



CLASHES BETWEEN LOCAL VALUES AND GREEN MARKETING APPROACHES IN TRADITIONAL COMMUNITIES

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Abstract

This article examines cultural resistance to green marketing within traditional communities that maintain strong local values and inherited wisdom. The discussion explores how promotional narratives inspired by Western environmental thought encounter established views of nature, obligation, and communal life. Green marketing is usually framed through technical standards, certification, and individual consumer choice, while traditional communities rely on customary rules, shared rituals, and collective decision making to regulate the use of land and natural resources. These divergent orientations give rise to subtle or explicit rejection of promotional messages that are perceived as disregarding ancestral knowledge, weakening communal identity, or masking external economic interests. The paper argues that such resistance reflects grounded moral reasoning rather than a lack of information or indifference toward ecological concerns. Understanding these cultural dynamics is essential for developing approaches to green marketing that respect local traditions and avoid symbolic domination. The study proposes a conceptual reflection that highlights the need for dialogue between modern environmental discourses and traditional systems of meaning when designing communication addressed to culturally rooted communities.

Keywords: green marketing, cultural resistance, traditional communities, local values, ancestral wisdom, environmental communication, communal identity.

Introduction

The wave of marketing promoting environmental sustainability has rapidly developed over the past few decades. Various companies formulate communication messages highlighting concern for the Earth, emission reduction, the use of eco-friendly materials, and commitment to future generations (Ramya et al., 2020). In many urban areas, such narratives tend to be accepted as part of a modern lifestyle associated with ecological awareness. However, when the concept of green marketing is introduced to communities with strong traditions and lifestyles rooted in customs, its acceptance does not occur automatically. Traditional communities have their own ways of understanding nature, resources, and the relationship between humans and the environment (Ingold, 2021). This perspective shapes their judgment of promotional messages coming from outside, especially when accompanied by terms, symbols, and values derived from other cultural experiences (Lil Alamin et al., 2021).

In many traditional communities, human-nature relations are built through local knowledge systems passed down across generations in the form of customs, myths, and ritual practices that regulate the community's ecological balance. Environmental anthropology shows that indigenous peoples develop resource management mechanisms based on collective norms that function to maintain sustainability without requiring modern scientific formulations (Berkes, 2012). Certain logging prohibitions, planting season regulations, and water use allocation are forms of ecological knowledge rooted in the community's long historical experience (Ostrom, 1990). When modern green marketing strategies are introduced through eco-friendly labels or global certifications, traditional communities tend to assess the message based on its alignment with local cosmological values, rather than purely formal ecological claims. Tension arises when sustainability narratives brought by companies are associated with consumer modernization perceived as potentially shifting traditional value systems, so acceptance of green marketing becomes a process of cultural negotiation, not merely a rational consumer decision (Escobar, 2001).

Green marketing developed from a Western perspective tends to rely on legitimacy based on certifications, labels, and certain scientific indicators (Nguyen et al., 2019). The concept of sustainability is associated

with energy efficiency, carbon footprint reduction, or the use of recyclable materials. These standards are often formulated by international organizations or industry associations rooted in the experience of developed countries. Meanwhile, traditional communities interpret sustainability through the balance between fulfilling needs and respecting limits set by customary law. For example, prohibitions on tree cutting in certain areas, gradual land clearing regulations, or taboos on taking forest products outside of appropriate seasons. When these two perspectives meet, a mutual assessment process occurs that does not always result in acceptance, especially if the green marketing approach is perceived as disregarding local wisdom authorities.

Modern green marketing often relies on universal visual symbols and technocratic language designed for educated urban consumers, such as the use of Earth icons, the color green, or science-based environmental sustainability terms (Khayru & Issalillah, 2021). Marketing communication studies show that symbols and advertising narratives are effective when aligned with the audience's social experience (Kotler & Keller, 2016). However, in the context of traditional communities, these visual representations may feel foreign because they do not reflect daily ecological experiences directly related to land, customary forests, or local seasonal cycles. This symbolic difference creates a cultural distance between marketing messages and the community's meaning framework (Hofstede, 2001). Promotional language laden with foreign terms such as sustainability, carbon footprint, or eco-efficiency often fails to connect with local vocabulary about harmony with nature, so green marketing messages can potentially be perceived as external discourse belonging to certain social groups rather than part of their cultural reality.

In some cases, green marketing is also perceived as part of economic penetration bringing new consumption patterns into the living spaces of traditional communities (Zhang & Dong, 2021). Products claimed to be environmentally friendly may come with higher prices, more striking packaging, and a lifestyle different from the simplicity that has long been maintained. Communities may interpret the presence of such products as an effort to shift consumption orientation from basic needs toward an image-oriented lifestyle. When green marketing is linked to a narrative of modernity emphasizing individuality and freedom of choice, some

traditional communities may see it as a threat to communal bonds formed through sharing, mutual cooperation, and collective consumption regulation. From this emerges the seed of resistance to green marketing.

The main problem that can be identified relates to the way green marketing brings a set of values not always aligned with local norms (Liao et al., 2020). The Western perspective emphasizing scientific rationality, consumer individuality, and freedom to choose products often conflicts with the worldview of traditional communities, which place consumption decisions within the framework of social obligations and customary considerations. Marketers designing messages based on assumptions of rational and autonomous consumers risk overlooking the role of customary leaders, kinship structures, and deliberation forums in determining the acceptance of an innovation. When collective decision-making structures are ignored, green marketing can be perceived as not respecting the social mechanisms that have long maintained community sustainability.

Other issues relate to the labeling process of local practices (Zhang et al., 2019). In many campaigns, green marketing promotes certain standards of what is considered environmentally friendly, while implicitly suggesting that practices outside these standards are less valid. Traditional communities that have developed methods of farming, forest management, or water resource utilization based on ancestral wisdom may feel that their practices are deemed outdated or invalid because they do not conform to modern certifications. This can generate feelings of marginalization and foster resistance toward products or messages perceived as diminishing the heritage of local knowledge. Instead of seeing green marketing as recognition of ecological concern, communities may interpret it as a form of symbolic domination that elevates one approach as the single standard.

The urgency of compiling a literature study on cultural resistance to green marketing in traditional communities arises from the need to understand the complex interaction between local values, traditional wisdom, and promotion approaches based on a Western perspective. Without a well-structured theoretical understanding, green marketing risks becoming an instrument for spreading values that disregard the dignity of local culture and weaken long-standing practices that are actually aligned

with environmental sustainability. Conceptual studies that assemble various perspectives on local values, traditional wisdom, and green marketing design are expected to provide a foundation for formulating approaches that are more sensitive to the diversity of lifestyles and ways of thinking in society.

Based on this description, the main research question in this paper is: how is cultural resistance in traditional communities formed and expressed when confronted with green marketing rooted in a Western perspective that carries a specific set of values regarding nature, consumption, and modernity. This formulation directs attention to the clash of values between local wisdom and environmental narratives brought by marketers, as well as to how traditional communities interpret, negotiate, or reject claims about environmentally friendly products. This question is normative in nature, as it seeks to describe the patterns of meaning inherent in green marketing practices and the resulting cultural responses without attempting to measure phenomena quantitatively.

In line with this formulation, the purpose of this study is to compile a structured conceptual understanding of the forms of cultural resistance of traditional communities toward green marketing originating from a Western perspective, as well as to describe the local value and traditional wisdom factors that influence this process. This paper aims to explain how value clashes occur in symbolic, normative, and everyday practical realms, while also showing how green marketing narratives are interpreted, negotiated, or rejected in the living spaces of traditional communities. Theoretically, this description is expected to enrich the discourse on the relationship between green marketing and cultural diversity. Practically, the discussion provides a reference for marketing communication designers who strive to respect local traditions when introducing environmental sustainability ideas.

Method

This study is designed as a qualitative, literature-based review oriented toward the development of conceptual understanding. Gomm (2008) explains that social research methodology requires clear explanations regarding how researchers select sources, organize categories, and connect diverse ideas. Using this explanation as a reference, this paper begins with

the formulation of questions concerning cultural resistance of traditional communities toward green marketing originating from a Western perspective. These questions are then translated into a series of keywords related to green marketing, local values, traditional wisdom, and cultural resistance. Crowther and Lancaster (2012) emphasize that the selection of reference sources should be guided by clarity of purpose and focus, so that the search process considers thematic relevance and the richness of theoretical arguments.

Gagnon (2010) highlights the importance of developing an adequate conceptual framework so that a literature-based study does not merely collect isolated views, but rather forms an integrated line of thought. In line with this perspective, the reading materials in this study are grouped into several thematic clusters, namely writings on green marketing theory, studies on traditional communities and local values, discussions on traditional environmental wisdom, and theoretical descriptions of cultural resistance to modern marketing practices. Gomm (2008) advocates a critical approach to reading, so that each source is not treated as ultimate truth, but rather as a contribution to be juxtaposed, compared, and reinterpreted. Crowther and Lancaster (2012) stress the importance of presenting a logical progression of analysis so that readers can follow the researcher's reasoning journey. By integrating these perspectives, this study is treated as a process of gradually constructing arguments, moving from the exposition of basic concepts to the formulation of a synthesis regarding cultural resistance to green marketing in traditional communities.

Result and Discussion

Cultural resistance to green marketing is a condition in which the values, social norms, consumption habits, and belief systems that develop within a society or social group give rise to rejection, doubt, or a skeptical attitude toward marketing practices that emphasize environmental sustainability (Varshneya et al., 2017; Zhu & Sarkis, 2016). This phenomenon arises because the shift toward environmentally friendly consumption is often perceived as conflicting with established lifestyles, higher price perceptions, distrust of eco-friendly claims, or low ecological awareness shaped historically and culturally. This indicates that each community has its own way of understanding and responding to changes coming from

outside its environment (Nurmalasari & Nuraini, 2021). From a consumer behavior and social marketing perspective, cultural resistance is not solely related to a lack of information, but also involves social identity, consumption status symbols, materialistic value orientation, and traditional preferences that lead consumers to maintain conventional consumption patterns even when green product alternatives are available.

Indicators for measuring cultural resistance to green marketing can be seen through the level of skepticism toward environmental claims on products, the tendency to reject changes in consumption behavior, the dominance of old consumption habits, the perception that eco-friendly products are irrelevant to local cultural needs, and low willingness to pay more for sustainable products (Do Paço & Reis, 2016). Additionally, other indicators include weak social norms supporting environmentally friendly behavior, reference group influence that does not encourage green consumption, minimal integration of sustainability values into daily practices, and the perception that green marketing is merely a promotional strategy without real benefits. In general, this understanding helps companies and researchers recognize that marketing success is highly influenced by local social and cultural context (Negara et al., 2021; Essa & Mardikaningsih, 2021). Measurement can also be strengthened through observation of green product adoption rates, community participation intensity in environmental movements, and the gap between positive environmental attitudes and actual purchasing behavior, indicating cultural barriers in the transformation toward sustainable consumption (Chen & Hung, 2016).

Cultural resistance to green marketing in traditional communities can be understood as a reaction to shifts in meaning frameworks affecting human relationships with nature, goods, and associated values. Green marketing introduces new language regarding sustainability, efficiency, and environmental responsibility formulated through modern scientific concepts (Charter & Polonsky, 2017). Essentially, any new intervention requires time for communities to adapt, as cultural change does not occur instantly (Mardikaningsih & Hariani, 2021). Meanwhile, traditional communities already have their own language to express prohibitions, obligations, and ways of interacting with nature. When these two languages meet, integration does not always occur; rather, subtle forms

of rejection emerge in the form of doubt, distrust, or reluctance to follow calls for green consumption coming from outside. Such rejection is not merely due to lack of information, but is related to the feeling that local values are placed in a lower position compared to the moral claims of green marketing.

In many traditional communities, environmental knowledge is conveyed through folklore, seasonal rituals, and daily practices passed down across generations. Explanations of the cause-and-effect of actions toward nature are often linked to the presence of guardian spirits, ancestral blessings, or local religious teachings. Green marketing that talks about carbon footprints, energy efficiency, and standardized certifications tends to overlook the narrative dimension that has long supported community compliance with customary rules (Ottman, 2017). In other words, the success of new strategies is more likely to be accepted if connected with existing local knowledge and practices (Nurmalasari & Nuraini, 2021). Consequently, green messages delivered through promotional media are perceived as less resonant with layers of meaning that have long existed in collective memory. Communities may acknowledge that caring for the environment is good, but do not automatically link that goodness to the call to purchase products defined as eco-friendly by external institutions.

Resistance also arises because green marketing often associates environmental concern with individual consumption choices (Kushwah et al., 2019). Consumers are portrayed as the main actors who, through purchasing decisions, can save the planet (Govender & Govender, 2016). However, in practice, consumption decisions are often influenced by local social and cultural norms, so the individual-focused approach is not always effective (Halizah & Nuraini, 2021). For traditional communities, decisions related to resource utilization and the use of goods are rarely seen as purely personal choices, but rather as part of a social order regulated communally. Patterns of land ownership, forest product collection rights, and resource distribution methods are often decided through deliberation within extended families or customary institutions. When green marketing directs messages toward individuals as the primary target, it obscures the collective structure that remains very strong. This contributes to emotional distance, as the narrative offered feels foreign to the way communities position themselves within their social relation networks.

Furthermore, green marketing is often tied to industrial products originating from outside traditional community areas. These products come with neat packaging, green labels, and claims that their production processes are more environmentally friendly compared to conventional products. However, for communities accustomed to using locally sourced materials processed themselves, such claims may raise questions. Differences in production context often spark debates between local values and global standards (Mardikaningsih & Darmawan, 2021). Why is a product that travels long distances, is packaged with industrial materials, and produced on a large scale considered more environmentally friendly than goods produced simply in the village? Such questions reflect the conflict between industrial logic, which relies on certification, and local logic, which evaluates sustainability through proximity to nature and production processes directly supervised by the community (Foley & Havice, 2016).

Cultural resistance to green marketing is also closely related to efforts to maintain collective identity manifested through daily consumption practices. Symbolic consumption theory explains that goods do not only have utilitarian functions but also serve as a medium for forming social identity and cultural meaning (Belk, 1988). This emphasizes that products are not only about utility but are also connected to community symbols and identity (Khayru et al., 2021). In traditional communities, choices of food, clothing, or household materials often represent historical relationships with the environment and the community. When green marketing offers alternative products based on global standards, these changes can be perceived as a threat to the continuity of local identity. Consumer globalization bringing universal environmental standards is sometimes seen as promoting cultural homogenization and weakening local practices that have long supported social life (Appadurai, 1996). Therefore, rejection of green products does not always indicate rejection of environmental values, but rather reflects an effort to maintain the symbolic cultural space perceived as increasingly constrained.

At the discourse level, green marketing often implies that traditional ways of managing nature contain many shortcomings (Fuentes, 2015). Such narratives appear as comparisons between new products claimed to

be clean and eco-friendly and old products considered wasteful, dirty, or damaging to the environment (Wahab et al., 2017). In general, communication that is insensitive to local values can provoke resistance even with good intentions (Fariz, 2021). For traditional communities that take pride in ancestors as guardians of nature, such narratives can be perceived as a form of belittling previous generations. Resistance emerges when community members feel that local knowledge, which has long regulated environmental balance, is summarized as a problem to be solved through new industrial products. This sentiment reinforces suspicion that green marketing carries a value domination agenda rather than merely promoting environmental care.

Cultural resistance can also stem from differences in the way time is perceived. Green marketing often emphasizes the urgency of immediate action to prevent future global environmental crises (Kenis & Lievens, 2016). Differences in time perception between traditional communities and the modern world can make green messages feel distant and less relevant (Mardikaningsih, 2021). Images of a threatened Earth and narratives about future generations are used to build moral pressure on consumers. Meanwhile, traditional communities often have a sense of time tied to seasonal cycles, agricultural rhythms, and customary ritual calendars. Their primary focus is on the continuity of familiar cycles, not on abstract depictions of global crises that are difficult to experience directly. This difference in temporal orientation causes the urgency narrative of green marketing to be less impactful, making calls for changes in consumption behavior feel foreign and distant.

At the practical level, resistance is visible in the tendency of communities to maintain old habits even after being introduced to green products or services (Chouk & Mani, 2019). They may accept explanations, attend socialization meetings, or even try new products in the short term, but in daily life, they revert to entrenched consumption patterns. This indicates that behavioral change requires a sustained approach that takes local social aspects into account (Darmawan & Gatheru, 2021). This pattern is often misunderstood as reluctance to change or lack of knowledge. In reality, behind such behavior are moral and social considerations not explicitly expressed. Alignment with family traditions, obligations to maintain harmony with elders, and fear of being

seen as abandoning custom form the basis of attitudes that appear as silent rejection of green marketing.

The dimension of trust becomes an important factor in the emergence of cultural resistance to green marketing. Marketing literature shows that consumer trust is formed through consistency between company claims and observable real-world practices (Delmas & Burbano, 2011). The phenomenon of greenwashing, which involves using environmental claims to improve image without substantive changes in production practices, has increased skepticism toward corporate sustainability communication in various countries. Strong trust is built through concrete actions and transparent communication, not merely promotional promises (Essa & Mardikaningsih, 2021). In traditional communities, information about such inconsistencies spreads quickly through informal social networks that have higher legitimacy compared to formal corporate messages (Granovetter, 1973). When collective trust is disrupted, technical certifications and scientific jargon are often insufficient to restore community confidence, because moral judgment is based more on social reputation and lived experience than on institutional documents.

From a value perspective, resistance arises because green marketing often prioritizes moral arguments rooted in individual responsibility toward the Earth as an abstract entity (Amos et al., 2016). Meanwhile, traditional communities interpret moral obligations primarily through concrete relationships with relatives, neighbors, and living beings they encounter daily. In this context, understanding local values becomes key for sustainability messages to be accepted (Nurmalasari & Nuraini, 2021). For them, preserving a certain tree is not about calculating carbon footprints, but because the tree serves as a village spring catchment, provides shelter for animals, or is part of sacred stories (Darmawan & Grenier, 2021). When green marketing encourages consumers to buy new products to save the global ecosystem, the gap between abstract scale and local experience can create a sense of estrangement. The resulting rejection reflects differences in moral starting points, not merely opposition to the idea of sustainability itself.

Cultural resistance also arises from the community's critical assessment of the economic motives behind green marketing. The

corporate social responsibility perspective emphasizes that organizational legitimacy depends on alignment between communicated values and operational practices (Carroll, 1991). Traditional communities often exhibit high sensitivity to discrepancies between moral rhetoric and real actions, especially when industrial activities are associated with environmental damage or resource conflicts. This critique highlights the importance of corporate integrity in implementing sustainable practices (Mardikaningsih & Darmawan, 2021). Within the organizational legitimacy theory framework, the public will withhold social support when a company is perceived as using environmental issues merely as a reputation strategy (Suchman, 1995). As a result, green marketing that is not accompanied by consistent ethical practices tends to be interpreted as a moral façade, leading communities to preserve local wisdom deemed more authentic and trustworthy. Such resistance underscores that sustainability communication requires participatory dialogue that respects local values, rather than a one-way promotional approach.

In addition, cultural resistance to green marketing is influenced by power relations in interactions between companies and traditional communities (Mukonza & Swarts, 2020). Green marketing often comes through corporate programs that possess capital power, media access, and policy influence. This power relationship shows that product acceptance is not only about quality, but also about the community's social and political position (Mardikaningsih, 2021). Traditional communities are in a much weaker position in determining the direction of communication and resource management. In such situations, green marketing can be understood as part of an intervention package introducing new management logic to the community area. Rejection of green products or messages sometimes reflects efforts to maintain remaining autonomy. Resistance becomes a means to express that the community does not want its entire way of life dictated by external interests wrapped in environmental narratives.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the cultural resistance of traditional communities to green marketing is rooted in fundamental differences in values, ways of understanding nature, and social organization between

local perspectives and marketing frameworks derived from Western traditions. Green marketing often introduces language, symbols, and standards that overlook the relational and communal nature of local environmental knowledge, as well as the social responsibilities that accompany it. Traditional communities evaluate green products and messages through the lens of custom, ancestral experience, and communal decision-making. When green marketing is perceived as diminishing traditional practices, threatening cultural identity, or exacerbating social hierarchies, resistance emerges as a mechanism to protect community dignity, cohesion, and autonomy. This indicates that resistance is not merely an obstacle but a meaningful response rooted in cultural preservation and collective identity.

The theoretical implication of this study underscores the importance of integrating cultural diversity and traditional wisdom into green marketing research and practice. Green marketing theory can be enriched by acknowledging that environmental knowledge is not solely scientific or technical but is also embedded in cultural narratives, practices, and ethical frameworks that have evolved over generations. By understanding resistance as a reflection of these deeper cultural dynamics, scholars and practitioners can better appreciate how sustainability initiatives intersect with social values. This perspective also encourages further research into cross-cultural marketing, the role of indigenous knowledge in environmental stewardship, and how value-sensitive marketing strategies can be designed without imposing external norms.

Practically, the findings highlight the need for green marketing designers to adopt inclusive and participatory approaches that treat local values not as barriers, but as collaborators in shaping sustainability communication. Establishing a dialogue that genuinely engages traditional communities before launching campaigns allows local knowledge, experiences, and priorities to influence both the content and delivery of green messages. This approach not only reduces the potential for resistance born from feelings of marginalization but also creates opportunities for synergistic collaborations where traditional practices and contemporary environmental goals reinforce one another. Ultimately, fostering mutual respect and co-creation between businesses and traditional communities can enhance the effectiveness of green marketing, strengthen community

trust, and contribute to sustainable development that is culturally grounded and socially equitable.

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