

Authenticity Within Oatly's Reaction to the Communication Crisis

Keaslian dalam Reaksi Oatly terhadap Krisis Komunikasi

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Abstract

This study sought to understand the brand authenticity of communication responses during crises. Previous research has provided findings about the organization's authenticity but overlooked in the moment of crisis from the consumer's point of view. By taking the popular brand "Oatly" as the subject, this research aimed to address the questions of how consumers make sense of responses during the crisis and its authenticity using qualitative analysis. Data from phenomenological interviews with Oatly's consumers in Sweden were investigated to collect patterns and meanings. Based on the findings, this research argues that the way consumers see authenticity in a brand's action is based on their preferred concept. This finding of this research contributes to the communication literature and specifically reaffirms the concept of theoretical foundation using symbolic interaction theory. Moreover, three themes regarding how consumers make sense of Oatly's reaction to the crisis were seen: the necessity of business perseverance, aggressive marketing style, and unacceptable behavior of justifying decisions that go against initial values. Additionally, how consumer understands Oatly's authenticity in a crisis response were seen through themes: commerciality, honesty, genuineness consistency, and a public apology.

Keywords: authenticity; brand; communication crisis; consumer; honestly; sense-making; values

Abstrak

Studi ini berusaha memahami keaslian merek dari tanggapan komunikasi selama krisis. Penelitian sebelumnya telah memberikan temuan tentang keaslian organisasi tetapi diabaikan pada saat krisis dari sudut pandang konsumen. Dengan mengambil subjek penelitian "Oatly", penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menjawab pertanyaan tentang bagaimana konsumen memahami tanggapan selama krisis dan keasliannya menggunakan analisis kualitatif. Data dari wawancara fenomenologi dengan konsumen Oatly di Swedia untuk mengumpulkan pola dan makna. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa cara konsumen melihat keaslian dalam tindakan merek didasarkan pada konsep pilihan mereka. Temuan penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi pada literatur komunikasi dan secara khusus menegaskan kembali konsep landasan teoritis menggunakan teori interaksi simbolik. Selain itu, tiga tema tentang bagaimana konsumen memahami reaksi Oatly terhadap krisis

terlihat: perlunya ketekunan bisnis, gaya pemasaran yang agresif, dan perilaku pembenaran keputusan yang tidak dapat diterima yang bertentangan dengan nilai awal. Selain itu, bagaimana konsumen memahami keaslian Oatly dalam respons krisis dilihat melalui tema: komersialitas, kejujuran, konsistensi keaslian, dan permintaan maaf publik.

Kata kunci: keaslian; kejujuran; krisis komunikasi; konsumen; masuk akal; nilai-nilai; merek

1. Introduction

“Oatly” from the Oatly Group AB is a company based in Sweden that produced alternative food of dairy products with oat as the main material. The brand has been actively highlighting its commitment to supporting environmental betterment within its activities. As an innovative plant-based food brand, it has been in a turmoil atmosphere since 2015 when it was sued for controversial slogans and got another challenge in 2020 when it took investment from Blackstone, an allegedly non-environmentally friendly company, and raised negative reactions on social media. Although it seems Oatly defended itself in a way they usually do, it still seems to raise hard critics from its fans and consumers by incriminating Oatly a hypocrite, to “boycott Oatly” hashtag (Spencer, 2020).

The importance of responding properly to a crisis is as huge as its potency of reputational threat and organizational disruption to a brand (Coombs, 2017). Strategies for handling crises need to precisely be planned, yet authenticity is one of the major factors when organizations face a turmoil environment or inconvenient situation with their stakeholders (Sisson & Bowen, 2017). To minimize crisis potency to arise, the authenticity in corporate

culture needs to be in line with business practice (Sisson & Bowen, 2017), which includes acting authentic in responding to crisis, which they argued to be one of the important keys in coping with a difficult situation that involves robust public or stakeholders.

Brand authenticity has been a common topic in communication research. Scholars like Napoli et al (2014) have developed measurement indicators for consumer-based brand authenticity comprising quality commitment, sincerity, and heritage. Other research by Ott & Theunissen (2014) revealed that “match the setting and the organization’s usual style” p.10 including during crisis, is an essential key to staying authentic. Furthermore, Ott and Theunissen (2014) also argued that an appropriate response should be conducted regarding keeping the reputation afloat. They found that by renouncing some controls, institutions or organizations could allow their loyal consumers or followers, or even supporters, to act toward the brand that is more authentic than the statement from corporations could defend an organization in crisis. Meanwhile, Vrabie (2014) in her study about limits on authenticity, argued it is only possible to obtain authenticity when the subjects encounter an extreme situation like death or guilt.

Although much research has been conducted to reveal brand authenticity, the majority of them mostly testified to the importance of brand authenticity, or the assessment of authenticity on the regular basis of market conditions and overlooking the authenticity of the reaction of a brand to the crisis from consumer's point of view.

Likewise, scholars have conducted research on Oatly, covering its brand authenticity in general, not in crises. This gap raised a question in the author's mind about whether acting the way one usually does is not authentic enough. Authenticity, as Banet-Weiser (2012) mentioned, is exchanged between the target audience and marketers' engagements which contribute to corporate brand construction.

Thus, this study would expose deeper on the consumer's point of view on the authenticity construction of a brand's communication activity within a specific situation (crisis). Specifically, this study aimed to understand how people see the Oatly crisis reaction from their view and how consumers further constructed their understanding of the authenticity of Oatly's response to the crisis.

RQ1: How do consumers make sense of Oatly's communication actions in response to the crisis?

RQ2: How do consumers make sense of authenticity in Oatly's responses?

1.1 Oatly's reactions to the crisis

This research examined the consumer's point of view towards two distinctive actions from Oatly in

communicating their response to two crises. In the first action, Oatly initiated an online petition to cancel amendment 171 (AM171) (Oatly, n.d-a). In October 2020, the European parliament finalized the 'yes' result of the majority vote for the new restriction, which will be further proceeded become law. In consequence, the plan-based product will no longer be allowed to use terms that were initially used for a dairy product like: 'milk,' 'yogurt,' 'cheese,' and 'butter' in all their design or packaging (Duong, 2021). This restriction is also known as "censor vegan 'dairy' products." By February 2021, over three hundred thousand signatures were collected from the online petition to revoke AM171, although the law does not seem to be further discussed for change (Giliver, 2021). Previously, Oatly was sued by an association of Swedish farmers, Dairy Lobby LRF Mjölkk, after using controversial slogans such as: "No milk, no soy, no badness" or "it's like milk but for human" (Lööf, 2015). The campaign was considered improper, putting dairy products in a negative image (Lööf, 2015). Oatly lost the lawsuit in 2015 yet still managed to bring its controversial campaign to different target audiences in the United Kingdom (Faull, 2018).

In the second action, Oatly argued its decision to take Blackstone as an investor for two reasons. On their website, Oatly mentioned first reason was to cope with financial difficulty. The second reason was their mission of "maximum change to benefit the planet" by increasing global awareness of sustainability business in big industries (Oatly, n.d-b). Oatly was accused of "selling its

soul” after the 10% stake investment deal with Blackstone, a private equity firm alleged to be responsible for the Amazon deforestation. Although Blackstone previously denied the allegation in September 2019, the public did not seem to consider it and started boycotting Oatly through social media (Spencer, 2020).

The Introduction explains why a problem needs to be investigated and any supporting data based on personal observations or the results of the researchers. The formulation of the research problem is always based on real conditions and scientifically objective.

2. Theoretical Framework

This research was conducted on the base of the symbolic interactionism paradigm that belongs to the imperative tradition. In imperative tradition, phenomenology underlies most of its research and considers subjective interpretation very seriously. It assumes that the “reality of situations is socially constructed through acts of interpretation” (Prasad, 2018 p.14). Further, the paradigm of symbolic interactionism as one of interpretative tradition’s ‘offspring’, undergirds this research that analyzed the sense-making in individual consumers toward Oatly’s reaction authenticity in response to the crisis.

The assumption that runs as the foundation of this study is the SI theory which refers to the meaning construction of individuals happening within the process of communication. This is because meaning is not innate, does not belong naturally to one thing or idea, and people are needed in meaning-making (West & Turner,

2018). From this assumption, Blummer; LaRossa & Reitzes (as cited from West & Turner, 2018) concluded three notions: first, “humans act toward others based on the meaning those others have for them” (p.72); second, people interact and produce meaning; Third, modification on meaning happened through an interpretive process.

3. Research Method

To answer the research questions, this qualitative study adopted a phenomenological approach to apprehend the phenomenon of consumer sense-making experience towards the response of a particular brand Oatly during a crisis. In phenomenology, the experiences that participants shared were adopted as specific meanings (Moustakas, 1994) that further acted as a knowledge base (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

Rooted in psychology, phenomenological epistemology seeks to understand how the phenomenon feels and is experienced by its participant. It relies on participants’ everyday involvement, impression, and feeling as a means of uncovering meanings (Moustakas, 1994). The phenomenological tradition extracts pure data of individuals’ experiences to understand their life-world social construction, as this approach presumes that individuals rather live by sharing a world that exists between space and time than independently exist (Thomson et al., 1989). Although individuals may have diverse experiences, some experiences are similarly assumed, which helps to figure out the essence of the phenomenon (Thomson et al.,

1989). For this study, the phenomenon of sense-making on Oatly consumers within the context of Oatly's response to the crisis and the brand authenticity during the crisis provided a shared experience from the interviewee that led to insight extracted from the emerged multiple realities throughout the data.

3.1 Source of Data

All the data used were gathered from semi-structured interviews, where the unit of analysis is individual. The semi-structured interview is defined as "a planned and flexible interview to obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee concerning interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena" (Brikmann & Kvale, 2005, p.367). The semi-structured interview was considered relevant for this study because it explains the participant's life point of view to further construct meaning within themselves about a particular concept or phenomenon (Brikmann & Kvale 2005). Employing a semi-structured interview is meant to understand how the participant makes sense of crisis response and its authenticity in their way. The interview guide had prepared to avoid irrelevant broader themes during the conversation.

The same interview guide was used for all samples where questions were open-ended with follow-up questions to understand deeply new ideas and to break down statements that were too simple or complicated (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Each interview was started by the interviewer briefly explaining the Oatly case, followed by questions related to research questions like:

"Oatly gathered petition from their website primarily and other online platforms as well. How do you see this action?". The interviewer used vocabulary that is common to make the interviewee understand the questions easily (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This meant avoiding misunderstandings that could lead to irrelevant answers. The author realized language differences, where the interviews were all held in English and none of the participants was an English native speaker. In compensating for the language limitation, the interviewer gave time or pause for participants to answer and welcomed participants to ask for clarification of words or sentences they do not fully understand if needed.

3.2 Sampling approach

This research used purposeful sampling to direct this study in exploring the research questions. Purposive sampling runs on the premise that the researcher aims to understand, reveal in-depth about a particular matter, and so it needs to drag data from the sample that is most relevant and can be learned within the case (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). There was a disadvantage considered in this study, that the purposive sampling would not be able to provide general findings for the research. Nevertheless, this research is focused on the specific situation of the Oatly brand, and therefore, this study acknowledged to the public that the result does not apply to another context.

In finding a good set of samples, criteria were determined. First, people who live in Sweden to

ensure participants were familiar with Oatly, as Oatly is a brand that originally comes from Sweden. Second, people who consume oat drinks and have knowledge about the Oatly crisis to ensure that participants can cope with the questions related to the issue. Third, they must be 18 years and above. This is because Swedish get ID cards when they reach 18 (Polisen.se, n.d), and this study is aware of the legal consideration for taking underage participants. In addition, this age was perceived as an independent buyer where buying decisions can be made individually

3.3 Sample

There are four samples in this research, and they consist of two females and two males. All participants consume Oatly daily to weekly, live in Helsingborg, Sweden, and have different backgrounds. Mentioned as a pseudonym, they are Dany (30), an automation engineer; Rere (23), a student and vegetarian; Maya (28), a personal trainer who is in the process of shifting to the vegetarian lifestyle and Armando (30) a student.

3.4 Data Gathering

Due to the limited time frame for this research, data gathering is focused on Helsingborg city, Skåne province, Sweden. Recruitment advertisements were posted on some Facebook groups related to Helsingborg. People who commented on the posting and met the sample requirements were then chosen to further discuss interview appointments separately for each sample. Beforehand, the interviewer sent a consent form file for the participant to read, which

would be signed by the participant directly on the appointed day before the interview started.

All the interviews were recorded using Adobe Audition 2020 software with Audio-Technica AT2020 mic without filter or effect. Interviews via phone and online were intentionally avoided, considering the distraction that might occur during a virtual meeting and the purpose to reach maximum focus from the interviewee. This research argued online interviews could result in a less valid answer as a distraction from the interviewee's environment is inevitable and uncontrollable.

The interviews were conducted between 26 February 2021 to 6 March 2021 in Helsingborg, with a duration of 17 to 23 minutes for each participant. Before the interview started, participants signed the consent form they had read before. The whole recording file was stored on a personal laptop for further analysis. After the interview, respondents were thanked and given a sealed snack and beverage packet to be taken away.

3.5 Analysis procedures

This research applied qualitative analysis from interview conversations to see how the customer makes sense of the communication activities of Oatly during the crisis, and the authenticity of the action, and looked if any things that might appear to influence the customer's insight, as well as the meaning-making process in it. Initially, interviews were transformed into verbatim transcription. Each word was transcribed in detail, including expressions such as "ahh.." or

“umm.” After the respondent approved the transcription, coding was conducted by labeling interesting data related to the topic to reflect the meaning interpretation and collect the similarity from passages (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The codes were then classified into several outlines. The meanings and patterns from classified coded data were then analyzed and extracted to key themes that were relevant to answering the research questions.

3.6 Validity and reliability

In providing knowledge, this research attempted to be trustworthy by ensuring the reliability and validity of the data and analysis. According to Merriam & Tisdell (2016), repetitive research resulting same findings is hardly possible as “human behavior is never static” (p.250). Nevertheless, the procedures are kept in a scientifically disciplined manner. Furthermore, things that make a research trustworthy according to Merriam & Tisdell (2016) are the application of well-developed standards and the involvement of the academic community. According to that, this research used academic methodology, and peer review was conducted before being published.

Although this study acknowledged absolute objectivity does not exist, data validity was maximalized by making sure the sample had no personal relations with the interviewer. The topic, furthermore, can help the organization in conducting communication as a response to a crisis.

3.7 Reflexivity Statement

It is important to acknowledge the self-awareness of the researcher (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) in this study. The research was conducted based on the author’s curiosity in the practical field. The crisis that had been part of the researcher’s empirical routine dragged the research question as the author wanted to figure out. Meanwhile, it is also acknowledged that the author cannot get away either from the meaning construction during the data gathering and analysis or the interaction during the interview. The experiences and previous knowledge owned by the author as public relations who worked previously in handling crises potentially affect the independence of data interpretation.

3.8 Ethical Consideration

As another aspect on which research validity is dependent (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), this study was aware of ethical considerations during the investigation. In participating in the investigation, this study tried to minimize any possible risks or consequences that might cause uncomfortableness or hurt participants’ privacy. Firstly, the interviewer explained openly what the study was about to the participant. Next, the study used anonymity for participants’ full privacy and safety and to avoid embarrassment. Lastly, the direct one-on-one interviews held during the pandemic were conducted by applying COVID-19 standard protocol: maintaining distance between interviewee and interviewer (minimum 2 meters); providing hand sanitizer and masks. All the data collections were conducted with the participants’ consent given through

the consent form (see appendix 2). Finally, as the research is independently funded with no sponsorship, the result was not made to justify any side's action.

4. Findings and Discussion

From the interviews, Consumers have known Oatly as a brand with sustainable principles, a healthier dairy-alternative product with a distinctive taste and good quality. Its variances and taste have successfully attracted people, even who do not use to consume the dairy-alternative product. "I was, how to say, surprise. For me in a good way. Because I usually didn't like so much vegan products, but when I tried this and discovered that I like it" (Armando, personal interview March 1, 2021). Furthermore, themes that appeared during the data analysis were further shorted to answer the two research questions.

4.1 RQ1- How do consumers make sense of Oatly's communication actions in response to the crisis?

Consumers would perceive the reaction by looking at what caused the crisis in the first place and then would further judge. Furthermore, although there is a sort of big toleration to the Oatly act, they tend to disagree with the statement that justifying decision that contradictive with initial vision or message that Oatly has.

4.1.1 Necessity on preserving business

From the case of vegan 'dairy' censorship, initiating a petition was perceived as reasonable and highly understandable. Consumers

expressed that it did not make sense to stop using certain labels, not particularly on Oatly, but on all vegan products in general. Rere stated she could not agree to the censorship from any single aspect, "*well, I think it's ridiculous to not be able to call oat milk for milk and butter for butter. Even if it's made of something else. Oats, something that's not cowmilk.*" (Armando, personal interview, 2021 February 28).

Similarly, normal, reasonable for business, and realistic were words consumers used to explain their impression of the statement that Oatly was in a difficult financial situation and needed to take a financial backup from Blackstone. The statement seems tolerable to accept and understandable. "*I think it's common and something normal in this kind of business, if you want to span or invest money you have to you, face negative financial problem.*" (Armando, personal interview, 2021 March 1).

4.1.2 Aggressive marketing style

Another theme that appeared in answering the first research question is the campaign style. Although all consumers tolerate the action of initiating a petition as a decent action, they cannot disregard the crisis from its original causes. Consumers were aware that the way Oatly campaigned was harsh, particularly to the cow milk industry. This was a major factor that was seen as the initial cause of the crisis related to censorship. The consumer also disagreed with Oatly's campaign message and explained that Oatly's way of marketing is offensive. "*I can agree with the no milk no soy no badness, that that's kind of dis-towards other products,*

and maybe that's not a right approach even if they think that milk is bad for any reason and it's right, then maybe not attacking other products with their product is a good idea" (Rere, personal interview, 2021 February 28).

4.1.3 Justifying decisions that against initial values to match identity is less acceptable

Consumer highlighted contradictive decisions regarding the "selling its soul" crisis. Two arguments were used to justify the decision, but only financial reasons were perceived as acceptable. When Oatly argued the decision to action "to make a change to the big industry" (Oatly, n.d), it did not seem to make sense to the majority of participants. The Blackstone choice was perceived wrong in the first place. Oatly has initially convinced consumers of their commitment to preserving plant-based product existence.

Nevertheless, using sustainability reasoning to argue the allegation right after explaining financial difficulties was unacceptable, irrelevant, and perceived solely to match the justification with their identity. *"I don't find it very justifying, because that would mean that (in) the end (Oatly) just justified the means (action) so in that way, well again, How do I find it, I don't find it justifying."* (Maya, personal interview, 2021 February 26).

Consumers did not tend to consider the crisis response in their buying decision. However, this perceived fabricated justification was seen to potentially ruin consumers' trust. Commenting on the sustainable

reasoning statement, one respondent said they might want to change the brand after knowing the statement.

"I know a lot of people have gone from Oatly to other oat milk, so I have considered it, maybe I should switch brand, but at the same time, I haven't put energy into researching it so much then I feel like I should" (Rere, personal interview, 2021 February 28).

Nevertheless, parts of consumers did not necessarily change the consumer's consumption behavior or tendency. When it comes to function, they would refer back to its quality and taste. A participant even expressed concern about extinction *"Yea, because if they have a crisis, (Oatly) might not be able to deliver any more product."* (Dany, personal interview, March 6, 2021).

4.2 RQ2- How do consumers make sense of authenticity in Oatly's responses?

Consumers evenly argued that it was authentic in some parts, while others were not. The factors they have used in considering the authenticity of Oatly's actions are mainly related to honesty, profit-oriented (commerciality), and genuineness consistency. Meanwhile, consumers testify that a public apology would be more make sense and a more authentic response.

4.2.1 Profit Oriented (Commerciality)

Respondents were aware that business in general needs profit. Nevertheless, the majority of the respondents considered communicating the profit orientation as implying inauthenticity in general.

The act of “saving the business” in terms of making Oatly’s petition, furthermore, was seen as inauthentic by half of the respondents. The majority who were pro to this notion said that product reaction is so much reasonable but not authentic. The petition was made so the product can be easily recognized without consumers’ difficulty in selecting plant-based products and eventually tend to be sold more.

“I would say maybe no it’s not very authentic. I would say probably the biggest reason is that they want to be able to sell their products.” (Rere, personal interview, 2021, February 28)

A consumer who judged inauthentic on Oatly’s statement about the “selling its soul” allegation also used the same argumentation of commerciality. *“Maybe they just put it like to keep people from continuing in their buying and believing in their product [...] No, it’s not authentic.”* (Dany, personal interview, 2021 March 6).

4.2.2 Honesty

Honesty was a dominant factor in deciding whether actions were perceived as authentic by consumers. The way Oatly argued the necessity of taking Blackstone as an investor because of its financial situation was perceived as authentic. Such difficulty make sense in term of business; therefore, looking for the investor is a decent decision, and the reasoning was not made up. *“I can feel like it’s ok. It’s more authentic that they are losing money, so they need investors”* (Rere, personal interview, 2021, February 28).

Nevertheless, when participants were asked about the second argument that Oatly chose Blackstone for the sustainability reasoning to pursue the goals of making a change, none of them can say authentic. They could not convince themselves whether the statement is honest or just to justify the contradictive decision with Oatly’s identity. *“I don’t know if I believe them. No, it’s not authentic.”* (Dany, personal interview, 2021 March 6).

4.2.3 Genuineness consistency

In general, consumers use ‘genuine’ to explain what is authentic for them. By genuine means: no hidden agenda; act right based on one’s nature; a reaction that is not common; and act by expressing the true feeling even if that seems rude or unpleasant *“being rude of when they (a brand) have messed up, they’re rude, and that’s yea... that might be authentic because they might not be feeling happy that day...”* (Rere, personal interview, 2021 February 28)

Furthermore, to perceive authenticity in Oatly’s actions, consumers expect consistency of Oatly’s genuineness. The consumer thinks Oatly acted authentically by being straightforward in the purpose of the petition. Using the same marketing style, they wanted to keep using the ‘dairy terms’, fight for it, and so far, there were no other hidden agendas participants could see from the petition. *“the same way to react, to publish information to behave, I think they are authentic. Maybe we don’t like the way they are (aggressive words), but they are authentic.”* (Armando, personal interview, 2021 March 1).

They who argued not authentic testify the action lack of genuineness, because not many options were available, so the action was predicted and common. *“their way of responding to it, I guess I wouldn't call it authentic, I would perceive that's something that any company might do in their way, in.. in. their spot because they do have public support, Especially in this”*

4.2.4 Public Apology

In the crisis triggered by the Blackstone investment deal, consumers expected a public apology from Oatly as an authentic reaction, including initially explaining the reason before finalizing the big decision. There were indeed parts consumers could tolerate and even accept authentic, like financial difficulty fact revealing. However, the decision to choose Blackstone hurt consumers' trust. For the consumer, Oatly made a mistake to do things against what they have been trusted for, and it made consumers hard to feel the authenticity in whatever statement they used to justify *‘why Blackstone’*.

“They should apologize, says that they make a mistake, yes. Because people are believing in them” (Dany, personal interview, 2021 March 6)

“Public apology because I find what they did was not in line with their vision of what they usually communicate to their customers” (Maya, personal interview, 2021 February 26)

4.3 Discussion

From the findings, it is observed that people make sense of Oatly's reaction and the action's authenticity on the same event is relatively different. Petition movement that perceived authentic for its genuine by a consumer turned out not authentic for different reasons by other consumers. This aligns with symbolic interaction theory, where meaning is not hereditary to a particular thing, and people interact while creating meaning and modifying it through the interpretive process (West & Turner, 2014). When it comes to judging honesty, people use relative tangible references. Students like Armando related the honesty about financial difficulty from Oatly's statement with statistical evidence like the financial report he previously read as acceptable.

Meanwhile, Rere, who had never read Oatly's profit report, used her intuition to say disbelieve initially and later changed her statement to believe after the interviewer further confirmed the financial difficulties in Oatly. Another thing to point out is that consumers like Rere might convert to another brand as she testified that Oatly did not initially explain why they chose the less known environmentally friendly company and did not apologize to the public. This finding is in line with how situational crisis communication theory predicted that the way organizations react to the crisis would affect consumer behavior (Coombs, 2007).

However, that is not the case when the “authentic” question emerged during the interview. A phenomenon emerged from the data

observation related to the theme of commerciality. One consumer might point out honesty about Oatly's financial difficulty as necessary and tolerable, but not for being authentic, because 'less commercial' is what is authentic for them.

On one side, this situation might be able to be explained with previous research findings like Vrabie (2014), who argued that authenticity during the crisis would hardly be obtained unless in such an extreme situation. For Oatly, the crises were not involving death, or desperation, as the investment needed is only 10%, and the options of investors are more than just Blackstone, which consumers assume there are other alternatives to choose to avoid a crisis. Thus, authenticity was not the first atmosphere that popped out of consumers' minds.

On the other side, however, this argumentation did not seem to reach a consensus. The commerciality issue kept appearing during the interview and was blamed for the cause of the inauthenticity action of Oatly. Consumers tend to argue that Oatly's financial reason showed that profit-oriented outweighs its argument for influencing big companies to be more aware of the environment. Hence, this study sees that commerciality is the main key to inauthenticity, apart from being honest.

5. Conclusion, Limitation, and Suggestions

5.1 Conclusion

Some parts of the findings support previous literature about what being authentic means. However, further analysis showed otherness when it comes to defining authentic action

during a crisis. Although consumer seems to agree that being authentic during the crisis means staying consistent with the initial values that the brand had introduced and being honest (Napoli et al., 2014; Ott & Theunissen, 2014), they categorized the brand is being inauthentic when the brand starts to involve financial in the narration. This could be contradictory as being honest means telling the real cause of the crisis, which can be financial or profit reasons. Consumers indeed tolerated that actions to financially preserve the business are necessary, but that is not what authentic means for them.

This finding uniquely suggests that it is highly unlikely that the profit-oriented brand would obtain "authenticity" status from the consumer's point of view. It will not matter that much what noble mission it brings. As long as the company is working for profit, which most companies do, authenticity would never be fully obtained. Hence, a non-profit organization seems to have a better chance to reach authenticity in the audience's view, as long as the institution stays honest and consistent on the value it offered initially.

5.2 Limitations and Suggestions

In doing this research, some limitations need to be considered. First, the potency of generalization from finding due to the small sample size is small. The next limitation, time constraint, could impact the depth of analysis. In addition, the single investigator in this research might affect the "correspondence between research and the real world." (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016 p.244). Furthermore, although the study

examined one particular International brand Oatly, the result did not serve generality to conclude the point of view of whole consumers because it only focuses on Swedish consumers.

Future research should involve triangulation data analysis to improve internal validity. Even though the focus of this research is examining how the authenticity of action from the consumer point of view, future research should involve the brand point of view, where data combination from the practitioner involved and document should be involved.

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