Understanding Global Sustainable Development Discourses within Eco-labeled Companies

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**Abstract:**

   Sustainable development (SD) has been a buzzword in global environmental policy since 1987; however, its definition is extremely vague. Scholars have worked to reduce its ambiguities at higher levels of abstraction by analyzing monumental global policy. And yet, there is little discussion of how international SD discourses trickle down to domestic businesses, citizens, and organizations. To help fill this gap, I conduct a discourse analysis examining how SD is characterized among four eco-labeled tea companies. This analysis involves a four step process where I analyze reports, social media posts, press releases, etc. to determine how the selected eco-labeled companies and policy initiatives understand and embody sustainable development. I then compare the meanings across the companies and policy to situate them within one another and determine trends. By employing this methodology, I have found that the global environmental policy discourse is still in the process of norm emergence as the meaning of SD has shifted from needs centered, to green economy focused, and then to environmental justice based. Conversely, the eco-labeled businesses have experienced norm internalization. The triple bottom line is the norm for understanding and acting upon SD. It is characterized through relationships, health, quality, and integrity and is acted upon through Fair Trade USA and USDA Organic certifications, transparency, and community. These findings are aimed at enriching the current understanding of SD and inform effective SD characterizations. This has future implications for working toward effective sustainability practices.

Key words: sustainable development, eco-labeling, norm diffusion, triple bottom line, global environmental policy

**Introduction:**

   In the early 2000's, America was on a health-kick. Notable figures advocated for a

healthier youth lifestyle by exercising and eating properly. One of the repercussions of this was

banning soda in schools. This sparked the creativity of two health conscious businessmen,

Steven Kessler and Erich Schnell. These two joined forces to develop a healthy alternative to this

beverage.[1] In 2002, they launched a sparkling green tea beverage company called Steaz Tea with

a mission that moved beyond just health benefits.[2] Kessler explained in an interview, "We

literally founded this company based on a mission to help people lead healthier lives and to run a

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[1]MeiMei Fox. "The Life Out Loud: Bubbling Over With Good Health," *The Huffingon Post*, March 23, 2013, <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/meimei-fox/the-life-out-loud-bubblin_b_3322561.html>(Accessed: March 19, 2016).

[2] *Ibid.*

humanistic, socially conscious business."[3] In order to attain this vision, Kessler and Schnell

employed a well-known accounting model that works as a checklist for achieving sustainable

development (SD) goals: the triple bottom line (TBL) of people, planet, and profit. While their

sparkling green tea was unique, Steaz's business model was a product of deeply entrenched SD

norms alluded to by previous tea companies such as Celestial Seasoning and codified norm

entrepreneur John Elkington in 1994.

The idea of SD is not new either. In 1987, this term was coined in the Brundtland

Commission's *Our Common Future* (1987) and has since been a buzzword in global policy.[4]

However, the meaning of this term has been fluid and ambiguous.[5] The current perception of SD,

portrayed in the United Nations 2015 Sustainable Development Goals, has departed significantly

from the meaning presented in 1987.[6] Scholars have worked to clarify the uncertainties

surrounding the meaning of SD.[7] However, there is little literature seeking to understand how

these definitions align with the norms in domestic businesses, citizens, and organizations.

Corporate business structures are arguably the most important way in which SD has transcended

the bounds of global politics as sustainable business practices reach almost all members of

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[3] Fox, "The Life".

[4] Jennifer Clapp, and Peter Dauvergne. "Chapter 3: The Globalization of Environmentalism," in *Paths to a Green World,* 2nd ed. (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2011), 63. Wilfred Beckerman, "'Sustainable Development': Is it a Useful Concept?" *Environmental Values* 3, no. 3 (Autumn 1994), 194.

[5] Maurie J. Cohen. "Chapter 2: The Emergent Environmental Policy Discourse on Sustainable Consumption," in *Exploring Sustainable Consumption: Environmental Policy and the Social Sciences*, eds. Maurie J. Cohen and Joseph Murphy (UK: Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 2001), 21-37. Michael E. Colby, "Environmental management in development: the evolution of paradigms," *Ecological Economics* 3, (1991), 196-197. Yosef Jabareen, "A new conceptual framework for sustainable development," *Environment, Development Sustainability* 10, (2008), 181-189. Aram Ziai. "The Millennium Development Goals: back to the future?" *Third World Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (2011), 27-43.

[6] Cohen, 21-27. Ziai, 41-42.

[7] Cohen, 21-37 Colby, 193-213. Jabareen, 179-192. Ziai 27-43.

society via the consumers. Consequently, this paper evaluates the understandings of SD as produced by eco-labeled tea companies through the question: how does the global policy understanding of SD align or depart from that of various eco-labeled tea companies in their pursuit of effective sustainable business practices? Answering this question reduces some uncertainties surrounding how the global SD discourse translates into domestic meanings and sustainability practices.

While this research question is pointed at a very specific slice of the SD discourse, it addresses themes that are of paramount importance for deepening the understanding of SD pertaining to the everyday person. Humanity is inevitably in an interdependent relationship with the environment, which means environmental issues are made, and can be solved by, changes in human practices. If humanity focuses on redefining consumption practices, which is intrinsically linked to goods-producing business, to reach SD goals, major progress will be achieved.[8]

While some argue a market-based approach to sustainability is limited because it creates a paradox between business growth and the conservation of natural resources, eco-labeled companies explore the nuances of  SD to overcome this paradox.[9]  Eco-labeled tea companies are the focus of this research because these certifications play a key role in fostering corporate sustainability through consumer power. Eco-labeling is unique as it involves almost everyone. It is not governments or international bodies instituting policy in a very specified realm; instead, eco-labels rely on the everyday consumer, us, to vote with their dollar and make a difference. Paul Rice, CEO of Fair Trade Certified USA best elicits this concept when stating, "if we can…

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[8] "Story of Stuff, Full Version; How Things Work, About Stuff," Youtube video, posted by PsycheTruth, July 12, 2008. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gLBE5QAYXp8.

[9] Jabareen, 181.

with a cup of coffee…reach halfway across the world and help a family keep their kids in school, that's very empowering to us…".[10] This is an powerful and simple tool for conscious consumers to promote a healthier world for themselves and future generations; moreover, eco-labels often create high quality products for buyers, making them mutually beneficial for producers and consumers.[11] Furthermore, social development is a necessity to pull communities out of poverty and bring high quality products to consumers.[12] As a whole, SD is everyone's concern which can be seen most directly through eco-labels.

I expand upon these ideas by framing them within the concept of norm diffusion. This allows me to comprehend the ways in which SD operates as a concept in the world. It also helps me analyze how meaning is attached to SD and used by global policy and the corporate world. Once I define this international relations concept of norm diffusion in the literature review, I provide a historical account of SD and describe the process of norm diffusion. Following this, I address how scholars have worked to understand meanings attached to SD through three approaches: discipline, paradigmatic, and language/meaning. The language/meaning approach is most conducive to researching global environmental policy and is employed in this research paper. In order to explore how SD operates in the policy and business sector, I employ an interpretivist discourse methodology to track the meaning of sustainability through environmental policy and four eco-labeled tea companies: Steaz Tea, Honest Tea, Celestial Seasonings, and Numi Organic Tea. This will follow a four step approach: 1) evaluate how each

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[10] "Paul Rice-Fair Trade for All," YouTube video, 20:54-21:09, posted by ViVa. April 17, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cXxt0lf2TAM.

[11] *Ibid*.

[12] "TEDxAshokaU 2011-Paul Rice: Awakening the Sleeping Giant: Fair Trade on Campus," YouTube video, 8:55, posted by TEDx Talks, May 9, 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a7X5eEimFD8.

eco-labeled company comprehends and acts upon their respective meanings of SD through social media posts, mission statements, press releases, interviews, 2) determine the global policy understanding of SD through the texts of three key initiatives (The Brundtland Commission, the Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, and the 2015 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals), 3) compare these meanings and actions across the companies, and 4) situate the meanings within the global contexts evaluated in step one.

By employing this methodology, I have found that the global environmental policy discourse has remained fluid through the last few decades where SD is understood in The Brundtland Commission through *need* and *resource management,* Rio+20 in terms of the *Green Economy*, and the 2015 MDGs regarding *environmental justice*. The eco-labeled tea companies align best with 2015 MDGs. However, their understandings of SD have been much less variable due to *norm diffusion*. This has created an optimal understanding of SD which is characterized through the TBL business model: *People, Planet, Profits*. This model is rooted in four key values: *relationships*, *health*, *quality*, and *integrity*. To best portray these meanings to the public and execute effective sustainability practices the eco-labeled companies have obtained a *Fair Trade USA* and *USDA Organic* certification, practice *transparency*, and involve themselves in the *communi-tea* (the specific terminology for community involvement characterized by the companies). These findings, along with their implications on the future of sustainable development activities, are conveyed in the analysis section of this paper. This research concludes with a discussion of limitations and future research opportunities.

**Literature Review**

In order to best comprehend how SD norms have emerged in global policy and the corporate world, this literature review defined norm diffusion, tracks the development of SD as an idea, explains how the concept of norm diffusion is employed to analyze the development of SD in my research, and reviews how scholars have worked to comprehend SD. The international relations theory of norm emergence is fundamental to this research since SD is a construction of norms. Finnemore and Sikkink's piece, "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change", is a monumental text in international relations scholarship that defines norm emergence.[13] Finnmemore and Sikkink define norms as, "…a standard of appropriate behavior for actors with a given identity."[14] They elaborate upon how these norms are developed by state actors through the process of norm diffusion which is the outgrowth of norms that "explains how principled ideas gain power and change identities and behavior with the rest being internalized".[15] The principled ideas of SD date back nearly seventy years.

While some scholars may consider resource initiatives by Theodore Roosevelt and the 1949 United Nations Scientific Conference on the Conservation and Utilization of Resources as the beginning of the SD discourse, it was not until 1987 that the Brundtland Commission famously defined the term as, "development that meets the needs of the present without

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[13] Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink. "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change," *International* Organization 52, no. 4 (Autumn, 1998), 896.

[14] *Ibid*, 891.

[15] Jonathan Ring. "An Agent-Based Model of International Norm Diffusion." *Department of Political Science University of Iowa* (March 13, 2014), 1.

compromising the ability for future generations to meet their own needs."[16] From this point

forward, SD has been a buzzword in international environmental policy; moreover, policy has

aimed at refining the definition through initiatives set by the United Nations Environment

Programme, including: the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development

(UNCED) Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; the 1997 Special Session of the General

Assembly to Review and Appraise the Implementation of Agenda 21; the 2002 World Summit on

Sustainable Development (WSSD), Johannesburg Summit, the 2012 United Nations Conference

on Sustainable Development, Rio+20; and the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit

2015.[17]

SD has emerged in the corporate world as something separate from global policy. As

consumers increasingly demanded goods developed with environmental and social concerns in

mind, businesses worked toward redefining production to address SD concerns. As a result, norm

entrepreneur, John Elkington, used his consultancy, SustainAbility, in 1994 as a platform for

advancing his corporate perception of SD: triple bottom line (TBL: people, planet, profit).[18]  This

"agenda focuses corporations not just on the economic values that they add, but also on the

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[16] Jan Bebbington, "Sustainable Development: A Review of the International Development, Business and Accounting Literature," *Aberdeen Papers in Accountancy, Finance & Management*, 00-17 (2000), 4. World Commission on Environment and Development, *Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future*, (New York, NY: World Commission of Environment and Development,1987), 41.

[17]"Process & UN System: Conferences," *United Nations Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform*, 2016, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/summit> (accessed: April 14, 2016).

[18] "Triple Bottom Line: It consists of three Ps: profit, people, and planet," *The Economist*, November 17, 2009, <http://www.economist.com/node/14301663> (Accessed: March 28, 2016).

environmental and social values that they add or destroy" through seven drivers: markets, values, transparency, life-cycle technology, partnerships, time, and corporate governance.[19]

To analyze how the meanings of SD have developed in global policy and corporations, I look to Finnemore and Sikkink's process of norm diffusion. According to Finnemore and Sikkink, norms diffusion is characterized by a three stage life cycle of norms that tracks "the process through which norms influence state and non-state behavior…".[20] Figure 1 highlights each stage of norm diffusion, beginning with norm emergence where "Norm entrepreneurs attempt to convince a critical mass of states (norm leaders) to embrace new norms."[21] Once norm entrepreneurs have prompted the international community to embrace a new set of norms, these norms experience a tipping point that causes "norm leaders [to] socialize other states to become norm followers…where the norm 'cascades' through the rest of the population [through] pressure for conformity, desire to enhance international legitimation, and the desire of state leaders to

**TABLE 1.** *Stages of norms*

|  | Stage 1<br>Norm emergence | Stage 2<br>Norm cascade | Stage 3<br>Internalization |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Actors* | Norm entrepreneurs with organizational platforms | States, international organizations, networks | Law, professions, bureaucracy |
| *Motives* | Altruism, empathy, ideational, commitment | Legitimacy, reputation, esteem | Conformity |
| *Dominant mechanisms* | Persuasion | Socialization, institutionalization, demonstration | Habit, institutionalization |

Figure 1: This chart was drawn directly from Finnemore and Sikkink's piece, "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change". It provides a useful visual of the three stages of the norm life cycle by identifying the actors, motives, and dominant mechanisms that initiate and develop each step of norm diffusion within and among states. (Finnemore and Sikkink, 898).

enhance their self esteem".[22] This process is understood as the norm cascade. The development

of norms then reaches the final stage of norm internalization where "…norms acquire a taken-

for-granted quality and are no longer a matter of broader public debate."[23]

    This theory of norm emergence is employed in my research in two key ways. The first is

used to understand the discourses that have emerged from United Nations initiatives on SD. This

portion of my research focuses on the norms developed at an interstate level through the platform

of the UN. This is consistent with Finnemore and Sikkink's use of the model. I then employ this

theory on the deeper, less traditional analytical level of norm diffusion within the corporate

world. Furthermore, I transition between these two analytical levels to provide a cohesive

comparison of norm emergence among state and domestic actors. As a whole, SD is a topic with

a rich historical narrative that many scholars have worked to understand, and Finnemore and

Sikkink's theory of norm emergence accompanied by the meaning/language approach to

understanding SD is useful for understanding the progression of this topic.

    Aside from Finnemore and Sikkink's norm diffusion, I look to how scholars have worked

to understand SD in order to inform my own research.[24] There are three main approaches to

comprehend SD: discipline, paradigmatic, and language/meaning.[25] A discipline approach seeks

to comprehend how SD is understood from an ecologist, economist, and/or sociologist

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[22] Finnemore and Sikkink, 895.

[23] *Ibid*.

[24] Colby, 202. This is an example of how a scholar looks to global environmental policy to determine the meaning of sustainable development by analyzing the Brundtland Commission's *Our Common Future*. Bill Hopwood, Mary Mellor, and Geoff O'Brien. "Sustainable Development: Mapping different Approaches," *Sustainable Development* 13, no. 1 (February 2005), 41. Here, Hopwood, Mellor, and O'Brien look to various scholars to construct their figure that maps views on sustainable development.

[25] Please reference Fig. 2 as a visual aid to the content discussed in this section of the paper.

perspective.[26] Literature suggests that ecologists are most concerned with ecosystem stability,

economists with "maximizing human welfare" (including ethics), and sociologists with social

organizations as modes of viewing and achieving SD.[27] This points indirectly to human-

environment relationships; however, a paradigmatic approach makes these relationships explicit.

Figure 2: Diagram of Schools of Thought: How literature approaches the meaning of
sustainable development
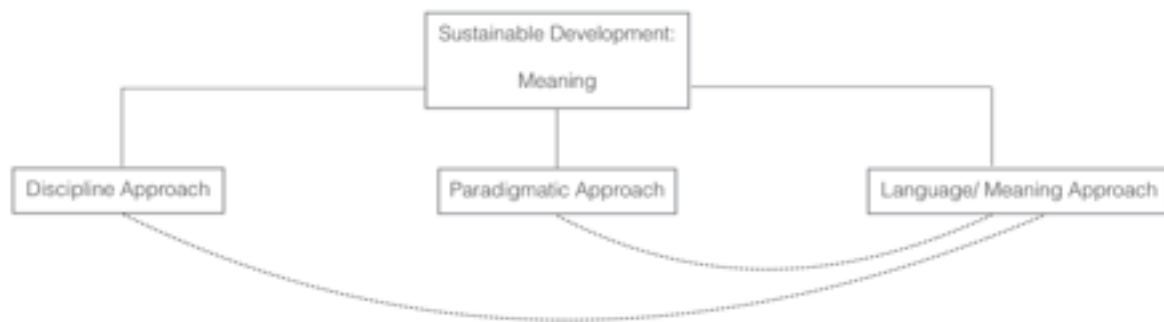


Scholars employing a paradigmatic approach weigh the importance of humanity versus

environmental goals along with a willingness to deviate from the world's current economic and

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[26] "Making Development Sustainable: From Concept to Action," eds. Ismail Serageldin and Andrew Steer et al. Environmentally Sustainable Development Occasional Paper Series. No. 2 (Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, 1994), 5, 14-30. Tom Russ, "Chapter 3: Is There an Ethical Obligation to Act Sustainably? Theories of Ethics," in *Sustainability and Design Ethics*, (Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press-Taylor & Francis Group, 2010), 47-52. Michael M. Cernea, "The Sociologist's Approach to Sustainable Development," *Finance & Development* 30, no. 4 (December 1993), 11. John Pezzey, "Sustainability: An Interdisciplinary Guide," *Environmental Values* 1, no. 4 (Winter 1992), 324-325, 334, 351.

[27] *Ibid*.

social systems.[28] Regardless of the specific terminology applied to this mapping, scholars

consistently agree on three fundamental views toward SD: technocentric (technology and status

quo), anthropocentric (human centered and reform), and ecocentric (environment and

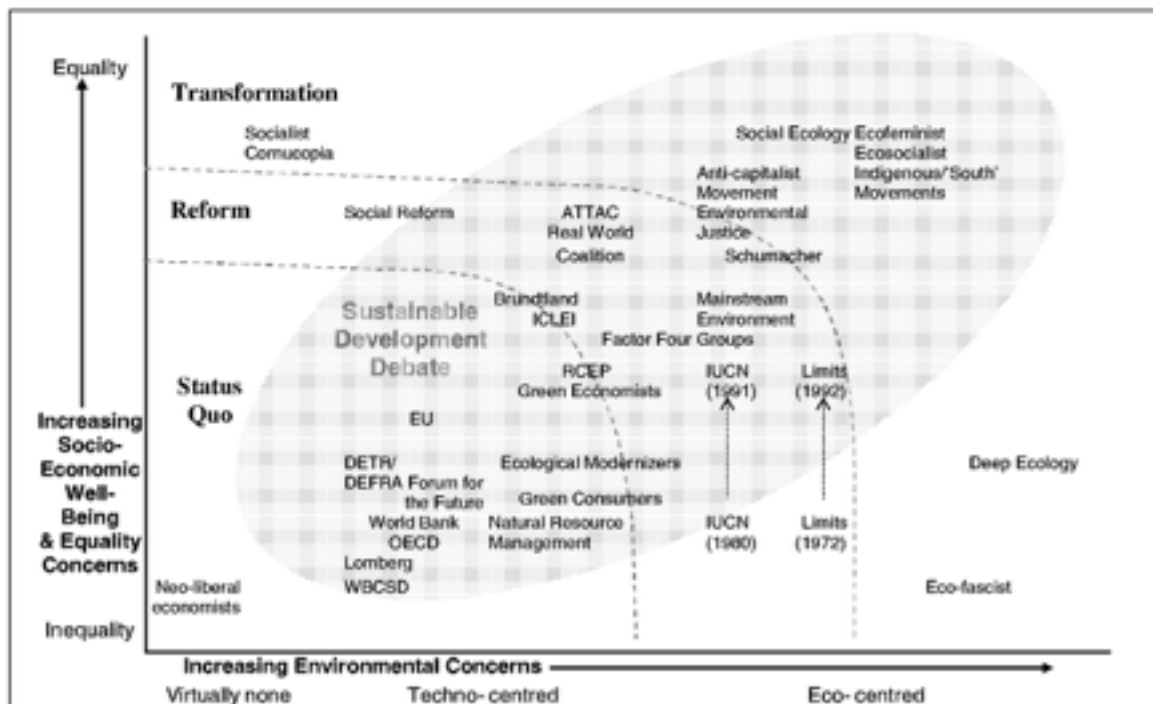transformation).[29] Figure 4 maps these three different characterizations and is drawn from the



Figure 1. Mapping of views on sustainable development

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Sust. Dev. 13, 38–52 (2005)

Figure 3: This chart was presented in Hopwood, Mellor, and O-Brien's "Sustainable Development: Mapping Different Approaches".

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[28] Hopwood, Mellor, and O'Brien, 41-42. Thomas N. Gladwin, James J. Kennelly, and Tara-Shelomoth Krause, "Shifting Paradigms for Sustainable Development: Implications for Management Theory and Research," *The Academy of Management Review* 20, no. 4 (October 1995), 882-896. Colby,196-197. William R. Caption, Jr. and Riley E. Dunlap, "A new Ecological Paradigm for Post-Exuberant Sociology," *The American Behavioral Scientist* 24, no. 1 (September 1980), 34. Lester W. Milbrath. "Chapter 2: Contrasting Belief Paradigms in Modern Society," in *Environmentalists: Vanguard for a New Society*, (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1984), 22 & 24.

[29] *Ibid*.

work of Hopwood, Mellor, and O-Brien.[30]  The 'Y' axis represents variation in environmental

concerns, with technocentric being the least concerned, ecocentric the most concerned, and

anthropocentric falling between the two. The 'X' axis represents levels of sociological concern

when viewing SD; however, the shaded area highlights the willingness of these views to change

the status quo to achieve SD. Both green consumers and policy narratives, such as the

Brundtland Report, hold anthropocentric views toward SD. However, policy initiatives like the

Brundtland Report are more willing then green consumers/ businesses to reform the status quo to

achieve SD.[31] This is indicative of the fluidity of SD norms at the policy level compared to

consumers/businesses, which will be addressed throughout my analysis.

The least explicit but most useful approach is language/meaning.[32] This approach

analyzes the raw meanings of SD without relying on a paradigmatic or discipline framing, even

though it can be incorporated into the first two approaches.[33] Scholars applying this approach

demonstrate how SD is complicated in that its characteristics overlap.[34] For example, scholars

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[30] Hopwood, Mellor, O'Brien, 41. "Mission/Values," *Fair Trade USA*, 2015, < http://fairtradeusa.org/about-fair-trade-usa/mission> (Accessed: December 2, 2015). "Our Mission," *Steaz*, <http://steaz.com/about-us/.> (Accessed: December 2, 2015).

[31] While this chart does not incorporate sustainable businesses, green consumers are representative of businesses as consumers are the primary drivers of sustainability within corporations. Steven Kessler. Interviewed by Amanda Borth. Phone Interview. February 25, 2016.

[32] Jabareen, 181-189. Beckerman, 205. Hopwood, Mellor, and O'Brien, 40. Gladwin, Kennelly, and Krause, 876-880. Serageldin and Steer et al. 5.

[33] *Ibid*.

[34] An example of this is SD's characteristic of eco-form, (time, space, and energy reduction), as noted by Jabareen, that is contingent upon managing natural capital stocks, which Jabareen defines as a separate quality. Jabareen, 182, 184, 186.

debate equality's utopianism and capacity to maximize welfare within SD.[35] Regardless of these

complexities, there is significant consistency among scholars suggesting equality and

relationships are main components of SD. [36] These two characteristics of SD will appear in my

findings. These two meanings and the complications associated with meaning-making shed light

on the understandings within eco-labeled companies and global environmental policy. Since

this is the most encompassing way to analyze the language of SD across perspectives, it is

employed in my methodology.

**Methodology**

I conduct an interpretivist discourse analysis that explores language/meaning in order to

understand the contextual representations of SD produced by four eco-labeled tea companies and

position those depictions within the dominant meanings constructed in international policy.

Interpretivism is fundamentally concerned with meaning-making within highly contextual

situations, which is conducive to my goal of understanding the deeply entrenched perceptions of

SD constructed by labeled companies.[37] To achieve this goal, messages about SD conveyed to

the public by labeled companies are analyzed. This is best achieved through a discourse analysis

of the texts these companies present to the public because, as Neumann notes, by analyzing

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[35] An example of the different understanding of equality within SD can be seen in the work of Hopwood, Mellor, and O'Brien which defines equality as "futurity — inter-generational", "social justice — intragenerational", "trans-frontier responsibility — geographical", "procedural equality — people treated openly and fairly", and "intra-species equality — importance of biodiversity". 40. Jabareen, on the other hand, defines equality through "environmental, social, and economic justice". 183. Gladden, Kennelly, and Krause define equality as property rights. 879. Consequently, equality may be a key component of SD but the definitions of equality can also vary.

[36] Colby, 877 & 883. Beckerman, 188 These are two examples where equality and relationships (or synonymous terms) are employed to characterize sustainable development.

[37]Peregrine Schwartz-Shea and Dvora Yanow. "Chapter 5: The Rhythms of Interpretivist Research II: Understanding and Generating Evidence" in Interpretivist Research Design: Concepts and Processes, (New York: Routlege, 2012), 80.

language as socially constructed one can better understand the realities it produces.[38] In my

research, these realties are the sustainability practices that emanate from the discussion of

sustainability among labeled companies. In this section, I detail my methods of evidence

generation and data analysis, then support these by addressing my methodological choices

regarding contact, mapping representations, and evaluative standards that underpin this discourse

analysis.

To understand how the discourse of SD emerged among eco-labeled tea companies and

correlates with the global discourse, a four step analysis, inspired by the works of Thomson and

Milne, Tregida, and Walton, is employed.[39] The first step is to evaluate how each eco-labeled

company interprets and acts upon their respective characterizations of SD. To do so, I analyze the

websites (focusing on the mission statements and press releases), Instagram, Twitter feeds, and

Facebook pages of Steaz Tea, Honest Tea, Celestial Seasonings, and Numi Organic Tea.

Supplemental interviews are conducted, when possible, to gain a better understanding of the

motivations behind the constructed meanings. The second step is to determine the global policy

understanding of SD. I achieve this by analyzing primary documents from and scholarly

literature on three UNEP policy initiatives which had the distinct mission of defining SD: The

Brundtland Commission's *Our Common Future* (1987), the 2012 Rio+20 United Nations

Conference on Sustainable Development, and the 2015 United Nations Sustainable Development

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[38]Iver B. Neumann. "Chapter 5: Discourse Analysis." in Qualitative Methods in International Relations: A Pluralist Guide, eds. Audie Klotz and Deepa Prakash (New York: PALGRAVE MACMILLAN, 2008), 61.

[39] John B. Thompson, *Studies in the Theory of Ideology*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984). Markus J. Milne, Helen Tregidga, and Sara Walton, "Words not actions! The ideological role of sustainable development reporting," *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal* 22, no. 8 (May 2009), 1221-1223.

Goals. Step three entails a comparison of these meanings and action across the companies and

UN initiatives with a focus on norm diffusion. The final step is comparing the means and norm

diffusion processes between the eco-labeled companies and global policy to determine further

implications.

To best envision the framework of my research, context must be addressed. Most

specifically, this research analyzes the publications of Steaz Tea, Honest Tea, Celestial

Seasonings, and Numi Organic Tea from May1, 2015 to May 1, 2016.[40] These four companies

were chosen because they all have Fair Trade USA and USDA Organic labels and explicitly

address SD concerns in their missions.[41] This allows for a unity between the goals of the

companies because they are influenced by very similar labeling standards and approach SD from

an economic perspective, as opposed to a social or environmental lens.[42] This is also a useful

dynamic for contrasting the constructed meanings of each organization because with similar

characteristics they are expected to maintain corresponding goals. I have chosen to limit my

research to one year of publications because I am interested in understanding the current

discourse of these companies. If data had been gathered from before a year ago, I would not

[40] The rational for choosing these four tea companies is that they all have distinct missions to achieve corporate sustainability and represent diversity within the tea industry (Celestial Seasoning-1969, Honest Tea-1998, Numi Organic Tea-1999, and Steaz Tea-2002). They were founded in separate decades, which represents a different atmosphere for norm emergence, and they illustrate two subsections of the tea industry: ready-to-drink/bottled/canned teas (Steaz Tea and Honest Tea) and bagged tea (Celestial Seasonings and Numi Organic Tea).

[41] "Our Mission," *Steaz*. "Our Mission," *Honest,* 2016, <https://www.honesttea.com/about-us/our-mission/>(Accessed: February 29, 2016). "Our History," *Celestial Seasonings,* 2015, <http://www.celestialseasonings.com/learn-about-us/our-history>(Accessed: February 29, 2016). "Numi's Vision," *Numi Organic Tea,* 2016, <http://www.numitea.com/vision/> (Accessed: February 29, 2016). "Our Mission," *Honest*. "Our History". "Numi's Vision".

[42] Cernea, 324-325, 334, 351.

accurately portray the current discourse among the eco-labeled companies due to developments

in their labeling status.[43]

Moreover, the historical context is relevant for situating the meaning-making of SD in

that global policy-making, specifically by the Unites Nations Environment Programme (UNEP),

as been instrumental in defining this concept since 1972.[44]  The 1972 Stockholm Conference first

linked the economy and environment; however, there are three specific UNEP summits that set

the historical frame and become primary subjects of analysis in this research. The first is the

Brundtland Commission's *Our Common Future* since it coined the term SD in 1987.[45] The 2012

Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development is the second monumental

historical text relevant to this paper because it highlighted the *green economy* and built on the

1992 Rio Earth Summit.[46] While only three years later, the 2015 United Nations Sustainable

Development Goals are also relevant to the global and historical context of the research because

it provides the opportunity to evaluate how norms have changed since Rio+20 in 2012, which is

a short time, and sets a benchmark of understanding SD in global policy since it portrays the

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[43] For example, Steaz Tea's Fair Trade certification has been effective since August, 2006. If I drew from their marketing before that I would not accurately portray their current emphasis on fair trade.
Amanda Borth. e-mail message to info@steaz.com, December 14th, 2015.

[44] Jennifer Clapp, and Peter Dauvergne. "Chapter 3: The Globalization of Environmentalism," in *Paths to a Green World,* 2nd ed. (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2011), 56-57

[45] *Ibid*.

[46] Jennifer Clapp, and Peter Dauvergne. "Chapter 4: Economic Growth in a World of Wealth and Poverty," in *Paths to a Green World,* 2nd ed. (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2011), 104. Cameron Allen, *A Guidebook to the Green Economy-Issue 2: exploring green economy principles*, (New York, NY: United Nations Division for Sustainable Development, UNDESA, November 2012), 12. The *green economy* is relevant to this research because it focuses on sustainable develop through conscious production and consumption which directly aligns with the functions of eco-labeled tea companies. Moreover, the 1992 Rio Earth Summit was the first instance where environmental management through trade was considered on the international stage.

current dominant discourse. This historical context sets the international precedent for SD and

eco-labeling.[47]

The immediate actors producing SD discourse are the tea companies and those UNEP

summits that are part of the wider global context. However, external actors also affect this

discourse, so I also map these representations. External actors, such as labeling schemes

(primarily Fair Trade USA and USDA Organic), and consumers most directly influence how

companies view SD.[48] These actors weigh heavily in corporate meaning-making because

companies must comply with the standards set by labels and cater to consumer demands in order

to sell products. As a result, a distinct power dynamic is constructed where the companies must

comply with the expectations of labeling schemes and consumer preferences to build a

functioning organization.[49] All of the actors have the potential to create alternative discourses,

and some have already done so, depending on their paradigmatic or disciplinary perspectives.[50]

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[47]"TEDxAshokaU2011-Paul Rice". Further scholarly support for defining the context of my research can be found in the work of Schwartz-Shea and Yanow. These scholars explain that it is important to understand the context of one's research before determining the methods for data analysis in order to clarify the grounds of that research. Peregrine Schwartz-Shea and Dvora Yanow. "Chapter 3: Starting from Meaning - Contextuality and Its Implications" in Interpretivist Research Design: Concepts and Processes, (New York: Routlege, 2012), 45.

[48] Each of the tea companies that are analyzed are Fair Trade USA and USDA Organic certified. Aside from these labels, some companies are certified NON GMO Verified, Certified 100% Organic, Wind Power certified, etc. "Our Mission," *Steaz*."Our Mission," *Honest*. "Our History". "Numi's Vision".

[49] On a broader scale environmental NGOs, Climate Summits, and the United Nations Millennium Development Goals also contribute to the atmosphere surrounding SD within the companies but are more removed at the international policy level.

[50] Because companies are economically oriented they inevitably have a different perspective on sustainable development than social development NGOs or environmental activists. Furthermore, the paradigmatic approach employed by each company (whether it be ecocentric, anthropocentric, or technocentric) fundamentally challenge each other on sustainability practices and constructs. This has been detailed in the literature review and can be seen in scholarly sources such as Michael M. Cernea, 324-325, 334, 351. Gladwin, Kennelly, and Krause, 882-896.

   While ensuring transparency through intertextuality in steps three and four is one way to bolster credibility in my research, cultural competence, reflexivity and trustworthiness must be addressed. Neumann explains that cultural competence is a vital prerequisite for interpretivist research because "the more in-depth the general knowledge" the easier it is to employ tools of discourse analysis to "demonstrate variations in meaning and representations".[51] Throughout my research, I continue to learn about the history of SD by familiarizing myself with canonical texts that define the term SD, such as the Brundtland Report and Agenda 21.[52] I have also researched the history of Fair Trade USA and other labels to best understand the practices they employ.[53] By examining the history of SD and the functions of labeling schemes, I can realize the contexts of the current discussions of sustainability and effectively employ discourse analysis tools.[54]

   In order to practice reflexivity, I consider how my social situation shapes the information being accessed, how I construct my identity and that of the companies, and assess how my exposure to texts generate new understandings.[55] My identity of a capitalistic-minded American is most relevant to this research. I believe that sustainability initiatives can be reached through

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[51] Neumann, 63.

[52] Cohen, 21-38. Neumann explains the importance of familiarizing oneself with canonical texts, as they can be "crossroads or anchor points" for discourses. In my case the Brundtland Report of 1987 is a prime anchor point for sustainable development because it coined the term and scholarly literature still refers to it today. Neumann, 67.

[53] This is one example of texts that provide insight into the goals and functions of labeling schemes. "TEDxAshokaU2011-Paul Rice".

[54] While I work toward a general understanding of the origins of sustainable development and its practices, there are some points where I lack cultural competence, such as external influences that determine company decisions beyond sustainability goals. These cannot be adequately foreseen because they are contextual for each company.

[55] These checkpoints are borrowed from Schwartz-Shea and Yanow. Peregrine Schwartz-Shea and Dvora Yanow. "Chapter 6: Designing for Trustworthiness - Knowledge Claims and Evaluations for Interpretivist Research", (New York: Routlege, 2012), 99-100.

the world's current economic system; whereas, others may think the globalized economy

requires an overhaul to be more conducive to SD. My perception of capitalism and sustainability

aligns with that of Fair Trade USA (one of the labels that is emphasized through this research),

which can be seen in Paul Rice's TEDTalk "Awakening the Sleeping Giant: Fair Trade on

College Campuses" .[56] Furthermore, I believe SD is a key approach to solving many

environmental and social issues, causing me to be optimistic about the subject of research.

Practicing this reflexivity is one way of working toward trustworthiness.

While situating oneself within the research is a fundamental practice of interpretive

research, it is a limitation as viewed by neo-positive scholars who believe reputable research

comes from eliminating biases.[57] Thus, I also employ alternative measures to build

trustworthiness, adopted by Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, to keep the logic of my methodology and

argument in-check.[58] As a whole, the methodological choices in this section are aimed at better

understanding the truths of how eco-labeled and global policy formulates understandings of SD.

**Analysis**

When analyzing how eco-labeled companies understand SD and the ways in which it

connects with international policy, there is norm internalization and norm emergence. Among the

eco-labeled companies, the TBL is the norm for understanding and acting upon SD. It is

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[56] "TEDxAshokaU2011-Paul Rice".

[57] Schwartz-Shea and Yanow. "Chapter 6", 95-96.

[58]Trustworthiness, or the accurate "understanding of human meaning-making in context", can be addressed in three additional ways. Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, "Chapter 6", 108. Shwartz-Shea and Yanow list these as: 1) "the consistency of evidence from different sources (the intertextuality of the analysis)", 2) "the way in which conflicting interpretations have been engaged", and 3) "the logic which the argument has been developed". Points one and two are accomplished through steps two and three of my four point methodological approach. Schawrtz-Shea and Yanow's third point is addressed throughout the entirety of the research by constantly reviewing my findings to check for accuracy. Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, "Chapter 6", 108-109.

characterized through relationships, health, quality, and integrity and is acted upon through Fair

Trade USA and USDA Organic certifications, transparency, and community. Conversely, the

global environmental policy discourse is still in the process of norm emergence as the meaning

of SD has shifted from needs centered, to green economy focused, and to environmental justice

based. Eco-labels correlate best with the environmental justice discourse of the 2015 SDGs due

to mutual understandings of health and the TBL.

To begin the story of norm internalization within eco-labeled companies, I look back to

the origins of the TBL. It was 1994 when norm entrepreneur John Elkington re-envisioned SD

through the TBL business model.[59] Just over twenty years later, the TBL has achieved norm

internalization, as it has become habit when understanding and designing companies toward

SD.[60] Celestial Seasonings was the first of the four companies in this research to embrace the

TBL model when designing their sustainability vision. While Celestial Seasonings does not

explicitly state the TBL in their publications, it can be inferred through the people, planet, and

profit principles of their *Blended With Care: From Seed to Sip* corporate outlook that "cares for

the health of [their] people", aims to grow ingredients "according to Earth-friendly practices",

and purchases 70% of its ingredients "directly from farmers and local communities".[61]

About a decade later Honest Tea also developed their sustainability mission under the

implicit TBL framework that includes the pillars of "promoting health & wellness", "reducing

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[59] "Triple Bottom Line: It consists…".

[60] Finnemore and Sikkink, 898.

[61] "Blended With Care: From Seed to Sip," *Celestial Seasonings*, 2015, <http://www.celestialseasonings.com/learn-about-us/blended-with-care> (accessed: March 19, 2016).

[their] environmental footprint", and "creating economic opportunity".[62] Around this time, Numi Organic Tea explicitly employed the TBL model and even added *purpose* as a fourth component.[63] Steaz Tea is the newest of the tea companies and also explicitly acknowledges the TBL as a foundation for their mission in stating, "Our 'triple bottom-line' business model is steeped in our core values".[64]

To fully understand how the TBL has manifested itself as a framework for SD in these eco-labeled tea companies, the deeper meanings that underpin this model must be realized. Across the four eco-labeled companies, the core characterizations of SD are: relationships, integrity, quality, and health. When these companies speak in terms of relationships, they are concerned with how people interact with the planet and other individuals, which concerns the links between farmers and business, business and the community, and/or components of the supply chain.[65] Honest Tea demonstrates the importance of this value when stating, "there's no substitute for developing personal relationships," in the opening of their 2015 Mission Report.[66] Numi Organic Tea also exemplifies the significance if personal relationships in stating, "…we value people involved in every step of the business…".[67] Steaz Tea expands upon just personal

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[62] Goldman, Seth, *Honest 2015 Mission Report*, (Bethesda, MD: Honest Tea, 2015), 3.

[63] "Philanthropy," Numi Organic Tea, 2015, <http://www.numitea.com/vision/philanthropy/> (Accessed: March 19, 2016).

[64] "Our Mission," Steaz.

[65] Please see Appendix I column 'Relationships' for more extensive textual evidence of these findings.

[66] Goldman, 3.

[67] "Celebrating People," Numi Organic Tea, 2015, <http://www.numitea.com/people/celebrating-people> (Accessed: March 19, 2015).

relationships by making "360 degree relationships" between people, planet, and profit

paramount.[68]

Creating relationships, particularly with consumers, is one way these companies achieve

their second core value, integrity.[69] This means being honest with consumers about how products

are crafted, which is best stated by Honest Tea's

Mission Director Jenny Burns, "We strive to grow our

business with the same honesty and integrity we use to

craft our products, with sustainability and great taste

for all."[70] Each company is also highly concerned with

the consumers health as evident in Steaz Tea's mission

that explains, "We created Steaz with one goal in mind:

to help people lead healthier lives."[71] Steaz also

emulates this value on social media posts as in Figure

4. Part of maintaining a health conscious business also

includes sourcing *quality* ingredients. The power of this

value is best seen in Celestial Seasonings *Blend With*

*Care: From Seed to Sip* mission that is dedicated to

producing "high quality teas that are good for [their]

consumers and good for the world" that they mention



Figure 4: This Instagram post provides visual representation of how health underpins Steaz's understanding of sustainability.Take note of the athletic apparel, earbuds, and water bottle. All are symbols that we often associate with exercise and good health. Moreover, the hashtags at the bottom are explicitly health oriented. steaz, [Instagram] post, 2016, accessed March 19, 2016, https://www.instagram.com/p/BCOdAQewT2h/.

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[68] Kessler, Steven.

[69] Please reference Appendix I column 'Integrity' for more extensive textual evidence of these findings.

[70] Goldman, 3.

[71] "Our Mission," Steaz.

quality 12 times.

To best achieve the values of relationships, integrity, health, and quality, the four

companies have obtained USDA Organic and Fair Trade USA certifications, ensure transparency,

and involve themselves in the *communi-tea*. Eco-labels become a cornerstone for sustainability

practices within these businesses, to the point where co-founder Steven Kessler considers them

fundamental to the "DNA" of Steaz.[72] The TBL is considered a checklist for achieving SD and

eco-labels, specifically USDA Organic and Fair Trade, provide guidelines that fulfill that

checklist through impact assessments and other qualifications regulating the uses of resources,

pesticides, etc.[73] These assessments also ensure fair price premiums and community

development, which not only achieve aspects of the TBL but also satisfies the core values of

relationships, health, and quality.[74]

These labels also lend to transparency, which is another way in which SD values are

achieved. In an interview with a public relations representative for Numi Organic Tea, the

representative explained that, "Eco-label[s], along with so many other certifications/verifications

that Numi has [been, and are,] part of ou[r] commitment to educate and influence other[s] to

make a difference in their contribution to society."[75] Moreover, Kessler of Steaz Tea considers

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[72] Kessler, Steven. Please reference Appendix II columns 'Fair Trade USA' and 'USDA Organic' for explicit evidence of how the companies discuss these labels.

[73] "Triple Bottom Line: It Consists". "Mission/Values," *Fair Trade USA*, 2016. <http://fairtradeusa.org/ about-fair-trade-usa/mission> (accessed: March 19, 2016). "Organic Agriculture," *USDA United States Department of Agriculture*, January 9, 2015, <http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome? contentidonly=true&contentid=organic-agriculture.html>(Accessed: March 20, 2016).

[74] *Ibid*.

[75] Amanda Borth, e-mail message to Maggie Philipsborn, March 18th, 2016.

How sustainable development is understood by the four eco-labeled tea companies under study.

How sustainable development is achieved by the four eco-labeled tea companies under study.
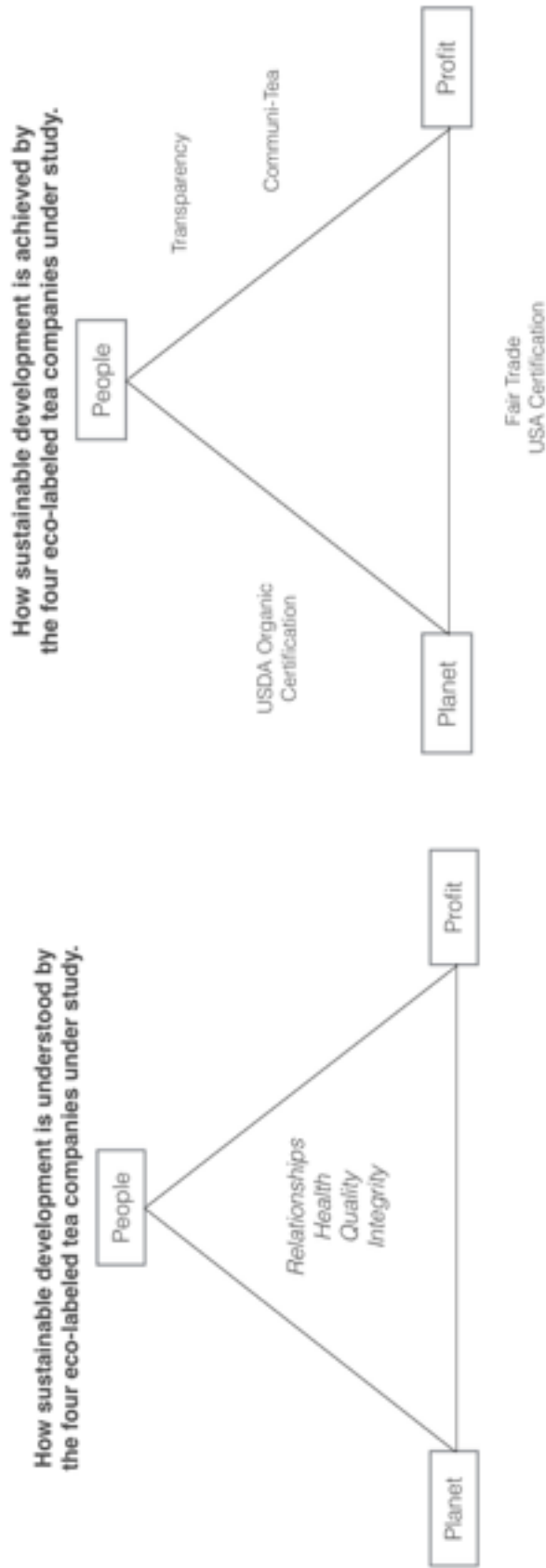


**Figure 5:** This is a visual representation of the findings regarding how Steaz Tea, Honest Tea, Celestial Seasonings, and Numi Organic Tea understand sustainable development. The overarching model for this understanding is the triple bottom line framework, as represented by the people, planet, profit triangle. The left triangle demonstrates the underlying meanings of the triple bottom line model, which are listed inside the triangle. The right triangle conveys how these meanings are acted upon in an effort to achieve effective sustainability practices. These actions are listed on the outside of the triangle.

eco-labels the primary way in which Steaz's mission is conveyed to the public.[76] This provides

for transparency so consumers can recognize the values in these labels and perceive the products

are of high quality and the company has integrity. Transparency is also achieved by providing the

public with information about company supply chains, so consumers can track where products

are sourced, in what ways, and how workers are paid. Consequently, this enhances the integrity

of a company. Celestial Seasonings accomplishes this by tracing the tea supply chain 'from seed

to sip'.[77] The final way in which these companies act upon their sustainability values is by

building *communi-teas* to develop relationships. For example, Steaz Tea has participated in

running events and festivals to foster wide-spread relations with their local community.[78]

While one may expect the perception of SD in global policy to be internalized, much like

in the corporate world, considering its long history in the UNEP, a closer examination presents

the contrary.[79] These meanings are still in the process of norm emergence where the international

perceptions of SD are still volatile.[80] The inconsistencies of how international policy views SD is

evident in the 1987 Brundtland Report, 2012 Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable

Development, and 2015 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The overarching

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[76] Kessler, Steven.

[77] "Blend With Care".

[78]"WELCOME TO THE COMMUNITY," Steaz, 2016, <http://steaz.com/community/posts/in-the-community/>(accessed: March 21, 2016).

[79] This can be seen through similar findings across the works of scholars, which is also referenced in the literature review. Colby, 193. Hopwood, Mellor, and O'Brien, 41.

[80] Finnemore and Sikkink, 895. Fabrizio Gilardi. "Transnational diffusion: Norms, ideas, and politics," in *Handbook of International Relations*, eds.Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse and Beth Simmons (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2012), 23.

narrative of these policies exemplify a shift in discourse from needs and limits, to the green

economy, and then to environmental justice.

In 1987, the Brundtland Commission coined the term SD with the central concepts of

needs, limits, and resource management.[81] These values were specifically mentioned in the

Brundtland Report's definition of SD, and it was elaborated upon by stating, "[this definition]

contains within it two key concepts: the concept of 'needs'…to which overriding priority should

be given…[and] the idea of limitations…on the environment's stability to meet present and

future needs."[82] This includes setting "limits in terms of…resource use".[83] However, these

dominant understandings did not successfully move out of the first stage of norm development

considering the next significant policy initiative, the Rio+20 United Nations Conference on

Sustainable Development, defined SD in term of the green economy.[84] The green economy

balanced all the aspects of SD (environmental, social, and economic) through market flows,

international governance, and international cooperation.[85] Consequently, international market

management through the TBL became more dominant than a needs based understanding of SD.

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[81] World Commission on Environment and Development, 41.

[82] *Ibid*. *Our Common Future* states, "Sustainable Development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own need."

[83] *Ibid*, 42.

[84] Allen, 12.

[85] Allen, 14. UNCSD Secretariat, *Finance for the Transition to a Green Economy in the Context of Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication,* (New York, NY: RIO 2012 Issues Briefs, August 2012), 14-15.

Just three years later, the 2015 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals shifted the

global discourse toward environmental justice (EJ) in culmination with the TBL.[86] Goals such as

"gender equality" and "peace, justice, and strong institutions" align with EJ as they aim to foster

an equal and healthy society.[87] Moreover, the UNEP includes the TBL in one of its "five big,

transformative shifts" as it aims to "put sustainable development the core" by "mobilizing social,

economic and environmental action".[88] These understandings best correlate with those of the

eco-labeled tea companies. Some may argue they best align with the perception of the green

economy presented in Rio+20. To a certain extent, this is accurate because Rio+20 embraced the

TBL and focused on market strategies for SD.[89]  However, this was in the context of global, top-

down governance of markets which naturally contends with free-market, domestic businesses.[90]

Moreover, the green economy view of SD is less concerned with the social aspects of health and

relationships, which are fundamental in the meanings of both the four eco-labeled companies and

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[86] "Sustainable Development Goals," United Nations *Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform*, 2015, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300>(accessed: March 20, 2016). *A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies Through Sustainable Development-The Report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda*, (NY: United Nations, 2013), Executive Summary.

[87] "Sustainable Development Goals". A full list of goals that complies with EJ is as follows: Goal 4 ("quality education"), Goal 5 ("gender equality"), Goal 10 ("reduced inequalities"), Goal 16 ("peace, justice, and strong institutions"), and Goal 17 ("partnerships for the goals").

[88] *A New Global Partnership*, Executive Summary.

[89] Allen, 17. UNCSD Secretariat, 14-15.

[90] *Ibid*.

the 2015 UN SDGs.[91] Moreover, the 2015 SDGs embrace the TBL.[92] Consequently, the

underlying meaning of SD as understood by the four eco-labeled companies correlates with those

present in the 2015 UN SDGs.

The findings that the understandings of SD are still in flux at the global level while

domestic businesses have embodied the TBL business model are peculiar because they are both

constant with and contrary to current scholarly understandings of SD. Scholars such as Colby

and Beckerman highlight equality and relationships as major components of SD, which is seen in

the four labeled companies and the SDGs.[93] On the whole, scholars consider SD to be highly

ambiguous. Colby states, "[s]ocieties are now beginning to have serious discussions about

'sustainable development', but there is still a great deal of confusion over what that means and

how to achieve it."[94] More recently, Hopwood, Mellor, and O'Brien explains how SD "needs

more clarity and meaning".[95] While this may be true at the international policy level, it is not the

case in the corporate world as the four eco-labeled companies have a framework for SD (the

TBL), values that ground it, and means of achieving SD. However, this norm internalization is

not surprising to scholars, such as Pattberg, who have studied the diffusion of environmental

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[91] "Sustainable Development Goals". List of 2015 UN SDG's that are closely associated with *health* and *relationships*: Goal 1 ("No Poverty"), Goal 2 ("Zero Hunger"), Goal 3 ("Good Health and Well-being"), Goal 5 ("Gender Equality"), Goal 6 ("Clean Water and Sanitation"), Goal 10 ("Reduced Inequalities"), Goal 11 ("Sustainable Cities and Communities"), Goal 16 ("Peace, and Justice Strong Institutions"), and Goal 17 ("Partnerships for the Goals").

[92] *A New Global Partnership*, Executive Summary.

[93] Colby, 877. Beckerman, 883.

[94] Colby, 193.

[95] Hopwood, Mellor, and O'Brien, 38.

reporting norms throughout the business and policy worlds.[96] Pattberg has explained how environmental reporting has become a strong norm in forest certification and CERES, a non-profit organization working toward corporate sustainability, and "has considerable influence in the policy domain".[97] This process of norm internalization in the corporate world can lead to the first implication of my research, norm reification.[98]

Norm reification is when internalized norms become concrete and attain a taken-for-granted quality.[99] As a result, they are not able to be re-evaluated and are difficult to alter when new discourses arise.[100] This may be occurring among eco-labeled companies as they almost automatically comprehend SD and work to achieve its goals by adopting the TBL business model. If facts, theories, and/or consumer perceptions of SD change these companies may have trouble modifying their business model to meet new demands. Global policy, on the other hand, will be more open to new ideas because their understanding of SD has been, and can continue to be, molded to fit emerging views of SD.

While this may be a significant drawback to the consistency of the TBL, there are significant merits associated with reification. Often, the UNEP is criticized for lofty, undefined

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[96] "Despite a flourishing research agenda on corporate social responsibility, business ethics, and the privatization of global regulation, the issue of good corporate conduct remains highly contested." Philipp Pattberg, "The Influence of Global Business Regulations: Beyond Good Corporate Conduct," *Business and Society Review*, 111, no. 3 (2006), 242. Finnemore and Sikkink, 893.

[97] "Despite a flourishing…," 257.

[98] Ana R. Urmeneta. "Reification processes of social norms in children and adolescents," *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 116, (2013), 1810-1811.

[99] *Ibid.*

[100] *Ibid.*

policy initiatives that have a broad and almost meaningless understanding of SD.[101] A result is scholars continually criticizing the inability of global policy to make significant achievements regarding SD.[102] Contrarily, eco-labeled companies, while debated to a degree, have hard evidence demonstrating their advancements toward SD.[103] Regardless of how social scientist discuss abstract ideas of norm emergence and what their possible implications could mean, the aspect that matters most is if these notions toward SD are working and if individuals have the opportunity to make a difference.

**Conclusion:**

In searching to understand how the discourses of SD among global policy and eco-labeled tea companies align or depart from one another, I have found that eco-labeled companies have experienced norm internalization as they characterize SD through the TBL framework rooted in the values of relationships, integrity, quality, and health. To effectively pursue these values, each company is Fair Trade and USDA Organic certified, emphasizes transparency, and is involved in the *communi-tea*. On the other hand, global policy is still in the phase of norm emergence. Since 1987, the global policy discourse has shifted from need and limits, to the green

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[101] Claire Luke and Michael Igoe. "Bill Easterly's take on the SDGs," *Devex.com* March 4, 2015 <https://blackboard.american.edu/bbcswebdav/pid-3196789-dt-content-rid-11636245_1/courses/SISU-280-002-2016S/easterly%27s%20take%20on%20SDGs.2015.pdf> (Accessed: April 10, 2016). Eduardo Porter. "At the U.N., a Free-for-All on Setting Global Goals," *The New York Times* May 6, 2014 <https://blackboard.american.edu/bbcswebdav/pid-3196790-dt-content-rid-11636250_1/courses/SISU-280-002-2016S/porter.2015.at%20un%20a%20free%20for%20all%20on%20setting%20goals.pdf> (Accessed: April 10, 2016).

[102] Luke and Igoe, "Bill Easterly's Take…". Porter, "At the U.N…".

[103] Jason Potts, et al. *The State of Sustainability Initiatives Review 2014, Standards and the Green Economy.* Canada: International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) and the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), 2014. Accessed July 3, 2015. https://www.iisd.org/pdf/2014/ssi_2014.pdf, 36-354. This source provides a statistical overview of the strengths and weaknesses of eco-labeled programs throught multiple sectors in their effort to work toward sustainable development.

economy, and to the current discourse concerning environmental justice. The implications that may result from these trends are linked to norm reification.

With any research, there are limitations; however, these drawbacks can be starting points for future projects. My work neglects to analyze consumer perceptions of SD and what they consider to be effective sustainability practices. Companies such as Steaz Tea make it clear that consumers (and people in general) come first. The name of their company (Steaz) means "a person's style (hip, grounded, centered, purposeful, real)".[104] This is the "DNA" of their company because Fair Trade USA and USDA Organic certifications that demonstrate "sustainable and social responsibility" is trendy among their consumers.[105] As a result, Steaz ingrains this into their business model and acts specifically to reach the sustainability expectations of consumers.[106] Research in this realm can inform how relationships are built between consumers and producers to work toward SD goals. Future research could also analyze other industries to determine if the trends found in this paper resonate outside the specific context of four eco-labeled tea companies. This provides a more comprehensive understanding of SD's presence in the corporate world. Overall, two future research opportunities are to focus on consumer perceptions and analyze businesses other than tea.

Continuing to research eco-labeled companies and SD within the corporate sector is necessary for improving relationships between humanity and the environment. Changes in consumption patterns is the most direct way individuals can take initiative and 'vote for change

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[104] Steven Kessler.

[105] *Ibid*.

[106] *Ibid*.

with their dollar'.  As the CEO of Fair Trade USA explains, consuming eco-labeled products

allow consumer to "reach halfway across the world" and make sure our world does not continue

to degrade the environment, keep a child in school, advocate for equality, and contribute to

community building.[107]  This is truly powerful. Research in this realm will deepen the

understanding of SD among social scientist and the public to empower them to make educated

decisions about how they impact the global community and ecosystem.

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[107] "Paul Rice-Fair Trade for All."

Appendix I: Hard Evidence of Values Underpinning the TBL in Eco-labeled Companies

| | Relationships | Health | Quality | Integrity |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Steaz Tea* | • "360 degree relationship".[1]<br><br>• Steaz Tea's logo, the flower of life, represents the relationship between the components of the company through its leaves that all meet in the center to demonstrate a unified relationship.[2] | • "Our Mission- We created Steaz with one goal in mind: to help people lead healthier lives."[9]<br><br>• "We literally founded this company based on a mission to help people lead healthier lives and to run a humanistic, socially conscious business. The product came second."[10]<br><br>• *Social media posts often include individuals practicing yoga and other fitness activities.*[11] | • "quality in, quality out motto".[18] | • "...brand values of social responsibility." [26] |

|  | Relationships | Health | Quality | Integrity |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Honest Tea* | • "…there is no substitute for developing personal relationships". [3]<br><br>• "...we have also developed a close relationship with the farmer cooperation…" [4] | • "Mission Statement: Honest Tea seeks to create and promote great tasting, healthier, organic beverages.'[12]<br><br>• "The 5 Pillars of Our Mission"..."Promoting Health & Wellness" is number one.[13]<br><br>• "...we enable FoodCorps to make schools healthier places for kids to eat…"[14]<br><br>• Award: Washington Business Journal: 2014 Healthiest Employers [15] | • "best-tasting".<br><br>• "Honest Tea seeks to create and promote great-tasting, healthier, organic beverages".[19] | • Part of mission statement: "We strive to grow our business with the same honesty and integrity we use to craft our products, with sustainability and great taste for all."[27] |

|  | Relationships | Health | Quality | Integrity |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Celestial Seasonings* | • "Blended With Care: From Seed to Sip."[5]<br><br>• "We believe our delicious teas improve people's lives by inviting balance, and that belief drives our commitment to our customers, our community and our planet."[6] | • "…we started a movement -a shift toward healthier, happier little moments carved into ever-busier days."[16] | • "Celestial Seasonings was founded more than 40 years ago with one goal: to provide delicious, high quality teas that are good for our customers and good for the world."[20]<br><br>• "We select the highest quality herbs, teas, and botanicals…Our farming partners meet strict standards for purity, quality…".[21]<br><br>• "…whenever possible allows us to select only the highest-quaility ingredients …".[22]<br><br>• "By purchasing our botanicals whole rather than pre-milled, we are better able to test the quality of our raw ingredients to ensure they meet our high standards for purity and quality."[23]<br><br>• "consistency in quality and flavor in each cup of our tea".[24] | • Can be seen in transparency of supply chain. [28] |

| | Relationships | Health | Quality | Integrity |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Numi Organic Tea** | • "…we value the people involved in every step of the business…"[7]<br><br>• "Numi is a creative and collaborative company, engaged in a strong work ethos, tea creations, art, music, and more. Our strong culture echoes beyond the Numi offices with events, volunteer efforts and contests. We value our greater community and invite…"[8] | • "The Numi Foundation's mission is to foster thriving communities by supporting initiatives that nurture art, education, health, and our natural environment." [17] | • "In 1999, after observing that competing brands in the U.S. tea market differed  little from one another in quality, consistency, and selection, Numi was created…". [25] | • Seen through Fair Trade USA certification as it produces fair wages, etc. |

[1] Steven Kessler. Interviewed by Amanda Borth. Phone Interview. February 25, 2016.
[2] *Ibid*.
[3] Goldman, Seth, *Honest 2015 Mission Report*, (Bethesda, MD: Honest Tea, 2015), 3.
[4]*Ibid*, 5.
[5] "Blended With Care: From Seed to Sip," *Celestial Seasonings*, 2015, <http://www.celestialseasonings.com/learn-about-us/blended-with-care> (Accessed: March 19, 2016).
[6] "Learn About Us," *Celestial Seasonings*, 2015, <http://www.celestialseasonings.com/learn-about-us> (Accessed: March 19, 2016).
[7] "Celebrating People," Numi Organic Tea, 2015, <http://www.numitea.com/people/celebrating-people> (Accessed: March 19, 2015).
[8] "Community," Numi Organic Tea, 2015, <http://www.numitea.com/people/communitea/#community-gatepath> (Accessed: March 19, 2015.
[9] "Our Mission," Steaz, 2016, <http://steaz.com/our-mission/> (Accessed: March 19, 2016).
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[28] "Blended  With Care: From Seed to Sip".

Appendix II: Hard Evidence of How TBL/SD is Achieved in Eco-labeled Companies

| | Fair Trade USA Certification | USDA Organic Certification | Transparency | Communi-Tea |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Steaz Tea* | • "…the DNA or our company being Organic and Fair Trade Certified…"[1]<br><br>• the labels establish a "clean bill of health"[2]<br><br>• "Steaz Plays Fair-Every Steaz iced tea…is made with organic, Fair Trade Certified green tea [and]cane sugar…Fair Trade takes the goodness you find in each can of Steaz green tea and spreads it around the world. It's good for farmers because it guarantees safe working conditions and a fair price for their crops…It's good for the environment because it promotes sustainable farming practices. And it's good for you , because it ensures you receive only the highest-quality products."[3] | • "…the DNA or our company being Organic and Fair Trade Certified…"[11]<br><br>• "We search the world for the highest quality ingredients, and that means wherever possible we're using organic and fair trade. Because doing the right thing means doing right by our fans and making sure you get the great taste, nutrition and quality you deserve."[12]<br><br>• "Each of our delicious, organic drinks are made with natural ingredients sourced from all over the world. Discover the origins of our fair trade ingredients."[13] | • certifications present a "clean bill of health" to consumers.[19] | • "University of Michigan Harvest Festival" and the "Boulder Green Street Ciclovia" community events. [23] |

| | Fair Trade USA Certification | USDA Organic Certification | Transparency | Communi-Tea |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Honest Tea* | • "Organic and fair trade have always been core to the Honest Tea mission."[4]<br><br>• "In 2014 we paid $200,124 back to our tea and sugar sourcing communities in the form of fair trade premiums. These funds have helped to establish improved farming, healthcare and education initiatives."[5] | • "Organic and fair trade have always been core to the Honest Tea mission."[14]<br><br>• "In 2014 we purchased 6,722,336 pounds of organic ingredients, meaning they are grown without synthetic chemicals and pesticides, genetically modified organisms or irradiation."[15] | • "stakeholders who gave [them] the benefit of the doubt when [they] were a small, independent company grew more skeptical when [they] become part of the world's largest beverage company."<br><br>• "enterprise impacts the ecosystem and consumers".<br><br>• "Real Talk"[20] | • "The Great Recycle Southern California Tour" "Mountain View Art&Wine Festival" "Candler Park Music & Food Festival" [24] |

| | Fair Trade USA Certification | USDA Organic Certification | Transparency | Communi-Tea |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Celestial Seasonings* | • "…with 70% of those ingredients purchased directly from the farmers and local communities."[6]<br><br>• "'Our new Estate Teas are ideal for consumers in the natural channel who prefer Certified Organic and Fair Trade Certified products, and they are also continuing our long history of treating our farming partners with the respect they deserve."[7]<br><br>• "…a bright and lively black tea from a successful plantation that's led the economic revival in this central African republic…"[8]<br><br>• "…and Certified Fair Trade by Fair Trade USA to support the rural farming communities from which teas are sourced."[9] | • "…and Certified Fair Trade by Fair Trade USA to support the rural farming communities from which teas are sourced."[16]<br><br>• "Each Celestial Seasonings Estate Tea is Certified USDA Organic to ensure that its ingredients were grown and processed in accordance with strict, earth-friendly standards, and Certified Fair Trade by Fair Trade USA to support the rural farming communities from which the teas are sourced."[17] | • "Blended With Care: From Seed to Sip". "We think it's important to share with you the steps we take to ensure that our teas are of the highest quality, deliver the great taste you expect and are produced in a way that protects the Earth's natural resources. Celestial Seasonings and our parent company, Hain Celestial, supports Right to Know GMO and for you to make informed purchase decisions when it comes to GMOs…We call our sustainability story "Blended With Care: From Seed to Sip", and we'd like to take you through it in eight steps – from the farmers' fields to your teacup."[21] | • "Community Support: From Local to Global Celestial Seasonings has always believed that the goodness of our teas should be exceeded only by the goodness of our actions toward the world. We know that our efforts truly make a difference in our local community and all around the world, so we give back to charities and social organizations in our home state of Colorado, across the country and around the world."[25] |

| | Fair Trade USA Certification | USDA Organic Certification | Transparency | Communi-Tea |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Numi Organic Tea* | • "Numi is a leading brand purchaser of Fair Trade Certified teas, with more than half of our blends (and 80% of the raw ingredients we purchase) bearing the Fair Trade Certified label. Fair Trade guarantees farm workers are paid a minimum fair wage for their labor and empowers them to lift themselves out of poverty by investing in their farms and communities. At these gardens, the worker community votes democratically on how Fair Trade premiums are used to invest in education, health, protecting the environment, and developing the business skills necessary to compete in the global marketplace. Some programs include: new roads, cooking stoves, mosquito nets, new schools…[10] | • "As with all intensively farmed crops, conventional tea is routinely treated with a broad range of agricultural chemicals that are potentially harmful to farmers, farm workers and the environment. As opposed to most produce that is washed prior to consumption, most teas are air-dried without first being washed. The first time tea comes into contact with water is in our own cups, right before we drink it… Beyond delivering the highest quality of product, organic teas are cultivated without the use of chemical fertilizers, herbicides or pesticides… Choosing organic not only preserves our earth's resources and protects the health of the farmers, but ensures that what is going into our bodies is 100% natural, made the way nature | • "…the eco-responsibility audits on the bottom of each box, we try to portray the thoughtful choices that Numi makes every step of the way."[22] | • "COMMUNITEA Numi is a creative and collaborative company, engaged in a strong work ethos, tea creations, art, music and more. Our strong company culture echoes beyond the Numi offices with events, volunteer efforts and contests."[26] |

[1] Amanda Borth, e-mail message to Steven Kessler, March 17, 2016.
[2] Steven Kessler. Interviewed by Amanda Borth. Phone Interview. February 25, 2016.
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Appendix III: Interview Records

(Answers given for e-mail interviews only. Field notes are not recorded due to complexity and possibly for mis-representing of specific quotes.)

**Steaz Tea-Phone Interview with Co-Founder, Steven Kessler, on February 25, 2016:**

    **Themes:**

        -Motivations behind company

            -Why the triple bottom line *People, Planet, Profit* and not *Environment, Social, and Economic* terminology?

            -What were some personal experiences that influenced the direction of this company?

        -The labels

            -What relationship does this company have to its USDA Organic and Fair Trade Labels? Were there any tensions between the objective of the labels and the interest of Steaz?

        -Branding

            -What about the branding of Steaz Tea conveys its mission to the consumers?

            -What is the meaning behind Steaz Tea's logo.

Steaz Tea- Follow-Up Question to Co-Founder, Steven Kessler, on March 17, 2016 via e-mail.

    **Question:** Where did the name 'Steaz Tea' come from? I have been looking into other tea companies and their names are often tied to their mission, values, etc., and I am interested in what role the name 'Steaz Tea' plays in your company.

**Answer:** "STEAZ: if you google the Urban Dictionary and enter STEAZ, the definition

is a person's style  (hip, stylish, grounded, centered, purposeful, real).  With the

DNA of our company being Organic and Fair Trade Certified (sustainable and

socially responsible), we feel that makes us very Steazy."

**Numi Organic Tea- Interview with public relations representative on March 18th, 2016 via e-mail.**

**Question 1:** There are many environmental and societal issues that Numi Organic Tea could

have chosen to work with, why did they decide on water crises (H2OPE).

**Answer 1:** "We started Numi Organic Tea because we believe everyone deserves a good cup of

quality tea. While we are fortunate to enjoy tea, we realize there would be no tea without clean,

safe drinking water. There are over 600 million people on the planet without this basic human

right. We have set out on a mission to help our CommuniTEAs around the world who lack access

to clean water solutions. It all boils down to us."

**Question 2:** What life experiences of the founders motivated them to create a sustainable tea

company?

**Answer 2:** "Ahmed had been living abroad and while in Europe had owned and operated a

number of teahouses. Reem at the time was studying art in Northern California. They wanted to

create a company that would encompass both of their passions. Numi was inspired by their love

for art and premium, exotic teas, after they realized that there was little differentiation in quality,

consistency, and selection in the U.S. tea market."

**Question 3:** What specific components of the packaging and marketing of Numi Organic Tea portrays its vision to consumers?

**Answer 3:** "I think every bit of marketing and our packaging portrays the Numi vision to consumers. From the beautiful images on each box of the real ingredients used in each tea blended, to the story on the back of each box, to the eco-responsibility audit on the bottom of each box, we try to portray the thoughtful choices that Numi makes every step of the way."

**Question 4:** Why did Numi Organic Tea decide to become an eco-labeled company?

**Answer 4:** "Since the beginning, we have been committed to the environment and our global community, making thoughtful choices when it comes to our products and packaging. Eco-label, along with so many other certifications/verifications that Numi has, are part of our commitment to educate and influence others to make a difference in their contribution to society."

**Question 5:** Has the company felt any tensions between its values, the mission of eco-labels, and/or other external expectations of sustainable development? Please Explain.

**Answer 5:** "Sustainable development is always ongoing. Growing the amount of land in organic production and the demand for organic tea can have many challenges but is part of Numi's vision and values as it grows. Through programs like Fair Trade and Fair Labor we are able to contribute in meaningful ways to sustainable development projects in every reach of our supply chain."

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