unilever similarly states: "*such sustainability development not only promotes innovation, but also helps to explore new market, (market or markets – check original) save costs, and inspire (inspire or inspires – check original) employees.*"⁸² In addition, in the product introduction advertisements, the discourse aims to dematerialize and naturalize human technologies in the composition of greenness, and thus the discourse is attached to an ecocentrism perspective (Thompson and Barton, 1994).

For example, as the data analyses show in both Chapters 4 and 5, green advertising purposely peripheralizes green product/technology in its visual configuration, although the textual discourse reflects a more anthropocentric perspective in which the company as the green exponent and a responsible leader initiates the green revolution and directs for changes. Moreover, as C2 advertising discourse attributes their environmental responsibility partly to the governmental and civil demand, and thus external political appeals, For example, Landsea states:

"In the next ten years, facing the macro environmental upheavals such as economic slowdown and growing attention for environment from both government and the society, Landsea will rely on its green reputation and technologies and

⁸² <http://www.unilever.com.cn/sustainable-living/ceo-review/ourapproach/> 2013/11/18

keep walking on the path of 'deep green'”⁸³.

In comparison, C1 advertising discourse expresses environmental responsibility as intrinsically motivated. In C1 advertisements, it is not mainly the outside pressures or appeals leading to corporate green turn, but also, and more importantly, the companies' understanding of the business opportunities in future green market.

In addition, even though both categories try to portray themselves as “green leaders”, the C2 firms present themselves as the first leaders to acclaim and respond to the governmental appeal for becoming green, while the C1 firms present themselves as leaders establishing and addressing international environmental standards and world-leading environmental practices. This signals different political orientations: C2 discourse seeks to gain green acceptance and legitimacy, while C1 discourse establishes their authority and governance by importing industrial standards and practice codes.

In short, differences exist in green advertising discourses and they differ on two levels (see **Table 5.1**): the level of greenness (or sophistication) and the level of integration. In the level of greenness, C1 is greener than C2 in terms of its enriched green vocabulary and its more environment-centered/concerned discursive configuration. In the level of integration, C1 is integrating environmental responsibility in alliance with business opportunities and development strategies. Besides, under the theme of “sustainability”, C1 is proactively enacting sustainability norms and environmental practices in their green advertising discourse. Such sustainability discourse can be seen as a manifesto of MNCs to take a political and leadership roles in environmental governance. In comparison, C2 is treating environmental protection as mainly a response to governmental demands without much strategic considerations.

⁸³ <http://landsea.cn/About/Value.aspx?id=4> 2013/10/10

In addition, the frequency of the term of “sustainability development” is much higher in C1 discourse than C2. For example, the terms of “sustainability” and “sustainability/sustainable development” appear 21 times 32 times in GE’s and Unilever’s studied web pages respectively, but only 6 times and 3 times in BYD’s and Landsea’s web pages.

In the articulation of sustainability, firms following sustainability development are described as those responsible players who not only cooperate with local government and comply with environmental regulations, but also, and more importantly, take a central and leading role who bring in above-local-environmental standards and world-leading environmental practices. The term “sustainability development” also appears in the C2 discourse in a few cases, but the term is not well articulated or interpreted, and it is more like a grafted term from a foreign discourse or an empty fashion word. Thus it is basically conceptual and not well integrated into the whole discourse. For example, Landsea’s CSR page states: *“Landsea is determined to be a responsible enterprise with business ethics: to be responsible to the society, its stakeholders, employees, customers, in order to achieve sustainable development.”*⁸⁴ BYD is even more concise: *“our technology helps to change the energy supply structure and thus to achieve sustainability development.”*⁸⁵

Compared with C2’s follower role answering the state’s environmental call, C1’s stance is more proactive, to give one example: *“We are not satisfied with meeting with the governmental regulations and laws in environmental issues. As market leaders, we have higher standards for our own practices.”*

In addition, a strategy oriented approach towards green business is found in C2’s

⁸⁴ <http://landsea.cn/About/Value.aspx?id=2> 2013/11/14

⁸⁵ <http://www.bydauto.com.cn/introduce-responsibility.html> 2014/4/13

green discourse surrounding the idea of “sustainability”. The term of sustainability development is better articulated and integrated by considering environmental protection and meanwhile making business sense: for GE, sustainability means that green is green: green business brings dollars. For Unilever, under the umbrella idea of Sustainability Living Plan, the advertising discourse interprets sustainability in one hand as consuming environmental friendly products to a green lifestyle, and in the other hand as opportunity for growing the business. In such discursive approach, the term of sustainability development is made comprehensible and provides guidance for practices.

5.7 Conclusion of Chapter 5

This chapter focuses on the discursive level analysis of green advertising discourse from two categories of firms. This analysis helps to answer one of the research sub-questions:

- Are there any similarities and differences between the advertising language used to represent greenness within the studied two categories of companies and what are they?

In the interpretative analysis, which focuses on content, subject, relations, and connection, similarities can be identified. (See **Table 5.1** and **Table 5.2**)

Similarities (common themes)	Strategies
1. Re-colouring the greenness	Intertextuality and interdiscursivity
2. Making sense of the greenness	Embedding the greenness into the existing discourses; rationalism; futurism
3. Perfecting the greenness	Pacification, topic avoidance, utopian version
4. Comparing with other greenness	Juxtapositions between ideal self and problematic other

Table 5.1: Similarities between Green Advertising Discourses from C1 and C2

Themes 1 and 2 are about positioning environmental responsibility with green returns (such as functional aspects of green products), and embedding “greenness” into a broader context and making worldly meanings of the corporate greenness (such as economic benefits, people’s health, technocratic). In such positioning and embedding process through intertextuality and interdiscursivity, people’s direct concern to the environment is diluted and people’s attention redirected to consumptions through the all-around green products. Them 3 and 4 are for idealizing the corporate greenness by constructing utopian versions of green future. The corporate greenness discourse in a promotional style naturalizes the intrusion of human’s industrial practices to the nature and therefore seems to guarantee a problem-free version of green consumption.

In a nutshell, a common connection exists between corporate green advertising discourse and a broader societal context. The discursive strategies such as positioning, embedding and idealizing are in order to represent green consumption as a feasible way to environmental problem, and a direction to the future, or a green consumption lifestyle. Different to the traditional environmentalist understanding of “greenness”, which holds the opinion that radical changes to the current lifestyle and economic systems should be take place in order to reverse environmental degradation and diminish industrial damages to the nature (Catton and Dunlap, 1994), and greenness is to protect the environment itself, in the corporate understanding of “greenness”, being green is re-articulated as a way of consuming: consumption turns to be environmental responsible and problem-free as long as people consume the green products. In addition, as the advertising discourse implies, consuming green is also rational (because it helps to reduce cost and protect health) and modern (because it has the advanced technologies and is able to solve current environmental threats). Therefore, greenness in green products is not simply a responsibility anymore, but an

attraction for consumers. The green products in advertisements are more like a new choice for living a lifestyle, a consumption lifestyle. As a means for the ends of living a green lifestyle, to protect the environment is not an ends anymore.

This lifestyle is not necessarily related to reducing over-consumptions, but a new approach to consumption and a way of extricating both consumers and the consumerism society from environmental worries, although the environmental threats remain. This can be explained as a reflection of social ideological thought of ecological modernization (Hajer 1995; Coffey and Marston, 2013) and is connected to social change towards post-materialism (Inglehart, 1971; 1977). Such connection between corporate green advertising discourse and the societal context will be discussed in next chapter of Societal Analysis.

Dissimilarities		C1: MNCs	C2: Indigenous Firms
Level of greenness		High	Low
	Green Vocabulary (Linguistic Novelty)	Coinage of new green terms such as “ecomagination” (GE), “Sustainability Living Plan” (Unilever); consistent in different web pages	No newly coined green words; Different vocabulary from different web pages: e.g. green vocabulary in Home/About/CSR pages, non-green vocabulary in Product page
	Focus	To manifest the environmental friendliness of the product; Dematerializing the product	To highlight the functionality of the product (e.g. energy reduction, high performance); Marginalizing the environmental factors; instrumental view; More anthropocentrism.
Level of Integration		High (strategic, organizational level)	Low (PR, product level)
	Features	Sustainability: reservation/protection and business growth	Responsibility: only emphasizes the responsibility for environment (national pride, patriotism, promote national environment, harmony, and prosperity)
	Political Orientation	Environmental governance	Environmental legitimacy

Table 5.2: Dissimilarities between Green Advertising Discourses from C1 and C2

Compared with the MNCs green discourse, it seems that the Chinese corporate green discourse is more oriented toward a culture of benefits – emphasizing the instrumental greenness for the consumers while erasing the green benefits for the environment. The co-existing of pragmatist attitude and philanthropy feature as one of the indigenous characteristics of Chinese corporate environmental responsibility is found as influenced by the emerging market economy in China, and is closely related to China’s social and cultural backgrounds (Xu and Yang, 2010).

The differences (see **Table 5.2**) existing in the studied corporate green discourses mark the contextual influences (such as historical and social differences) shaping the construction of greenness and the objective of environmental protection. The explanation for this will be presented in the third stage in the data analysis. The objective of the 3rd stage of CDA is to examine the studied discourse as a social practice in a macro environment. According to Fairclough (1993), analyse in this level target to two basic questions: firstly, how discourses are affected by their embedded social contexts? And secondly, how discourses can produce reproductive effects to change or sustain social structures? A discussion of the relation between corporate green advertising discourse and its contextual influences is the focus of the societal analysis in the next chapter.

Chapter 6: Analyzing the Social Context

6.1 Introduction

In order to understand discourses and their differences, the context in which they arise must be understood (van Dijk, 1997). According to Fairclough (1995), CDA not only describe and interpret discourses in social contexts, but also explain why and how discourses work.

Having analyzed the text as text and as discursive practice at a micro level, the focus of this chapter now moves to the broader social contexts with which the discourse construction process can be explained. In this stage of analysis, the social matrix of discourse need to be identified and discussed (Fairclough 1992b: 237). As argued by Fairclough (1992b; 2001), other theories (such as social or cultural theory) can help to understand the kind of institutional and economic conditions to which the discursive practice is subject. A good example is that Modernity Theory was applied by Fairclough to explain the British universities' recruitment discourses in his study (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002).

This chapter provides explanations based on examination of the social context of the studied discourse. Drawing on the explanatory power from social theories, this chapter is able to answer the following research sub-question:

- What are the influential contextual factors causing both of these similarities and dissimilarities in the discourses?

6.2 Explaining the Similarities in Discourses

As discussed in Chapter 5, there are similarities between C1 and C2's green

advertising: discourses in themes of “re-colouring” or enriched greenness and perfecting greenness. In these instances, a common connection between the discourse and the social context can be identified: corporate greenness is represented as more of a new consumer lifestyle than a concern for environmental protection. The inclusive greenness presented in corporate green advertising discourse helps to re-articulate the traditional understanding of environmental responsibility, dilute the concern for environmental threats, and re-direct people’s green practice away from reducing consumption and toward green consumption. Such discourse is a part of a social process and it can be explained in the sociological theories of post-materialism and ecological modernization.

6.2.1 Green Consumption as Lifestyle in Post-materialism Era

In postmodern society, both practices and meanings of consumption become more diversified (Banerjee and McKeage, 1994). In the Postmodernism era, consumption practice is driven by freedom of diverse choices, and emphasizing on differences. Such feature, according to Miles et al., (2002), leads marketing practices and advertising discourses towards more fragmented and diversified forms of social identity and lifestyles. Compared with materialism as a consumer value which emphasizes the type and quantity of goods consumed (Richins and Dawson, 1992), post-materialist values put more emphasis on individuals’ self-expression and quality of life. Moreover, monetary rewards and economic gains are downplayed in such values. Instead, social goals are highlighted and a cooperative approach to social problems promoted. Therefore, consumers’ growing concern to environmental issues and green consumption can be seen as a coincidence to the post-materialist values (Knutsen, 1990).

As environmentalism is globalized and “green” is becoming the new “cool” (Strizhakova and Coulter, 2013), consumers under the post-materialism influence

deliberately begin to consumer for their status symbols as well as their lifestyles (Haanpaa, 2007). Inglehart (1981) explains that the environmental movements appear not as a concern for the increasing depletion of resources and environmental pollution, but rather, as a result of a change in cultural value towards “quality of life” issues (for example, having more beautiful cities and countryside views). As Banerjee and McKeage (1994) claim, in firms green marketing practices, advertisers tend to put emphases on aspects such as success, self-actualization, and social status, as this is an easier way to relate environmentalism to the realm of consumption. In addition, in contrast to those environmental advertising campaigns that evoke negative effects (for example, fear or guilt) among consumers and directly challenge the ideology of consumption with radical environmentalism (Banerjee and McKeage, 1994), this “green lifestyle” advertising approach, identified in this study, can be more effective.

Although environmental consumption in the post-materialism era is to consume for social goals, at a symbolic level, the post-materialism underpinning a green lifestyle in advertising discourse still belongs to the domain of consumerism; this is especially true in China as a developing country. This is reflected in the green advertising which emphasizes more on the functional and utilitarian aspects of green products than their Western counterparts.

Increased income and modernity have greatly influenced Chinese consumers’ attitudes and purchasing behaviours, making them more sophisticated in consumption values than ever before (Xiao and Kim, 2009). Both materialist and post-materialist values as consumption values have been found amongst Chinese consumers in the context of drastic economic and social change (Wang and Sun, 2013). In addition, as discussed in previous chapters, green consumption emerges along with the globalization process as well as people’s growing concern for

deteriorating environmental conditions. Under such circumstances, as post materialism mediates the relationship between soft status and consumption values (e.g., buying for price; buying for pleasure; buying for lifestyle), the new rich and the well-educated middle class in China, similar to their Western counterparts, begin to turn to post-materialist consumption, such as green consumption, to express their new consumer values and identity.

Correspondingly, what appears on the corporate online green advertising discourse in both categories of firms intends to present and construct a “green lifestyle” involved with green products consumption: the people who consume green products are presented as those who are not only responsible, ethical, but also health conscious, efficient, smart, hi-technology facilitated, and the “new-cool”. Thus, green consumption in China always represent an attempt for a green lifestyle, and the lifestyle oriented consumption is a reflection of postmodern society and post-materialism era.

6.2.2 Green Consumption as a Solution and the Ideological Influence from Ecological Modernization

In corporate green advertising discourse, green products and green consumption are represented as a solution to environmental problems, and companies with their green technologies and green products are described as playing a leading role in providing such solutions. This discursive representation can be explained as a consequence of the ideological effects of ecological modernization. Ecological modernization was first developed as a social theory on the environment and modernity. Mühlhäusler and Peace (2006) see ecological modernization as a variety of macro level green discourses. Ecological modernization holds the idea that although environmental issues are structurally embedded, solutions are able to be found within existing institutions (Coffey and Marston, 2013).

As Mol and Spaargaren (2000) argue, there are three characteristics of ecological modernization theory. First, ecological modernization theory assumes science and technology play a central role in bringing ecological reform. Secondly, ecological modernization believes the economic growth and market incentives, together with innovators, entrepreneurs and other economic agents, are all essential to form a dynamic which leads to ecological restructuring. Thirdly, ecological modernization disagrees with the solution in which the state takes a central role in environmental reform: the state should turn from centralized to decentralized in the environmental governance, and the market should take more responsibilities in environmental issues. Meanwhile, private economic actors, such as firms, can be actively involved in environmental reform (Mol and Spaargaren, 2000).

As discussed above, it can be concluded that the discourse from ecological modernization rejects radical restructuring in response to the environmental problems caused by industry. Instead it advocates a gradual change in which the business should be leading. From this perspective, environmental problems are decoupled from industrialization, pursuit of economic growth, and consumption. And the current model of capitalism seems to be capable for environmental problems (Hajer, 1995). As Bäckstrand and Lövbrand (2006) claim, ecological modernization is a technocratic and neo-liberal economic discourse that does not challenge the status quo or involve any fundamental reflective thinking about the current model of business and its production and consumption. Similarly, Havey (2005) sees neoliberalism as a timely antidote to threats to the existing capitalist social order and as a cure to over-production and over-consumption. Such pro-business/consumption opinion, in line with ecological modernization and developed under the influence of neoliberalism ideology (Havey, 2005), naturally wins support from companies and is, therefore, reflected in their green advertisements.

In China, although the economic political system is state-dominant (Havey, 2005) and the environmental protection system is initiated and led by the government (Tsai, 2001; Child, Lu and Tsai, 2007), the neoliberalist reform process since the 1980s has established a special type of market economy and China's authoritarian centralized control begun to incorporate neoliberal elements (Havey, 2005). Such a system of political economy influences the discourse of Chinese firms' green advertising. On the one hand, as with their Western counterparts, the Chinese firms advocate corporate power and believe in green consumption, seeing green products/technology as a viable approach towards a greener future. On the other hand, as discussed in Chapter 5, the Chinese green advertising discourse reflects a follower's stance to the government's requirements in environmental responsibilities and is philanthropy focused, and thus is different from MNCs' green discourse which integrates environmental responsibility into business growth. The differences between the categories of the firms' green advertising discourses will be explained in more details in the next sections.

6.3 Explaining the Differences

Although the transnational advertising industry tries to spread a universal version of green consumerism around world, this universalizing scheme is found to be localized by local firms in their green marketing and advertising (Li, 2010). This shows that advertising, in spite of its dazzling visual power and excellent outreach capability, is not fully transferred across borders. Instead, the green advertising discourses are embedded in a society's particular cultural-historical and institutional conditions and thus cannot be universalized.

Although common themes are identified in the green advertisings, by comparing MNCs and Chinese local firms' green advertisings, the above analysis shows the

differences in two general ways: the first one is the level of greenness; the second one is the level of sophistication of green discourse in terms of vocabulary, the integration of environmental responsibility into firm strategy, and political orientation.

In the first general difference, the MNCs' green advertisements discourse is greener than the Chinese one. For example, while most MNCs green advertisements intend to naturalize or marginalize the green products/technologies in the visual configuration of green advertisements, their Chinese counterparts exaggerate the existence of the products. The MNCs advertisements thus represent a symbol associated with a sense of guilt about environmental pollution and resource exhaustion, whilst the Chinese firms' advertisements show an individual status symbol which downplays the green products' value in environmental protection and benefit to the society. Ironically, it is known that Western culture stands for individualism while Chinese society is typically a collectivistic culture (Hofstede, 1984). It seems that the two types of green discourses contradict their contextual influences. Why, then, does the Chinese green discourse keep its focus on products while the MNCs focus more on environmental protection?

To solve this problem, the study needs to probe further into the contextual backgrounds. The following sections will first, draw on an institutional theoretical framework (North, 1990; Scott, 2001; Scott and Meyer, 1992) to explain the difference in level of greenness, and then rely on the perspective of the MNCs' new political role for business (Scherer and Palazzo, 2011) to explain why difference exists in the level of integration.

6.3.1 Explaining the Differences in the Level of Greenness: Institutional Theory

In the previous chapters, it has been argued that the emergence of Western green

marketing was strongly shaped by three social movements – the environmental movement in the political realm, the neoliberal movement in the economic realm, and the New Age movement in the religious and cultural realm. In comparison, Chinese green marketing started much later and was influenced by a different set of institutional factors. According to institutional theory, organizations all exist with their external constraints and the activities of organizations are inescapably influenced by the external institutional environment. Such external constraints from institutional environment can be rules, laws, industry standards, best established practices, social influences, and conventional wisdom (Katz and Kahn, 1978; Scott and Meyer, 1992). Institutional theory suggests that firms as organizations act in response to the conditions and institutional pressures – both in terms of economic efficiency and social legitimacy – inherent in the environment (Baum and Oliver, 1991; Harriss et al., 1995; Meyer and Rowan, 1977; Oliver, 1997). The implication of institutional theory is that the policies and practices of firms both face normative and regulatory constraints from governmental and social institutions (North, 1990). There are three distinct types of institutional forces both within and outside organizations: regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive (Scott, 2001). The distinctive features of Chinese firms’ green advertising discourse will be discussed based on the understanding of institutional theory in aspects of regulative, normative and cognitive-cultural institutions in China.

Regulative institution: First, in the political realm or regulative pillar of institutional environments, China did not experience a powerful and consistent environmental movement as did the U.S. and Europe. Instead, Chinese politics have been deeply influenced by Confucianism, which proposes strict social hierarchy and demarcates the responsibilities of the ruler and the subject. This belief extricates ordinary Chinese citizens from concerns about public issues such as environmental problems (Weller, 2006). Under Mao’s reign, the socialist egalitarianism and Mao’s call on the

Chinese to participate in collective actions eventually coalesced into a collective violence against nature (Shapiro, 2001). Post-Mao Chinese society relapsed into the Confucian tradition and citizens again became indifferent toward public affairs. Most citizens believe that environmental protection is the government's business (Weller, 2006; Zhang, 2008).

Also in China, the state regime directs and coordinates institutional change, i.e. the Chinese Communist Party and the state administrative bodies are the rule-makers, and others bodies such as companies and non-government organizations follow the rules (Tsai, 2001; Child, Lu and Tsai, 2007). The dominant and repressive role that the state plays in constructing regulatory pillars for the system of environmental protection, and the follower's role played by the Chinese indigenous companies, helps to shape the discursive features of their green advertising. For example, C2 firms' green advertising discourse bears a "political accent" (compared with C1 firms' business strategic orientation) and attaches much importance to government policies and regulations regarding environmental protection and responsibility.

Normative institution: The normative institution of environmental protection is related to the economic context. Factors from the economic realm play another role in restraining the constitution of green norms. While the Western consumers have achieved an elevated place in post-industrial life and begun to pursue post-materialism consumption such as green consumption (Ger and Belk, 1996), China's burgeoning capitalism has not reached the stage of mass consumerism which has paved the road for green consumption in the West. China's rapid economic development polarizes the society into the poor and the rich. The poor, comprising most of the population, are still struggling to enhance their very low living standards. As users but not consumers, they seek to fulfill needs from commodities' functions. Although China's rising middle class is influenced by the

imported environmentalism from the West through media and education, their green consumption for a green lifestyle is comparably in an early stage and their demand for expensive status-symbols such as green products is limited. The rich, on the other hand, can distinguish themselves by any conspicuous consumption and do not necessarily need to purchase green products to make themselves stand out. This condition of uneven economic development and social status has led to a lack of widely accepted norms on environmental protection and the general absence of the importance of environmental protection in the normative pillar, even though the environmental conditions are getting worse as a side effect of China's rapid economic development.

The green market is at most a niche market in China. Existing studies (e.g., Child and Tsai, 2005; Weller, 2006) also support this argument. For example, Child and Tsai (2005) found that despite the fact that China is rapidly promulgating new laws and policies, considerable uncertainty still exists because of the combination of rapid legal enactment and multiple overlapping layers of jurisdiction. Besides, the opaque nature of the institutions in terms of their complexity and arbitrariness serves economic rather than environmental aims. Furthermore, Weller (2006) has argued that although China had passed a series of environmental regulations and laws, they have been loosely implemented because people see environmental protection as less important than economic development. In environmental policy implementation: "there are policies from above and countermeasures from below" (Weller, 2006: 138). The underground resistance to environmental regulations and policies is rooted in the Chinese people's norms about environmental protection. Chinese people, as well as organizations, normally speak about the needs of the environment in terms of human gains and losses, or of economic interests (Weller, 2006). Such an argument is supported by company interviewees. Both C1 and C2 firms find barriers in developing and marketing their green innovation products. For example, Landsea's

Vice President commented:

“Most people do not buy into the green housing idea firstly because of the higher price and secondly because they think environmental protection or sustainability factors are too conceptual and not practical. Most consumers are willing to pay a green price premium because they think that their purchase has extra benefits, such as better environment and comfort. So we emphasize these factors when we design and advertise our environmental friendly products....”

Similarly, the Unilever Sustainability Development Director commented:

“We need to communicate with our consumers about the idea of sustainability in terms of economic gains[...]it is hard to for them to make sense of consuming out of environmental protection.”

The lack of environmental norms in China’s institution means that firms that advertise their environmental friendly products must deal with consumers’ normative void about the importance of environmental protection, and help them make sense of greenness by articulating greenness into existing norms and the worldly consumption values that have been better accepted in China: such as product design, function and performance, and value for money.

Cognitive institution: Specific features in the cultural realm also influence the construction of corporate green discourse in China. Western media often argues that the world’s environmental apocalypse begins from China, but the Chinese public lack the Judeo-Christian religious tradition and find strange the idea of an apocalypse. Buddhism, as the country’s mainstream religion, contains a cyclical perception of time and conceives prosperity and destitution as inevitable seasonal change. Here, Fei’s (1992) sociological theory of Chinese traditional society is drawn to examine further the nature of Chinese culture and its influence on Chinese green discourse. Compared with Hofstede’s general model of cultural dimensions, Fei’s theory is

specifically focused on the Chinese context and thus more useful to grasp the cultural-cognitive institutional feature in China, and explain the “selfish instrumental” feature of green discourse in Chinese firms’ advertisements.

6.3.1.1 Selfishness and Egocentrism

In addition to the societal influence from economic development as well as the normative context on environmental issues and firms green practices, factors from the cultural realm play another role in shaping green advertising discourse. Compared with the discourse that naturalizes green products and technologies of C1’s green advertisings, the C2 green advertising discourse reveals a more obvious anthropocentric and pragmatic attitude: nature can have its value only if it can provide material or physical benefits to humans, and green product/service has value because of its utilitarian, functional and economic advantages. Preserving nature and protecting the environment are apparently marginalized messages in this green discourse. It seems that the advertisings target audiences who think only of their own gain regardless of public resources – nature and the environment.

In the Chinese understanding, once something is deemed as a public belonging, it means that everyone can take advantage of it. Thus, people can have rights without taking their obligations. This selfishness has in fact contributed to environmental deterioration, and to the incompetence in solving environmental problems. But the incompetence in the face of the deteriorating environment, has less to do with individual ability than with each person’s service to, and responsibility for, public welfare and the natural environment. In comparison, when Chinese people manage their family’s businesses, earn money, and make personal connections, they show a greater aptitude than people from other countries. The problem defined by this kind of selfishness is thus actually one of how to draw the line between the group and the individual, between others and the Chinese sense of self. How this line has been

drawn in China traditionally is obviously different from the way it is drawn in the West. Therefore, if the problem of selfishness (and thus the problem of environment) in China is to be discussed, the pattern of the entire social structure has to be taken into consideration.

6.3.1.2 The Chinese Pattern of Organizing

According to Fei (1992), the way that Western societies are organized is like the way people collect straw: the straw is firstly bound into small bundles and then several bundles are bound into larger bundles; and then these bundles are stacked. By making an analogy between organizations in Western societies and the composition of haystacks, Fei (1992) indicated that in Western society the people in an organization form a group, and their relationship to the organization is usually the same. If there are differences among group members or distinctions among ranks within the organization, these would have been agreed upon as part of the rules of the organization. An individual may join several organizations, but it is impossible for a straw to be in several bundles at the same time. That is the difference between people and straws. Fei's purpose in making the analogy is to see more concretely the pattern of personal relationships in social life, what he henceforth calls the "organizational mode of association" (tuantigeju).

In comparison to the Western way of organizing pattern, Fei (1992) argues that the Chinese pattern is unlike distinct bundles of straws. Instead, it is somewhat like the circles that appear on the water surface of a silent lake when a rock is thrown into it. Each person has a social position at the center of his/her social circles produced by his or her own social influence. Meanwhile, each one's social circles are interrelated. For Chinese, their most important relationship – kinship – is like the concentric circles. This pattern of organization functions in Chinese traditional society and still largely remains in the modern Chinese mind. In the circle-like networks that make up

Chinese mindset, a self at the center of each web always exists, and the self centred mindset is not aligned to individualism, but egocentrism.

With individualism, individuals make up organizations in the same way that parts make up the whole. The balance between parts and whole produces a concept of equality: since the position of each individual in an organization is the same, one person cannot encroach on the others. It also produces a concept of constitutionality: an organization cannot deny the rights of an individual; it controls individuals merely on the basis of the partial rights they have willingly handed over. Without these concepts, such organizations as these could not exist. However, in Chinese traditional thought, there is no comparable set of ideas, because there is only egocentrism for Chinese.

Similarly, Confucian ethics are linked to the idea of discrete centers fanning out into a web-like network. As Confucius wrote, “What the superior man seeks is in himself; what the petty man seeks is in others.” With sentiments such as these, Confucius could not be like Jesus, who so loved everyone under the sun, including his enemies. These actions could not have been motivated by egocentrism. It is often thought that the Chinese would sacrifice their organizations or parties for their own self-interests or families’ interests, their country for their party’s and organizations’ interests, and the whole world for their country’s interests. Accordingly, environmental protection as a public and outer circle interest is thus sacrificed for an individual’s personal inner circle interests. This same idea is found in the classic book *The Great Learning*:

“The ancients who wished to display illustrious virtue throughout the empire first put their own states in good order. Wishing to order their states, they first cultivated their own self. Their self being cultivated, their families were regulated; their families being regulated, their states were correctly governed. Their states being well governed, the whole empire was made tranquil and peaceful.”⁸⁶

⁸⁶ *The Great Learning*, sec. 4. Its authorship is unclear.

Now it is clear about the boundary between the public and private spheres: only the “self interest” is satisfied, he or she can consider its next interests sitting on outside circle relationship; only the interests of people in his or her inner circle relationship met, he or she can begin to think about the next circle. Sacrificing the family for individual member’s interests, or the lineage for the interests of one’s household, is in reality a formula. This formula explains the fact that the civic consciousness as well as environmental responsibility is much less developed in China than Western society.

As a matter of fact, when Western diplomats work for the benefit of their own countries in international conferences, they willingly sacrifice world peace and other countries’ legal rights; these actions are the same as Chinese. However, the difference is that Westerners regard the state as an organization surpassing all smaller groups. Both international and local affairs can be sacrificed for the sake of the state, but the state cannot be sacrificed for other groups. In the same logic, the environment is like the state. In the concept of the modern state, public resources should be protected by the individuals as a public civic interest. However, this concept has historically been absent from Chinese society and culture. This differs from the West where the state as well as the environment is an organization that creates distinct boundaries between the public and the private spheres. Like straws in a haystack citizens all belong to the state and the environment. They have to make the state a public organization beneficial to each individual. Yet in traditional China, the concept of public and the environment is the ambiguous “tianxia” (all under heaven), historically whereby the state and its environment were seen as the emperor’s family and their belonging. Hence, the private hardly can be concerned with the environment. For individuals, the state and the public are simply remote and additional circles that spread out far.

In the light of Fei's theory, the anthropocentric and pragmatic feature of green discourse found in Chinese corporate green advertising can be understood as a reflection of the pattern of organization in Chinese society and the egocentric culture and mindset.

6.3.2 The Institutional Context Accounts for the Lower Level of Greenness

Overall, even though China's central government has been aggressive in launching environmental regulations and laws, in the current stage, elaborate legal provisions seem to have little effect on institutionalizing environmentalism in normative level norms, and massive propaganda campaigns have little effect on greening people's cognition. The majority of Chinese consumers, poor or rich, place their immediate personal welfare ahead of environmental degradation—except under the condition that environmental degradation has influenced their individual well-being (no wonder that the green products such as air purifiers and green houses equipped with pollution elimination facilities are so popular in the Chinese market⁸⁷). This might also be a reason why the green products currently available in China are mainly limited to food and certain luxury goods, such as houses, home electronics, furniture, and cars (Dai, 2010). As a consequence and under the influence of the institutional context (See **Table 6.1**), the meaning of “green” in China generally refers to a product's benefits for individuals, for example, consumer's health improvement, instead of its contribution to public environmental protection. This is reflected in the “light greenness” or lower level of greenness in Chinese firms' green advertising discourse. The “light greenness” refers to a pragmatic greenness, which means products' environmental features are mainly focusing on anthropocentric aspects instead of environmental protection itself, such as cost efficiency greenness, health related greenness, and coziness greenness.

⁸⁷ <http://www.ftchinese.com/story/001053828> 2013/12/9

Institutional pillars	Description	Influences on green discourses
Regulative	State-led, top-down environmental protection system; Poor implementation	A follower's stance, and "political accent": taking environmental responsibility as response to governmental calls.
Normative	Lack of environmental norms Treating Environmental protection in economic	Worldly consumption values
Cultural-cognitive	Selfishness and egocentrism	Pragmatism greenness and anthropocentric greenness

Table 6.1: China's Environmental Institutions and Firm's Lower Level of Greenness in Discourse

Influenced by a broader social and historical context, the advertising together from MNCs subsidiary in China and Chinese indigenous firms indicates that there is an ongoing struggle about how greenness should be presented: the Chinese indigenous corporate green advertising discourse presents greenness as anthropocentric and pragmatic (economic advantage, functional benefit, and way escaping from pollution). In comparison, the MNCs subsidiaries in China shape greenness as a sustainable development approach (making both environmental and business sense). From this point of view, the MNCs' green advertisings can be seen as a reflection of the new political role of MNCs in their global impacts, and a discursive force for change towards the governance of environmental issues (Matten and Crane, 2005; Scherer and Palazzo, 2007; Scherer and Palazzo, 2011; Scherer et al., 2006). This is reflected in the more sophisticated discourse constructed by MNCs. The following sections will explain the second general difference with a focus on the idea of sustainability development.

6.3.3 Explaining the Differences in the Level of Integration: Business' New Political Role

The second difference between green advertising discourse from C1 and C2 pertains to the level of integration of greenness: in C2 firms' green online advertising discourse, environmental practice is always related to corporate social responsibility and corporate environmental responsibility is articulated as a response to the governmental appeal for becoming green. In comparison, the C1 firms' discourse integrates corporate environmental practice into business sense, and through the idea of "sustainability development" it presents a way towards both a greener environment in the future and a growing business for the company. Besides, different to C2 firms' follower's stance responding to governmental requirements, C1 discourse presents a more active stance: by introducing and interpreting sustainability development, the firms are presenting a model of corporate environmental responsibility and providing guidance for business environmental practices under the theme of sustainability development.

This proactive stance identified in C1 firms' discourse can be seen as a reflection of firms' political role and a politicized corporate environmental responsibility. Matten and Crane (2005) suggest that during the past decades, corporations have become more political and made more impacts on the global societies, especially in situations where the government fails to enact or implement effective environmental policies. Scherer and Palazzo (2011) claim that, in the context of globalization, there emerged an "extended model of governance with business firms contributing to global regulation and providing public goods" (p. 901). They further explain that:

"[...]multinational firms operate in complex environments with heterogeneous legal and social demands so that often it is not clear which activities can be considered legitimate and which are unacceptable[...]In order to react to NGO pressure, to close gaps in regulation, and to reduce complexity, many business firms have started to compensate the gaps in national governance by voluntarily contributing to self-regulation and by producing public goods that are not delivered by governments" (Scherer and Palazzo, 2011: 903).

As companies have engaged in activities that traditionally are regarded as governmental activities (Matten and Crane, 2005; Scherer and Palazzo, 2011), it is especially true that MNCs start to become more proactive in the environmental issues (Hart, 2005; Marcus and Fremeth, 2009). Specifically, empirical studies (e.g., Child and Tsai, 2005; Tsai, 2001) have found that MNCs in China actively engaged in the formulation of environmental protection policies. Since business firms begin to adopt a political role in environmental issues, the erosion of the division of labour between business and government is in accordance with the more active attitude noted in MNCs' green advertising discourse.

6.3.3.1 The Emergence and Adoption of “Sustainability” in Green Discourse

It has been found that MNCs largely adopted the concept of “sustainability” in their green advertising discourse. Sustainability can be seen as a floating signifier (Laclau and Mouffee, 1985) which is open to different ascriptions of meanings. But through discursive activities, meanings are constructed. Thus, sustainability as a floating signifier is also a discursive agent which is used by discourse producers to construct their standards and norms as realities. Such discursive agency is not without limits. Rather, according to Hardy and Phillips (1999), the production and dissemination of various forms of texts are embedded into a larger discursive context. So, to explain the feature of MNCs green discourse – the adoption of sustainability – it is necessary to look into the context of corporate sustainability discourse, especially its historical roots and socio-cultural background.

The term of sustainability has become popular nowadays; both government and commercial organizations appeal for a sustainable development model. As claimed by Scherer and Palazzo (2007, 2011), on the one hand, as the countries' ability in addressing the environmental problems had been low and inconsistent, there has been a need to engage and bring commercial organizations on board because

environmental and social problems need more aggressive and creative solutions; on the other hand, the companies always wanted to find a better way to control resource cost while improving their energy efficiency and enlarging businesses. For those two reasons, commercial environmentalism and sustainability discourse developed (Scherer and Palazzo, 2011). In the commercial world, it is not hard to find that a great number of multinational corporations have adopted the idea of sustainability and integrated it into their business practices and development strategy: following Wal-Mart⁸⁸, firms operating in global market began to have their own but similar sustainability strategies (see **Table 6.2**).

⁸⁸ <http://corporate.walmart.com/global-responsibility/environment-sustainability/energy> 2014/4/12

Company	Sustainability strategy	Year	Goals
GE	Ecomagination	2005	Growth through clean energy, clean water and clean technologies. ⁸⁹
Unilever	Unilever Sustainability Living Plan	2010	Decouple growth from environmental impact, halve environmental impact while double business. ⁹⁰
Procter and Gamble	Sustainability Vision	2010	Design products to maximize the conservation of resources. Focusing our efforts where we can make the most meaningful difference in both environmental and social Sustainability. ⁹¹
Wal-Mart	Sustainability Commitment	2005	Achieve zero waste, 100% renewable energy, and sustainable sourcing. ⁹²
BASF	BASF Sustainable Strategy	2009	Create chemistry for a sustainable future. ⁹³
Nike	Considered Design	2008	Performance without compromising sustainability. ⁹⁴
IBM	Smarter Planet	2008	Environmental stewardship, ethical sourcing and community involvement goals by 2015. ⁹⁵
Best Buy	Greener Together	2010	Encourage consumers to reduce, reuse, and trade-in “end of life” electronics. ⁹⁶

Table 6.2: The Rise of Sustainability among MNCs

With the evidence of the widely accepted idea of sustainability, previous study (e.g., Guilbrandsen, 2010; Lister, 2011) had discussed the importance of corporate power in shaping the form and content of eco-certification. By looking to answer why and how industry tried to frame issues, lobby governments, and partner with NGOs, researchers found that companies are constructing market - and state - led environmental governance (e.g. Lister, 2011). Look deeper into the sustainability

⁸⁹ <http://www.ecomagination.com/> 2014/4/13

⁹⁰ <http://unilever.com/sustainable-living/index.aspx> 2014/4/13

⁹¹ <http://www.greenbiz.com/blog/2010/09/27/behind-procter-gambles-sustainability-vision> 2014/4/13

⁹² <http://foundation.walmart.com/our-focus/sustainability/> 2014/4/13

⁹³ <http://www.basf.com/group/corporate/us/en/about-basf/worldwide/north-america/USA/sustainability/sustainable-strategy> 2014-04-13

⁹⁴ <http://nikeinc.com/considered-design> 2014/4/13

⁹⁵ <http://www.ibm.com/smarterplanet/us/en/> 2014/4/13

⁹⁶ <http://stores.bestbuy.com/1452/announcement/lets-grow-green-together/> 2014/4/13

practices presented by the MNC's green discourse with the above argument in mind, and refer to further background information about the companies, it is not hard to find the other side of the "sustainability story". For example, the companies state: since Unilever Sustainable Living Plan was implemented in 2010 Unilever's share price has doubled over the four years. GE Ecomagination reported \$21billion in revenue for the year of 2011⁹⁷. However, this does not mean that the increase in business derived only from corporate sustainability strategy and practice. Looking back into the history of Unilever, instead of a sustainability strategy, the company has always realized its profit growth through its high-volume and low-cost outsourcing approach (Dauvergne and Lister, 2011). Such strategy enabled Unilever to win competitive advantage from economies of scale and low prices, and thus contributed largely to Unilever's business growth and market share.

In addition and more importantly, the company's competitive advantage was rooted in the effective way its complex supply chain was controlled. Most of Unilever's suppliers are from under-regulated regions. For example, Unilever had 264 manufacturing sites worldwide and about 50% of the raw materials that Unilever used for products came from agriculture and forestry (Dhawan et al., 2010). Therefore, Unilever took outsourcing to achieve more flexibility, cost savings and inexpensive inputs. However, outsourcing can forfeit direct control and potentially introduce new risks around product quality and reliable supply. More importantly, there might be toxic and illegally products produced which could cost MNCs millions in lost as well as reputational damage. The situation is similar to GE, a multinational dealing with business partners and suppliers all over the world and across a number of sectors. The less developed environmental standards among suppliers in developing countries apparently pose many potential threats to GE's operation efficiency and corporate reputation.

⁹⁷ Information collected from corporate internal data and interview data.

In order to better govern their extending global chains, Unilever and GE have been implementing policies and procedures which are integrated into, or under the name of, their sustainability strategies. For example, GE's EHS (Environment, Health, and Safety) under their sustainability practice portfolio and aligned with its Ecomagination, played an essential role in stabilizing and improving production flows, as well as minimizing financial risks, and ultimately helped GE capture more business value. GE's ecomagination program is actually an open-innovation platform through which GE's traditional technological and financial strength is more leveraged and localized into customer needs. Thus, in a fashionable way of becoming sustainable and presenting the discourse of sustainability, corporate sustainability has been increasingly adopted by firms as a means to govern their supply chains and achieve business goals, and in the meantime, address growing environmental and social expectations from outside stakeholders such as government, NGOs and the "responsible consumers".

In addition, in order to enhance the efforts of their supply chain management, both Unilever and GE in China are collaborating with a range of stakeholders from governments, academies, local communities, and advocacy NGOs. Through this collaboration, MNCs are able to direct both government policy making and industrial norms by providing training programs and auditing service. This is a more implicit way for MNCs to exert their influence and diffuse their standards, and the ultimate goal is to establish their governance and control. This kind of approach is also reflected in their green advertising discourse in their websites.

In the end, defining and integrating sustainability into companies' operations, products and supply chains not only help companies save cost and improve efficiency, but also and ultimately link sustainability to their branding. The bigger the corporate

reputation, the harder it is to protect the brand. Companies therefore need to go to great lengths to guard their brands. Without doubt, the sustainability practices conducted and sustainability meaning constructed by Unilever and GE enhance their brand among different stakeholders and put a safety valve on their extensive business operations.

Based on the above arguments, it can be assumed that the real motivation behind business discourse of sustainability is to achieve green governmentality, a form of governance on environmental issues and global supply chain management, as well as advocate for more business growth and more consumption of material products.

6.4 Conclusion of Chapter 6

As the level of societal analysis, this chapter focuses on the research sub-question of “What and how are the influential contextual factors causing both the similarities and differences in the discourses?” and draws social theories to explain both the similarities and differences identified in corporate green advertising discourse, as well as their interaction with social contexts. First, in the explanation of similarities, the inclusive or re-coloured/enriched greenness is explained by the post-materialist value in which consumption is related to identity and lifestyle. In addition, the fact that green advertisements treat green consumption as a solution to environmental problems is influenced by ecological modernization as both a theory and a neoliberalist ideology.

Secondly in the explanation of differences, based on an institutional theoretical framework, the lower level of greenness of Chinese firms’ green advertising discourse is explained in terms of regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive institutional influences. Especially in cultural-cognitive institutions, Fei’s sociological theory on the Chinese mindset helps to understand the distinctive nature

of Chinese egocentrism and the more significant worldly and anthropocentric features in Chinese firms' green advertisings. Moreover, a more proactive attitude combined with the adoption of "sustainability", represents a more integrated green approach for MNCs. This difference is a discursive reflection of MNCs' new political role and their intention in environmental governance.

In the next chapter, a critical discussion on the research findings will be presented. And the implications for practice and possible future research directions will be followed.

Chapter 7: Discussion

7.1 Introduction

This chapter will firstly provide an overview of data findings. It will then engage critically with the findings, and discusses and evaluates them in relationship to previous research, and in the context of existing literature on corporate environmental responsibility, corporate communication, and green consumption. The evaluation of findings in the review then allows me to critically summarize the material and address my principle research question. In the end of this chapter, the overarching research question will also be responded.

7.2 Advertising as Corporate Discursive Strategies

Companies have adopted a range of discursive strategies and engage in the symbolic management in order to influence public perceptions (Livesey, 2001). Previous studies have indicated that corporate communication is able to “create and maintain systems of shared meanings that facilitate organized action” (Smircich and Stubbart, 1985: 724). Therefore, companies are conceived of as capable to manage or control its “publics” (Shrivastava, 1987; Tyler, 1992). Communication theorists have studied the environmental rhetoric and illuminated the constitutive function of language in framing problems and disputes related to the natural environment (e.g., Cantrill and Oravec, 1996; Carbaugh, 1996; DeLuca, 1999; Hajer, 1997; Harre et al., 1999; Myerson and Rydin, 1996; Peterson, 1997).

Companies’ communicative ability is found not only in dealing with public relation issues as but also in its use to manufacture mass consumption (Baudrillard, 1998). As environmental concerns have begun to emerge in China, both multinational corporations and Chinese indigenous firms have started to target at the emerging

“green market” and launch their green products; companies’ green advertisings as one kind of corporate environmental communications, have helped to fuel the desire for green commodities. Such consumption desire can be socially generated and symbolically structured by advertising (Baudrillard, 1998; Haug 1986; Leis, et al., 1986). Despite the important role of green advertising in facilitating corporate green marketing and communication, existing academic research on the ways companies construct greenness lacks a sound theoretical foundation, especially with regard to emerging economies such as China, where environmental institutions appear to be different from those in developed countries (Mol, 2006; Tsai, 2001; Weller, 2006).

Moreover, in the digital era, corporate websites have become a vehicle to market and disseminate advertisings (e.g., Nielsen, 2002; Hwang et al., 2003) and corporate websites have been treated as a type of advertising that not only build a brand for the company but also offer more depth of information that could not be provided in traditional media-based advertising (McMillan et al., 2003). Thus, it is worth investigating the linguistic or discursive features of corporate online green advertisings (Nielsen, 2002).

7.3 Research Question

Due to the dearth of research about the corporate discursive strategies in green marketing, this research has focused on types of advertising discourses active on corporate websites. This study has been organized around the following key question:

- How do firms construct the corporate greenness through green advertising discourse in their corporate websites?

As a discourse is defined as an attempt to fix a web of meanings within a particular

domain (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001), this research question bases its theoretical framework on Discourse Theory and aims to look into the representation and meaning constructed in green advertising discourse, and to identify the hidden ideology in the commercial greenness. Among the variety of discourse analysis approaches, the CDA approach of Fairclough's Three-Dimensional analytic model emphasizes on the dialectical relationship between discourse and its situated social contexts, and guides the researcher to analyze language in use in China Market.

Because of limited knowledge on the nature of green advertising discourse on corporate websites, the overarching research question has served as a direction for the investigation. In addition, based on the descriptive, interpretative, and explanatory dimensions in Fairclough's model, as well as literature review on the Chinese environmental institutional contexts, sub-questions have been developed:

- Are there any similarities and differences between the advertising language used to present greenness within the studied two categories of companies? If yes, what are they? (Descriptive and interpretative dimensions)
- What are the influential contextual factors causing both of these similarities and differences in the discourses? (Explanatory dimension)

As the research sub-questions have been addressed in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, this section will mainly focus on the overarching research question by summarizing and discussing the findings.

7.4 A Summary of Research Findings

This study aims to adequately trace the ways in which green advertising represents firms as environmental responsible and promotes the commodification of

environmental responsibility or green consumption (Castree, 2003; Liverman, 2004). In doing so, it contribute to critical theory on advertisings (Tadajewski and Brownlie, 2008). Specifically, the study respectively analyzes the online green advertising discourses from the four types of corporate web pages. The pages chosen are: the Home Page, About Page, CSR/Sustainability Page, and Products Introduction Page. The key research findings from each web page will be briefly reviewed, followed by a critical discussion in perspective of discourse theory and in relationship to previous studies.

Firstly analyzed is the discourse appeared on Home Page. Home Page is a new genre emerging from the World Wide Web (Nielson, 2002) and it functions as a billboard. Through hyperlinks, it enables the audience to investigate further information in the website. The language on the Home Page from both categories of firms exhibits promotional language by featuring largely visual information and repeatedly touting the distinct accomplishments of current companies in green products development and environmental protection practices. The prominent presentation of firms' green products (and technologies) identifies their distinction, which help enhance the corporate profile. Such distinctive profile offers tangible evidences for firms to build their green identity. Moreover, repetition of corporate information, such as the company's name and its products/services, along with the its accomplishments, demonstrate an attempt to build identity (Toma et al., 2005).

On the Home Page, a hyperlink directs its audience to the About Page of the company website. Similar to the Home Page, green information derived from the About Page is featured with promotional discourse. In addition, the firms' history, values and mission are also described as relevant to environmental responsibilities. In a word, the About Page green discourse can be styled as promotional, and corporate greenness is imbued with prominence. The overall objective of the

“About” web page information is to give recognition of the history of the firms as responsible organizations. Furthermore, the greenness communicated is derived from the companies’ values, mission and traditions, which embed corporate greenness into its history and help to legitimate them as environmental responsible organizations.

The third type of web pages studied is the web page that presents information under the themes of “CSR” and/or “Sustainability”. The terms of “CSR” and “sustainability” occupy an important proportion in the corporate online green discourse. Especially for the MNCs’ websites, the word of sustainability has been pervaded not only in the CSR/Sustainability web page, but also appears across other web pages, such as Home page, About page, and Product Introduction page. It acts as an umbrella term to illustrate firms’ integration of environmental responsibility into their business development strategies. Moreover, the online discourse from the CSR/Sustainability web page features information about the green credential of the advertising firms. All companies investigated present their green practices with a promotional-style discourse instead of a fact-statement discourse.

Difference exists between the MNCs category and the Chinese indigenous firms category on their CSR/Sustainability webpages. MNCs have a Sustainability Development webpage and a CSR webpage established and respectively introduce sustainability (such as sustainability business models/products/services) and CSR practices. In comparison, Chinese indigenous firms only have CSR webpage in which the term of sustainability is included but only briefly mentioned and appears as an empty and grafted concept. And the concept is without any explicit business practices regarding to it. Such difference embodies the difference between environmental orientation and environmental strategy. Banerjee et al. (2003) propose that corporate environmentalism includes two dimensions: environmental orientation and environmental strategy. “Environmental orientation is the recognition by

managers of the importance of environmental issues facing their firms, and environmental strategy is the extent to which environmental issues are integrated with a firm's strategic plans" (Banerjee et al., 2003:106). As reflected in the corporate green discourses in CSR/Sustainability web pages, MNCs subsidiaries take a position more in environmental strategy and less in environmental orientation than Chinese local firms in their corporate environmentalism.

Literature on CSR also suggests that CSR in developing economics has been characterized as less embedded in corporate strategies than in most developed countries (Visser, 2008). Besides, the CSR of small and medium enterprises in developing countries is more blended with personal and religious motivations, and it thus reflects in a spontaneous altruistic philanthropic CSR orientation (e.g., Amaeshi et al., 2006; Jamali et al., 2009). Such altruistic philanthropic orientation is also found in the discourse of Chinese firms' webpage in introducing their corporate environmental responsibility practices. Besides, the CSR discourse in Chinese firms represents nationalist and political motivations.

Conceptually and taking it through a discourse theoretical perspective, sustainability can be understood as "contested" (Jacobs, 1999) and a "floating signifier" (Laclau, 1990), in the sense that while the concept has broad public acceptance, its meaning in corporate advertisements is contested as "competing discourses seek to fill the term with their own particular meanings" (Jorgensen and Philips, 2002: 28). Although the notion of sustainability is complex, difficult to understand and sometimes disengaging (Carvalho, 2001; Giddings et al., 2002; Kallio, 2004), there is no detailed information on the definition of this concept in the web page. However, in the presentation of CSR/Sustainability web pages, both categories of firms publicize and advertise their involvement in community. In addition, they produce opportunities for both local community involvement and industrial development, and

encourage green practices to protect the natural environment on their CSR/Sustainability websites. In the articulation of sustainability and environmental responsibility web pages, GE's main cause is to push forward the aviation industry's development in China. Unilever raises funds for conservation of wilderness and ecosystems in China's Tibetan region. BYD invests its resources to set up the electrical infrastructure for local public transportation. And, Landsea initiates the Green Association for promoting higher environmental standards in the real estate industry in China. Through these firms' emphasis on community involvement and industrial standards enhancement, the corporate green advertising discourse on their CSR/Sustainability web pages shows that corporations are not only profit-driven but also stakeholder driven, and the discourse of greenness can be seen as a dialogue between companies and their stakeholders.

This finding has been supported by existing studies on firms' environmental marketing and stakeholder theory (e.g., Freeman, 1984; Cronin, et al., 2011). For example, Polonsky (1995) claims that firms' environmental decisions and strategies have been affected by their stakeholders. Other previous studies also have focused on the successful approaches stakeholders influence firms (Agle, et al., 1999), but limited attention paid on the way firms modifying such influences.

The promotional discourse of firms' CSR/Sustainability reflects firms' response to stakeholders' influences and represents an attempt to modify such influences. For example, in the CSR/Sustainability web page, there are common words that show a business perspective such as *bring* (the best standards), *provide* (opportunities for development), *understand* (the local needs), and *benefit* (for both company and environment), which shows a corporative paternalistic perspective. It implies that corporations are responsible for providing something to society and the natural environment. The narrative is constructed as: firms provide for the planet, not the

other way around. Such narrative found in corporate discourse represents firms' responses to their multiple stakeholders with environmental concerns, and in the same time, construct an intention to dominate the relationship with and lead these stakeholders in environmental issues. Therefore, different to the previous research findings that firms react in a compliance position or mediate passively in face to stakeholder's influence (e.g., Fineman and Clarke, 1996), corporate green advertising discourse functions as counter-influence and actively modifies the power relation between firms and their stakeholders.

It is also noted that the Sustainability statement in advertising discourse, with its attempt to sustain economic development, seems to bear the conventions of neoliberalism discourse (Harvey, 2005). Neoliberalism discourse gives promise on progress in the future (e.g., the sustainable harvest of tomatoes in Unilever's Sustainability Development program in China). Such discourse is used to shield the firm from blame for present environmental risks, also it has devastating effects on weaker groups who are lack of economic power in a market system (e.g., under the contract with Unilever, local farmers have no other options except planting tomato as their sole income source). The myth of progress, and the contradictions within it, have been concealed and manipulated by this kind of corporate talk of sustainability development. Behind the sustainability discourse is the companies' drive for eco-certification and the implementation of their own environmental standards. Existing studies have suggested that corporations have an important role in shaping the form and content of eco-certification (e.g., Cashore et al., 2004; Clapp, 2005; Dauvergne and Lister, 2011; Pattberg, 2005; 2007).

Such corporate eco-certification and governance on environmental practices embodied in firms' sustainability discourse need to be critically treated. For example, management tools for environmental benefits remain non-standardized; it is difficult

to say that GE's environmental standard is not to maximize the company's interests such as brand security and productivity. Environmental standards or practices which do not make business sense might be excluded from a corporate sustainability package. It needs to be acknowledged that MNCs such as GE and Unilever are proactively pushing forward China's environmental system and helping to implement sustainability practices. However, it is problematic whether the MNCs exert too much influence on policies and rules via their sustainability standards and hegemonic sustainability discourse. This might result in even more unbalanced relations of power.

In addition, in the company self-claimed philosophy behind sustainability business, business needs to think more about how it could give to, rather than take away from, society. In practice, this seems to be not effective in solving environmental problems in China as it nevertheless encourages people keep consuming and making impact to the environment. Fundamentally, global sustainability is hardly achieved by big brand sustainability governance on its own. As claimed by Dauvergne and Lister (2012), the MNCs' business model is actually unsustainable: increasing volumes of cheap goods from developing countries are shipped across the world to retail outlets, in order to satisfy the growing desire of consumers at discount prices which cannot fully reflect the environmental and social costs in production. In addition, MNCs enact and implement environmental governance on their own terms for business value. Consequently, the underlying objective of governance from corporate sustainability – always more business growth and more consumption – inherently hinders the real reform towards truly sustainable development.

Overall, this study suggests that multinationals with their sole efforts of sustainability can hardly solve the environmental problem. Ultimately, effective global environmental governance has to involve a more public justified and shared

governance approach.

Compared with the above three types of web pages, the Products Introduction web page provides much richer information. The green advertisements found in this type of webpage are developed around companies' green products, and both the textual and visual discourses of the advertisements have been analyzed.

Baudrillard (1998) has argued that capital utilized an aestheticized commodification in order to promote the wonders and joys in the consumer society, and, in this way controlled the mode of signification and consumption. Thus, Haug's (1986) "commodity aesthetics" was one type of capital's strategies to colonize consumer culture and everyday life, as well as promote consumption. A possible consequence of this is that people are commodified and they equal buying and consumption as the sole solution to all problems. As a result, consumerism becomes a good way of life in contemporary capitalism societies. In green advertisements, in order to stimulate the audience's imagination and construct the "aestheticized commodification", the aesthetic terrain is constituted by visual strategies of "naturalization" and "harmonious configuration". In addition, the greenness is related to the "lifestyle" themes such as "family", "health" and "efficient" etc., which connect corporate greenness to a broader social context. In this way, people's imagination can be stimulated. Similarly, Garland et al., (2013) argue that advertisements as "aesthetic objects" are made meaningful by relating other social themes to a broader "circuit of culture" (Buchanan-Oliver et al., 2010). By critically studying the visual strategies used in these advertisements from corporate green product introduction page, it can be concluded that the process of "replacing" or "hijacking" is taking place: under a utopian vision constructed symbolically by green advertising, people's concern for environment and green practices (such as reducing consumption) is hijacked by the green consumption practices advocated by corporate green advertisements. Corporate

green advertising constructs a hopeful and exciting vision of a utopian society in which everything exists in ecological harmony; the urgent sense of facing environmental problems is, therefore, diminished, and the environmental pressure on companies is suspended.

This utopian discourse is an important component of what Buell (2003) describes as the “culture of hyperexuberance” and is also symptomatic of the green consumerism phenomenon emerging in modern society. This utopian discourse and hyperexuberance greenness that appear in corporate online advertising can also be seen as a form of systematically distorted communication (Habermas, 1984; 1989).

The idea of systematically distorted communication is developed by Jürgen Habermas and widely used in the critical research on communication. Systematically distorted communication refers to strategic action where “at least one of the parties behaves with an orientation to success but leaves others to believe that all presuppositions of communicative action are satisfied” (Habermas, 1984: 332). For example in the study of oil companies,

“[...]the ‘sustainable development’ of the oil companies has not saved us from the malignant effects of their unsustainable operation, such as the greenhouse effect, continuous degradation of the ecosystems and extinction of species[...]Instead, the oil companies take advantage of the economic and social pillars of their concept of ‘sustainable development’ to exploit the huge, tempting commercial prospects in second and third world” (Ketola, 2007:172).

The distortion comes from action oriented to business goals in terms of profit and shareholder value. Such distortion from environmental benefits to business success influences the adoptions to and understanding of the concept of sustainability, and affects the agenda of “discussing the issue of sustainability and how to reach such development” (Ketola, 2007:344). Thus as a result of such distorted communication,

the issue of environmental protection is implicitly marginalized and replaced by the idea of company profit which has been positioned as the central focus.

Habermas (1970) asserted that science and technology are sources of systematically distorted communication that prevent the attainment of consensus on political issues. Communication about environmental problems and issues is particularly susceptible to the distortion that follows from the uncritical use of the language of science because of the technical complexity of most environmental problems and the accompanying need to relegate all complex environmental problems to “technical experts” (Brown, 1987). Brown (1987) explored some of the more frequent ways in which the translation of environmental problems into the language and methods of science all too often distorts the value questions inherent in environmental problems and in many ways questions of value are lost or distorted in technical discourse about environmental problems. For example, he argued that one way in which values questions are distorted in the technical process to which they are relegated is through the translation of value questions to economic language. According to Brown (1987), when the particular value questions are considered in environmental decision making, the values are usually assessed by technical experts in terms of traditional economic considerations, such as costs, benefits, and efficient markets.

The distorted communication in the Product Introduction web pages is also featured by perfected greenness. Social constructionist claims that discourse builds people’s understanding of social realities (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). It is also recognized that some discourses present a higher “truth value” than others and thus are easier to be accepted. Sometimes certain discourses are even considered as absolute truths that are not to be questioned (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). To echo the systematically distorted communication theory (Habermas, 1981; 1984; Deetz, 1992), the corporate greenness as a constructed social reality is distorted and communicated with

discursive strategies such as perfection and pacification. The analyses in my study show that the green products advertisements leverage an illusioned vision of a nostalgic and innocent Edenic world.

There ARE different emphases on the visually presented picture of corporate greenness, seen for example, in the way that MNCs centralize the natural component, and naturalize and dematerialize products, while Chinese local firms emphasize green products with greenness as mainly a decorative factor. That said, the green pictures in corporate green advertisements seem to show an intact, super-real and harmonious nature. On the surface, this is a flavor of radical environmentalism and it reflects the intrinsic value in nature. However, this seemingly pro-environmental picture is a cover for companies' anthropocentric world-view and certain realities have been silenced in the pacification strategy of corporate green advertisements.

According to Fairclough (1993), an analysis of discursive silences (or silenced and/or omitted discourses) is essential. In discourses there are a number of silences, as well as omissions and obscure connotations. It is through this recognition that whatever can and cannot be said about something becomes perceptible and help to uncover hidden intentions, implicit assumptions and veiled ambiguities (Fairclough, 1993). There are several discursive silences in corporate green advertising discourse. First, the advertisements information on their green solution or sustainability development model does not expose the fact that the use of finite resources cannot be sustained. It is quite impossible, in the contemporary production and consumption model, renewable resources are able to be renewed fast enough to match fast-growing consumption; it is also problematic to think that there are adequate substitutes for what has been used in the resources. The natural environment cannot be sustained by consumption alone.

Another example of pacification strategy is in the green car advertisements. Even though the discourse emphasizes the environmentally beneficial elements such as petrol free or low emission and pollution reduction, the green car still produces certain other pollutants to the environment, especially its car battery disposal and its production process. There have been critical voices suggesting that the extra energy cost of manufacture, shipping, disposal, and the short lives of the green vehicle products, outweighs energy and resource savings from the reduced consumption of petroleum during their useful lifespan (CNW Marketing Research, 2006). As cars cannot do anything good for the environment, although some can do less damage than others, Norwegian law has restricted the use of green washing for market automobiles (Doyle, 2006). Similarly, Tziovaras' (2011) claims that there are no cars that are really environmentally friendly. In addition, although the increased fuel efficiency of green cars is considered positive in the short run, the Jevons paradox⁹⁸ (Alcott, 2005) however suggests that in the long run, energy efficiency can increase energy consumption. Therefore, scholars believe that green transport may require a fundamental move away from hydrocarbon fuels, and from the current automobile and highway paradigm (Gilbert, 2010; Kunstler, 2012).

In the end, corporate advertising green discourse fails to mention the feasibility of their green products, (such as changing the consumers' consumption habit by Unilever's green products; developing whole new infrastructures for eco-cars by BYD). Although the green product can help enhance environmental performance, the comparatively higher price for green product is also not mentioned. Though there exist such debates and paradoxes on the influence of green vehicles on the

⁹⁸ In economics, the Jevons paradox/effect is the proposition that as technology progresses, the increase in efficiency with which a resource is used tends to increase (rather than decrease) the rate of consumption of that resource. The proposition was put forward by English economist William Stanley Jevons who observed that technological improvements that increased the efficiency of coal use led to increased consumption of coal in a wide range of industries. He argued that, contrary to common intuition, technological improvements could not be relied upon to reduce fuel consumption. (Alcott, B. 2008. Historical overview of the Jevons Paradox in the literature/ in J.M. Polimeni, K. Mayuni, M. Giampietro. The Jevons Paradox and the Myth of Resource Efficiency Improvements. Earthscan.

environment, corporate green advertising discourse purposely conceals the negative effects of the product and only presents the positive side. Such concealment can be understood as a result and practice of discursive suppression (Deetz, 1992).

7.5 Divergence and Localization

As Corbett (2006) suggests, “the social construction of nature or the definitions and meanings, which people tend to build through social interaction about nature, can be quite different from culture to culture”, and furthermore, all environmental messages “have ideological roots that are deep and that are influenced by individual experience, geography, history, and culture” (Corbett, 2006:6). Based on such point, firms are expected to adjust their environmental messages to their target audience, especially via the use of green advertising. And the representation of the “greenness” constructed by firms operating in China (corporate environmental responsibility practices, environmental features of products/services) is likely to be influenced by Chinese contexts. In this study, the analysis findings have indicated differences exist between MNCs’ and Chinese firms’ websites. Such finding supports the argument that the globalization process of environmentalism is not homogeneous or unitary (Weller, 2006). And the globalization of environmentalism as well as green discourse is not simply a diffusion process from a single core to the rest of the world. Instead, the green discourse is influenced by external influences and bears specific characteristics.

For example, Chinese firms mentioned the political and governmental rhetoric of “harmonious society” in combination with “sustainability development”, while such combination is not found in MNCs’ green advertisings. In addition, the environmental responsibility represented by Chinese firms is normally disconnected from making business senses and are philanthropic in nature. Such characteristics reflect the fact that business in China subordinates to the dominant government who

plays a role of an institutional entrepreneur in China's environmental protection system establishment (Child and Tsai, 2005; Child et al., 2007). Similarly, the relationship between advertising discourse and its social context can be found in Chinese firms' lower level of greenness (the more emphases on functional and material aspects of green products) and Chinese consumers' comparatively lagging environmentalism awareness, or their different cultural-cognitive understanding towards the environment (Fei, 1992; Weller, 2002).

In comparison, MNCs' green advertising discourse featured with its use of "sustainability". As discussed above, the term of sustainability serves as a "nodal point" surrounded with business meanings and a channel to integrate such meanings into corporate environmentalism discourse. With the articulation of corporate green discourse, the idea of "sustainability" has won a wide acceptance in business and in the globe; "sustainability" related discourse has been shifted from *elements* of the social into stabilized and relative permanent *moment* of social practice (Laclau and Mouffe (1985). It can also be seen as a type of hegemonic intervention, because it reflects an intention of MNCs to gain their governance over environmental issues as well as a discursive tool to secure their international operations and reputation.

The prevalence of "sustainability" is also not without its ground. As discussed in Chapter 6, such discourse is rooted in MNCs' operational experience and resources related to environmental protection practices.

In conclusion, although firms all have their communication channels to shape their discourse and influence, the communication discourse, such as green advertisings, is subject to external constraints from existing social structures (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999). In addition, this study adds a point: besides external influence, internal resource (such as firm's experiences and operation networks) also helps a

discourse turns into hegemonic intervention.

7.6 Responding to the Overarching Research Question

7.6.1 The Discursive Elements in Constitution of Corporate Greenness

Given the findings reviewed here, the research can now summarize the findings and address the central research question – “How do firms construct the corporate greenness through green advertising discourse in their corporate websites?” The brief answer to the question is that, in representing their greenness, firms apply both textual and visual languages to discursively construct corporate green hegemony and maintain their power by developing a corporate environmental discourse.

Fairclough (1992:9) claims that “‘Critical’ implies showing connections and causes which are hidden; it also implies intervention, for example providing resources for those who may be disadvantaged through change”. So in the CDA approach, the hidden things (such as meaning, ideology and power relation) in researched discourses should be exposed, since they are not evident and thus cannot be fought against. In order to both respond the question and reveal the hidden things, this study has conducted three dimensions of analyses: the descriptive analysis is to describe the representations of corporate greenness; the interpretive analysis is to interpret how meanings of green consumption are constructed; and the explanative analysis is to explain contextual socio-cultural influences on corporate constructions. Each level of analysis is interrelated and together contributes to the critical discussion of the ideology and hegemony embedded and embodied in corporate green advertisings.

The descriptive analyses suggest that firms shape themselves as environmental responsible and authoritative, and represent themselves as taking a green leader’s position. In the description on their history, values, and CSR/Sustainability practices, advertising firms are always willing to lead the greening process and capable to

provid environmental benefits with their green technologies and projects. Based on the interpretative analyse, the themes as the “meaning tissues” of green consumption have been identified. Firstly, a recurring theme in corporate greenness discourse is the subversion of subjects: the corporate discourse reframes consumers as non-commercial. A particular subject that companies frame and align with their targeted consumers is the value-advocate/contributor/participant/patron of responsible and savvy practices. The semantic power in advertising discourse frames audiences’ interpretations that they are not just consumers, but also having other subjective positions. In such way, the promotional consumption discourse produces the possibility of an “ideal self” of consumer culture (Holt and Thompson, 2004; Thompson, 2004) and implies to the audience that being a consumer can also be a contributor in environmental protection, as long as consumers choose the advertised green products. Secondly, the object of “consuming green” is structured as being morally superior to the “other”. Such constructed dualisms and built boundaries also play a role to mythologies and idealize the greenness in the green products/firms (Thompson, 2004). Indeed, the discursive practices of corporate green advertising rely on mixture of these elements to imbue the green consumption with meanings and make it interpretable.

In conclusion, compared with the “deep green” advocated by environmental activists, the advertised greenness is the “in-breadth green”, which helps to balance consumerism with environmental conservation. Therefore, the components in green products are presented both horizontally via interdiscursivity and vertically via intertextuality. Such process of meaning-making has been enabled through both “intertextual” (e.g., newly produced texts are from fragments of existing, conventional ones) and “interdiscursive” (e.g., texts are drawn from texts from other domains of discourses) properties of discourse, enables the audience to draw upon a wider range of social-historical backgrounds.

In addition to the representation and meaning constructions, this research has also revealed the hidden constitution features of corporate green advertising discourse, or the discursive elements of representation and meaning of corporate environmental responsibility and green consumption.

The review on Discourse Theory implies that the commercial green advertising discourse as the object of this study does not emerge out of void, instead, it has legacies or discursive elements from existing discourses. Therefore, in forming the overarching research question, three main green discourses have been reviewed. These discourses all articulate the relationship between humans and the natural environment, and the environmental problem solving. They are ecological modernization, green governmentality, and civic environmentalism. Corporate green advertising discourse is in form of inter-discursivity and it recruits discursive elements from the above meta-discourses.

When comparing the studied corporate green advertising discourse with those three meta-discourses, it can be found that the advertising discourse overlaps with green governmentality and ecological modernization in its managerial approach to environmental problem-solving. The advertising discourse supports the optimistic rhetoric of ecological modernization and represents expert-driven and technocratic measures to counter environmental threats. However, the civic environmentalist discourse, especially in its radical version, has not been reflected in the advertisings.

To be more specific, similar to ecological modernization discourse which emphasizes on sustainability development, and green governmentality discourse which believes in scientific environmental management, corporate green advertisings discourse presents the firms as a leading role who are knowledgeable and capable to bring out a

more sustainable development model and more advanced green products/technologies as solutions to environmental threats. To be noted, the green governmentality discourse is mostly reflected in MNCs' green advertisings, but not Chinese indigenous firms.

Besides representing the firms as an authoritative role in eco-knowledges (Luke, 1999), a strong message from corporate green advertising is that as long as consumers choose green consumption, the environmental problem can be solved, with the help of companies' green products which represent the right knowledge and the needed technology. This message, as well as the discursive constitution in corporate green advertising, is in line with the ecological modernization discourse and green governmentality discourse whose logic can be concluded as that economic growth decouples ecological degradation and industrialization can be more environmentally friendly.

The green advertising discourse evidently bear the discursive elements from these developed country originated discourses. However, as China is still a developing country with its different stage in industrial process and distinct demographic features from the West, it is problematic to apply the technocratic and neo-liberal economic logics in solving China's current environmental problems. This is because these dominant and influential Western green discourses envision a broader participation by societal actors in sustainable development, encapsulating the notion of "ecological democracy" (Dryzek, 2000), however, the ecological democracy might not be as effective in China as in the Western democratic societies. As this study has suggested, both of the egocentrism of Chinese culture and the government dominant political structure conflict with the logic of ecological democracy, and thus make the corporate green discourse less effective in bringing its claimed outcome. However, the ideological impact from the West represents an indispensable force. Through

green advertising discourse, it not only reproduces the consumer capitalism, but also brings the corporate environmental practices developed from the West into developing countries as “universal standards”, and thus fuels the maintenance of capitalist hegemony.

In addition, the corporate environmental discourse in online green advertisings emphasizes on practicality. In the perspective of discourse theory, such emphasis can be almost hegemonic in its consequences. By stressing on this version of practicality, the corporate green advertising discourse imposes a powerful “discursive closure” (Deetz, 1992) on other viewpoints from alternative environmental discourses. Therefore, it can be argued that the real problem posed by pragmatics of corporate green advertising discourse is that it remains indifferent to other variants of instrumental rationality (Habermas, 1971; Prasad and Elmes, 2005).

The instrumental rationality has been criticized by Frankfurt School. Such critique points out that instrumental rationality treats our entire world only in an economic lens, instead of sees it as a constituted of beauty and sources of divine inspiration. The critics have argued that instrumental rationality reconstitutes the environmental agenda on the foundations of economic logics and the preservation of the existing order (Dryzek, 1995). Furthermore, the “practical” tenet of instrumental rationality has problematic implications when actually implemented in the material context of dealing with the natural environment itself (Prasad and Elmes, 2005).

7.6.2 Deciphering the Hegemony and Ideology in Greenness

Gramsci (1971) used the term of hegemony to describe the discursive construction of consciousness and identity. “Hegemony” is also a very useful concept for the analysis of corporate marketing approaches (Brei and Böhm, 2011). Similar to the hegemony within society to manufacture popular consent for the unequal distribution

of power and wealth, hegemony is constructed by corporations to maintain capitalist production and consumption models, and to gain companies' governance of environmental issues.

According to Wodak (2001), by deciphering ideologies, CDA is able to demystify discourses (Wodak, 2001: 9). In this study, it has been found that the hegemonic discursive practices consist of two major and interrelated ideological components: ecological modernism and neoliberalism. I can now consider each of these components in detail, drawing on examples from this study and previous research.

7.6.2.1 Ecological-modernism Discourse – Slimming off the Ethical Fat

Previous research, such as Menon and Menon (1997), argue that environmental problems of corporate environmentalism are being increasingly reframed as economic problems. Elmes (2005) also has traced the development of corporate environmentalism discourse which integrates elements from both ecological modernization discourse and governmentality discourse, and has identified practicality as a striking feature of corporate green discourse. By examining corporate green advertising discourse, this research has found that companies discursively construct ideas into a form that appear rational and progressive, and thus persuasive. Three “attachments” to the ecological-modernism discourse have been identified in corporate green advertisings: rationalism, pluralism and association.

Rationalism Greenness

In modern society, a certain legitimation can be given to something if it is described as rational (Des Jardins, 1993). The corporate environmentalism discourse reflected in the green advertisings is bound to rationalism.

Since the appeal to rationality produces legitimacy, firms always rationalize their

own interpretations of environmental issues. The advocates of the green consumption in corporate green advertising discourse thus wear the clothes and incorporate the language of techno-rationality (Eden, 1996; Gladwin et al., 1995; Fineman, 2001; Crane, 2000), a particularly influential form of instrumental rationality. Those who want to remain on the inside of this particular discursive universe must endorse a techno-rational, “scientific” world-view, and abandon expressions of radical environmental values. Such therapy can be seen as a measure of discursive suppression. The analyses from this study suggest that corporate green advertisements have refined this “rational-scientific” approach and utilize abundant scientific evidences in an expert stance to market their green solutions, despite the fact that their advocated approach has not been proved effective.

This techno-rational approach above is addressed also in Crane (2000)’s study of firms’ “amoralization” process in which environmental issues become amoral and only “real” scientific facts need to be considered in management and decision making, so the decision can be based on reason rather emotion. Such techno-rationalism parallels the general societal themes of “scientification” somewhat like a modern religion (e.g., Lyotard, 1984) – no one can argue against science (Eden, 1999).

However, the “scientification” and rationality of the corporate environmental discourse come under scrutiny: for the other green advocates such as environmentalist NGOs, green solutions and sustainability development are not just environmental matters; there is a more comprehensive question of how the relationship between business and its stakeholders ought to be and should be organized. As Dyllick and Hockerts (2002) state, “(a)t the business level sustainability is often equated with eco-efficiency. However, such a reduction misses several important criteria that firms have to satisfy if they want to become truly

sustainable” (p. 130).

Pluralism Greenness

Besides binding corporate greenness with rationalism and technocentrism, pluralism is found in the “re-colouring” or “enriching” process in which the traditional implications of greenness in environmental-protection and conservation are positioned with, and in some extent weakened by, additional components, such as coziness, cost-saving, fuel efficiency, modern lifestyle and family health care. On the side of consumers as audience, Baudrillard (1975) argues that individuals living in consumerism society are seeking commodities as signs of social position and prestige. In addition, consumers have a sense of the hierarchy of consumption, which means certain objects are with more prestige and are more desired, and therefore provide certain social gratification. So the recolouring to, and pluralism in, greenness help to infuse green products with such significance such as: family health, advanced technologies and environmentally responsible consumer identities. In this way, green advertisings build the meaning of green consumption, as well as promote the commodification of self, human relations and natural and social issues.

Fineman and Clarke (1996) have also noticed that the green discourse is featured with pluralism. For example, green discourse can centre upon: corporate social responsibility to save the planet earth from destruction; the minimal impact on or use of natural resources; avoiding waste; recycling; reducing “end of pipe” pollution; and care for indigenous populations. Similarities are found in the corporate green advertisings. There are attempts to shape greening into a form that includes multiple meanings for consumers.

Association and Slimming off the Ethical Fat

Besides the common theme of plurality, green advertising discourse apparently

downplays aspects of environmental responsibility or direct concern for the environmental protection. Instead, aspects such as green technology and a greener production model are emphasized and presented as green solutions which are seen to contribute indirectly to the environmental protection.

This finding echoes previous research on the greening process in management and commercial organizations (e.g., Ottman, 2008; Orsato, 2009). Such studies have argued that among the business greenness practices, contentious terms such as corporate social responsibility, are mostly downplayed for the consumers and practitioner audience. The green message in business green discourse is slimmed down, and turns to be rhetorically pragmatic and making business sense.

Such discursive strategy in corporate green advertisings aims to tie greenness to different consumption fashions, and thus provide legitimacy and enhancing acceptance by association. For instance, the widely embraced consumer values of “health”, “efficiency”, “coziness” and “style” are stressed as the cornerstones for environmental values. These values are all well integrated into the current business world and consumer society. So in a word, the corporate green advertising discourse, as a new type of discourse, is presented in a familiar format to consumers.

In concert with this feature of association, key terms can be distilled such as “efficiency”, “emission reduction”, “energy”, “recycling”, and “waste management”. Along with such terms, there are “business benefits” encapsulated in the ideas of “new market/business opportunities”, “reduced costs”, and “improved corporate image”. This skeletal representation of corporate greenness is economical in form and emanates from ecological modernism.

Ecological modernization theory interprets the role of technology in favourable terms.

This is sharply different from other articulations of the relationship between natural environment and society relationships, which view technological development and economic growth as threatening to the environment (Schnaiberg and Gould, 1994). Therefore, based on the ecological-modernism approach, corporate green advertising discourse believes environmental risks can be resolved with managerial and technical improvements. Facing such challenges, companies present their green technologies and sustainability strategies as their solution, which they then communicate in green advertisements. This mentality represents the view that industrial processes can become cleaner and more environmental friendly once they are refined and better controlled (Gouldson and Murphy, 1998), and companies can turn to develop their environmental technologies, tools and green procedures to clean up their act, and harvest the business-benefits and enjoy the win-win result (Schmidheiny, 1992).

In sum, ecological-modernism in corporate environmental discourse has a reformative voice and gives a seductive script for business greenness. Greening has been made fashionably good for business as it echoes to the wider social concerns about the natural environment. In such way, the environmentalism in which environmental protection is the focus has been transformed into a form of corporate sustainability in which a market-based economy and consumerism are stressed.

Furthermore, ecological modernization is technocratic and entails a neo-liberal economic discourse. As discussed earlier, neo-liberalism helps maintain the status quo and does not involve any fundamental rethinking of societal institutions. Therefore, companies' marginal adjustments towards ecological and social issues are acceptable (e.g., Hajer, 1995; Welford, 1997; Kallio, 2004). But as Giddens (1998) argues, "ecological modernization skirts some of the main challenges ecological problems pose for social democratic thought" (p. 58) and, as a result, the ecological modernization theory seems "too good to be true" (p. 57).

Another major criticism of ecological modernization relates to the applicability of the theory. For example, researchers (e.g., Cohen, 1998; Fisher and Freudenburg, 2001; Hannigan, 1995) have argued that the ecological modernization approach might be applicable to some nations while far less appropriate for other countries. And the logic of ecological modernization might only work in “developed” countries (Frijns et al., 2000). Besides, this technocratic greening of industrial production has been silent on equity and poverty issues. As Bäckstrand and Lövbrand (2006) state, the predominant focus is on flexible and cost-effective environmental problem-solving rather than social justice.

7.6.2.2 Neoliberalism Discourse – Acquiring Green Authority

The corporate green advertisements, based on ecological modernism, view business as part of the solution rather than part of the problem. Here, the relationship between business and the environment is regarded as unproblematic, such that business is considered good for the environment. In addition, the green advertising discourse suggests that companies have a central role in responding to the environmental threats. This reflects and promotes a neoliberal discourse.

Neoliberalism is first a political economic theory. It proposes that liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free market, and free trade can best advance human well-beings (Harvey, 2005). In addition, neoliberalism plays a role as a potential antidote to threats to the capitalist social order and as a solution to ills of capitalism (such as over-production and over-consumption) (Harvey, 2005). The relationship between neoliberalism and the environment has attracted considerable attention (e.g., Castree, 2008; McCarthy and Prudham, 2004; Castree, 2008). Neoliberalism exposes state-controlled aspects of the natural environment to the full

force of market rationality and capital accumulation, and restructures the state so that it can offload responsibilities to private sector. Heynen and Robbins (2005) further argue that neoliberalism is linked to the environmental issues in four domains: environmental governance is being rebuilt along neoliberal lines; government authorities are turning natural resources over to firms and individuals; the capture of common resources through the exclusion of the communities to which they are linked via the establishment of property rights; and valuation through which invaluable and complex ecosystems are reduced to commodities through pricing (Coffey and Marston, 2013).

The market is depicted ideologically as the way to foster competition and innovation, and it becomes a vehicle for the consolidation of monopoly power. And the neoliberal freedoms have produced immense concentrations of corporate power in the media. Corporations with disproportionate influence over the media and the political process, have both the incentive and the power to persuade consumers that they are all better off under a neoliberal regime of freedom. For example, advertising can be seen as a tool for companies to actively construct the consent of consumers.

Firms operating in the market not only compete for customers but also for legitimacy in their embedded institutions and political power. In other words, to maintain fitness, companies must create and maintain an identity, which is not only distinct from their competitors but also responsible (such as environmental responsible), an identity that they attempt to communicate to both consumers and other stakeholders. This study suggests that corporate green discourse not only helps firms gain legitimacy through communicating their responsive green practices required by government (such as C2 firms), but also help them to communicate their green authority (such as C1 firms). Neoliberalism is also found in firms' construction of their green authority in green advertisings. In the "About" page and "CSR/Sustainability" page, by linking

companies' internationally high standards in environmental practices to corporate value, mission, culture, and history, a continuum of distinct green identity is established, and the companies are naturally represented as green leaders who have consistent responsibility for the environment. Also, in the CSR/Sustainability web page, common words show business perspective such as "provide", "bring", "support", and "establish". Such discourse shows a corporative paternalistic perspective. It implies that corporations are responsible for providing something to society and even to nature. Such discourse describes the corporations as a role of guaranteeing, providing and bringing benefits to both consumers and the environment. Therefore, a sustainability agenda is created to accomplish these objectives of companies. In a nutshell, it is the companies who provide for the planet, not the reverse.

As discussed in Chapter 6, the corporation is taking a new political role and sharing environmental responsibilities with the government. Thus they want to be recognized as a benchmark. However, corporate greenness is still a subjectively constructed reality. And, instead of the promotion of common interests, which is the traditional notion of politics, the term "politics" here refers to the promotion of actors' own interest and the pursuit of social legitimacy for business in particular. All businesses and every single company need legitimacy from the surrounding society. The paternalistic perspective relating to companies' new political role and green authority reflected in such corporate green discourse implies that the firms need the public to share the same meaning of corporate subjectivity on greenness, the same sustainability practices, and the same standards. Companies adopting green strategies which seem to be good to society might also be understood as companies for taking over control and reducing potential risks in their management (Scherer and Palazzo, 2011).

The above analyses have shown that companies are constructing their meaning of environmental responsibility and it is the same meaning shared with society. In this sense, society plays an important role in the way companies define greenness. Both actors, over time, are interacting to construct and change the meaning of environmental responsibility. The corporate discourse practices often occur in response to stimulus from society. The discourse itself is constructed with the collaboration of society and it can only be constructed through interactions. However the discourse aims to dominate and fulfil specific goals of the companies. It is an exercise of power. It is an attempt to try to return power back to the companies. In order to accomplish that, they represent good will, and seek to achieve a good relationship with different stakeholders via green advertisings.

The empirical analysis showed that the corporate green advertisings embraced an approach to greenness that is informed by neoliberalism and ecological modernization; this approach, represents environmental responsibility in ways that give the impression of companies taking it seriously, and yet it has limited its importance and constrained the types of responses to consumption activities. Consuming the environment responsibly is re-interpreted as consuming greenness, rather than consuming less. By doing so, companies have marginalized the opportunity to hear more transformative ideas.

The conclusion is that discursive approaches of producing environmental advertising are a combination of ecological modern and neoliberal discourses. Both of these two meta-discourses are flawed, because by commodifying nature, limiting the character and magnitude of change that is required, and placing responsibility to act onto companies and consumers, only a constrained understanding of environmental issues is offered. As Coffey and Marston (2013) argue, further consequences of such approaches are that they recasts ecological modernization in ways that provide for

the further encroachment of neoliberalism, through framing neoliberalism as a positive sum game for the environment. The corporate green discourse also restrains the transformative potential of ecological modernization by ensuring that environmental issues are always considered through the lens of neoliberalism. This ensures that the environment is considered in anthropocentric terms, and markets and market forces are positioned as the most efficient and effective way of promoting environmental objectives.

7.7 Conclusion of Chapter 7: Green Advertising - Saviour or Hypocrite?

As the environmental awareness is emerging globally, the consumers are also voting for the green products, but how do they know the greenness they see is the greenness they truly need for environmental protection? Or if the green consumers and market are socially constructed, is such constructed greenness problematic? Put it another way, will the corporate greenness represented in corporate advertisements really solve environmental problems?

Supporters of green marketing, such as Hailes (1998) has argued that green corporate advertising campaigns use the corporations' international prestige to "green the consciousness" of the American people and thus should be considered as a progressive social movement. However, Hailes's argument seems to be over-optimistic. There have been doubts on the progressive effect advertising brings. Firstly according to Discourse Theory, certain social realities, such as the corporate greenness, are represented and established in the discursive practices of communication and marketing. Through commercial green advertising, firms are able to defend their image and construct the meaning of green consumption as well as their green identity through symbolic manipulations. Moreover, social reality is constructed by and becomes understood through discourse. But, not all the existing discourses have a similar: some discourses are with a higher "truth value" than others,

and they are more easily to be accepted. Sometimes, discourses with self-evident means can be considered as absolute truths. In the modern consumer society, companies and their advertisings in various forms have a prominent role and spread their influence to every corner of the world. Advertising as a corporate discourse is powerful in shaping public opinion and consumer perceptions. Meanwhile, advertisings by their very existence can limit the alternative ways of interpreting social reality. Therefore, it should be carefully considered if the commercial green advertising really plays a saviour's role to solve the global environmental problems.

Secondly in the perspective of critical theory of advertising (e.g., Haug 1986), advertising has been theorized as part of an expanding capitalist mode of production in the transition to consumer capitalism. This can be explained that capitalism is looking for ways to commodify the world and transform it into collection of commodities. In such process, advertising produces consumerist demand through inventing desires and false "needs", and stimulates the fetishization of consumption.

In a CDA approach, this study results reveal an apparent contradiction of corporate green advertising discourse: in one hand, green advertisings claim their environmental responsibility or/and promote the environmental benefits of their green products; in the other hand, they indicate the need to keep consuming, and consuming the greenness. The paradox is that the problem caused by consumption is expected to be solved by consumption. And the intrinsic value of the environment and environmental movement are both commercialized.

This study also shows that corporate green advertising represents an ideological force in social reproduction, and it works as an indispensable force in the reproduction of capitalist and the maintenance of consumerism hegemony. Besides, green advertising produces a new desire for green consumption – to consume for a green fashion. In

this sense, green marketing has acted as a bridge between the people's concern and worry to the environmental problems and their consistent desire to maintain the Western consumer lifestyle.

Thus my research findings accord with Prasad and Elmes (2005)'s claim that business green discourse provides nothing more than symbolic reassurance to people who are increasingly anxious about the undergoing deterioration of the ecological system. The advertising fuelled green consumption is still contributing to the capitalism and consumerism, and not necessarily or effectively solving environmental problems in the current world. Therefore, this study agrees with Banerjee (2003) who points that the popular ideas of eco-efficiency and eco-modernization, and the widely adopted green marketing practices in the current capitalism system will not save the planet. Banerjee (2003) points out that current discourse on sustainability ensures that ecological rationality is determined by economic rationality. This leads to even further erosion of alternate cultural and social values assigned to nature. As a result, this extinguishes the very cultural and social forces from which possible solutions to the present environmental crisis might emerge. Agreeing with such argument, this study also implies that, under the erosion of corporate green advertising, the current discourses of sustainability might be increasingly depoliticized by corporations. Through their neoliberalistic environmental discourse, the environmental choices have been translated into market preferences; instead of a green lifestyle which centered on the idea of consumption reduction, the green life in fact still stagnates with the same consumerist lifestyle. The main difference is that the advertised green life is stuffed with brand new green products. If in the future, each Chinese family can own two electronic SUVs and afford for a American style and green house, is it bringing any relief to China's vulnerable and deteriorating environment?

With the arguments above, this research result agrees with the arguments from critical marketing scholars (e.g., Banerjee, 2003; Jhally, 2000; Lv and Yan, 2003). Banerjee (2000) believes that green marketing, as well as eco-modernization and eco-efficiency, will not save the planet. van Dam and Apeldoorn (1996) claim that marketing has had an inherent drive toward environmental unsustainability. Jhally (2000) further points that commercial advertisements are designed to produce instantaneous pleasure and advertising seems to be unsuitable for future projection and long-term strategic planning. The myopic nature also appears to constrain advertisements' ability to express concerns for human welfare on a communal and societal level. Green advertising with no difference is short-term time frame and thus inadequate in navigating a change from endless consumption toward environmental concerns and practices (Jhally, 2000). Moreover, corporate green advertisements allow for the discursive play of ambitious ideas so that a firm in the unsustainable industry of extracting finite natural resources could describe itself as contributing to sustainable future (Knight, 1998). Lv and Yan (2003) therefore distrust businesses' ability to initiate a structural shift in market economy, and they envision a "government-led" green marketing revolution that includes the environmental education of the masses, the stipulation of environmental laws, and the innovation of green technologies for the development of green marketing in China.

Consequently, the eroded boundary between environmental responsibility and profitability restricts the firms' commitment and motivation in making real changes. And firms' emphasis has always been on picking the low-hanging fruits such as cost-saving, efficiencies and PR that pose little threat to the status quo. The corporate environmental responsibility in this way is "hijacked" by the economic capture of corporate greenness. Therefore, if the corporate greening is to be moved beyond, the assumptions that business is promoting environmental responsibility need closer examination and further critiques.

In next chapter, I will give a conclusion of this study and discuss the implications for practice. In addition, I will consider the limitations of my work and how they direct for future research.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

8.1 Research Summary

This is the final chapter of my thesis and summarizes the overall results of the research. In order to understand the emerging phenomenon of green advertisements in China, this study has focused on the construction of “greenness” from green advertising discourse on corporate websites. The purpose of my study was to explore how companies use online advertising language to represent themselves as environmentally responsible and construct the meaning of green consumption in advertising green products/services.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was chosen as an appropriate theoretical and methodological approach to examine language constructed by companies in their websites. Fairclough (1992a, 1995a, 2001) argued that through the close and careful study of language, it is possible to not only describe and interpret representations, but also to explain the formation of relationships, processes, and structures that affect individuals. The theoretical component to Fairclough’s (2001) approach to discourse analysis is concerned not only with overt or seemingly obvious representations in language, but also with obscured or opaque messages. Methodologically, CDA offers a process that can illuminate representations within the language, providing the researcher with a systematic set of inquiries to analyze both textual and visual constructs in relation to social phenomena.

To investigate the role of language on corporate online advertisements, data from four companies were analyzed in order to ascertain how firms employ online advertising language to represent themselves as well as their products, as environmentally responsible or green. Firms were categorized according to similar sets of

organizational characteristics such as their pioneering position in green markets, and their resource-based industrial background evaluation of China's Green Firms.

This research sits at the intersection of and develops dialogue to growing research of corporate social marketing and green advertising, and critical studies with a special focus on firms' environmental communication practices (e.g., Budinsky and Bryant, 2013; Böhm, and Brei, 2008; Corbett, 2006; Crane, 2000; Irvine, 1989; Jhally, 2000; Kilbourne, 1995; Livesey, 2001). This study aims to contribute to the development of communication theory in a critical tradition (e.g. Habermas, 1981/1984; Deetz, 1992) and helps people to understand what role companies and their corporate green discourse plays in the greening development and environmental protection practices, especially in the context of China, where the environmental consciousness is emerging and open to various influences (Weller, 2006; Wong, 2003). Therefore, the implications from this research can encourage and enhance debates on issues such as environmental protection.

8.1.2 Corporate Green Advertising as the Trojan Horse

By analyzing the green advertising discourse, my research has found that the businesses in subterfuge of their green advertisings and advocated green consumption, have invaded the Trojan city (of environmentalism and green movement). According to Catton and Dunlap (1994), environmentalism means embracing the belief that some radical changes in current lifestyle and economic systems may be required to prevent environmental damage. Thus, by this definition of environmentalism, the green consumption promoted by corporate green advertising is eroding and changing the existing meanings of environmentalism, and infusing it with consumerism. By constructing the meaning of and promoting the idea of green consumption, green advertisings send messages that consumption works, consumption delivers a healthy environment.

It can be further argued that the corporate green discourse is the companies' Trojan horse; not only do they gain consumers' agreement on consumption and companies' legitimacy as environmental responsible, but also take over influence and governance on environmental issues. The reliability of corporate green standards presented in corporate green discourse is an open question. First, although the green discourse has described a responsible and paternalistic role for firms, the corporate environmental responsible practices are not solely for protecting the environment and it is difficult to say that corporate standards are not used to maximize the company's interests such as brand security and productivity. Environmental standards or practices which do not make business sense might be excluded from a corporate sustainability package. Secondly, the standards developed by companies make comparisons and interpretations of data difficult and politically charged. It needs to be admitted that MNCs such as GE and Unilever are proactively pushing forward China's environmental system and helping to implement sustainability practices. However, it is problematic if the MNCs exert too much influence on policies and rules, and through this then establish their hegemony.

Green advertising is a celebratory discourse on the pleasures and power of commodity consumption – a discourse that frames corporate green products as a solution to environmental problems caused by the activities of over-production and over-consumption. However, is not it ironical and contradictory that the solution to environmental problems caused by over-consumption is to consume more, not less? The corporate green advertising is analogized as the Trojan Horse because it is a form of deception. It is deceptive because first, it associates consumption with human desires to which it has no real reference; and secondly, it makes people believe green consumption is about buying a green lifestyle such as social respect, health, beauty, and power to control their environment.

There is a clear conflict between the need to reverse or at least to control the impact of our economy on the biosphere and the imperatives of capitalism – to maximize continuing growth in the search for profit. Hobsbawm (2011) sees this as the Achilles heel of capitalism. Löwy (2010) argues that the environmental problem lies with “the capitalist system – its absurd and irrational logic of unlimited expansion and capital accumulation; its obsessive drive to increase material production in pursuit of profits” (p. 19). However, the mentality reflected in green advertising discourse is that when there appears to be a problem in the system, the industry’s approach is not to go back and see what is wrong with capitalism, but to come up with some high-tech fix that allows the system to survive. Such a techno-centric approach and anthropocentric way of thinking can only do more harm and delay the real changes to the problematic system. It is like a Chinese cigarette product with an advanced filter; even though its advertiser highlights the highly filtering function which largely reduces the toxic inhalation for smokers and communicates it as “healthy cigarette”, the cigarette is still harmful to smokers. However, persuaded by the cigarette advertising, the smoker might even consumer more cigarettes than normal because he or she is convinced about the beneficial function of the cigarette filter.

Similarly in the green advertisings studied here, such as the one on eco-cars, although they can reduce the pollution level of vehicles, it is unlikely that the products will preserve this “delicate balance”. Even if all cars were fitted with a hybrid engine or battery, the 50% reduction in car fuel emissions would fall well short of the 90% reduction in all emissions deemed necessary before 2030 to prevent a rise of more than 2° Celsius in average world temperatures (Monbiot, 2007: xxii). To cite an example from another manufacturer, Land Rover offered buyers of their Discovery 3 model a “CO₂ emissions offset for the first 45,000 miles” of the car’s lifespan (National Geographic, 2007a: 4). However, the effectiveness of offsetting

schemes is both uncertain and unproven, and merely permits the continuation of pollution rather than enable its significant reduction (Monbiot, 2007:210-212; Smith, 2007). Based on such facts, the main aim of these advertisements is to convince consumers that companies are doing as much as they can to alleviate harm. Often, however, these companies are engaging in a token gesture whilst continuing with business as usual.

The move toward a commitment to the notion of sustainable development reflects the fact that firms have begun to recognize that they could not maintain rhetorical control of the discursive field. Or, the language games about the environment could not be contained within a narrow discourse of technical expertise. Rather, the argumentative others (such as NGOs and other stakeholders) have offered alternative constructions of reality that have forced firms to address difference through dialogue and processes of discursive struggle. This is the reason why firms turn to accept a more open and frank way with others in order to reach acceptable solutions in their green and sustainability development programs. In addition to listening to outside views, firms are explicit about their plan to tell their own story better in the green advertising discourse – to revitalize and reactualize the discourse of development within the discourse of sustainability and stakeholder cooperation.

However, the business world has retained its hostile attitude towards environmental issues until the societal atmosphere and political arenas have adopted a different kind of more optimistic environmentalism associated with the concepts of “green consumption” and “sustainability development”. Different from the previously advocated *zero-growth* scenario, one of the key ideas of sustainable development is the mutual consistency of economic growth and environmental protection. The underlying idea in sustainability is that there is no problem with economic growth. Through corporate strength in developing new green products, the environment can

be protected and people's sufficient livelihood can be achieved, as long as they consume companies' green products.

While the sustainable model of business and economic development advocated by business seems to be a reasonable conclusion to reach, the corporate green discourse largely silences the fact that it is impossible for all the people in the world to have the standard of living enjoyed by the industrialized countries. It has been estimated that it would take the maximum output of not one, but six, planets to sustain the current world population at the standard of living of an average American (WWF, 2004). The idea of sustainable development originates from the Brundtland Commission's famous report, *Our Common Future* (WCED, 1987). It was commanded by politicians, not scientists, thus the beautiful thoughts and political compromises do not guarantee that the planet earth can be saved and environment protected from economic growth and fast growing consumption before depletion of resource, even though the consumption is greening.

Population growth, together with growth in consumption, is not the only cause of most environmental problems, but also creates a formula that is an absolutely impossible long-term trend in a finite system. As Boulding (1966:1) put it strikingly: "Anyone who believes exponential growth can go on forever in a finite world, is either a madman or an economist." Similarly, the growth fetish has been criticized by Hamilton who states:

"Growth not only fails to make people contented; it destroys many of the things that do. Growth fosters empty consumerism, degrades the natural environment, weakens social cohesion and corrodes character. Yet we are told, ad nauseam, that there is no alternative." (Hamilton, 2004, p.x.)

While economic growth may promote environmentally sound behaviour to some extent, to an even greater extent, it creates much more consumption and ecological

burdens (Kallio, 2007). This is especially true for developing countries, such as China. Ayres et al., (2001) make this point further: whereas economic growth creates sorts of wealth, the existence of human beings is constituted by environment – natural capital instead of human-made capital. Once the natural capital has been turned into human-made capital, it is hardly returned to natural capital. The lost natural capital, such as rainforests or extinct species, will not be bought back (Ayres et al., 2001)

In conclusion, although the “development” and “growth” themed corporate green discourse tries to portray a promising picture, economic growth does not make people happier or preserve the social wellbeing. The so called green technological advancement or development which has fuelled green consumption and sustainable development, is also hardly going to protect environmental wellbeing. This is not to criticize all growth or support – only zero-growth. But, the acclaimed green consumption and sustainable development advertised should be examined and mantra of corporate greenness discourse questioned.

In addition, the underlying objective of this form of corporate environmental governance – always more business growth and more consumption of material products – inherently limits its capacity to reform towards real environmental protection and sustainable development. Overall, from a critical perspective, the companies’ efforts and logics reflected in their green discourse will not resolve the eco-pressures from a growth-dependent world economy. Effective global environmental governance will ultimately require a more shared and publicly justified governance approach with strong regulation and sustained advocacy to go beyond the important but ultimately incremental big brand market improvements.

8.2 Contributions and Implications of this Study

The contributions of my study can be summarized and classified in three categories: 1) practical applications; 2) methodological contributions and 3) a theoretical/epistemological contribution.

8.2.1 Practical Applications

This study aimed to set the stage for marketing and advertising scholars to enhance the understanding of how advertisements are deployed on corporate websites to promote firms' green brand and products/services, and to consider the consequences of the application of advertising discourse in the domain of environmentalism (which is used to be a non-commercial and public sphere). Even if the research did not have any straightforward managerial applications, its goal is in line with the emancipator goals of the critical discourse analysis tradition of research. The research results are helpful to increase the awareness of the public to the discursive production of a particular "reality" where "the environmental responsibility" is depicted as a consumption practice. By showing how the widely recognized "green firms" produces powerfully influencing advertisements (and consequently gets a substantial sales and market share), this study aims to highlight the "hypocritical" and self-contradictory greenness. It is expected that, by highlighting the conflict between what corporate greenness claims to achieve (such as a win-win future) and the reality that the green advertisements are hiding but we are currently facing, society and consumers will be able to critically assess corporate green advertisements and be able to resist certain consumption patterns and industrial practices which are pernicious to the environment. The next section will also suggest implications for practices.

It needs to be emphasized that, the emancipatory claims of critical discourse analysis put me, as the critical discourse analyst, in a privileged position. By claiming emancipatory and educational purposes, I implicitly imply that I know best, and I have been able to uncover hidden meanings and naturalized ideologies. I make my

findings available to the public, with an aim to rectify wrong-doings as posited by CDA principles. Placing oneself in such a privileged position is arrogant. Therefore, it is important that one shows reflexivity. The analysis I conducted is not more than one interpretation: the research himself is part of society, influenced by it, and socially constructed by discourses he seeks to deconstruct.

8.2.2 Methodological Contribution: Application of CDA

This research makes a novel contribution of applying CDA to environmental advertising and marketing. The potential of CDA to marketing is considerable. For instance, CDA has been applied by Fairclough (1995) to study the marketisation of British universities. The focus of this research on commercial advertisements highlights the potential contributions of CDA in areas outside of its traditional playing field (such as racism, anti-Semitism, and identity and gender issues). In addition, the CDA approach in this study has included fieldwork interviews and documentary data as supplement to the main online data, in order to gain insights for enhance the validity of its societal explanation. Such effect represents a complement to Fairclough's three-dimensional framework with Wodak (2001)'s discourse-historical approach.

8.2.3 The Theoretical Insight for Understanding the Discursive Construction of Commercial Greenness and its Meanings

The last contribution of the research comes from the premises of a development of a critical environmental/green marketing agenda. Critical marketing viewpoints were taken in this research and provide an approach to the study of marketing in commercial context focusing on ideology and critique of academic discourse. The critical perspective identifies that marketing works as a powerful economic, social, and cultural institution designed to control consumers (Denegri-Knott et al., 2006). This is also the case when marketing includes environmental issues. This study has revealed the discursive constructive characteristics of commercial greenness and its

emanated meanings. It also discussed the relationship between discourse and institutional contexts and how the interaction causes divergent discursive features in the context of China.

Overall, this investigation, and the issues it raises, will be important not only for CSR scholars, but will also contribute theoretically to communication studies and critical social theory. In next sections, research implications for practices and potential future research directions will be discussed.

8.3 Implications for Practice

The research findings have several implications for practices. Firstly, the analysis on corporate discourse has revealed the conflict between environmental protection and resource preservation, and the intrinsic exploitative nature of capitalism business. With its short-term calculus of profit and loss, the narrow-minded rationality of the capitalist market is intrinsically contradictory to the rationality of the living environment, which operates in terms of long, natural cycles. As Löwy (2010) points: “it is not that bad ecocidal capitalists stand in the way of good green capitalists. It is the system itself, based on pitiless competition, demand for return on investment, and the search for quick profits that is the destroyer of ecological equilibrium” (p. 19). This implies that, in contradistinction to the fetishism of commodity production and the automatically self-adjusting economy propounded by neoliberal economics, what is of need is the emergence of a “moral economics” – economic policies based on non-monetary and extra-economic criteria. So this implication suggests integrating economics into its environmental, social, and political integument. Partial reforms are totally insufficient. What is needed is to replace the single micro-rationality of profitability criterion with an environmental and social macro-rationality, which means that civilization will have to operate according to a different paradigm.

In order to achieve greater sustainability and more substantive progress, a number of elements of marketing thought and practice need to be reshaped for industrial and marketing practitioners. Firstly, the advertiser should encompass the means of production and the broader activities of the producer. This can help consumers base their purchase decision on issues beyond the tangible products. Secondly, the markets need to be changed. New types of market in which material flows become more circular through product recycling, and alternative forms of production and consumption (e.g., farmers' markets) can be created or rediscovered. Thirdly, marketers and advertisers can emphasize more on the benefits from product use rather than on the joys of product ownership. And marketing and advertising communication can aim to inform rather than just impress.

The agenda for change is radical and challenging for marketing practitioners and industry. However, without addressing these issues, marketing will continue to act as an obstacle to progress towards genuine sustainability. In addition, it needs combined efforts of consumers, practitioners, policy makers, and scholars and educators.

For consumers, they should be aware of the commercial advertisements' manipulative nature and their advocated obsessive consumption lifestyle. For public policy and communication intervention, as the limited ability of business to initiate a structural shift in market economy, it is necessary for the government to envision a "policy-led" green marketing revolution that includes the environmental education of the masses, the stipulation of environmental laws, and the innovation of green technologies. I believe that the Chinese government must intervene to support the greening of the business sector. For example, government policies can be designed to promote green industries such as clean/renewable energy and organic farming. Besides, the Chinese government cannot only focus on GDP growth but should pay more attention to the industrial upgrading and manufacture waste reduction

procedures. For example, as Akenji (2014) suggests, the government can attempt to integrate well-being in its development measurements. In addition, government should also develop greater incentives for green growth in private sectors. Besides, a greater investment in public television (on environmental protection) is needed to provide a genuine alternative to commercially structured broadcasts. Such alternative media can be helpful to civilians as consumers in their discovering and determining what they really wanted to be and discerning for themselves what kind of a world they wanted. For Chinese consumers, there should be alternatives to the Western consumerism lifestyle.

While deep structural change to the current capitalism system is unlikely to be realized in the near future (Fineman, 1998; Carvalho, 2001), it can happen gradually through education. My research suggests that an “active education” is necessary for developing consumers’ green awareness because corporate green advertising is after all consumerism which cannot solve the environmental problems.

The “active education” involves a true political battle and the public authorities must play a role. Formal sustainable development education in schools should be reinforced, especially in China where lacks environmental literacy amongst consumers. Business schools should also play an active role in the sustainability progress. Educators and scholarship need a strong research ethics to be more reflective and morally attuned to consequences of the advertisings, and to educate students to be more aware of the potential contradiction of green advertisings and green consumption advocated by such advertisings. Other agents of change should include consumer associations, trade unions, and environmental movements.

8.4 Limitations and Future Research

As I have indicated in Chapter One, this study has several limitations. These

limitations present opportunities for future research. First, it is limited in what I can claim because it is based on a sample of advertisements from websites of four companies that operate in China. The robustness of my findings could be tested by continuing to collect advertisements over time and with more companies' green advertisements. My study has explored and identified the differences among the firms which are from different backgrounds, following this direction in the future studies, the data scale can be further enlarged. For example, future study can be more detailed and look at how the industrial differences influence on the construction of green advertisings. Similar future studies can also focus on other types of firms in order to ascertain the types of language at work on their green advertisings online. Moreover, as my study findings suggest, there are correlations between discourse and its contexts, it is important to find out more details on the differences in the advertisings' cultural, historical and societal contexts, and how the differences exert influence on the localization processes of multinationals' advertising discourse. Besides focusing on the relationship between corporate discourse and its external context, it is also interesting to consider the organizational internal influences on its green discourse.

Secondly, my study is limited to online advertisements. Future studies could include different advertising mediums applied by companies, such as printing and television advertisements, to compare their discursive constitutive characteristics. It can also be fruitful if the future research applies a longitudinal approach in collecting green advertising data, such approach with discourse analysis can provide a lens to study institutional change and how institutional fields evolve under the influence of institutional entrepreneurs' discursive practices (Munir and Phillips, 2005).

Thirdly, the study analyses the discourse and its system of signs without testing their effect. As Van Leeuwen (1993) states, discourse is seen as the instrument of power

and control and as the instrument of the social construction of reality. Therefore, CDA analyses language through texts in order to investigate their interpretation, reception and social effects (Titscher et al., 2000). However, this study mainly focuses on the side of companies as advertisers. Such limitation suggests that future study should also include the consumer side, and to examine the reception process of company produced discourse. Future studies could examine how these green advertisings influence a range of viewers to make sense of environment in their purchase decisions, and explore the role of advertising discourse in shaping consumer decision making processes through its influence on consumers' interpretations and action. For example, as Puntoni et al., (2010) have suggested, studies could introduce simulated exposure to a range of conditions and analyze the process and outcomes of green purchase decision in relation to these advertisements.

Fourthly, as recent branding research suggests that brand meanings are co-constructed through a dialogue between managers and consumers (O'Reilly, 2005; Schembri, 2009; Roper, et al., 2013), future research can also extend the managerialist paradigm to incorporate the consumer, and to identify the dialectic, co-constructed nature of environmental consumerism culture.

Similarly in a dialectal perspective and in addition to a focus on the interaction between advertisings and consumers, future research can include argumentative studies on green discourse. As Harjer (1995) contends that "argumentative interaction is a key moment in discourse formation, it needs to be studied to explain the prevalence of certain discursive constructions" (p. 54). Studies can focus on the environmental discourse which has controlling effects over how environmental problems are understood and study the discursive struggles between corporations and their critics as a kind of forced "dialogue". This stream of research is able to find out how companies and critics make their own transformative effects on each other's

conception of, and relationship to, the natural environment; and how their interaction in discourses help to adopt – and adapt – the discourse of sustainable development.

Lastly, possible future research direction can be aligning discourse analysis with psychoanalysis in the field of green advertising and marketing. Such research can aim to understand how green advertising impact on the subjectivity of consumers. In the wider social sciences it has been long recognized that “psychoanalytic theory is eminently qualified to capture, map and interpret these mechanisms in ways that more traditional analyses and the standard leftist critiques have been unable to envisage and/or fully develop” (Stavrakakis, 2007:231). More specifically, a Lacanian conception of commodity fetishism can used to investigate how greenness is integrated into the fantasy or desire which constitutes the fetishism in the capitalist society (Žižek, 1989, 1997).

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APPENDIX A
Fieldwork Interviews with Companies

Companies	Main green/environmental focuses	Interviewees	Archival data sources
GE (Category 1)	Pollution reduction; Clean energy	1. Director of China's Ecomagination Project; 2. Two Scientists of R&D Centre; 3. Manager of Branding and Advertising Office	Company annual reports; Sustainability reports
Unilever (Category 1)	Pollution reduction;	1. Vice President of Marketing; 2. Director of Sustainability Department; 3. Researcher of RandD Centre;	Company annual reports; Sustainability reports
BYD (Category 2)	Pollution reduction; Clean energy	1. Manager in Marketing Office; 2. Manager in PR Office	Company annual reports
Landsea (Category 2)	Clean energy; Pollution reduction	1. Chairman; 2. CTO; 3. Manager in Marketing Office 4. Manager in PR Office	Company internal journals

APPENDIX B

Unilever's Sustainability Living Plan

(information extracted from Unilever's Sustainability Living Plan reports from 2011-2012)

Unilever's Sustainable Living Plan, launched in November 2010, aims to "help everyone enjoy a good quality of life while respecting the planet" and consists of three broad goals to achieve by 2020:

- halve the environmental footprint of Unilever products
- help more than 1 billion people take action to improve their health and well-being
- source 100% of agricultural raw materials sustainably

The plan includes seven pillars – health & hygiene, nutrition, greenhouse gases, water, waste, sustainable sourcing and better livelihoods – and a total of 50 core commitments. In order to implement the Plan throughout its more than 100 markets, the company has, among other things, sent out best practice toolkits, set up an R&D team dedicated to sustainability, as well as an employee network of sustainability ambassadors.

Unilever's philosophical shift towards sustainability development: reflects increased awareness among corporations that long-range planning and future competitiveness depend on sustainability -- doing business without damaging or depleting natural resources.

Unilever is also hedging its bets some—it is promising a 50% reduction "per consumer use"—and it acknowledges that it can only grow sustainably by changing consumer behavior. That's no small matter and one that is largely beyond its control. Still, Unilever's Sustainable Living Plan, as it's called, breaks new ground for a number of reasons.

It is comprehensive, setting more than 50 social, economic and environmental targets. It is rigorous; the company says it has measured the carbon, water and waste footprints of 1,600 products, representing 70% of its volume. It's far-reaching, taking into account the full lifecycle impact of its product—from "seed to disposal," as one executive put it. It builds on an impressive past history when it comes to sustainability.

APPENDIX C
Janks (2005) Linguistic Analysis Rubric

Linguistic feature	Explanation	data
Lexicalisation	The selection/choice of wordings.	
Metaphor	Used for yoking ideas together and for the discursive construction of new ideas.	
Euphemism	Hides negative actions or implications.	
Transitivity	Processes in verbs: are the verbs of : Doing/being/having/thinking/feeling/perceiving/saying/existential	
Voice	Active and passive voice construct participants as doers or as done-to' s. Passive voice allows for the deletion of the agent	
Nominalization	A process is turned into a thing or an event without participants or tense or modality. Central mechanism for reification.	
Mood	Is the clause a statement, question, offer or command?	
Modality	Logical possibility/probability	
Degrees of uncertainty	Social authority Modality created by modals (may, might, could, will,) adverbs (possibly, certainly, hopefully) intonation, tag questions.	
Pronouns	Inclusive we/exclusive we/you Us and them: othering pronouns Sexist/non sexist pronouns The choice of first/second/third person	
Sequencing of information. Logical connectors – conjunctions set up the logic of the argument	Sequence sets up cause and effect. Conjunctions are: Additive: and, in addition Causal: because, so, therefore Adversative: although, yet Temporal: when, while, after, before	

Adopted from Janks (2005)

APPENDIX D
Kress and van Leeuwen (2006)'s Visual Analysis Rubric

Visual feature	Explanation	Data
Descriptors	A basic description of the visual elements such as: actors and carriers; angle; colours; graphics; font; settings; spatial relationships	
Actor	The active participant(s) in an action process is the participant(s) from which the vector emanates or which if fused with the vector.	
Goal	The passive participant in an action process is the participant at which the vector is directed.	
Interactors	The participants in a transactional action process where the vector could be said to emanate from, and be directed at, both participants.	
Transactional reaction	An eyeline vector connects two participants, a reactor and phenomenon.	
Non-transactional reaction	An eyeline vector emanates from a participant, the Reactor, but does not point at another participant.	
Setting	The setting of a process is recognizable because the participants in the foreground overlap and hence partially obscure it (e.g., soft focus, over/under colour saturation)	
Means	A process used to create image (e.g., photograph, graphic, logo).	
Symbolic Attributes	Symbolic attributes are made salient in the representation in one way or another. (e.g., by being placed in the foreground, through exaggerated size, or being especially well lit, or through their conspicuous colour)	
Sequencing of information	Sequence sets up cause and effect; Placement of images on a page (e.g., high, low)	

APPENDIX E

GE's Ecomagination Advertising in China (with Chinese Characters)

1. The Internal Combustion Engine

“Where others only see organic waste, we see a treasure which can produce electricity and heat”



2. The Aeroplane Engine

“Every time you go past the tops of clouds, it will bring you wealth”



3. Train Operation and Optimization System

“Reduce fuel consumption, to save more money”



4. Wind Turbines

“Power generation through wind-driven technology will make profits soar”



5. Water Solution

“A clean water supply will wish you a good fortune”



6. Coal Technology

“The cleaner the coal we use, the bluer the sky will be”



用更洁净煤炭
争来更多蓝天

GE煤气化技术，将煤炭转化为价值更高、更清洁的燃料进行发电。相比传统发电，将大大降低主要污染物、温室气体排放量。

绿色创想 成就未来

GE 梦想启动未来

绿色创想