

## **Green Consumption, Environmental Marketing and Green Advertising: A Look at the Privatization of Nature from the Perspective of Liquid Modernity**

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### **Authors' contributions**

*The authors worked as a team to define the scope of this research, and all participated equally in all phases of this study.*

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### **ABSTRACT**

The production of new market arrangements that can reveal the appropriation of nature as a strategy of consumption for the benefit of capital is observed in the contemporaneity. From this perspective, this research investigates Green Consumption, from an interdisciplinary perspective, to reveal if contemporary advertising with social and environmental appeal influences the process of production of new subjectivities even more rooted in consumption. The methodology adopted is the qualitative exploratory research of the "green" ads published in *Veja* magazine between 2004 and

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2014. The theoretical foundation is built from Bauman and other authors who with this dialogue. From this clipping, some clues are analyzed about the legitimacy of environmental marketing strategies focused exclusively on consumption expansion. The study takes a look at the use of advertising and marketing as a way to legitimize and feedback the idea of "productize" nature, that is, presented as a commodity ready to be consumed, and discusses how the new "green" stamp models can be produced and reproduced on the market. Finally, this work brings publicity and environmental marketing as possible instruments for the formation of new "ways of being", even more rooted in the logic of consumption, decrease medical as well as a financial burden, hence improving the management of cirrhotic patients. These predictors, however, need further work to validate reliability.

*Keywords: Environmental marketing; green consumption; green advertising; Liquid Modernity.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

By the end of the twentieth century, the advance of technology development, in parallel with the increasing limitation of available natural resources, resulted in large negative shocks in the world social and marketing scenarios. The imminent need to develop new values and socioeconomic models aimed at reducing social and environmental impacts reposition nature as a topic of great relevance in the debates of different segments of the market and society. The interest in the issues inherent to sustainability starts to permeate different fields of knowledge and market sectors. "Sustainable consumption" becomes one of the key topics in the contemporary context, a reality that encourages corporations to turn their advertising and marketing efforts into the green-modeled argument.

Following this logic, the media, allied to forming opinions and inducing new behaviors, can contribute to the formation of new individuals whose "identity is plural, changeable, fragmented and flâneur" [1]. From this idea, companies can stimulate the production and reproduction of new "ways of being" in the consumer market by directing their advertising efforts towards the construction of a pro-environmental image, a strategy that aims to differentiate and add value to the brand in a scenario of extreme competitiveness. In this sense, the interdisciplinary approach helps to understand the process of choosing "trademarks as a strategy of belonging, through revocable, temporary and floating identities" [1].

Considering the need to discuss new consumer relations in postmodernity, the general objective of this study is to investigate how advertising and marketing of an environmental nature in the Consumer Society [2] reflect the process of

production of new "ways of being" constituted from the individual relations in the Liquid Modernity [3,2,4]. The specific objective of this study is to understand the use of the "green" argument as the cause and consequence of the production and reproduction of new "green" stamp models that reflect a mobile subjectivity [5], who's consumption occurs in an interdisciplinary way, in the context of Liquid Modernity [3,2,4]. The justification and the relevance of the study for such study are based on the unveiling - through the analysis of the advertising actions in question - the use of environmental issues as a form of marketing positioning. It is questioned the possible incompatibility of the use of the environmental theme inserted in a society whose consumption is ephemeral and fleeting, and in which the political role of stamps is to encourage an excessive compulsion for "having", more and better [6]. What is the role of marketing tools in the implementation of advertising movements with the exclusive objective of promoting and creating "green" stamp models that positively reinforce the corporate image [7] in communion with the formation of revocable and ephemeral identities?

The methodology used is the exploratory bibliographical and documentary research that was carried out through a qualitative study of environmental advertisements published in *Veja* magazine between the years 2004 and 2014. The segmentation of the collected material takes into account how the appeal is built, as well as the interdisciplinary dimension of consumption. The analysis of the data is inspired by the technique of Content Analysis, based on the precepts of BARDIN [8]. The journals are grouped into four broad categories: nature-product; (un)sustainable speech; green stamp and consumerism, created from the theoretical framework constructed in conjunction with

methodological criteria chosen from the Content Analysis. The research aims to stimulate a reflection on the importance of advertising as an instrument for the formation of psychosocial identities inserted into ecological problematic through actions that can vary from the adoption of effective sustainable practices to the formation of a movement of nature privatization [9].

### **1.1 Contemporary Society: Some Considerations on Consumption in the Context of Liquid Modernity**

In contemporary times, they are perceived to be new factors that significantly changed the *modus operandi* that governs the machine consumption under the aegis of capital. Technological development, the craving for high-performance production, consumption desires transformed into needs [10], among others, composed a new marketing diagram [11]. In this new logic, the ephemerality and volatility processes emerge the flagship of the strategic processes of dissemination of new behaviors and ideas. The consumption - be it products or commodified nature - when viewed from the perspective of Liquid Modernity [3,2,4], is revealed the booster of the transformed needs desires.

According to BAUMAN [3], the Liquid Modernity is characterized mainly by temporary connections. The speed required of processes - whose actions vanish even before they have been completed - is essentially marked by superficiality. "You are the only stable point in a universe of moving objects thanks to your connections." [12]. In addition, SANTOS [13] comments that "one of BAUMAN's main concerns is to analyze the process of individualization of society," the author brings in the discussion ideas that reveal unstable modernity, which he calls Liquid Modernity [13]. BAUMAN [3] brings the idea that contemporaneity is clothed with a new world order that is in itself unstable and fleeting. It predominates in this new modelling - also called postmodern, late modern, neo-modern [14] or "second modernity" or "over modernity" [3] - a great unpredictability that causes individuals to be immersed in a cycle of constant changes [15] [16]. In this new logic, processes are shaped by the needs of consumption dictated by profit, an objective pursued by the model of capitalist production, which stimulates frantic consumption as a means of maintaining its own system. And for there to be an extra stimulus to consumption, there is, in this process, a transformation of

desires into needs that are soon consumed by the brilliance of a new shopping opportunity, ever more seductive than the previous one.

Under this approach, the Consumer Society [2] presents fundamental changes that bring the desires decentralized and of new importance. The objects to be consumed pass, in this logic, to be subjected to compose the individuals in the process of capture, creation and production of desire [15] from the reproduction of new "ways of being".

Consumption, at the present time, takes a prominent place in the intrinsic and extrinsic transformation of these individuals, who begin to consume by the desire to consume themselves, to consume in a "therapeutic" way, to consume goods and services that feedback, incomplete and unfinished desires, it breaks apart.

### **1.2 Green Consumption or "Productize" Nature?**

According to TAVARES, IRVING and VARGAS [1] the individual has, in the contemporaneity, chosen products and services as a form of belonging to a consumer logic that exalts revocable, temporary and fluctuating "ways of being". Thus, the act of consuming in the contemporary world is the passport to belonging to the community, a way of guaranteeing recognition and having secured the status of "consumer" (*Ibid*). Inserted in this market movement, individuals would focus on consumption in such a way as to engender connections that put them in a process of intertwining new social relations, from the production and reproduction of these new "ways of being" created to generate fluidity and oxygenate the consumer market [17]. In this sense, it is assumed that "people use the goods in order to create links or establish social distinctions" [18].

TAVARES and IRVING [9] add to this discussion the idea that the Liquid Modernity causes the Green Consumption in which "life" is "productized", and, by doing so, makes the immaterial capitalize through the rhizome of a fluid network. According to TAVARES [19] "the *aporias* about society, consumer culture, its complexities, ambiguities and contradictions serve as inspiration for the deepening of the relationship between consumption and nature." PORTILHO [20] points out that the environmental problem of consumption was initially defined

within the limits of the notion of green consumption and, soon after, focused on the so-called sustainable consumption, moving towards the idea of green "ways of being", an idea discussed in this paper research. Thus, green consumption is more widely denominated in the literature on sustainable consumption, gaining a series of interpretations, from the discussion of several authors. According to PAAVOLA [21], sustainable consumption is one that deals with goods that have a reduced environmental impact. HANSEN and SCHRADER [22] describe sustainable consumption as one that is promoted in a way that respects environmental resources and is managed in such a way as to guarantee the needs of the present generations without compromising those of future generations.

In a perspective closer to the *aporia* of the Liquid Modernity, one can bring the concept of green consumption from the perspective of the networks of actors that influence and are influenced by a *rhizomatic* distribution [3] to which all would need to belong from [10] [17] [23]. According to the author, in these networks, mutual and collective assemblages are influenced by political, social, economic, cultural and environmental values in their multiplicity of vectors and movements. Thus, a new configuration characterizes a movement of "liquid sustainability" [1], which is formatted from the political-economic logic of capitalism whose new cleavage can present the symbiosis of capital and nature.

It should be emphasized, however, that, for the most part, consumers - despite the need to belong to the consumer society logic - are more engaged with environmental issues. In general, the Brazilian citizen becomes more mature and selective, beginning to demand price and quality in a single product or service, which leads to the movement of consumerism. According to PAPASTAWRIDIS [24]: "the term consumerism is related to responsible consumption, ethical and solitary, according to appropriate and rational criteria that take into account the origin of products acquired and the environmental and social impacts of this consumption" [24]. Accordingly, the author affirms that, to meet the needs of sustainable development, consumerism has been emerging in recent years, condemning the consumption model disseminated by companies and governments under the claim of pure and simple economic development. "Consumerism aims to defend the interests of consumers and users, individually or in groups. It is expressed in the criteria that people use to

acquire goods or services in a conscious way" (*Ibid*).

Moreover, NEVES [25] brings the concept of green consumerism:

*"Green consumerism aims to encourage the consumption of environmentally friendly products, environment-friendly, as they have lower consumption of raw materials and greater of recyclable. They use clean production technology; do not use unnecessary tests with guinea pigs, do not produce negative impact or damage to endangered species, consume less energy and water during production. They are long-lasting, allowing for upgrades, have post-consumer distribution and disposal, reduced or unpacked packaging, and can be reused or refilled, collected or dismantled after consumption, reused or recycled"* [25].

This view of consumerism coincides with that of Fábio FELDMANN and Samyra CRESPO [26] since they say that consumption exclusively linked to the promotion of benefits or to the need to belong has already been left by society.

However, according to GINSBERG and BLOOM [27], companies should always consider the fact that consumers are not susceptible to losing the inherent attributes of the traditional product, such as price, quality, convenience, availability and performance. So, according to this factor, should "green" goods and services match their attributes to "non-green" products through marketing tools so that they are considered by most consumers?

### **1.3 Some Clues about the Environmental Appeal under the Aegis of Liquid Modernity: Green Marketing or Greenwashing?**

With the worldwide movement of public policies around social and environmental issues in the context of Liquid Modernity [3,2,4], there is the rise of marketing tools as strategic tools for corporate image building with stakeholders. The term has some synonyms: environmental marketing [28]; ecological marketing [29]; the sustainable marketing [30] and greener marketing [31]. It is argued by DIAS [32] that green marketing [33,34] is [...] the marketing aspect that "deals with the relation between consumption and the environment and is involved with the recent needs of the client

conscious of the importance of the preservation of nature".

POLONSKY [35] brings the definition of green marketing as activities developed by companies to generate and facilitate any exchanges aimed at satisfying the desires and needs of consumers, provided that this "occurs with the minimum negative impact on the environment" [35]. Nonetheless, KILBOURNE [26] argues that it is difficult to identify the practice of green marketing, since the ads are not clearly identified as such and concludes: "that green advertising is more behavior-oriented than consumption than compromised with the sociopolitical aspect of environmentalism" [26]. ALMEIDA [36] brings a strong critique of environmental marketing when he states that companies, in an attempt to adapt their speeches, take a true "green bath". The author is told that there are companies that use specialists to try to reprogram an image, often linked to neglect and social and environmental scandals for centuries.

BARBIERI [37] seeks to disclose yet another relationship in relation to environmental marketing at the same time as the task of getting women to do the production cycle information over and over again: the "green makeup" or "greenwash" [37]. These are classified as greenwashing, given that their promotion goes against the conceptions. However, the Brazilian independent research firm, Market Analysis [38], states that greenwashing is a term used to designate a marketing procedure used by an organization to provide an ecologically responsible image of its products or services.

The "green" trend brings a number of opportunities to promote change in the market. However, these may lead to the creation of doubtful and opportunistic eco-elements, or they may encourage the use of visual appeals that induce the consumer to draw the wrong conclusions about what is being acquired or even to acquire brands shaped to be "eco-friendly" (modelling "green" stamps). Viewed briefly these concepts, the next topic addresses the methodology of analysis of the selected campaigns.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

In order to understand the process of consumption with environmental bias, the research followed the theoretical clues covered

by Zygmunt BAUMAN, through the cuts of the Consumer Society [2] under the logic of Liquid Modernity [3]. The methodology used to analyze the concepts in the practical case is the exploratory research given through a qualitative study of the environmental ads published in *Veja* magazine between the years of 2004 and 2014. The analysis of the ads is inspired by the technique of Content Analysis [8]. The journals are grouped into four broad categories: nature-product; (un)sustainable speech; green stamp and consumerism, created from the theoretical framework constructed in conjunction with the selected methodological criteria. According to BARDIN [8], categorical analysis is one of the techniques of Content Analysis. The author complements that the goal of Content Analysis "is the manipulation of messages (content and expression of this content) to evidence the indicators that allow inferring about reality other than that of the message" [8]. It should be emphasized that the categorization does not aim to fit the concepts studied in boxing in a way to exclude them mutually, a methodological choice that would indicate a conceptual error of a study that proposes to study a reality that is supported under the aegis of Liquid Modernity.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It is observed in **Chart 1** that the first 5 years analyzed (2004-2008) was the publication of the total of 113 appeals ads with "green" against 244 that were published in the next 5 years (2009-2013). This evidence represents a 115% increase in the number of ads published with "green" appeal in the period analyzed. **Table 1** shows the compilation of these ads. Of the 380 ads found over the 11 years surveyed, 134 were included in the "nature-product" category; 169 in "(un)sustainable speech"; 50 in "green stamp" and 26 in "consumerism". This table shows that, in parallel to the "boom" of campaigns with a "green" appeal during the dissemination and "Rio +20" [39], there was also a small increase in campaigns considered as "consumerists", evidence which confirms the presence of a resistance movement of the previously installed logic.

The following topics are presented a qualitative analysis of the campaigns selected to illustrate the categories defined according to the theoretical discussion proposed in this study following the precepts of the technique of BARDIN's Content Analysis [8].

### 3.1 Nature-Product

**Definition:** In this category, nature is presented in a manner subjugated to man, as a product to be exploited, often, in an unlimited way, to serve the interests of capital, as a matter of priority. This category brings companies that justify the "green" approach explicitly linked to utilitarian logic.

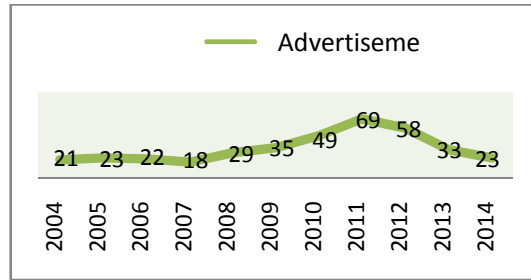
**Analysis:** In the advertisement represented in Fig. 1 (next page) it can be observed that *Banco Real* brings possibly in its advertising argument the nature of "productized" form [9], as evidenced in the statement that opens the advertisement: "Green is the color of money". The phrase brings nature as a raw material to be controlled in order to meet the interests of capital, as a matter of priority. It can be inferred, from the concepts studied, that the issue of preservation in this advertisement is placed as a strategic priority to increase productivity and profitability, and not as a theme to be considered in order to contemplate all the structures that permeate the market and society in the context of Liquid Modernity [3,2,4].

The ad's message, by pointing out that the capital market that values the issue of nature as a global business trend, ends up reducing environmental value to a mere means of leveraging profits, driving readers (consumers) from a more reflective view about the theme. Also, in this announcement, "green" products presented are sold by any bank. Checks and credit lines are instruments designed to further drive the consumption that needs capital to meet their needs transmuted into needs. The company says these products are "socio-environmental" and help stimulate thinking about a new lifestyle, but it does not make it clear what this new "green way" would be.

The central argument of *Banco Real's* announcement reveals the submission of environmental values to the logic of profit, as can be inferred from the interpretation of the phrase: "Integrating environmental values and human values into economic values." Finally, this phrase, when analyzed together with the first sentence here cited ("Green is the color of money"), can be interpreted as an incentive the search for getting more and better [1] insofar as it places nature as an object of consumption and equates it in terms of value and importance to economic and financial issues.

### 3.2 (Un)Sustainable Speech

**Definition:** In this category, the brand is positioned as owner of what will be best for the question of the nature under the aegis of Liquid Modernity [3] [2] [4]. Brings speeches loaded with emotion that self-promotion as the great protectors of the environmental cause.



**Chart 1 - Curve of ads classified as "environmental" in *Veja* magazine between the years 2004 and 2014**

Source: Authors' adaptation from the data collected in documentary research *Veja* magazine between 2004 and 2014.



**Fig. 1. Banco Real Ad in the Magazine See edition of June 07, 2006, page 14**

Source: Digital Archive *Veja* magazine, in 2018.

**Analysis:** The Fig. 2 shows *Bombril ECO*. In this Ad, Carlos Moreno (*Bombril's* advertisement boy for some years) endorses the following phrases to definitively link the product to the image of credibility with the stakeholders: "You use it,

**Table 1. Number of ads per category between the years 2004 and 2014**

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Total
nature-product	7	5	9	6	6	9	17	24	33	13	5	134
(un)sustainable speech	11	15	12	6	17	15	26	29	10	14	14	169
green stamp	2	1	1	3	4	8	4	12	8	5	2	50
consumerism	1	2	0	3	2	3	2	4	7	1	1	26
Total	21	23	22	18	29	35	49	69	58	33	23	380

Source: Authors' production from the data collected in the documentary research of *Veja* magazine between the years 2004 and 2014.



**Fig. 2. Bombril Ad in *Veja* magazine edition of May 19, 2010, page 93**

Source: Digital Archive *Veja* magazine, in 2018.

throw it away, it rusts, spoil and disappear"; "Do not attack nature" and "100% ecological". In these sentences, it can be inferred that there is the presence of elements that corroborate the idea of a "(un)sustainable speech" in view of being exaggerated statements and lacking technical explanation. In addition, the stamp boasts the best choice among competitors when it claims to be more environmentally friendly than the others, without, however, giving more transparent information about the process of product decomposition in nature.

It is inferred that the *BombriL ECO* brand still tries to induce the dynamics of "simplified" disposability when it depletes the production and disposal process, as can be evidenced in the statement "You use, throw away, rust, spoil and disappear", which can show the presence of "green makeup" or greenwashing [37] [40].

It can be interpreted from this clipping that there is an attempt to convince consumers that the product simply disappears in nature, as if there were an organic process of decomposition. The company also included in its packaging the "ECO" stamp, as a way to differentiate the product in the gondola and to appeal to the merchandising in the point of sale without, however, changing any characteristic of the product so that it became "100% Ecological" [39].

Lastly, the *BombriL ECO* brand stands as the bearer of what will be best for the nature issue under the aegis of the Liquid Modernity [3] [2] [4] bringing emotionally charged speeches whose message promotes the great protectors of the cause environmental.

### 3.3 Green Stamp

**Definition:** This category includes all the ads that bring some kind of seal that aims to guarantee, through the confirmation of a third party (or not), that the company is involved with the environmental or socio-environmental cause. However, these chancels that reveal themselves in the form of national stamps, awards or certifications that are often attributed to the advertisements without any explanation that make the reader (consumer) understand what he is reading.

**Analysis:** The ad *Malwee* illustrated in Fig. 3 provides the information that the company is a pioneer in the textile industry, the neutralization of emissions that cause the greenhouse effect and adopted by free will, such practice.

It is observed in the piece that the expression "Carbon Zero" appears in the form of a "green label" applied in the left corner of the advertisement. Even if the format implies the presence of a "green stamp", the print is actually a creation of the company itself and not a certification granted by an external body free of interests. This evidence makes clear the presence of a self-declaration and the possible veneration of a false seal as a means of adopting a strategy of environmental marketing or "green" stamp modelling.

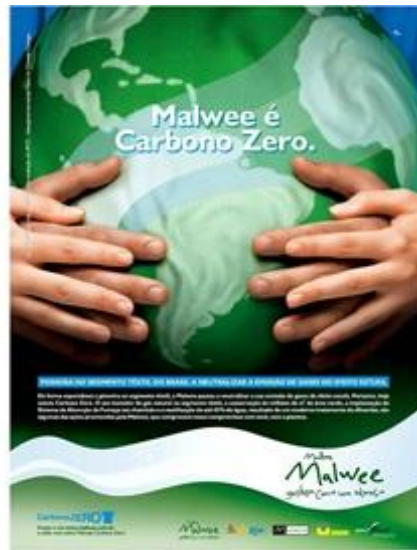


Fig. 3. Ad *Malwee* in *Veja* magazine edition of November 7, 2007, page 101

Source: Digital Archive *Veja* magazine, in 2018.

The advertisement subtly states that the statement that "*Malwee* is Carbon Zero" is based on the parameters of the IPCC - Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. The consumer probably does not know what this indicator means, but may consume a false feeling that he is acquiring a certified product or service by a third party qualified to do so. This process possibly happens without the consumer worried about the origin of the statements, limiting themselves to "trust" what is being advertising, through the perception that the stamp allows the adherence of new green "ways of being".

### 3.4 Consumerism

**Definition:** In this category are inserted ads that question the forms of production, the logic of consumption in the Liquid Modernity [3,2,4], the



veracity of the information passed by the manufacturers, bringing the announced message through a critical-reflexive bias.



**Fig. 4. Ad Ethos Institute in *Veja* magazine edition of October 20, 2004, page 131**  
 Source: Digital Archive *Veja* magazine, in 2018.

**Analysis:** The *Ethos Institute's* advertisement illustrated in Fig. 4 represents the category "Consumerism" since it brings the socio-environmental issue in a reflexive way, without having to bring a product, service or action transvestite of a "green" atmosphere, causing the readers to reflect critically on Corporate Social Responsibility. The importance of transparency and ethics in the management of companies and in their relationship with their stakeholders is highlighted. The phrase "Much has been said about socio-environmental responsibility. But is it clear what it means?" brings a message with a critical-reflexive bias on the environmental and social issue, raising the reader's attention to the possible practice of greenwashing, since the term socio-environmental responsibility can be inserted into advertisements indiscriminately, that is, as a marketing position.

Lastly, the *Ethos Institute's* advertisement points to the importance of the goals compatible with "sustainable development". Despite the economic benefits of investing in social and environmental responsibility, the *Ethos Institute* does not place them above the social and cultural spheres, not only presenting them as "green" stamp models [10,17,23].

#### 4. CONCLUSION

From the theoretical basis and methodological application chosen, this research focused on the construction of questions based on a critical-reflexive and interdisciplinary view on the psycho-sociological question linked to the production and reproduction of new green "ways of being" through advertising and marketing. It was observed, from the point of view of the chosen theoretical clipping, how the process of consumption of products and services with environmental appeal can be constructed and fed back from the perspective of the "ways of being" as "green" stamp modelling.

The study noted that there is a tendency for companies to appropriate the environmental argument in a way that encourages a continuous and uninterrupted flow of consumption and the subjective impoverishment of the individual instead of promoting reflection on nature. The data collected shows that there is a significant increase in ads with "green" appeals between 2004 and 2014 (approximately 115%). However, much of these reinforce the production and formation of new "ways of being", being these ephemera revocable and entangled by the desires transmuted into needs, in the logic of nature-product.

The aim of this research was not to point out which companies are or are not "green" or practicing greenwashing but incite a look that seeks reflection on the advertising and marketing as important tools in the formation of new identities inserted into the ecological problem, through the idea of modelling "green" stamps. Are the companies occupied with reflection on an environmental issue or forming a movement to privatize nature?

Likewise, a possible framework of nature in a "market-driven" way in terms of competitive advantage was verified in the analyses to "wash" the image of its green products and, in this way, win the credibility of its stakeholders, in the logic of Liquid Modernity. There has been a multiplication of "green" offers to the detriment of contemporary social, demographic and environmental problems.

Thus, one can conclude that it is necessary and urgent to provoke new concerns and philosophical perspectives regarding green consumption. The question, in this case, is whether there is a more coherent alternative

solution to the environmental issue. Alternative questions must be discussed in order to interdict the automatism of the standardized conceptions that tend to make nature a product to be sold on the shelves.

### COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist. The company names used for this research are commonly and predominantly selected in our area of research and country. There is absolutely no conflict of interest between the authors and company because we do not intend to use this company as an avenue for any litigation but the advancement of knowledge. Also, the research was not funded by the company rather it was funded by the personal efforts of the authors.

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