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The Social Construction of Bottled Water Consumption in New Zealand

by

ISABELLE MIRIAM KUNZE

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the ways in which bottled water consumption is socially constructed and associated with place, nature, gender and health. Consuming bottled water is related to ideas of both sustaining the environment and the body. I explore how performances of both the environment and consuming bodies constitute each other. Consumer performances in Hamilton and various visual and textual representations illustrate spatialities, socialities and subjectivities of bottled water consumption.

Geographies of consumption and feminist geographies and methodologies provide the framework for my research. I conducted eleven semi-structured interviews on the Waikato University Campus in Hamilton with participants different in age, gender and ethnicity. Bottled water advertising in international and national lifestyle magazines and newspapers, as well as bottled water websites, are also examined through the lens of critical discourse analysis.

The first part of this thesis focuses on bottled water consumption in regard to the environment and explores how the natural and pure image of bottled water is currently linked to notions of green and sustainable consumption. The second part examines the embodiment of the environment in regards to sustaining healthy, pregnant, sporty, sexed and 'green' bodies while looking at gender, health, and consumer performances and subjectivities.

Linking bottled water consumption to the environment and the body not only enriches geographies of consumption but also emphasises the paradoxes associated with consuming bottled water.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Bottled water is one of the marketing triumphs of our time
(Price New Zealand Listener 2007 para. 2).

The political economy behind the growth of bottled water reveals a major incentive to market something so simple, yet so essential as water: profit (Opel 1999 76).

The Rise of Bottled Water Consumption

Water has been identified as key environmental issue of the 21st century. The growing phenomenon of bottled water started to become a major trend in industrialised countries despite most of them having access to high-quality tap water at little or no cost. It seems as if bottled water has become our ‘constant companion’ because we take ‘our’ bottle everywhere: to work, to the gym, while travelling and even in our bed rooms. According to the Paul Easton from the Dominion Post (6 April 2008), New Zealanders spend more than \$20 million a year on bottled water and about \$100 billion is spent each year on bottled water worldwide.

The bottled water industry argues that bottled water is healthier than tap water because it contains fewer bacteria. However, several studies of water quality have shown that the health benefits of bottled water compared to tap water are minimal (Ferrier 2001; Gleick 2004, 2006). In fact, as stated by Peter Gleick¹ (2004 17), ‘bottled water plants typically receive far less scrutiny from inspectors than other food plants or municipal water systems’.

¹ Dr. Peter H. Gleick is co-founder and president of the Pacific Institute for Studies in Development, Environment, and Security in Oakland, California. His research and writing address the critical connections between water and human health as well as bottled water (http://www.pacinst.org/about_us/staff_board/gleick/, viewed 11 July 2008).

However, bottled water is the most dynamic beverage industry in the world and corporate markets driven by economic globalization dominate the global water industry (Barlow and Clarke 2003; Ferrier 2001; Gleick 2004, 2006). Therefore, the water sold in plastic bottles can be seen as part of the process of commodification of nature within capitalist societies and cultures of consumption (Opel 1999).

Based on public discourses mediated through both the landscape of international and national media and current research on bottled water (see Ferrier 2001 from the World Wildlife Fund and the Peter Gleick 2004, 2006 from the Pacific Institute), the negative environmental impacts of bottled water are widely acknowledged and critiqued. My motivation for starting this research in the first place was that I developed keen interest in water issues from a social and cultural geographical perspective. My concerns about the negative environmental impacts of bottled water in particular inspired me to map a cartogram of 2004 global bottled water consumption by country. The map is illustrated in Figure1. I investigated this topic from a geographical perspective because bottled water consumption links social behaviours to the use of natural resources. Total global consumption exceeds 154 million cubic metres. The text critically reflects upon environmental impacts of bottled water use². The map also includes a 'bottle-graph' that shows the global bottled water consumption per capita by region in percentage, and a histogram of the global bottled water consumption by region of 1998, 2000, 2002 and 2004.

² The Pacific Institute (2006, see <http://www.worldwater.org/data.html>, viewed 12. July 2008) provided the data for the cartogram of the global bottled water consumption by country from 1997 to 2004, the histogram and the 'bottle-graph'. The data provide units in thousand cubic metres per year. The data of 2004 are preliminary estimates. The most important feature of cartograms is the size. The size of each country reflects the bottled water consumption. I also took data from the Natural Resource Defence Council (1999) which explains the reasons for consuming bottled water.

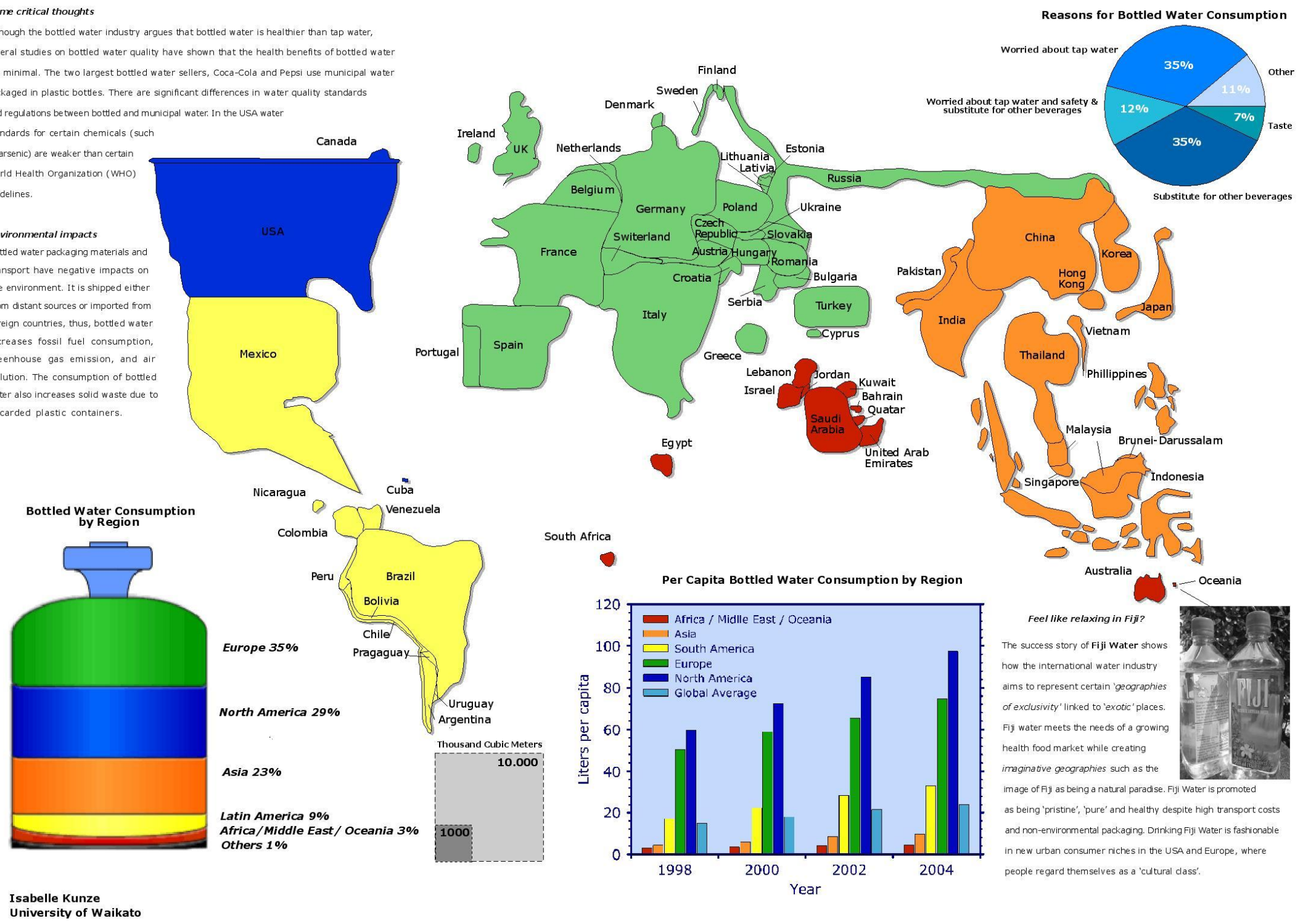
Global Bottled Water Consumption

Some critical thoughts

Although the bottled water industry argues that bottled water is healthier than tap water, several studies on bottled water quality have shown that the health benefits of bottled water are minimal. The two largest bottled water sellers, Coca-Cola and Pepsi use municipal water packaged in plastic bottles. There are significant differences in water quality standards and regulations between bottled and municipal water. In the USA water standards for certain chemicals (such as arsenic) are weaker than certain World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines.

Environmental impacts

Bottled water packaging materials and transport have negative impacts on the environment. It is shipped either from distant sources or imported from foreign countries, thus, bottled water increases fossil fuel consumption, greenhouse gas emission, and air pollution. The consumption of bottled water also increases solid waste due to discarded plastic containers.



Isabelle Kunze
University of Waikato

Figure 1 Cartogram Global Bottled Water Consumption 2004

(Source: Author)

A pie chart presents the reasons why people prefer to drink bottled water rather than tap water. The map also refers to Fiji Water because it is important to link this topic to a geographical place. Data were not available for all countries of the world, including New Zealand. Due to this lack of data, I was prompted to take my interest in bottled water further. Despite these data gaps, the cartogram seemed to indicate that the greatest consumption of bottled water was in developed countries where articulated water is of high quality. This made me wonder, what are the reasons of increasing bottled water in industrialised countries?

(No) Geographical Research on Bottled Water in New Zealand

This Master of Social Sciences thesis offers an original contribution to contemporary geographies of consumption. My research is an initial response to the lack of cultural geographical research on bottled water which is highly under theorized. In responding to this gap in research, I deconstruct social values and meanings of bottled water (consumption). The ‘cultural turn’ in human geography partly influenced by feminism and poststructuralism focuses on meanings, representation, deconstruction and emotions e.g. (Clifford and Valentine 2003; see also Anderson 2003; Cook *et al.* 2000; Crang 1998; Johnston *et al.* 2000). Contemporary geographies of consumption also emphasise the need to investigate matters of consumption in regards to identity formation as well as the meaning of language used in advertising (Mansvelt 2005).

Most water companies emphasise some link between product, place and quality and construct marketing tools related to ‘imaginative geographies of place’ (Connell 2006 342). Contemporary structures of bottled water markets develop innovative types of comparative

advantage, competition and power structure that are shaped around place (Connell 2006). This research shows how these are in part linked to notions of sustaining the environment and the body. In addition, I examine how performances of both environment and bodies constitute each other.

New Zealand has a number of bottled water brands and many of these use places and the environment in their marketing. Frucor, a well-known bottled water company in New Zealand, states that bottled water is the fastest growing beverage category (Frucor Beverages Group 2008; see also McDonald 2008). A bottled water brand called Alpinegold claims that this water is the 'essence of New Zealand's pristine alpine environment' (Alpine Gold 2008 para. 4). Another bottled water brand, Waiwera Infinity, has won a global design award for its innovative bottle, designed and packaged in New Zealand (New Zealand Trade and Enterprise 2008). New Zealand has about twenty domestic bottled water brands. Fine Water points out that 'with vast open spaces filled with stunning landscape, gorgeous beaches, often spectacular geothermal and volcanic activity, ... it is no surprise that New Zealand's pure natural environment is so attractive ...' (FineWaters 2008 para.1). The New Zealand bottled water industry provides an excellent field for research on this growing consumption activity.

Research Objectives

The overall purpose of this research project is to explore the reasons for increasing bottled water consumption and how these are attached to social meanings and values. Accordingly, I investigate how bottled water marketing in New Zealand is linked to place and natural environments. Using a theoretical framework based on the geographies of consumption and feminist geographies, I examine socially

constructed values and images around nature, place gender and health. Both theoretical perspectives are located within cultural geography. From this broad area of interest in the social construction of bottled water marketing, I have developed the following research questions.

First, what are the reasons for increasing consumption of bottled water? This question addresses the social values from a consumer point of view. Second, how is bottled water consumption presented in the media? This includes an analysis of bottled water websites, sports, women's, food, health and fashion magazines. Third, which images and values are used around the promotion of bottled water and fourth, how are these images linked to place, gender and health? The two questions are interrelated. Critical discourse analysis and visual methodology help to understand the socially constructed meanings of bottled water. Fifth, are bottled water consumers aware of the environmental impacts such as the production of waste? Consumer performances and environmental perceptions of nature in regard to water are the focus of this research question. The research was based in Hamilton on the campus of the University of Waikato.

Thesis Outline

In this introductory chapter, I have provided relevant background information about the growing phenomenon of bottled water consumption. I have also briefly explained the politics behind my interest this research in the first place. The lack of data on bottled water consumption in New Zealand on the one hand and little work on bottled water consumption in the discipline of geographies of consumption on the other inspired me to this research.

In chapter two, I discuss the theoretical framework that guides this thesis. First, I offer an overview of contemporary geographies of

consumption while considering the role of the media. Second, drawing upon feminist poststructuralist geographies, I review work on identity and consumption, and embodied consumption as well as geographies of food. Then, I outline relevant contributions which seek to deconstruct bottled water from a cultural geographical and non-geographical perspective. Finally, I critically discuss literature on matters of consumption linked to environmental discourses and engage with notions of sustainable consumption and green consumerism. I conclude with an explanation of how these theoretical perspectives challenge contemporary geographies of consumption.

The use of feminist qualitative research methods is discussed in chapter three. The multi method data process is outlined. I discuss the interviewing process and focus on semi-structured interviews, recruitment of participants, critical reflection on the interviewing process and the analysis of interviews. Furthermore, I explain how and why I collected visual material as well as critical discourse analysis and how copyright restrictions limited my research. I finish this chapter with a critical reflection upon my role as a researcher.

The notion of sustaining the environment through bottled water consumption is the focus of chapter four. I begin with situating bottled water in current environmental discourses in New Zealand media. This chapter has two main objectives: first, to uncover the contradictions between bottled water consumption and ideas of sustainable consumption and green consumerism; and second, to explore how bottled water is made meaningful through place and socially constructed images of nature.

In chapter five, I first explore embodied bottled water consumer performances in regards to the convenience/portability factor and taste preferences, peer pressure and consumers' bodies in different spaces.

Then, I discuss gendered differences in the consumption of bottled water while focusing on notions of sustaining healthy, pregnant, sporty and sexed bodies. This chapter concludes by linking the idea of both sustaining the environment and the body through greening the female body.

Chapter six brings this thesis to a close and suggests future prospects for further research on bottled water. In referring to my initial research questions, I summarize my main arguments. I focus on embodied consumer performances and multiple and contradictory meanings of bottled water. I show how further geographical research on bottled water can contribute not only to geographies of consumption but also Māori geographies, the political economy of consumption as well as political and health geographies.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Water as a natural resource has become a major topic of geographical inquiry in recent years (see for example Bakker 2007; Budds &McGranahan 2003; Davidson & Stratford 2007; Page 2005). However, the social values and meanings associated with consuming bottled water have not been adequately addressed. Current discourses in the media categorize bottled water as 'healthy', 'better' and more 'natural' than tap water. Furthermore, it is widely assumed within the Western world that we need to drink at least two litres a day in order to sustain our bodies. Bottled water advertisement and discourses in the media are often marketed towards women, mediating that there appears to be a gendered element to bottled water consumption.

Cloke and Johnston (2005) note that we simplify the world through constructing binaries. This results in dualistic thinking based on classification and categorization 'as a means for creating our identities both individual and collective' (Cloke and Johnston 2005 1).

Furthermore, they make another important contribution to my research project by explaining that social constructions are not given but created: 'we live in worlds of human-created categories which we modify when new situations arise that call for new responses' (Cloke and Johnston 2005 1). This statement may be linked to bottled water because it is related to notions of green consumerism as part of contemporary mainstream environmental discourses. Bottled water is categorized as 'green' and therefore promoted as being an environmentally friendly product. The construction of 'bad' versus

‘good’ consumer choices in regard to bottled water consumption is crucial. The idea of sustaining both the environment and the body through consuming green products is highly contradictory and requires investigation.

My theoretical framework is situated between geographies of consumption and poststructuralist feminist perspectives. In this chapter, I examine each in detail. This chapter is divided into three main parts. Firstly, I will provide a brief overview of geographies of consumption including perspectives on consumption and the role of the media. Secondly, I review work on identity and consumption, embodied consumption and geographies of food as well as on bottled water. The last section examines the ways in which consumption matters are situated within current environmental discourses.

Contemporary Geographies of Consumption

Most authors describe geographies of consumption as a critical field of inquiry that has emerged as response to the development of consumer society (Crewe 2000, 2001, 2003; Goss 2004, 2006; Jackson 2000, 2002; Jackson and Thrift 1995; Mansvelt 2005). Inspired by the ‘new cultural geography’, poststructuralist theories dominate debates about the construction of power and the politics of consumption (Mansvelt 2005; Latham 2004; Shurmer-Smith 2002; Slater 2003; also see Anderson *et al.* 2003; Cook *et al.* 2000; Crang 1998; Duncan *et al.* 2004). Latham (2004 232) summarizes three elements of ‘new cultural geography’ in regards to matters of consumption: firstly, it involves a redefinition of cultural geography as a ‘critical enterprise’; secondly, it includes an understanding of how contemporary consumer identities are constructed and contested; and finally, it is an attempt to define the key spaces of consumer society.

Progress reports on geographies of consumption by Louise Crewe (2000, 2001, 2003) and Jon Goss (2004, 2006) provide useful overviews of current research within this field. Crewe focuses on retailing, and the embodiment of food in relation to consumption. Goss highlights the contradictory nature of consumption as well the commodification of consumer identities from a critical geographical perspective. Elaine Hartwick (2000), Gavin Bridge and Adrian Smith (2003) both enhance contemporary research within geographies of consumption by focusing on their political dimensions and how consumption is linked to globalisation. A very recent book on geographies of consumption is by Juliana Mansvelt (2005 1), who describes geographies of consumption as ‘the ways in which relationships between people, things and places are constituted around the sale, purchase and use of goods and services’.

As a response to social inequalities in contemporary power relationships, contemporary work on consumption is starting to address inequities and the politics of consumption while considering socially and environmentally harmful impacts in relation to economically driven globalisation (Crewe 2001). Furthermore, critical geography not only has a particular interest in the social perspectives of consumption practices, but also in the ‘dark side’ of global consumption matters such as the effects of branding, marketing, fast food, fashion, commerce and shopping (Goss 2004). Landscapes of consumption are diverse and can include public spaces, marketplaces, nature, heritage and spaces of childhood. In Goss’s view (2004, 2006), current research needs to focus on corporate manipulation, environmental degradation and exploitation in order to address ‘unsustainable’ consumption practices within neo-liberal globalisation.

Similar to Goss (2004, 2006), Elaine Hartwick (2000) critiques contemporary geographies of consumption, arguing that radical

geography needs a political revival. She offers a critical review of geographies of consumption that requires activism and resistance to the capitalist system which is the main reason for environmental degradation and exploitation. In Hartwick's view, political activity needs to inform our daily lives on the one side and stress connections between producers and consumers on the other. She challenges contemporary geographies of consumption because she returns to questions of justice, poverty, exploitation, and the environment in relation to commodities. She critically discusses Baudrillard's notion of hyperreality in which 'signs dominate 'subjects' (Hartwick 2000 1179). Signs as symbols, status, prestige or image codes influence peoples' consumer choices. It is the image, rather the need, which makes people consume. However, in Hartwick's view, postmodern geographical thought neglects to address the production of signs, the ways in which signs are regulated and what signs hide.

Bridge and Smith (2003) claim that contemporary research on geographies of consumption needs to acknowledge the mutually constitutive relationship between the global economy and the local culture in relation to the meaning of commodities. A reproduction of the cultural and the economic through 'illuminating the margins' would not only enrich contemporary geographies of consumption but also enhance research on less-obvious 'cultural' commodities, such as bottled water. In conclusion, Bridge and Smith (2003 266) succeed in demonstrating the 'mutual constitution of culture-economy-production-consumption in relation to consumption practices and politics in everyday, intimate, and lived worlds of the commodity'.

Mansvelt (2005 12-13) categorizes geographies of consumption into three different modes that constitute each other: spatialities, socialities and subjectivities. *Spatialities* of consumption refer to the most (tourist spaces, malls, public space) and least (bodies, private space) visible

places of consumption and the ways in which places and spaces are linked and made meaningful through consumption. *Socialities* of consumption concentrate on the connections, relationships and social interactions among people.

Socialities of consumption are often researched by feminist geographers who are concerned with patriarchal and sexualized discourses in space in relation to such items as food consumption and clothing (see Mansvelt 2005; Valentine 1999, 1999a; Bell and Valentine 1997). Fundamental to examining the social values of bottled water is the notion of *subjectivity* which explores the ways in which 'consuming subjects are made and performed through personal and collective acts, discourses and relationships and imagining' (Mansvelt 2005: 20). The concept of subjectivity seeks to contest the traditional separation of production and consumption. It challenges notions of homogeneous consumer culture while focusing on the social construction of consumption through processes of embodiment, emplacement and performance. Furthermore, the visual partiality of discursive and representational understandings of consuming subjects has been questioned by bodily practices, movements, senses and habits (Mansvelt 2005).

Geographies of Consumption and the Media

In the 1990s, the world of consumption and the relationship between geography and advertising gained considerable attention within social geography and the social sciences as a whole. For example Jackson and Taylor (1996: 356) called for highlighting the 'language of consumption' and considering the relationship between geography and advertising.

The absence of any sustained geographical research on the subject is all the more remarkable as advertising is an inherently spatial practice, playing a crucial role in an increasingly mediated world as part of the national and international expansion of markets; creating uneven

patterns of demand across space; and striving for universality but constantly subject to local variations in meaning and interpretation. (Jackson and Taylor 1996 356)

The concept of cultural politics plays a significant role within the study of consumption as 'it involves a rejection of the idea of culture as a purely aesthetic realm, separate from economy and society' (Jackson and Taylor 1996 357). Cultural politics also explore the multiple 'maps of meaning' (Jackson 1992; see also Jackson and Taylor 1996) that emphasise differences in class, gender and marginalized groups in relation to unequal power relations among them. Therefore, Jackson and Taylor (1996) suggest a deeper understanding of cultural geography could help decode the culturally constructed knowledge and media messages.

One example would be the construction and contestation of gender identities in advertising in relation to economic and social shifts within post-Fordist societies (Leslie 1993). In addition, work by Nicky Gregson (1995) critically examines two trends that emerged in the 1990s in the literature about consumption matters within social geography, by focusing on work about the mall and advertising imagery. In Gregson's view, the reading of advertisements can be linked to new cultural geography and feminist thought which critique the idea that the focal point of advertisement is production rather than consumption. Because social geographies and concerns about consumption are still a product of the 'masculine gaze', Gregson (1995 138) argues for an acknowledgement of the ways in which gender constitutes geographical knowledge and imagination.

Jacqueline Burgess (1990) examines the production and consumption of environmental meanings in the mass media. She explains that 'the media are an integral part of complex cultural process through which environmental meanings are produced and consumed' (Burgess 1990

139). Symbolic meanings within postmodernity are unstable, continuously shifting among images, texts, buildings and objects. Instead of reducing media messages of environmental meanings to language and external reality, Burgess (1990) calls for recognition of the complex and ideological discourses composed by verbal and visual signs.

The production and consumption of environmental meanings and values through the media is, I believe, of considerable significance. By 'environmental meanings', I refer to relations between social groups and the physical world, including climate, water, resources, plants and animals which are culturally defined as 'nature' (Burgess 1990 141).

In her view, environmentalism critiques the construction of human-environment relations based on hegemonic structures. Furthermore, she claims that media influenced by cultural politics would redefine the meanings of landscapes and places associated with nature (Burgess 1990). However, Burgess does not include matters of consumption and its representation in relation to environmentalism in the media.

Identity and Consumption

Using a poststructuralist perspective, meaning and identity are relational constructs based on difference and acts of creation. As opposed to traditional political economy approaches, poststructuralism addresses the social construction of consumer identities through deconstructing consumer 'behaviours, practices, strategies and techniques of power produced by the interconnections between discursive and material realms' (Mansvelt 2005 27). However, identity is not only defined but also embodied through consumption practices and discourses.

Consuming involves practical and bodily experiences which may be about mundane acts and provisioning, security and sociality as much as individualistic lifestyle choices. Discourses and practices of consumption also locate bodies in

particular spaces, emplacing identities. Places in turn influence processes of embodiment, influencing rituals, practices and consumption through which they are made meaningful (Mansvelt 2005 80).

The relationship between identity formation and purchase of commodities is complex, even contradictory and changing over time and space. Mansvelt (2005) explains two different schemas that describe the link between consumption and identity: consuming to become and consuming according to who we are. The first schema focuses on consumption practices in which individuals create, favour and contest social identities. The second schema focuses on the use of consumption as 'articulation of one's sense of positionality as being defined through lifestyle' (Mansvelt 2005 81). Both schemas are constitutively linked to each other.

Linking performativity with matters of consumption

In this context, Judith Butler's (1990) theory of performativity is essential in examining how the discursive repetition of bodily consumption practices forms consumer identities. As stated by Nelson (1999 331), the theory of performativity 'captures the ways in which gender and sexual identifications are continually remade through repetition, or the compelled performance of dominant discourses'. Mansvelt also (2005 89) links performativity to consumption. She views performativity as a 'means of comprehending how identities are inscribed in bodies, how agency and subjectivity operate through social roles and practices which both make and 'locate' consumption'. Identities are performed and defined through places, structures and the membership of social groups, classes and communities. Mansvelt (2005) makes an important point, arguing that identity formation associated with performativity is dependent on public discourses in society.

Building on Butler (1990), Gregson and Rose (2000) explore the potential of performance and performativity as theoretical tools for a critical human geography. They argue that performance helps understanding of the construction of social identities, social differences, and social power relations in space. According to Mansvelt (2005 99), the concepts of performativity and displacement offer a useful approach to investigate how the cultural and the material are infused to create identity. In examining the complex relationship between consumption practices, commodities and place from a geographical perspective, commodity purchase, use, meaning and experience cannot be reduced to 'identity value' (Mansvelt 2005 99). Rather, 'consumption practices are complicit in the creation of boundaries between self and others through processes of embodiment and emplacement which are spatially, socially, morally and politically constituted' (Mansvelt 2005 99).

Embodied Consumption

Corporeal geographies of consumption are significant in examining the ways in which consumption is linked to the body (Bell and Valentine 1997; Benson 1997; Mansvelt 2005; Valentine 1999; Valentine 2001). Gill Valentine (2001) defines corporeality as 'recognition of the importance of the body as crucial to understanding our lived experiences, in which the body is understood to be socially constructed rather than a biological given'. In addition, Mansvelt (2005) states that the 'process of identity formation occurs through the body, where identities may be enacted, negotiated or subverted through bodily practice' (Benson 1997 cited in Mansvelt 2005 84).

Robyn Longhurst (1997 486; see also Longhurst 2001, 2001a, 2005a) provides a useful overview of geographical approaches that focus on the complex relationships between 'embodiment and spatiality'. She

describes three concepts which help to understand the body from a geographical perspective: firstly, phenomenological approaches seek to explore pre-discursive bodies; secondly, psychoanalytical approaches offered by Lacan and Freud create the notion of sexed identities and finally the critical examination of the social construction of bodies which view bodies as cultural constructs. According to Longhurst (2005a) the 'body' cannot be captured by a single definition, rather, it is 'messy'. Discourses in the past disagreed about the placement of bodies within space and society. Longhurst (2005a) analyses controversial discourses between constructionist and essentialist views of the body. Referring to her own research on pregnant bodies in public spaces, she raises awareness of discursively and socially constructed binaries between the mind and the body. She further explains that in order to understand the meaning of constructed bodies it is important to put them in a social, cultural and political context. Therefore, it is inevitable to challenge existing paradigms and to develop methods and theories regarding 'lived experience, subjectivities, and power relations' associated with the body (Longhurst 2005a 343).

In addition, Lynda Johnston's (2005) work outlines how feminist geographers challenge the dualism between men and women. Johnston (2005) also focuses on the performativity of bodies that are not fixed or stable but fluid. She calls for a greater commitment towards embodiment and the need to acknowledge the fluidity of subjectivity and to challenge binaries of sexual difference. Johnston (2005, 2006) argues that bodies and space are materially and discursively produced in particular spaces and vice versa.

Discourses around feminine and masculine bodies are also related to the slimming/fitness craze as well as to matters of health and obesity (Benson 1997; Longhurst 2005). Susan Benson (1997 123) views the body as 'the medium through which messages about identity are

transmitted'. She refers to discourses on fatness and explains that in Western society, the 'bad body' is considered to be fat and slack whereas the 'good body' is seen as sleek, thin and toned. The obsession with the body image can be linked to ideas of sustaining the body through consuming 'pure' bottled water which appears to be a healthier choice for women. Longhurst (2005) argues that body shapes and sizes become indications and means of inscribing identity. A useful example in this context is the work by Derek McCormack (1999) who critically examines the metaphorical and material geographies in relation to particular figurations of embodied fitness. In her view, fitness discourses are part of the sociocultural terrain of contemporary industrialised societies. However, McCormack (1999 156) also claims that particular configurations of fitness, such as fit, able bodies and unacceptable, unfit and disabled bodies as well as categories of gender and health would reinforce the concept of purification.

Food Geographies

Geographies of food offer important ground on which to examine matters of emplacement, displacement, sociality, embodiment and their construction in place and are therefore related to identity formation and consumption (Mansvelt 2005; see also Cook and Crang 1996; Cook 2006). Work by Bell and Valentine (1997) and Valentine (1999; 1999a; 2002) is significant in conceptualising how food 'becomes the corporal body' (Valentine 1999 cited in Mansvelt 2005 98). Inspired by postmodern thought and the cultural turn within the social sciences, geographies of consumption have shifted from the political-economic perspective to the projection of identity through the body (Bell and Valentine 1997).

In '*corporeal geography of consumption*', Valentine (1999) investigates how bodies are related to open spaces of consumption and the ways

bodies are influenced by sociospatial relations. She offers insights into gendered differences in food practices in relation to narratives of identity construction in everyday life. While women are concerned with their own bodily appearance and sexuality and with how others will perceive them, men's bodily experiences were formed through discourses of health and functionality (Valentine 1999; Mansvelt 2005). Linking her approach to my thesis topic, she makes an important contribution regarding the connections of embodiment to social and cultural construction of identity.

Bell and Valentine (1997) argue that in (post)-modern societies food is associated with social, cultural and symbolic meanings rather than with sustenance and nutrition. They explain that 'in a world in which self-identity and place-identity are woven through webs of consumption, what we eat (and where, and why) signals ... who we are'. Therefore, 'food has become largely dominated by ideas of bodily beauty and comportment, rather than by ideas of energy and sufficiency' (Bell and Valentine 1997 2-4). Contemporary research on consumption practices focuses on social and cultural issues ranging from health and the ethics of aesthetics to the role of transnational corporations in global regimes of capitalism.

Using a postcolonial and feminist perspective, Domosh (2003) provides a unique analysis of the U.S. based Heinz Corporation which examines the dual role of women as both producers and consumers while 'food is taken into the body'. Domosh (2003) critiques contemporary research within geographies of consumption which focuses on dominant dynamics of the world market rather than on gendered and racialized contexts. Domosh critically examines contradictory meanings of the concept of purity: purity means simple, natural and free from human manipulation on the one hand and manipulated, germ-free and antiseptic on the other.

Chatterjee (2007) offers an interesting approach to the discourse on consumption and identity formation in regards to product packaging. In her view, the importance of semiotics used in product packaging has not been addressed. Therefore, Chatterjee (2007 293) calls for deconstructing gendered identities as they are 'complex, porous and materially rooted in space' and are therefore constituted by socio-geographical contexts.

Geographies of consumption combined with feminist geographies including embodied geographies as well as food geographies provide a useful framework to inform my research. Because bottled water as a 'fluid' commodity is highly under theorized, this theoretical framework is appropriate to engage with the socially constructed values of bottled water associated with nature, gender and health. In the next section, I will discuss some critical geographical and non-geographical viewpoints on bottled water (consumption).

Deconstructing Bottled Water

There are only two geographers who have investigated bottled water consumption from a cultural geographical perspective. Connell's (2006) work offers important insights into the ways in which Fiji Water is associated with an 'exotic' place and Page (2005) examines the concept of commodities and commodification of water. Page (2005) critiques contemporary approaches to water governance because they fail to consider the multiple meaning of water as 'part of a wide set of stories and its commodity narrative' that 'cannot be understood in isolation' (Page 2005 303). In his view, using a socio-geographical perspective could help the understanding of the morally complex aspects of the commodification of water.

According to Connell (2006 342), 'the particular construction and use of information ... produced a new structure of bottled water marketing built and shaped around new types of comparative advantage, competition and power structures, and, above all, shaped around place'. He also explores how imaginative geographies of place are constructed as marketing tools in order to emphasise the 'cultural' value of consuming Fiji Water.

Opel's (1999) work is significant to my research because it examines bottled water from a poststructuralist perspective. He argues that bottled water is made meaningful through its symbolic value, communicated through 'signs' such as visual promotional material.

The words and images used to situate bottled waters in the marketplace are part of the capitalist commodity economy that supplies goods with symbolic exchange value and social meanings. These meanings, created within corporate structures, are laden with ideology and designed to create need while serving the growing market segment. ... Ads and labels then become a way of adding symbolic value to products, and the symbolic is then translated into material value (Opel 1999 70).

This quotation is relevant to Goss' (2004) work, who argues that using a critical geographical perspective demonstrates the dark side of matters of consumption. In conclusion, Opel (1999) succeeds in demonstrating how images used in the promotion of bottled water mask the connections between human activity and the natural world.

Similar to Opel, Wilk's (2006 303) work explores the cultural meaning of water used in marketing and branding in which bottled water is viewed as a 'pure commodity in the age of branding'. Using an anthropological perspective, he links bottled water consumption to discourses around risk, health and environmentally destructive consumer behaviour. He emphasises that 'today, marketers recognize that goods have magical powers that have nothing to do with 'needs',

and they have become magicians who transform mundane and abundant things into exotic values' (Wilk 2006 305). He stresses bottled water as an outstanding example of the influence of branding to make commodities a meaningful part of every day life. Wilk also critiques the global political economy of water and offers an overview of the history, nature and cultural meaning of water.

He refers to the scientific venture of 'control of water' as the mastery or conquest of nature.

Modernism imposes human will (and governmentality) on nature by channelling, damming, chemical treatment, purification and organized distribution. Because today bottled water can draw on both traditions, it has the unusual capacity to disemically carry and transmit the magic and power of nature *and* modern technology at the same time. In a world where floods and tidal waves still prove the imperfection of human control over the natural power of water, every bottle of water is a visual metaphor for control and at the same time a reminder that, without water, people cannot exist (Wilk 2006 308).

In examining the ambivalent connection between the notion of 'nature' and bottled water, Wilk (2006) explains how bottled water is linked to original natural places and sites. Bottled water brands such as Perrier, Vichy and Evian are constructed as being natural, pristine or pure because the companies declare that the water still comes from nature. Thereby, Wilk (2006) explores the paradoxical meaning of nature in regard to conflicts in western cultures about rationality and the body. He states that 'if nature is dangerous, technology makes it safe. By generic reverse osmosis water is 'pure' because it has passed through a machine. ... For the romantic, water is pure because it comes straight from nature' (Wilk 2006 310; see also Andersen 2000; Domosh 2003). In addition, Wilk (2006) touches upon the idea of ethical consumerism. He states that water consumption could be more sustainable or 'ethical'. However, there is room to critically examine the socio-political and counter-capitalist perspectives around the idea of resistance to

bottled water. In addition, the consumer behaviour and associated environmental impacts and awareness are rarely addressed. According to the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) (Ferrier 2001), the bottled water industry creates considerable packing waste compared with tap water. Furthermore, bottled water packaging materials and transport have negative impacts on the environment (also see Connell 2006). It is shipped either from distant sources or imported from foreign countries. Thus, bottled water increases fossil fuel consumption, greenhouse gas emissions, and air pollution. The consumption of bottled water also increases solid waste from discarded plastic containers. The WWF argues that limiting the transport of bottled water would help to reduce its negative environmental impacts.

Consumption Matters linked to Environmental Discourses

One part of this research project looks at the ways in which discourses around bottled water consumption are related to current notions of environmentalism shaped by environmental discourses. As I will examine the environmental values associated with consuming bottled water as well as how these values are linked to ideas around nature, it is important to introduce the concept of sustainable consumption and green consumerism.

Contemporary sustainability discourses

In response to increasing poverty, environmental degradation and social inequalities, *Our Common Future*, the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WECD), published in 1987, popularised a framework for sustainable development (SD). The overall objective of sustainable development is to foster the integration of economic and environmental values on a global and local level, based on the idea of economic growth. According to the report, national governments and multilateral institutions need to combine economic

development with environmental concerns in order to meet the basic needs of all generations including those of the future (WCED 1987). However, the concept of sustainable development is complex and contradictory and, therefore, has been strongly critiqued. For example Meadowcroft (2005) claims that some industrialized countries fail to involve matters of consumption and international equity in environmental policies. Likewise, Ganesh (2007) argues that discourses on sustainability poorly address the driving forces of environmental degradation which are linked to matters of consumption and capitalist accumulation. In examining conventional discourses on corporate social responsibility (CSR)³, Ganesh (2007) critiques the hegemonic character of sustainability discourses as these are based on neoliberal values on the one hand and the idea of a homogeneous humanity on the other.

This view is shared by other authors who critique the elite-driven character of CSR discourses and practice within industrialised countries (Munshi and Kurian 2007; Mont and Plepys 2008; Popke 2006). For example Munshi and Kurian (2007) suggest that CSR needs to promote a sustainable society that addresses matters of consumption.

Fundamental to the concept of sustainable consumption is the Rio Earth Summit Declaration ‘Agenda 21’, developed by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992. Chapter 4: Changing Consumption Patterns’ of the Agenda has two objectives: first, to focus on unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, and second, to develop national policies and strategies to encourage changes in unsustainable consumption patterns (United

³ Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is understood as a global commitment for corporate organization to behave socially and environmentally responsibly and pursue sustainable development on a global scale (Ganesh 2007).

Nations 1992; see also Cohen 2005; Jackson 2006). Furthermore, in 1999, the United Nations explained that ‘sustainable consumption is not about consuming less, it is about consuming differently, consuming efficiently, and having an improved quality of life’ (UNEP 1999 cited in Jackson 2006 5). In 2001, the United Nations emphasised the multiple meanings of sustainable consumption and explained that,

Sustainable consumption is an umbrella term than brings together a number of key issues, such as meeting needs, enhancing quality of life, improving efficiency, minimizing waste, taking a lifecycle perspective and taking into account the equity dimension; integrating these components parts in the central question of how to provide the same or better services to meet the basic requirements of life and the aspiration for improvement, for both current and future generations, while continually reducing environmental damage and the risk to human health (UNEP 2001 cited in Jackson 2006 5).

There are three points that can be drawn: firstly, sustainable consumption is based on the belief that a combination of economic growth and technological innovation could prevent environmental damage; secondly, sustainable consumption combines economic efficiency with consumer efficiency; and thirdly, sustainable consumption encourages consumers to reduce waste in order to enhance a better quality of life.

Most authors argue that current approaches to sustainable consumption have made commitments to change both unsustainable production and to protect and manage natural resources. However, these commitments have not reached policy level and have, therefore, failed to challenge the political structure of decision-making.

Furthermore, sustainable consumption fails to question the idea of consumption because the focus is on consuming ‘sustainable’ products instead of consuming less (Cohen 2005; Burgess *et al.* 2003; Hobson 2003, 2006, 2006a; Princen *et al.* 2002). For example Mont and Plepys (2008) claim that current environmental strategies fail to address the

environmental impacts of increasing material consumption. In addition, the development of socio-economic systems of sustainable development require enhanced knowledge about consumer behaviour and the environmental impacts of consumerism (Mont and Plepys 2008; see also Cohen 2005).

The contradictory nature of sustainable consumption is another critical aspect discussed by authors. It is argued that sustainable consumption is not compatible with individualistic lifestyles in industrialised countries (Hobson 2006, Hobson 2006a; Karliner 2000; Maniates 2002; Mont and Plepys 2008; Princen *et al.* 2002; Wilk 2002). Burgess *et al.* (2003) explain that consumer choices are not necessarily based on 'rational' decision-making but on cultural and social aspects of consumption practices. These include normative values such as comfort, care and cleanness which clash with the sustainability 'mantra' of reducing, reusing and recycling.

Good (sustainable) versus bad (unsustainable) consumer choices

Proponents of sustainable consumption seek to concentrate on consumption practices rather than on restructuring industrial processes in the realms of production (Cohen 2005; Hobson 2003, 2006; Jackson 2006; Popke 2006). Princen *et al.* (2002) offer an important contribution to the argument, stating that consumption is not only an individual choice but also a stream of choices and decisions that are related to social relations of power and authority. Similarly, Hobson (2006) views consumption as a locus of power mediated through the discursively praxis of sustainable consumption and sustainable living. Sustainable consumption is perceived as a 'good' way of consuming whereas unsustainable consumption practices are 'bad'. Instead of reinforcing a rationalisation of consumer choices, Hobson (2006) emphasises the need to discuss alternate discourses about sustainable

consumption which focus on consumers' environmental perceptions, knowledges, and concerns. These approaches would address values, beliefs, assumptions and the ways in which these are related to cultural meanings. Burgess *et al.* (2003 276) confirm this thought and claim that 'individual's choices depend on particular social, and geographical contexts according to the rules of particular social practices which also vary depending on actors' experiences, interests and capabilities'. In addition, Popke (2006) critiques simplistic approaches to consumption for two reasons: first, they fail to consider the complexity of waste production; second, they ignore consumption as a cultural act as performed and mediated through cultural-semiotic codes and values. Hobson's (2003, 2006, 2006a) work emphasises the need to investigate individuals' consumer voices and subjectivities. She explains that geography helps us to understand what consumption and the environment means to individuals both as a cultural norm and as an everyday practice.

Princen *et al.* (2002) note that little attention has been paid to externalities of consumption which influence consumption choices through dominant environmental discourses. They also claim that the consumption of basic human needs, such as water is under theorized. Therefore, it is necessary to ask: who sets the social and environmental values and norms of consumption practices? In which ways do consumption choices differ in relation to class and gender? In this context, it is important to review some feminist perspectives on sustainable consumption discourses in regards to nature. For example, Ganesh (2007) explores ecofeminist notions of sustainable development and states that 'a unified version of humanity evident in sustainable development invokes 'nature' as fragile, feminine and in need of protection. He calls for consideration of the gendered notions of nature in order to challenge patriarchal discourses characterised by conservative and heterosexist views of family. In addition, Andersen

(2000) argues that the visual constructions of nature in advertising can be related to key conceptions of the environmental movement. These, as well as cultural narratives, construct images of a helpless and idealized 'Mother Nature' that needs protection. She also comments on the environmental harm of consuming bottled water and identifies the contradictory meaning of consuming bottled water.

The concept Mother Nature helps associate bottled water with purity and inspiration and compels people to express their love with nature by buying individual plastic containers, a substance that degrades the environment, hazards public health, and ultimately has the potential to contaminate our drinking water (Andersen 2000 210).

Green consumerism

Green consumerism is promoted as a particular approach for individuals to consume more sustainably in their consumption and is an important concept to review in regard to my research topic. Burgess *et al.* (2003) explain that consumption matters are significant in the context of climate change as consumption is responsible for depletion and degradation of environmental resources. Therefore, some authors argue that the personal spheres of everyday life including matters of consumption, are strongly influenced by political responses to the environmental crisis (Burgess 1990; Hobson 2006; Luke 1997; Princen *et al.* 2002). As stated by Ganesh (2007), the promotion of 'green' governments and the establishment of strategy and planning processes to implement policies are key concepts of sustainable environmental governance. The idea of enhancing quality of life relates to both sustainable consumption and green consumerism. Consuming green products means people will consider themselves to be 'green' and therefore making 'good' choices which might lead to a better quality of life.

Luke's (1997) work is essential in examining the contradictions associated with green consumerism. From his perspective, environmentalism has become a mainstream public good made meaningful by an ecological relationship with nature through sustainability. In order to reverse the negative image of unsustainable economic goods, corporations have changed their corporate political discourses in favour of the environment through promoting green products. This shift in discourse is described as 'greenwashing', which is understood as any form of marketing or public relations that links a corporate, political, or non-profit organization to a positive association with environmental issues despite having unsustainable product or practice (Sustainabilitydictionary 2008, para 1; see also Hofrichter 2000; Laufer 2003; Luke 1997; Munshi & Kurian 2005:). In other words, 'the corporate world seeks to market itself and its products as the greenest of the green' (Karliner 2000 183).

Work on green consumerism examines the ways in which green consumer practices, such as recycling, seek to restructure mainstream understandings of the ecological crisis (Andersen 2000; Hofrichter 2000; Luke 1997; Maniates 2002; Princen *et al.* 2002). According to Luke (1997), green consumerism, as a means of reducing material consumption, is highly problematic. Instead of critiquing and challenging the environmentally destructive practices of corporations and production, the individual consumer becomes the 'key ecological subject, whose everyday economic activities are either a blow for environmental destruction or a greener Earth' (Luke 1997 118). In addition, he claims that 'the whole environmental crisis is reinterpreted as a series of bad households or personal buying decisions' (120). Andersen (2000 207) shares this view, arguing that 'public service announcements and advertising campaigns often suggest that solutions to environmental problems are the private responsibility of individual consumers'. She concludes that the focus on

individual responsibility places corporate responsibility outside the discourse.

Linking this view to my research topic, the 'green' promotion of bottled water, gives an indication of how bottled water corporations may create environmental meanings through powerful discourses mediated through visual representations. Green consumerism can be seen as a way of manipulating consumer choices through power relations between the individual consumer and bottled water corporations.

Furthermore, promotion of green consumerism reinforces the separation between consumption and production on the one hand and creates good versus bad consumer identities on the other.

For example Hofrichter (2000 9) claims that 'global corporations are shaping public debate more aggressively than ever before on issues of ecology and environmental health'. Likewise, Karliner (2000 190) makes an important argument that can be easily related to the bottled water industry.

Corporate globalisation linked with corporate environmentalism has emerged, as one responding to the ecological contradictions of global corporate capitalism and attempting to appropriate the language, images and objectives of the environmental movement.

Building on this statement, Darnovsky (2000) critiques everyday environmentalism as a form of green living for three reasons: first, it is based on individual values; second, it lacks a political message and finally, it fails to consider differences in class and social status.

Darnovsky (2000 219) calls for a transformation of 'this popular green sensibility into an environmental imagination' in order to foster political activism. Unlike Darnovsky (2000), Maniates (2002 46) critiques the idea of environmental imagination because this concept narrows and undermines the capacity to react effectively to environmental problems. He contests the concept of green consumerism because it neither challenges consumer practices nor

changes the distribution of power in society. Maniates (2002 58) concludes that, 'if consumption in all its complexity, is to be confronted, the forces that systematically individualize responsibility for environmental degradation must be challenged'.

Conclusion

I began this chapter by offering an overview of the main tendencies of geographies of consumption including the relationship between the three modes of consumption. Contemporary research on consumption ranges from retailing to embodied consumer practices to the (de)construction of consumer identities. Current work on consumption focuses on the 'dark sides' of consumption and calls for a contest against environmental exploitation. I also discussed how matters of consumption are made meaningful through the landscape of the media.

I reviewed particular poststructuralist feminist work on consumption in regards to identity formation, embodied consumption and geographies of food. These perspectives are fundamental for examining both the gendered values of bottled water consumption and the mutual relationship between embodiment and the social construction of consumer identities. Given the lack of geographical work on bottled water from a cultural geographical perspective, I also included non-geographical work available on bottled water in my discussion.

Finally, I discussed relevant literature on sustainable consumption and the contradictions of green consumerism. I developed a framework which enabled me to place bottled water consumer performances and material promoting bottled water in relation to current environmental discourses.

Through critically engaging with various perspectives from geographies of consumption and feminist geographies to matters of (un)sustainable consumption and green consumerism, I hope to challenge contemporary cultural geographical research on consumption. These viewpoints provide a profound theoretical framework for this thesis and allow for the possibility of considering the multiple meanings of bottled water consumption. In the next chapter, I outline how feminist qualitative research methods helped me to conduct and analyse my research.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss how qualitative methods inform my research. The overall objective of this research project is to explore social values and identities associated with bottled water consumption as well as the socially constructed values and images around nature, gender and health. McDowell (1997) claims that questions about symbolism, meaning and representations of gender relations in the landscape by the media, play a crucial role in doing feminist geography (McDowell 1997). Furthermore, 'feminism does not encourage methodological elitism, but instead promotes a plurality of methods where the choice of method depends on what is appropriate, comfortable or effective' (WGSG 1997 98; also see Ekinsmyth 2002; Johnston *et al.* 2000; Moss 2002; Moss and Falconer Al-Hindi 2008; Rose 1993).

Therefore, using feminist qualitative research methods are appropriate in order to engage with the multiple meanings and values associated with (embodied) bottled water consumption. Conducting interviews and using critical discourse analysis through deconstruction 'allows for the meaning of a commodity to be situated in its social and material context' (Hartwick 2000 1184).

In this chapter, I will critically discuss the methodological framework of my thesis. I outline how qualitative research methods inform this research and discuss the key methods used to collect data. This includes semi-structured interviews and the recruitment of participants as well as interview analysis. I then discuss the second source of data, visual material, and explain my reasons for engaging

with material promoting bottled water. This includes a critical consideration on copyright inquiries. I provide insights about using discourse analysis and aspects of visual methodologies. Finally, I offer a critical reflection upon my positionality as a graduate student in this research project.

Qualitative Methods

Winchester (2000; see also Crang 2002, 2003, 2005; Moss 2002) explains that qualitative methods require multiple conceptual approaches and methods of inquiry while focusing on the human environment, individual experiences and social processes. In addition, Bryman (2004 542) notes that ‘qualitative research usually emphasizes words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data’. Current themes in recent qualitative research in human geography address questions of agency, embodiment and emotion, being within nature, and the performativity of place (Clifford and Valentine 2003; Davies and Dwyer 2007).

Research on the body and embodiment is strongly influenced by feminist and poststructural thought in which ‘the study of the body may also be as a text or as landscape which may be marked or shaped in particular ways’ (Winchester 2000 11). Through engaging with embodied notions of consuming bottled water, I hope to enrich contemporary feminist qualitative research. Using a feminist methodological framework has enabled me to put myself into the research as feminism emphasises positionality and reflexivity within the research process (Ekinsmyth 2002; Moss 2002; Rose 1997; WGSG 1997).

In qualitative research, the researcher mainly decides what is heard, read, seen and interpreted; therefore, the discussions offered in

chapters five and six are influenced by subjectivity. However, this approach has been critiqued by quantitative researchers who claim qualitative methods are guided by the concept of subjectivity and, therefore, are restricted in their findings (Bryman 2004). I contest this critique as many critical researchers such as Moss (2002) and McDowell (1992, 1997) argue that there is no such thing as objective truth and that all knowledge is subjective. I have used 'triangulation', understood as the employment of different data sources and collection procedures to add 'robustness' to my analysis (Hoggart et al. 2002). This method allowed me to gather multiple perspectives on my research topic with the aim to reinforce the final outcomes (Bryman 2004; Shumer-Smith 2002; Winchester 2000). In this research I engaged with qualitative multiple methods such as semi-structured interviews and critical discourse analysis

Semi-structured Interviews

Valentine (2005 111) points out that material generated through interviewing is 'analysed using a textual approach, relying on words and meanings, rather than statistics'. Given the nature of my research topic, I view semi-structured interviews as a useful technique to provide insights into (embodied) consumer performances. In contrast to focus groups, semi-structured interviews prevent the chance of interviewees being influenced by other participant's thoughts and opinions (Longhurst 2003).

I prepared one interview schedule (see appendix one) with fourteen questions addressing the main objectives of my research project. Because students' perceptions of bottled water might have multiple meanings, I gave the participants the opportunity to explore issues they considered were important. I only used the interview schedule to direct the conversation. In doing so I allowed for the possibility of an

informal and spontaneous discussion which both valued my participants' reflections and gathered valuable information for my research project (Longhurst 2003). An open forum of discussion is important because consumption matters are linked to morality and personal values in which 'knowledge is always situated and partial' (Ekinsmyth 2002 179).

As stated by Forbes (2002), conducting semi-structured interviews involves both interviewer and interviewee. Therefore, I allowed the interviewees to express themselves in their individual ways and raise questions I might have not anticipated. Semi-structured interviews offered me the space to capture individual experiences about bottled water consumption in regards to gendered differences, consumer performances and the impacts of advertising. This technique aided the understanding of how values and beliefs around bottled water are socially constructed. However, I recognized that the performances they played as participants were influenced by my role as researcher and vice versa (Avis 2002; Longhurst 2003, Valentine 2005).

Recruitment of participants

I aimed to conduct semi-structured interviews with students studying at the University of Waikato. The reason for choosing this location was that I noticed a large number of students drinking bottled water on campus. Given the popularity of environmental discourses over the last two years, I was prompted to find out if students link bottled water consumption to negative environmental impacts. I also found it important to recruit students not only from New Zealand but also from other countries in order to gain multiple insights into the socially constructed image of New Zealand being 'green and clean' in relation to bottled water.

I conducted eleven semi-structured interviews with students differing in age, gender and ethnicity. I interviewed three New Zealanders, two people with a New Zealand Residency and six people from other (western and non-western) countries (see appendix two for list of participants' details). The interviews took between twenty and forty minutes. Pseudonyms have been used for all the participants to maintain anonymity and confidentiality. I approached on the University Campus. I also observed and recruited people drinking bottled water because I hoped that this would help introduce my interest and lead to further discussion. After I approached possible participants, I introduced myself, explained the significance of my research and asked people if they were interested in participating. If they agreed, I outlined my research and asked for their availability. If they disagreed, I thanked them for listening. Some people seemed interested but were restricted by time, so I gave them the information sheet (see appendix three). I also asked people their email addresses, this recruitment process was less successful. I only recruited six people on Campus. However, based on the snowballing effect (Bryman 2004), I recruited three more students, one friend and one neighbour who were willing to take part in my research. In total, eleven people agreed to be interviewed.

Due to different ways of recruiting, the interviews were conducted at three different locations: six were conducted in the Students' Study Room at the Department of Geography, Tourism and Environmental Planning; three in a building located near to the Management School; one at a friend's place and one at my house. After outlining my research, I thanked the participants for assisting me, gave them the information sheet (see appendix three) and discussed and signed the consent forms (see appendix four.). In order to avoid any obscurities, I made sure that they understood the nature of my research and the way their information would be used. I also stated that they could contact

me throughout the research process if they had any additional questions.

Critical reflections on the interviewing process

Dunn (2000) notes that the complex and uneven power relationship between the researcher and the informant is often critical to the collection of opinions and insights because the information flows mostly from the informant to the interviewer. Lindsay (1997) describes the interactive nature of qualitative interviewing as a learning process for the researcher. Drawing upon my experience as a graduate student, I learned that conducting interviews requires both confidence and social competences. The first interview with Ali felt awkward because I had the impression he did not fully understand my questions. Furthermore, Ali did not want to give me 'wrong' answers that could put him in a negative position because he drinks bottled water. Therefore, I found it difficult to direct the interview in an informal manner. However, after critically reflecting upon my role as a researcher, I acknowledged that participants may need some space and time to engage with the research questions. Furthermore, in order to challenge the binary associated with the researcher and participant, I emphasised that I am not looking for 'correct' answers but to explore the social values associated with consuming bottled water from an individual consumer point of view.

Interview analysis

I listened to the tape recorded interviews and transcribed them based on Dunn's (2000) list of symbols commonly used in interview analysis⁴. I attempted to transcribe each interview after another which helped me to put the information in the relevant social context. One participant did not want to be audio-taped, therefore, I made notes during the interview and typed it up immediately after finishing the interview. While transcribing I started to identify dominant themes: Convenience/Portability and taste preferences, health issues, peer pressure, urban-rural differences and gendered bottled water performances.

As stated by Crang (2005a), qualitative research offers a range of ideas and options for analysing transcribed interviews. My analysis was based on 'open coding' which enabled me to develop my own technique to categorise and interpret my findings. Because 'methodology is not just a matter of practicalities and techniques, it is a matter of marrying up theory with practice' (Shurmer-Smith 2002 95), I attempted to relate the transcribed material to relevant theoretical perspectives from the beginning of my analysis. I read through my material several times, when ideas emerged I considered were relevant for my research topic, I noted them alongside the text. 'Emic' (Crang 2005a 224) coding helped me to acknowledge themes that were used by informants themselves (such as peer pressure), and categorisation helped me to uncover interrelated linkages between the four themes of health, gender differences, environment and peer pressure. I used

⁴ The transcribing codes are as follows: italics signify participant's emphasis on particular words; ... indicates a self-initiated pauses by a speaker; ... or ... indicates longer self-initiated pauses by a speaker and (...) implies that material has been edited out. I added commas, question and exclamation marks and corrected spelling or grammar mistakes to improve the readability of the extracts. When citations were too long or contained information not relevant to the context, I edited it out.

different colour codes to identify each theme in my material. A word search helped to put all relevant extracts together. Based on these files, I started linking each theme to relevant theoretical perspectives.

'Etic' (Crang 2005a 224) coding was used to link my findings to the theory. Building on the three modes of consumption described earlier by Juliana Mansvelt (2005), I attempted to contextualise my findings in relation to the socialities, spatialities and subjectivities of consumption. Refining, categorisation and re-categorising which included the development of different sub-categories enabled me to explore the complex interrelations between consumer performances, embodied consumption and the environment. (For an overview of the interpretations of my main findings please see appendix five).

Visual Material

Rose (2001, 2007) notes that visual representations structure peoples' behavior in everyday lives. She recommends a closely critical reading of the three sites of the interpretation of visual images including the site(s) of production, the image itself and where it is seen by various audiences. In addition, Aitken and Craine (2005 258) highlight advertising as one the most influential forms to emerge in modern times. Representations are essential in producing meaning and subjectivity. Therefore, a critical analysis and the interpretation of promotional materials of bottled water constitute an important source of data for my research.

Collection of promotional material

I used different women's magazines to search for bottled water advertisements to demonstrate these representations are marketed towards women. In order to examine the ways in which bottled water consumption is made meaningful through public discourses, I searched

New Zealand newspapers such as, the Waikato Times, Sunday Star Times and the New Zealand Herald for visual and textual illustrations of bottled water. I also explored the following bottled water brand websites⁵:

- Pump water (www.pump.co.nz)
- The Coca-Cola Company
(<http://www.ccamatil.com/newZealandProducts>)
- Frucor (<http://www.frucor.com/brands/nz/water.html>)
- H²Go Australia (<http://www.h2gogreen.com.au>)
- Waiwera Infinity (<http://www.waiwerainfinity.com>)
- Eternal Water (<http://www.eternalwater.com>)
- The Good Water company (www.goodwater.org.nz)
- Evian water (<http://www.evian.com/us/>)
- Mizone sportswater⁶ (www.mizone.co.nz)
- 420 Springwater (<http://www.420springwater.co.nz/>)

I chose to examine different sources of visual material to gain multiple perspectives on how bottled water is represented in the landscape of the media. This way of collecting data proved to be a rich source of data and therefore enabled me to include some useful material in my discussion⁷.

Limitations to my research - copyright inquires

Copyright issues prevented me from reproducing certain images in my thesis. I emailed and called diverse women's magazines as well as bottled water companies in New Zealand to ask for copyright permission to include their visual material in my discussion. Despite contacting the persons responsible for such inquiries, the outcome were

⁵ The websites were all viewed on the 19th of June 2008.

⁶ I included Mizone sportswater in my discussion as some of my participants emphasised this particular brand in relation to gendered differences of consuming bottled water (see chapter six).

⁷ The University of Waikato requires such permissions for theses.

was disappointing. Apart from Marie Claire magazine, the Good Water company and 420 Springwater and Waiwera water, I did not receive any responses.

Initially, I intended to use promotional material by Mizone, a New Zealand bottled water brand owned by Danone, in my thesis. However, Danone declined the use of their images. Another company asked for an extract of my thesis to make sure I did not discuss their product in relation to recycling because this type of research could threaten their bottled water brand. However, in agreement with my supervisor, I decided not to send any content information as I did not want them to intervene in my research. Copyright issues are an excellent example of the ways in which uneven power relations operate between corporations and researchers and how they can hinder academic research. I have given Internet websites for these images that I discuss but could not reproduce in the thesis.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Michel Foucault was influential in describing the relationship of discourse and power, the discursive construction of social subjects and the functioning of discourse and social change (Fairclough 1992 38). Aitken and Craine (2005) note that identity formation and the construction of social values and meanings are shaped through discourse and visual representation. Batram (2003 152 emphasis in original) explains that ‘visual imagery *always* produces cultural meaning’ and therefore, is embedded in socio-spatial contexts. Furthermore, Burgess (1990) states that the decoding of symbolic meanings in different media texts are shaped by the personal, social, economic and cultural contexts which influence consumer practices.

I used Norman Fairclough's (1992) *Discourse and Social Change* to employ critical discourse analysis as a method in my thesis. He offers a three-dimensional conception of discourse entailing three coexisting and relating elements: text, discursive practice and social practice. Of particular relevance to this research is Fairclough's (2001) later argument that positions representations as a process of social construction; of practices that shape people's identities as consumers through advertisement.

Consumers can be influenced and sometimes misled by persuasive language used in marketing and advertising (Bloor and Bloor 2007). With this in mind, I used semiotics, understood as the 'process of interpretation' (Hoggart et al. 2002 311), to examine discourses and performances in the representations and self-interpretation of bottled water marketing. I also examined how the relationship between the signifier (bottled water) and the signified (bottled water is healthy/natural/green) constructs paradoxical meaning. Using bottled water advertisements as visual material helped to understand how bottled water consumption is influenced by environmental discourses. In addition, I examined the ways in which gender and sexed bodies are stereotypically represented in discourse through material promoting bottled water.

As stated by Rose (2007 168), 'doing a discourse analysis thus demands some critical reflection on your own research practice'. Using critical analysis of visual material supplemented my analysis in a two-fold manner: first, it enabled me to deconstruct the socially constructed meanings associated with bottled water and second, it added weight to my ideas and helped me to strengthen my arguments.

Critical Positionality

Qualitative research challenges fixed positionalities through recognising the positionality of researcher and his/her subjects and the relationship of power between them (Berg and Mansvelt 2000; Crang 2003; Mc Dowell 1992; Rose 1997). The universal, stable and disembodied idea of doing 'objective' research has been strongly critiqued by feminist and poststructuralist approaches. Dowling (2000) notes that there is no objectivity since all research is social in nature. Further, Fiona Smith (2003) claims that geographers need to critically reflect upon their positionality while doing research in different countries. She describes positionality as,

... our 'race' and gender ... but also our class experience, our levels of education, our sexuality, our age, our ableness, whether we are a parent or not. All of these have a bearing upon who we are, how our identities are formed and how we do our research. We are not neutral, scientific observers, untouched by the emotional and political contexts of places where we do our research (Smith 2003 186).

I am aware of my positionality and how it influences my research. I am twenty-six years old, female German, white, middle class, heterosexual, and able-bodied. Due to my European identity, I am aware of my 'outsider' position in this research because I am a foreigner and English is my second language. However, instead of reinforcing the binary between outsider/insider, I see myself between the roles.

Travelling to different countries certainly changed my perspectives on water issues and shaped my (political) identity. When I started doing this research project in the first place I was in particular interested in environmental aspects of consuming bottled water (see Figure 1). I also developed keen interest in the ways in which corporate markets driven by economic globalization dominate the global bottled water industry. I avoid consuming bottled water, in particular those produced by the

Coca-Cola Company. The reason for doing that is to ‘demonstrate’ my resistance to inappropriate social, political and environmental practices by corporations. However, I am aware that I am still a consumer and influenced by the sign and value of commodities.

I am also aware that my own positionality and subjectivity affects and influences this research. Therefore, I acknowledge that knowledge is never value-free but situated and partial. My motivation for doing this research is to enrich work on geographies of consumption while deconstructing bottled water consumption and advertising. This research reveals that ideas around sustaining the environment as well as the (consuming) body are constitutively linked to each other.

Conclusion

The theoretical perspectives - geographies of consumption and feminist geographies - lend themselves to qualitative methodologies. Using these methods I was able to identify two major themes: the notion of sustaining the environment and embodying the environment through consuming bottled water. Critical discourse analysis and visual methodologies illustrate how bottled water consumption is socially constructed through discourse. Utilizing these methods enabled me to address research questions one, two and three. Semi-structured interviews helped me to address research questions three, four and five which focus on consumers’ perceptions of bottled water in regard to the environment, place, gender and health. The following chapter examines the ways in which bottled water consumption is made meaningful through environmental discourses and can be linked to place and notions of purity.

CHAPTER FOUR

SUSTAINING THE ENVIRONMENT

Introduction

This research project focuses on the ‘cultural politics’ (Jackson and Taylor 1996) of bottled water consumption in order to decode culturally constructed knowledges and media messages in regard to environmental issues. In this chapter, I aim to uncover the paradoxes associated with the discursive praxis of the media messages and consumers’ perceptions of bottled water. I also examine the ways in which international and national bottled water companies are shaped around culture, place and nature (Connell 2006).

Using critical discourse analysis helps to understand how powerful meanings are constructed and linked to place. Visual and textual representations of bottled water that address environmental concerns are situated within the concept of ecological modernization (EM), understood as a way to overcome the ecological crisis through a reflexive reorganisation of capitalist industrialised societies (Barry 2005; also see Milanez and Bührs 2007⁸). Discourses around morality and green consumption used in the promotion of bottled water are related to corporate social responsibility as part of the sustainability agenda.

I draw on Bloor and Bloor (2007 12) who explain that discourse is not only a product of society but also ‘a dynamic and changing force that is constantly influencing and re-constructing social practice and values’.

⁸Recent work by Milanez and Bührs (2007) offers another definition of EM, ‘as the implementation of preventative innovation in production systems (processes and products), that simultaneously produces environmental and economic benefits’ (p. 565).

Therefore, it is important to consider the moralities in socio-political contexts. In Juliana's Mansvelt (2005 149) view,

this includes a consideration of where and how geographical discourses and practices of consumption are located, embodied, embedded, performed and travelled but also efforts to understand the types of power and knowledges that are derived from differing perspectives on consumption, who/what is included and excluded and the (moral) judgements made about this.

I suggest that the discursive meanings of bottled water advertisements in New Zealand are strongly influenced by dominant environmental discourses on sustainability. I attempt to show how discursive practices and visual images construct not only natural but also environmentally friendly images of bottled water. This links to Bell and Valentine (1997) who claim that current research within geographies of consumption raise awareness about both ethical and environmental concerns of commodities.

This chapter shows how current bottled water discourses have environmental meaning. It is divided into two main parts. First, I examine environmental perspectives on bottled water consumption. I demonstrate how bottled water is situated in contemporary environmental discourses. In doing so, I look at recycling and how it links with the notion of green consumerism. Second, I present international and national case studies of bottled water advertisements in regards to place, nature and ideas of purity.

Situating Bottled Water in Environmental Discourses

Now, bottled water is being targeted as one of the next social ills- and in some countries New Zealand water is among the targets (Herald on Sunday, Green Living magazine 2008 14).

Setting the scene

According to contemporary environmental discourses of public life, climate change has become a serious concern and risk for modern society (Beck 1992). Particular in the last year, the environmental impacts of consumption of bottled water, have received negative attention in New Zealand's media. For example the Herald on Sunday magazine 'Green Living' (published on the 9th of March 2008) states that, 'globally, nearly a quarter of bottled water crosses national borders to reach consumers'. New Zealand's Waiwera water similarly travels 18,000 km to Britain. Furthermore, the Green Living magazine clarifies that, 'overall, the ecological burden of carting bottled water internationally and between source, bottling plants and central distribution points in the UK generates 31,100 tonnes of CO²'. Andrew O'Hagan from the Weekend Herald (February 23 2008) also addresses the contradictions of ethical consumerism from a polemic point of view, arguing that,

(...) the national debate has concluded that bottled water is the work of the devil. It's certainly expensive and apparently the manufacturers use 10 litres of water to produce each litre bottle, but the panic-merchants-in-chief are not claiming that bottled water is bad for your health; they are saying it's bad for you morally.

This statement provides a good example of how current discourses on bottled water consumption are woven into issues of morality and the environmental crisis. Denise Irvine from the Waikato Times (March 8, 2008 E4/5) claims that 'our love affair with the bottled water is costing us, and the planet, dearly'. The bottled water industry has increased

about 111-12 per cent last year, and New Zealanders drink 17 litres per person a year (68 million litres of packaged water a year), with about 65 per cent bottled in Putaruru.

The following Figure 2 shows the Blue Spring near to Putaruru⁹.

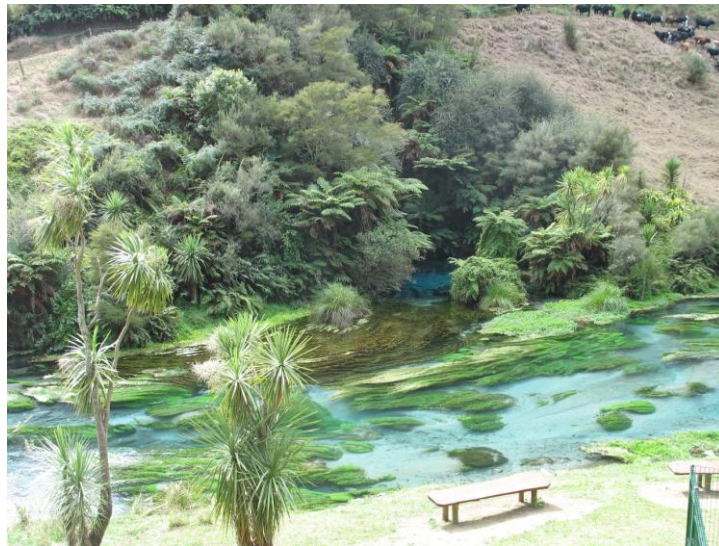


Figure 2 Blue Spring, Putaruru, New Zealand
(*Source: Author*)

Bottled water and recycling = green consumer?

Fundamental for examining the social values of bottled water is the notion of subjectivity which explores the ways in which ‘consuming subjects are made and performed through personal and collective acts, discourses and relationships and imagining’ (Mansvelt 2005 20). An important theme that came from interview data is recycling. This is viewed as a ‘green’ or sustainable consumer practice that seeks to contest the negative environmental impacts of bottled water

⁹ Putaruru is located at the heart of the South Waikato District, in mid-way between Tokoroa and Tirau on State Highway 1. It is close to Lake Arapuni on the Waikato River. Putaruru is also called the ‘water town’ because about 60% of New Zealand’s bottle water is bottled from the ‘Blue Spring’ or ‘Waihou Spring’ (http://www.swktodc.govt.nz/district/district_info/putaruru.asp, viewed 23 June 2008).

consumption. Consumer performances are strongly influenced by discourses around sustainable consumption. Accordingly, many consumers perform environmentally friendly consumption practices based on recycling through which consumer practices become a 'good' individual choice. However, powerful environmental discourses place the responsibility for consumption matters on the individual (Andersen 2000; Luke 1997; Maniates 2002; Princen *et al.* 2002).

I have identified two dominant themes which address notions of sustainable consumerism: firstly, recycling as a technological process, and secondly, the reusing of water bottles as a consumer choice to reduce waste. Most of the participants believe that bottled water consumption negatively affects the environment due to the disposal of plastic and the increase of waste. Recycling as a form of green consumerism is seen as the overall solution to environmental concerns associated with bottled water. The following extracts are from different semi-structured interviews.

Isabelle: Do you think bottled water consumption has negative impacts on the environment? I mean, discourses around climate change have become increasingly important in New Zealand, do you think these can be also linked to bottled water?

Vicky: I think as long as we can recycle the bottles, the bottles have no negative impact. But apart from that, I cannot think of negative impacts. (Interview 19/02/2008)

Pitt: The recycling of plastic that we use, there are probably more serious issues that are facing environmental degradation than bottled water. I think there are other areas where we could do better. Areas where we're recycling are really not such a big issue. (Interview 19/02/2008)

Robbie: Yeah, a bit, eh? But we can recycle those. (Interview 17/01/2008)

Nicky thinks bottled water consumption has negative impacts on the environment 'which is one of the reasons why I sort of hold on to a

bottle for a very long time' (Interview 17/01/2008) before she recycles them. Marianne argues that depending on the water source and filling process, drinking bottled water can have negative impacts on the environment. Therefore, she relates environmental impacts of bottled water to the (over) use of natural resources.

Isabelle: Do you think that bottled water consumption has negative impacts on the environment?

Marianne: I think it depends on where they take the water. Like some of those aquifers, where they take the water from, it takes a thousand years for the water to cycle through. So we're suddenly sucking ten times the water out, then you're going to have a long-term effect on the environment. But, if it's a source that naturally bubbles up lots and lots of water anyway and it's probably not going to have an effect on the environment. I think it really depends on the source and where it is. (Interview 17/01/2008)

The statement it 'depends where *they* take the water' strongly reinforces the division between consumer and producer in which the individual consumer becomes passive and the producers active. Furthermore, it becomes clear that from a consumer perspective, sustainable approaches to processing bottled water can reduce the negative environmental impacts. However, I suggest this viewpoint is also problematic because it fails to question the need to produce bottled water in the first place. In the following extract, Marianne focuses on recycling as a 'eco-friendly' consumer choice.

Isabelle: Do you recycle or do you reuse the bottles?

Marianne: I'll reuse the bottle all the time, in fact I reuse them until they smell and then I chuck them. (...) I do recycle and it is becoming more and more the thing to recycle. Of course, it's peer pressure again and councils are making it so much easier to recycle. So, ... if we didn't recycle, yes, I think this would be a big problem in terms of the environment. But more and more people do recycling, they're becoming a lot more eco-conscious and in NZ we might pride ourselves on being eco-conscious, probably not as much as we'd like to be, but we do pride ourselves on trying

and because of that, we probably not gonna cause such a problem long-term. (Interview 17/01/2008)

There are several points to make from this statement. First, recycling, as an eco-conscious consumer performance is seen as the 'good' approach to resolve waste problems associated with the environmental crisis. Eco-conscious consumer identities are constructed through consumer practices such as recycling. They are also situated within the broad framework of sustainable consumption linked with green consumerism in which recycling appears to be one form of restructuring unsustainable into sustainable consumption practices.

However, recycling is eco-conscious consumer practice does not question the very idea of producing waste through consuming bottled water in the first place. Using a cultural geographical perspective, recycling water bottles becomes an expressive consumer act which is full of environmental meaning (Wilk 2002).

For example Angie states that 'I think if Kiwis were made aware of the ecological consequences they would reach for buying the stronger bottles' (Interview 05/02/2008). Consequently, from a consumer perspective, reusing water bottles could reduce the environmental impacts of consuming bottled water in the long term. Therefore, recycling and reusing water bottles are ways of performing ethical consumption as they problematize everyday practices of consumption by motivating people to reflect on the relationship between choice and responsibility (Barnett *et al.* 2005). According to the participants, the recycling of water bottles ameliorates the negative environmental impacts of bottled water consumption. Recycling is performed as a sustainable practice of consumption and therefore, participants identify themselves as sustainable consumers.

Sustainable consumption and bottled water - an unhappy alliance?

In this section, I examine the ways in which bottled water consumption is situated within current environmental discourses. I draw on Luke (1997) and suggest that promoting bottled water as a 'green' product is contradictory because bottled water consumption and the notion of sustainable and 'green' consumerism are mutually exclusive.

I found three international and one national example of bottled water advertisements link consuming bottled water to 'green', ethical and sustainable consumption¹⁰. The first example is Auckland based Company 'Good Water' (see Figure 3). The company's strategy is an excellent example to show how marketing adapts to current environmental discourses to contest the negative image of bottled water.



Figure 3 'Good' Water Bottle

(Source: <http://www.goodwater.org.nz/>, viewed 07 May 2008.
Printed with permission from the Good Water Company)

As opposed to petro-chemical based PET plastic bottles, this 'good' water bottle is made from NatureWorks PLA, a bio-bottle which comes from natural plant sugars - a renewable resource (The Good Water

¹⁰ For definitions of sustainable consumption see chapter two, page 25-26.

Company 2008). Good Water as a 'good' and therefore ethical and green choice contests inappropriate individual consumer preferences in favour of a better and greener planet. Figure 4 supports my argument.



Figure 4 Good Water Poster

(Source: www.goodwater.com, viewed 8 May 2008.
Printed with permission from the Good Water Company)

The image portrays a blond, young and white female model drinking Good Water. The advertising incorporates the slogan 'life is about choices, let's make a good choice', and a Sir Peter Blake¹¹ statement about 'good water, good life', which emphasises the ethical feature of Good Water being a good choice for young, ethical and environmental friendly consumers. The advertisement demands 'Try me! NZ's first ever Bio-Bottle' and addresses the consumer as individual while linking the product to New Zealand as a place. The company's marketing strategy has two objectives: firstly, to encourage eco-conscious consumers to make 'good' choices through choosing a renewable bottle (appropriate consumption) over a non-renewable one

¹¹ Figure 4 also appeals to New Zealand identity by using a Peter Blake statement. Sir Peter Blake is a New Zealand 'hero' and appears to be a 'good' man and someone to aspire to.

(inappropriate consumption). Secondly, Good Water uses the notion of 'inappropriate' consumption (Burgess *et al.* 2003 269) to critique 'bad' recycling practice in New Zealand and therefore, calls for a 'major revolution in recycling, as currently all plastic water bottles go to either landfill or China' (The Good Water Company 2008a; see also articles on bottled water by the Irvine from the Waikato Times 2008; Milmo from the New Zealand Herald 2007).

Good Water responds to basic needs and brings a 'good' quality of life. But it fails to reduce the use of natural resources and waste disposal, as well as to meet the needs of future generations because the production of the 'bio-bottle' requires natural resources which could otherwise be used for food production. Considering the contemporary food crisis and the fact that safe tap water is available at very low or no cost, Good Water might not be as 'good' a choice as first appears. Making 'good' choices becomes one way of promoting sustainable or green consumption even though their meanings are highly contradictory. The following statement by Jackson (2006 1) confirms my argument. He states that 'the whole discourse embodies a profoundly ethical dimension in which rights and responsibilities are deeply entwined, in which both present and future generations are implicated'. As a response to the environmentally unfriendly image of bottled water on a global and local level, Good Water seems to offer an innovative alternative for bottled water consumers without damaging the environment. However, Good Water is a useful example for constructing ethical and therefore environmentally friendly consumer subjectivities without questioning the (basic) need for New Zealanders to consume bottled water. Good water builds on dominant discourses around the negative environmental aspects of bottled water consumption and claims that, 'although it cannot be disputed that water is a healthy drink, it is the packaging and the transportation of the water via importing and exporting which is having an unhealthy

impact on the environment' (The Good Water Company 2008a para. 3). This view is supported by an article in the Healthy Food Guide from December 2007 on the 'ethical shopper: what's the real cost of that bottled water' which provides a critical evaluation of bottled water consumption. If bottled water is urgently needed, the Healthy Food Guide encourages the reader to buy 'Good Water' as a good and environmentally friendly choice. 'Good Water' is an excellent example of a bottled water brand that is marketed towards consumers who identify themselves as ethical and green consumers. I found 'Good Water' advertisements in the Healthy Food Guide and Green Living magazines (Herald on Sunday) which are both marketed towards middle/upper-class consumers who can afford a 'green' lifestyle.

'Go Green' and Consume Clean? - Environmental Meanings of Bottled Water Advertisements

The notion of sustainable consumption is linked to the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) understood as a global commitment for corporate organizations to behave in socially and environmentally responsible ways and practice sustainable development on a global scale (Ganesh 2007). The following case studies show how the bottled water industry has linked into the CSR framework by constructing bottled water as a 'green' and therefore a morally acceptable product.

As we saw in chapter two, Latham (2004) describes three key elements of 'new cultural geography'. I combine these three elements. The 'critical enterprise' of this research project means to examine how selected bottled water advertisements construct environmental meaning for the consumer in the landscape of visual representations. In this context, it is important to consider the notion of consumer subjectivity as it focuses on the socially constructed processes of

embodiment, emplacement and performance in regard to consumption matters (Mansvelt 2005). Burgess (1989 139) suggests that the media industry participates in a 'complex cultural process through which environmental meanings are produced and consumed'.

Fiji Water¹² is a powerful example that reveals, as Connell (2006 342) states, 'the virtues of a 'pristine' product, produced in a natural context, in an environmentally sensitive manner'. I found three Fiji Water advertisements in two Australian lifestyle magazines 'Who' (Issue 842, April 2008) and 'New Weekly' (November 2007, February 2008). Similar images as well as animated images of Fiji Water are available on the Fiji Water homepage www.fijiwater.com and www.fijigreen.com, viewed on the 21st of May 2008. The Fiji Water commercials all portray Fiji Water embedded in a dark blue background which represents a 'pristine' and 'untouched' water source. It also builds upon the traditional and uncontested view of (bottled) water being blue and therefore 'natural'. The advertisements incorporate different text sources on the top of the image. Under the text is a water drop which drops into the blue background that makes the water look lighter. One image presents Fiji Water as 'Nature's soft drink' and 'Untouched'; the other two images claim 'Every drop is green' and next to the Fiji Water bottle is a small green water drop. Both images invite the viewer to join an imaginative journey to Fiji where nature is represented as exotic, green and clean. In addition, the image found in 'Who' magazine emphasises that 'Fiji Water is not merely the best-tasting water, it is also an environmentally responsible choice' (see also the Fiji Water Company 2008).

¹² Due to lack of copyright permission, I am unable to use visual material of Fiji Water. The images are available on www.fijiwater.com.

I interpret this advertisement as an attempt to redress the negative reputation of the bottled water industry related to the industry's high ecological footprint (Landi 2007; Connell 2006). In order to reverse the unsustainable image of bottled water, Fiji Water addresses mainstream environmental discourses in regard to consuming bottled water and claims to reduce 'CO² emissions across our product's entire life cycle' including processing and packaging. The company demonstrates its sustainable success, arguing that 'we then offset the remaining carbon footprint by 120%, making FIJI Water not just carbon-negative, but positively green'. Fiji Water commercials are excellent examples of demonstrating the contradictory nature of bottled water consumption. Fiji Water reinforces current dominant environmental discourses to promote responsible and environmentally sustainable consumerism. In this context, Wilk's (2006 305) work is central in examining the socially constructed values associated with bottled water. He views bottled water as 'an exceptional example of the power of branding to make commodities a meaningful part of daily life' (Wilk 2006 305).

The Danone owned brand H²Go discursively creates environmental meaning through 'green' advertisement performance¹³. Therefore, H²Go is an excellent example to reveal ways in which the social construction of meanings are related to consumption practices and individuals' lifestyles enabling individual consumers to position themselves in environmental discourses (Burgess *et al.* 2003). As stated on the website, H²GoGreen is 'proudly supporting green energy research' (Danone 2008 para 1/2),

¹³ According to the [National Business Review](#), H²Go is also another bottled water brand in New Zealand which launched a multi-million dollar campaign called 'Snapped for Cash' to contest its main rival Pump which also launched a series of 50 animated TV commercials (McDonald 2008). Furthermore, 'Fruco's H²Go has the second-biggest market share in both "pure" water, behind Coca-Cola Amatil's Pump, and "flavoured" water, behind Mizone' (McDonald 2008).

At h²go we understand that green energy solutions are imperative for our future, that's why we're supporting the University of Tasmania to work towards the development of sustainable and environmentally friendly energy initiatives.

Our sponsorship of The University of Tasmania is our first drop in an ocean of change, but we still have more to do to ensure we make a real difference.

Referring to the overall framework of sustainability, the text encourages the individual consumer to contribute to a greener and better planet through buying H²Go bottled water. Similar to the textual material, the visual advertisement found in the women's magazine Marie Claire (No 151, March 2008) uses personal language and normative values to promote bottled water as a green good (see Figure 5).



Figure 5 H²Go Advertising

(Source: Marie Claire magazine No 151, March 2008. Printed with permission from Marie Claire magazine)

The image portrays a young, white woman with a naked upper body and green lips. Next to the woman, in the right top corner, is an image of the physical earth to connect the advertisement with the idea of sustaining the planet. Using blue, white and green colours, H²Go water is labelled as 'pure spring water, proudly supporting GREEN ENERGY RESEARCH' (emphasis in original), including a little green tree printed on the right side of the text. Like Good Water, H²Go builds on mainstream definitions of sustainable consumption through promoting the water as a 'good' and therefore responsible, green and morally acceptable consumer choice. The font is white to make it stand out from the blue background signifying water. Similar to a water spring, H²Go water is portrayed as blue while using conventional colours to reinforce the natural and pure image of bottled water. The catchphrase 'do something good for yourself and the Planet' addresses consumers as individuals because it emphasises the consumers' needs and well-being. While researching the H²GoGreen website (Danone 2008), it becomes clear that Frucor does not only focus on environmental sustainability and recycling but also on health concerns such as dehydration as a major risk. Therefore, I suggest the H²GoGreen marketing strategy seeks to construct not only green but responsible consumer identities. H²Go addresses the core of current environmental discourses and reverses the negative image of bottled water through promoting corporate social responsibility. The constructed green consumer identity fosters environmental awareness through everyday life consumption practices without necessarily changing a less environmental friendly lifestyle.

The Australian brand Mount Franklin, owned by Coca-Cola Amatil Company is another useful example that uses environmental values to promote bottled water. The New Zealand brand 'Kiwi Blue' (see chapter six) is the equivalent to Mount Franklin using the same

marketing slogan: ‘Drink Positive – Think Positive’. I found the Mount Franklin advertisement (see Figure 6) in the same Marie Claire magazine (No 151, March 2008) as H²GoGreen.

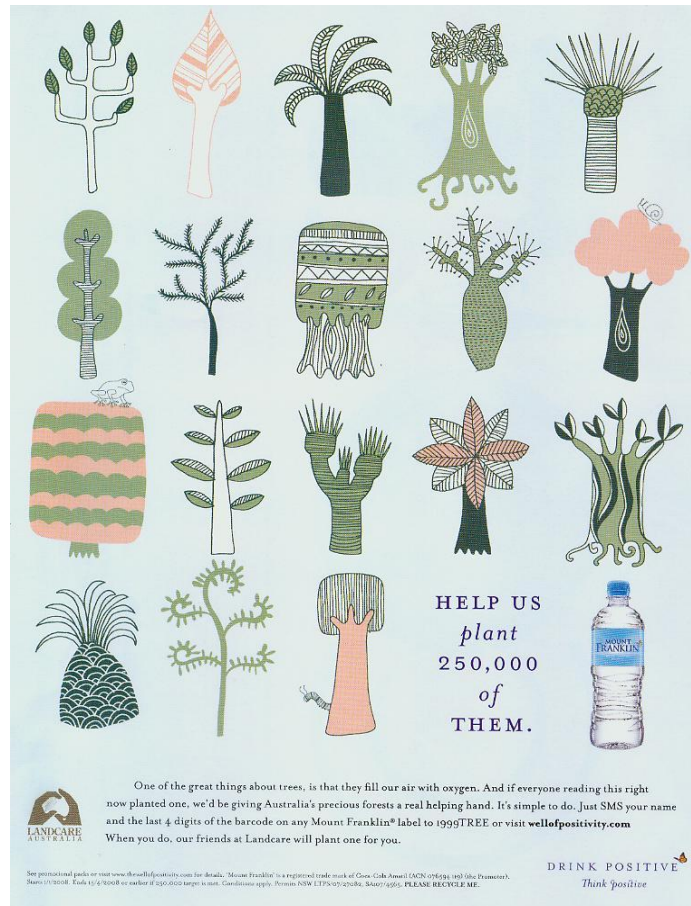


Figure 6 Mount Franklin Advertising

(Source: Marie Claire magazine, No 151, March 2008
Printed with permission from Marie Claire magazine)

In collaboration with Landcare Australia¹⁴, Mount Franklin launched a conservation campaign in order to reverse the unsustainable and ‘dark sides’ (Goss 2004) of bottled water. The image portrays eighteen creatively drawn trees. The first tree rows have five of them but in the fourth and final row there are only three trees. The space where the

¹⁴ Landcare Australia Ltd is the official not-for-profit company responsible for promotion and sponsorship for Australia's landcare movement (<http://www.landcareonline.com>, viewed 10 July 2008).

other tree may be is used to incorporate the demand ‘HELP US plant 250,000 of THEM’ on the one hand and show the Mount Franklin water bottle on the other. This reveals that two more imaginative trees are needed to complete the conservation project. This can only be achieved through the help of the individual consumer.

The marketing strategy aims to ‘give Australia’s precious forests a real helping hand’ through purchasing bottled water and therefore supporting environmental protection and green consumerism at the same time. What consumers need to do is send an SMS-message including the name and the last four digits of the barcode of any Mount Franklin label, and ‘our friends at Landcare will plant one for you’. The point to make from this statement is that through purchasing Mount Franklin, bottled water consumers might identify themselves as green and responsible. In addition, consuming bottled water means incorporating environmental values constructed through discourses in the media.

Bottled Water linked to Place and Nature

After situating bottled water consumption within environmental discourses I examine how it is linked to place and nature. I draw on the semi-structured interviews to explain the socio-spatial connections of consuming bottled water. In this context, I concentrate on spatialities of consumption (Mansvelt 2005). This includes exotic locations as exciting spaces of bottled water consumption such as landscapes of advertisement and mundane spaces of bottled water consumption such as geographies of everyday life and constructions of value. Using one international and four national examples of bottled water brands, I explore the ways in which bottled water is made meaningful through place marketing promotions associated with place and socially constructed notions of nature.

Using a poststructuralist perspective, Braun and Castree (1998 3) argue, 'nature is something made' and the 'production of nature is both material and discursive' (12). As discussed in chapter two, Wilk (2006 310) explores ambivalence about nature which is related to 'unresolved and longstanding conflicts in western culture about technology and the body'. Based on these theoretical perspectives, I show that consumers' perception on purity have multiple, even contradictory meanings.

Some of the interviews address contradictory meanings of purity and nature in relation to New Zealand as a place of origin. In fact, most of my participants believe that bottled water is not so natural because it goes through technical processes. I found that consumers do not necessarily think bottled water is more natural and therefore healthier than tap water. For example Andrew states that bottled water 'has been filtered and has been through different processes and it has to go through different standards before it gets put out on the line' (Interview 14/02/2008). This statement reveals that consumers are aware of technology used to purify and therefore 'denaturalize' water.

Isabelle: Are there any other values you associate with the consumption of bottle water apart from it being healthier or more pure? I mean, do you think bottled water from New Zealand is more natural than from anywhere else in the world?

Vicky: New Zealand has got a 'pure' environment. But in China for example, the cities might be polluted but in the countryside, the water and nature is pure and natural too. So I don't think New Zealand's water is necessarily more pure or better than from other countries. Bottled water goes through certain procedures, or technical processes, so it is not natural anyway. So I guess I would challenge the 'natural image'. (Interview 19/02/2008)

In addition, Luis claims that bottled water is 'not so natural because sometimes the bottled water might be manipulated' (Interview 19/02/2008) or purified. Andy also contests New Zealand's natural image and explains, 'I don't think it is better or more natural than

bottled water in Germany' (Interview 22/02/2008). But she does believe bottled water advertising and labelling create an image of New Zealand as natural and as an 'original' place.

The following statement confirms the idea that bottled water has cultural meaning as produced through landscapes of advertising and branding.

Isabelle: And have you ever realised that it's also often advertised as being more natural or pure; like the Pump bottle, they say it's *pure spring water*. Do you think that actually influences people? I mean it might not influence you, but generally speaking.

Andrew: Like when it is from a New Zealand spring and that it's good, you know, they can appeal on many different levels in advertising. And that's one of the health aspects as well that it's from New Zealand, or New Zealand made, they push that quite hard ... products that are made in New Zealand. (Interview 14/02/2008)

This statement demonstrates that New Zealand as a place is not only used in order to promote the natural features of bottled water but also link place with identity formation. Angie reinforces Andrew's argument and makes it clear that she prefers to buy 'made in New Zealand' as opposed to products from the USA, arguing that 'I try to buy the New Zealand ones because I think New Zealand is supposed to be very clean and green. I guess I know that their water is the best' (05/02/2008)! Furthermore, Angie tells me that tourists from the USA, for example, also reinforce the socially constructed image of New Zealand's landscape.

Angie: Like tourists would come here and they would think: 'Oh my gosh, you can swim in the lakes and at the beach! Because we can't swim in our lakes 'cause they are polluted'. So people from overseas tell me that the water is cleaner. (Interview 05/02/2008)

There are two points to make from these statements: first, the Angie reinforces the essentialising image of New Zealand being clean and

green, and second, New Zealand as a place is viewed as more natural than others because the water is 'cleaner'. I draw on Wilk (2006 310) who explains that both romantic images of nature and consumer preferences constitute each other while reinforcing the assumption 'water is pure because it comes straight from nature'. I suggest that because New Zealand has an international reputation of being green, clean and therefore having 'untouched' nature, bottled water companies use romantic imagery of nature to promote their products. Bottled water consumers might not agree with this idea. Consumer identities are influenced by discourse and visual representations which reinforce the natural value of bottled water.

The socially constructed image of New Zealand being green and clean is strongly reinforced by New Zealand's local bottled water brands such as the award winning Waiwera Infinity, New Zealand Eternal and the volcanic natural artesian water 420. According to the product guide (www.waiwera.co.nz), Waiwera Infinity was the first water bottled and sold in 1875 as 'The Elixir of Life' (see Figure 7).

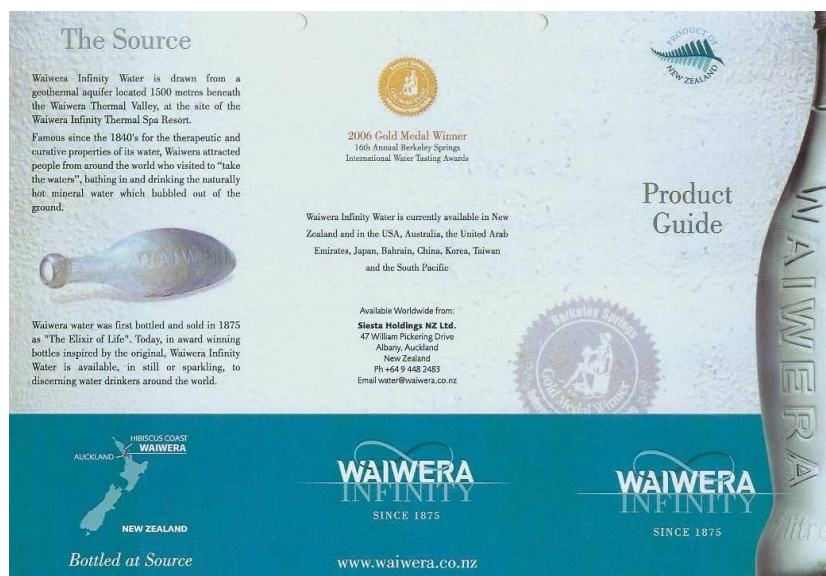


Figure 7 Waiwera Infinity Brochure

(Source: Product brochure, www.waiwerainfinity.com, viewed 16 April 2008. Printed with permission from Waiwera water)

The product brochure portrays the innovative design of the bottle itself with the ‘2006 Gold Medal Winner’ label in the centre. Additionally, the water is clearly linked to New Zealand as a place as the brochure shows a map of New Zealand including the location of the water source as well as the silver fern saying ‘Product of New Zealand’.

Furthermore, the brochure is marketed towards tourists who wish to experience New Zealand’s natural beauty through taking a bath in the Waiwera Infinity Thermal Spa Resort and consuming local bottled water. As presented in Figure 8 below, the company’s homepage constructs not only the natural, but also the special value of Waiwera Infinity.

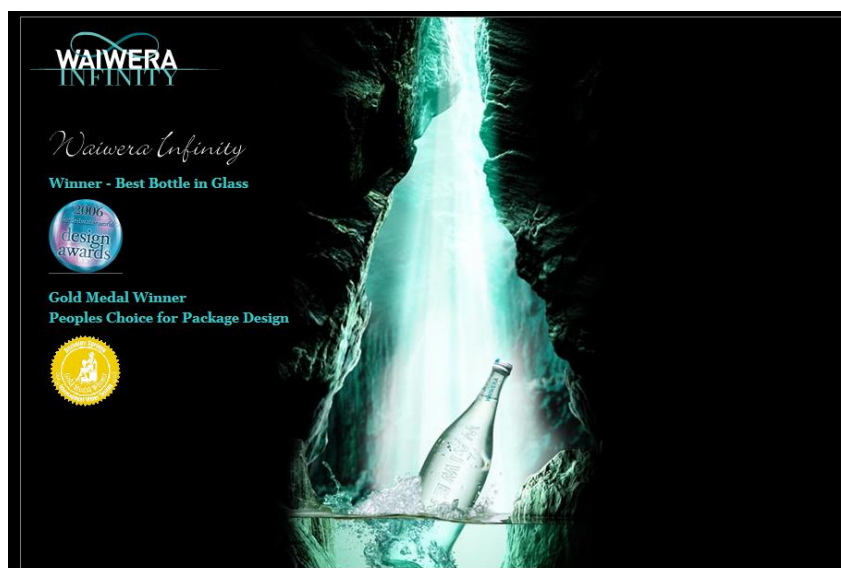


Figure 8 Waiwera Infinity, Innovative Botle

(Source: www.waiwerainfinity.com, viewed 16 April 2008.
Printed with permission for Waiwera water)

The image portrayed on the homepage also invites the consumer to experience the pure taste of Waiwera water. Furthermore, the bright light shining on the bottle underlines its unique design. One participant confirms this thought and explains that she did choose to buy Waiwera Infinity water because she was attracted to the bottle

design. Waiwera Infinity uses aesthetic as well as environmental values to influence people's consumer behaviour.

Good Water is not only a useful example in regard to ethical consumerism but also in regard to consumer identity formation. Good Water stands out from conventional bottled water brands because it creates alternative local consumer niches on the one hand and emphasises New Zealand as a place on the other. As stated by Arron Sundars from the Good Water Company (2008b para. 5), 'ethical brands have a greater responsibility to highlight issues and pioneer better ways of communicating. We also have to be smarter when competing with the huge multinationals that dominate the local beverage market'. For example, good water offers the possibility to buy a 'Keep New Zealand Beautiful T-Shirt' on their website (see <http://www.goodwater.org.nz>). Good Water is also fundraiser for the Sir Peter Blake Trust. With every bottle of Good Water sold, ten cents is donated to the Trust to support educating young New Zealanders about the environment.

According to Gibson (2008) from the New Zealand Herald, a little-known Paeroa water business, New Zealand Eternal, has become one of the largest suppliers to the (US\$18 billion) United States water market. The image¹⁵ shown on the company's website portrays a New Zealand Eternal water bottle surrounded by a deep spring which highlights the natural, pure and everlasting quality of this particular New Zealand water. Furthermore, the koru-style symbols as well as the silver fern on the bottle and on the background image reinforce the connection between the water as a commodity and New Zealand as a place. Similar to Waiwera Infinity, the packaging style of the New

¹⁵ Due to lack of copyright permission, I am unable to use the image of New Zealand Eternal Water. The image is available on the following website: <http://www.eternalwater.com>, viewed 23 June 2008.

Zealand Eternal bottle makes the product stand out and therefore, expresses the idea of consuming 'eternal' water which is *only* available in New Zealand.

420 spring water¹⁶ is the third example which demonstrates how local water companies in New Zealand use spatial linkages to promote their product (see Figure 9).



Figure 9 420 Spring Water

(Source: www.420springwater.co.nz, viewed 2nd May 2008.
Printed with permission from 420 Below Company)

However, similar to the Waiwera Infinity and New Zealand Eternal, 420 spring water strengthens the clean and green image of New Zealand, not through visual images but a story which describes the special history of the product. The following 'marketing story' is taken from the 420 homepage (<http://www.420springwater.co.nz>, viewed 2nd of May 2008).

¹⁶ According to a BBC News article on bottled water (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/london/7252385.stm), the '420 Volcanic, from New Zealand, sells at 21 pound for 42cl or about 50 pounds a litre' (para. 4). Therefore, it is seen to be one of the world's most expensive bottled waters. The company won two top awards at the prestigious bottledwaterworld design awards in Italy: an award for the best PET bottle and the best press marketing campaign (Media Releases 2006 para 1-2).

If you get any old map of the world and look right on the bottom, you'll see New Zealand - the last place in the world to ever be discovered. And even though these two little Pacific islands have been around since the dawn of time; as far as humanity is concerned they've pretty much only been here since just before World War One was invented.

It's fair to say us New Zealanders haven't really done much with the country over the last hundred years; we tend to be laid-back by nature and not much interested in making chemicals or nuclear weapons. In fact, statistically what we like to do best is hang out at the beach, do a bit of gardening or go off hunting in the mountains.

It was on one of these hunting trips that two Kiwis decided the rest of the world might like a little taste of what it's like to live in 'God's filmset' and created what is now known as 420.

... 420's secret spring lies at the foothills of the South Island's Banks Peninsula, an extinct volcano older than the Moa - an extinct flightless bird that Maori reckon made a roast chook look like an hors d'oeuvres (420 Spring Water, 2008).

The story clearly emphasises the natural characteristics of 420 spring water and describes an essentialising picture of New Zealand's culture. Furthermore, the product story offers a reductionist and generalising view of New Zealand as a country and culture. However, it becomes clear that 420 spring water is marketed towards a 'cultural class' (see Connell 2006) because the web presence emphasises the bottle itself as well as the unique story behind the product. Nature is seen as given and used by Pākehā in favour of their culture. Because 'Kiwis' are evidently less interested in chemicals or nuclear weapons, and therefore environmental friendly, 420 spring water is promoted as being pure and natural.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have showed how bottled water is made meaningful through environmental discourses on sustainability and disclosed the contradictory meaning of bottled water in regard to notions of 'green consumerism'. In addition, I explored how bottled water is discursively constructed as natural, pristine 'green', and linked to sustainability frameworks. I illustrated how selected examples of bottled water advertising reinforce the dualism of 'good' versus 'bad' consumer choices.

Semi-structured interviews and critical discourse analysis helped to uncover the environmental meanings associated with bottled water consumption. Deconstruction of visual material enabled me to situate bottled water in its social and material context (Hartwick 2000). Work on geographies of consumption in relation to the media as well as critical viewpoints on bottled water and notions of sustainable consumption including green consumerism were fruitful in situating bottled water consumption in contemporary environmental discourses.

In the following chapter, I concentrate on embodied consumer performances and gendered differences in bottled water consumption. This will help the understanding of how images of bottled water are linked to gender, health, peer pressure, and urban and rural places. Furthermore, I demonstrate how bottled water is related to various notions of sustaining the body.

CHAPTER FIVE

EMBODYING THE ENVIRONMENT

Introduction

This chapter seeks to reveal the social values and gendered identities associated with consuming bottled water. In the last chapter, I explored the ways in which bottled water consumption is made meaningful through ideas around sustaining the environment. Now, I examine the ways in which bottled water consumption is linked to gender, health and the notion of sustaining 'the body'.

Inspired by postmodern thought and the 'cultural turn' within social sciences, geographies of consumption have shifted from political-economic perspectives to the projection of identity through 'the body' (Bell and Valentine 1997). According to Longhurst (2005a; see also Longhurst 1997, 2001) there is no widespread definition of 'the body'. The placement of bodies within space and society has been a contentious issue. In her view, it is essential to challenge existing paradigms and to develop methods and theories regarding 'lived experience, subjectivities, and power relations' (Longhurst 2005a 343) associated with the body. Building on this work, my research seeks to enrich contemporary research on geographies of consumption by examining bottled water as a 'fluid' commodity which is made meaningful through embodiment. This means that the social and gendered values associated with consuming bottled water are not fixed or stable. Instead, embodied performances of consuming bottled water have multiple meanings.

Benson (1997 124) offers an important contribution to processes of identity construction and embodiment by focusing on 'how

contemporary identities are constructed in and through the body, and the tension between self-fashioning and the constraints of corporeality'. Furthermore, Mansvelt (2005) suggests that identity is not only defined but also embodied through consumption performance and discourses.

Consuming involves practical and bodily experiences which may be about mundane acts and provisioning, security and sociality as much as individualistic lifestyle choices. Discourses and practices of consumption also locate bodies in particular spaces, emplacing identities. Places in turn influence processes of embodiment, influencing rituals, practices and consumption through which they are made meaningful (Mansvelt 2005 80).

Lynda Johnston's (2006) work critically examines the dualism between men/women while focusing on performativity of bodies. In her view, a greater commitment towards embodiment is needed in order to acknowledge the fluidity of subjectivity and to challenge binaries of sexual difference. In addition, Johnston (2006) looks at the ways in which bodies and spaces are materially and discursively produced in particular spaces and vice versa. Likewise, Cloke and Johnston (2005) note that dualistic divisions, such as men/women and mind/body, are based on classifications and categorization as 'a means for creating our identities both individual and collective'. They offer an important contribution to my research project, explaining that social constructions are created not given. Consequently, 'we live in a world of human-created categories which we modify when new situations arise that call for new responses' (Cloke and Johnston 2005 1). I suggest that current environmental discourses create a 'new' situation that puts environmental concerns in the centre of public life and consumer behaviour. This might affect people's attitudes towards an embodied environment.

In this chapter, I uncover the ways in which embodied bottled water performances are made meaningful through discursive and visual

representations. The first explores bottled water consumer performances relating to health issues, peer pressure¹⁷ and urban-rural differences. These themes are interrelated. The second part demonstrates that bottled water performances are gendered. Critical discourse analysis of both bottled water advertisements and semi-structured interviews help to understand embodied consumer performances in regards to sustaining and 'greening' the body.

Embodied Consumer Performances

In linking embodiment to matters of consumption, Valentine (2001 33) argues that 'the body has emerged in consumer culture as an important bearer of symbolic value and as constitutive of our self-identities'. As noted in chapter two, Mansvelt (2005) observes that socialities, spatialities and subjectivities of consumption are mutually constitutive and defining. Drawing on these perspectives, I pursue the argument that bottled water consumer performances have multiple meanings depending on socio-spatial contexts and discursive constructions. I have classified four main themes under the research question: 'why do people prefer drinking bottled water'. First, the convenience and portability factor, including taste preferences; second health consciousness linked to peer pressure and third the distinction between urban and rural areas.

Convenience/portability factor and taste preferences

Convenience and *portability* factors as well as *taste* preferences are three important reasons for consuming bottled water. In some cases, participants link these aspects to health concerns. Nicky from the

¹⁷ Peer pressure as described by my participants is a term that refers to the 'pressure' imposed by a 'peer group', such as students, to encourage other students to adopt the group's consumer behaviour. For example, instead of drinking Coca-Cola, bottled water has become a 'fad' and therefore the appropriate beverage to consume because it is healthier than fizzy drinks.

United States comments that she prefers drinking bottled water 'mostly because it's convenient, I'm always on the go, so I always have a bottle of water in my bag, usually I have a back up in my car, ... I have them in my bedroom' (Interview 17/01/2008). Likewise, Marianne explains that she does not prioritize bottled water over tap water:

Isabelle: What makes you drink bottled water today, here on campus?

Marianne: Convenience, more than anything else. I can carry it around. (Interview 17/01/2008)

Most participants link water quality concerns with taste preferences, arguing that bottled water tastes better than unfiltered tap water.

Marianne: I know in other countries the water content or the water quality is not as good. (...) And they drink bottled water 'cause it tastes nicer. Here in New Zealand, there is not really a lot of difference between the tap water and the bottled water. (...) But I do think in parts of the world, yeah, it is an issue, so that's why bottled water came about in the first place. (Interview 17/01/2008)

Angie expresses similar sentiments. She reveals that bottled water tastes nicer than unfiltered tap water, because 'it's cleaner than water from the tap. I find it difficult to drink water from the tap because of the taste' (Interview 05/02/2008). In Pitt's view, bottled water consumption in New Zealand has not increased due to health safety issues but an increased level of exercising:

Isabelle: Why do you think bottled water consumption has increased in New Zealand? Do you think it has to do with the promotion of it or the water quality?

Pitt: I doubt it's the water quality. I think ... people ... do a lot of exercise and wanting to re-hydrate quickly after exercising as opposed to any health safety issues. And definitely, it's most the convenience and the need to have this water while you're exercising. And it is an easier way to have that drinking bottle or something. So it's more convenience. (Interview 19/02/2008)

This statement links to McCormack (1999) who notes that discourses around fitness are part of the socio-cultural terrain of contemporary industrialised societies. Therefore, consuming bottled water is related to exercising and to individuals' need to sustain their body in order to prevent dehydration. Regular exercising and appropriate re-hydration through bottled water becomes a central aspect of living a healthy lifestyle.

Health issues

I found the experiences of participants to be varied and multiple. As such, I did not think it appropriate to categorize their experiences into a single assumption. Mansvelt (2005) observes the relationship between identity formation and purchase of commodities is complex, even contradictory and changing over time and space. Some participants disagree with the overall assumption that bottled water is healthier than tap water. The following examples illustrate different extracts from the three different semi-structured interviews.

Isabelle: Do you think that bottled water is healthier than tap water?

Clark: I don't think tap water is harmful to our health. I think it is just not as pure as nature. (...) We don't need minerals (from bottled water) in the water because we get it from our daily meals. (Interview 19/02/2008)

Pitt: I don't know if there is any difference. The only difference is the bottled water has got a bit of flavour in it. (Interview 19/02/2008)

Nicky: I don't think that it's safer or healthier for me. I mean, I know that there are minimum standards for water. (Interview 17/01/2008)

Additionally, Angie from New Zealand states that plain bottled water offers no health benefits compared to tap water. She argues that 'I mainly drink 'Mizone' 'cause it has those vitamins. But 'Pump' is just 'Pump'. Furthermore, she believes flavoured bottled water 'makes me

feel better; like when you're feeling very sleepy or really yucky, then you go to a shop and you think 'oh, that has added vitamins', and you drink it and you feel much better' (Interview 05/02/2008). These statements reveal that consuming bottled water is not necessarily related to health concerns; rather individual consumer preferences are the forces driving consumer choices.

In contrast, some participants share the view that bottled water is healthier than water from the tap. The following examples show that some female bottled water consumers view bottled water as a commodity essential for sustaining the healthy body. The following extracts from two different semi-structured interviews reveal that public health discourses as well as increasing bottled water advertisement have contributed to a shift in consumer awareness towards 'healthier products'.

Isabelle: Do you think bottled water would be healthier than water from the tap?

Vicky: *Theoretically, I assume yes. Practically, I don't know.* But I prefer drinking flavoured bottled water because tap water, since it is purified, has to go through a technical cleaning process and therefore, needs chemicals to be cleaned. I don't wanna have chemicals in my water. I assume in bottled water there are no chemicals. (Interview 19/02/2008)

Marianne: No. Just convenience. But I prefer this over fizzy drinks which are my real preference. It's my own choice in order to keep my weight down. (Interview 17/01/2008)

Isabelle: Would you agree that bottled water consumption has increased due to health issues?

Marianne: *Perceived* health issues, yes!

Isabelle: And also, the idea that it hasn't got any calories?

Marianne: Yes, that's right. There is something that the New Zealand Ministry of Health has been promoting for a while like 'drink more water, drink more water'. 'Cause all

the water companies say 'look, it's all nice and healthy'. (...) I probably, I think it's because there has been this whole scandal and they're trying us to stop drinking the fizzy drinks. (...) So ... they discovered a market out there that likes to drink water and that's healthy! (Interview 17/01/2008)

There are two points to make from these statements: firstly, powerful public discourses generated by the New Zealand Ministry of Health and the marketing strategy of bottled water companies influence consumer performances; and secondly, bottled water is seen as a low-calorie alternative and is therefore associated with the idea of sustaining the aesthetic¹⁸ body. This thought in particular links to Longhurst (2005a) who argues that discourses around feminine and masculine bodies are related to slimming or fitness trends as well as to matters of health and obesity. I suggest that consuming bottled water is made meaningful through discursively constructed governmental health campaigns and is related to the idea of sustaining a healthy body. In addition, drawing on Valentine (2001), my research shows that consuming female bodies are influenced by social relations and structures of political-economic power that form health and body conscious consumer identities.

Peer pressure

Butler's (1990; see also Gregson and Rose 2000) notion of performativity is essential in examining the ways in which consuming bottled water is made meaningful through embodied consumer performances. In chapter two, I discussed Mansvelt's (2005) two schemas that describe the relationship between consumption and identity: consuming to become and consuming according to who we are.

¹⁸ With 'aesthetic' body I refer to Longhurst (2005, 2005a) who explains that body shapes and sizes become indications and means of inscribing identity. An aesthetic body would be slim and sportive.

Building on these perspectives, I examine the ways in which peer pressure is influential in shaping consumers. The majority of my participants view increased bottled water consumption in relation to peer pressure and mass consumerism associated with advertising.

Isabelle: Do you think that the media influences the consumption of bottled water?

Nicky: I think it may be rather influenced by other people's choices like when you're looking around and seeing what other people are consuming. (Interview 17/01/2008)

Marianne: Yeah, definitely! ... When I was here 16 years ago when I was at school, we'd drink Coke. () And I found when I look around today, groups are drinking bottled water, it's just peer pressure. You sort of do what everybody else in your group does. (Interview 17/01/2008)

Andrew: If I would really cast my mind back when I was in first year University, *it was almost unheard of*, ... the only people you would see with water would only be the mature students. And they would have a ..., it was a like a thermos of water, and they would carry that around. And I think something started in the market place and people would start carrying around their bottles of Pump, and Mizone, and H²Go ... it is probably linked to mass consumerism as well as advertising. (Interview 14/02/2008)

Vicky: Yes, possibly. I remember seeing a large H²Go poster at the Hamilton bus station downtown one year ago... I think some are influenced by commercials, some are not. It depends on whether or not people are easy to influence. Like, I guess it comes back to peer pressure. (Interview 19/02/2008)

These statements from different semi-structured interviews reveal that both consuming performances and discursively constructed social values of bottled water are constitutively linked to each other. A shift in consumer performances in public spaces and the landscape of advertising demonstrate the fashionable aspect of consuming bottled water. Bottled water consumption can be interpreted as an 'articulation of one's sense of positionality as being defined through lifestyle' (Mansvelt 2005 81). Bottled water as a lifestyle choice (see

Ferrier 2001; Connell 2006; Wilk 2006; Opel 1999) is also related to the notion of sustaining the body through embodied consumer performances.

Andrew refers to perceived health benefits of bottled water, arguing that in his view, corporal consumer practices focus on the healthy body.

Isabelle: Do you believe in a general perception of bottled water being healthier or safer than tap water in New Zealand?

Andrew: I'm not so sure about the health aspect of it. ... Of it being safer in the bottle? I think it's more just something that people feel they need to do is carry this bottle of water around with them.

Isabelle: Do you think bottled water has become fashionable?

Andrew: It will be perceived as health conscious and carrying this water with you. Like saying, look I'm health conscious; ... it's something may be perceived as 'hey, I'm taking care of myself! I'm a classy girl! (Interview 14/02/2008)

Building on Benson (1997 123 emphasis in original), who describes the body as the '*medium* through which messages about identity are transmitted' I pursue the argument that through consuming bottled water female bodies can become healthy and aesthetic. This confirms that the gendered values associated with consuming bottled water are socially constructed through discourses on the healthy body. Therefore, bottled water may be fashionable for consumer culture and has symbolic value that is linked to a health conscious lifestyle. Furthermore, Andrew's statement reinforces the gendered association of bottled water consumption and also demonstrates the influence of 'class' or socio-economic status. Drinking bottled water may indicate that you are of higher social-economic positioning because you can afford to buy it.

Consumers' bodies in urban and rural spaces

The symbolic meanings of consumer performances may vary between urban and rural areas. Two participants in the research believe that rural places in New Zealand have more sustainable water use and storage and therefore consume less bottled water as opposed to urban places like Hamilton.

Isabelle: Why do you think people in rural areas wouldn't drink bottled water?

Angie: In rural areas I don't think they see the need for it. Particularly my friend who lives near to Putaruru [a small rural settlement near Hamilton], she thinks it's hilarious that they have bottled water! Because most people live on farms ... and actually, I think a rural water supply is different from a city water supply. So their water is probably a bit cleaner like from the rain. (Interview 05/02/2008)

Likewise, Andrew considers rainwater used in rural areas as fresher than processed tap water available in an urban place like Hamilton. Comparing tap water quality in Hamilton and Northland, Andrew explains that fluoridated water in Hamilton could distract people from drinking tap water due to health concerns.

Isabelle: Do you think bottled water is healthier than tap water?

Andrew: I know that the councils, depending on different areas in New Zealand, they're pushing to put fluoride into the water and ... I think (...) Hamilton is fluoridated and Northland isn't. So that's one thing which could be a matter of concern for people. (14/02/2008)

Some participants note that consuming bottled water might be more popular in urban spaces. These consumers are more likely to be influenced by other people's consumer performances as well as by advertising.

Isabelle: Do you think it is fashionable or trendy to buy bottled water?

Nicky: I also think it depends on whether or not you live in a town. Like here in Hamilton, which is a student town where it is more likely that people have those things. But let's say, where I was living first, at Hawkes Bay, Napier, I rarely saw people drinking bottled water out there. But I do see it more in Hamilton and whether or not it is a student thing or not, who knows? But, yeah, that might have something to do with it, you know if it's a commuter kind of place, you may see more of bottled water whereas if it's more, you know sleepy communities, you may not see it as much. (17/01/2008)

Nicky emphasises that bottled water consumption might be more popular in cities with a higher population of students and younger people. In addition, Vicky refers to gendered differences of consuming bottled water in different places. She states that in Hamilton, 'you see a lot of people carrying around their bottle. Guys normally drink Coke whereas girls have bottled water more often. (...) I think water in New Zealand is clean, it might vary between cities and rural areas' (19/2/2008).

These quotations are excellent examples demonstrating the relationship between spatialities, socialities and subjectivities of consumption. First, they highlight urban and rural spaces of consumption and the relationship and social interactions among students. Second, they show the ways in which bottled water consumption is made meaningful through processes of performance and emplacement. Drawing on Valentine (1999, 2001) and Chatterjee (2007), I suggest that socio-spatial relations shape consumer practices that are gendered and performed differently in different places. Furthermore, building on Johnston (2006) and Longhurst (2005a), I argue that embodied consumer performances and space are constitutively linked. Therefore, the socio-spatial context influences the ways in which bodies consume bottled water.

Gendered Differences in the Consumption of Bottled Water

The outcomes of the interviews have multiple interpretations and expose that identity formation and the purchasing commodities are complex and changing over time. Most of the interviewees explained that the social values associated with consuming bottled water vary between genders in that women are more aware of their embodiment than men. I draw on Mansvelt (2005 80), who notes that ‘discourses and practices of consumption also locate bodies in particular spaces, emplacing identities’¹⁹. This enables me to identify the construction of gendered identities and values associated with consuming bottled water.

Sustaining ‘healthy’ bodies

A gendered notion of consuming bottled water is often linked to health concerns and the desire to sustain the aesthetic²⁰ body. The following examples from three different semi-structured interviews support my argument that the social values associated with consuming bottled water is not only gendered but also marketed towards women.

Isabelle: Do you think there are gendered differences in the consumption of bottled water?

Marianne: Depending on the activity, I mean I know guys that are really big athletes, like they play a lot of rugby and stuff, they do drink water ‘cause they physically need to replace fluid. *But I’d say yes, generally speaking, there is a gendered difference.* Because the guys, they don’t tend to worry about their weight as much and the girls do. So the girls tend to drink more water ‘cause it has technically no calories as opposed to guys who drink the sport drinks and

¹⁹ By ‘gendered identities’, I refer to socially created distinction between men and women including sexed bodies and sexualities.

²⁰ With ‘aesthetic’ body I refer to Longhurst (2005, 2005a) who explains that the body shape and size become indications and means of inscribing identity. An aesthetic body would be a slim and nicely toned one.

the energy drinks because they taste nicer. (Interview 17/01/2008)

Andy: I cannot really think of any examples, especially not in regards to advertising. Plus, I don't have the comparison from a masculine perspective. But I do think that the idea of women being more aware of health issues than men definitely fits in the overall picture of a healthy way of life that includes drinking healthy water. (Interview 22/02/2008)

Angie: Yes. Because we're told that it's good for our skin ... and we always have a handbag, so we can put it in the handbag or the bag. (...) But for guys, I think it's not as cool to carry around a lot of things. I think it's marketed more towards women. (Interview 05/02/2008)

Isabelle: And why is that? Have you seen particular promotions?

Angie: It doesn't seem like a guy is attracted by a guy to buy a bottle of water. I think it would be too much of a metrosexual²¹ looking, like they're caring too much about their bodies, and their skin, and their health, ... things like that. So, they won't do that unless the bottle is being used several times so they'd refill it with water from the tap. (Interview 05/02/2008)

In addition, Angie notes that weight issues influence people's consumption of bottled water. She emphasises the link between water consumption and the desire for a slim body, explaining that,

I was reading those magazines upstairs, and they also say you should drink water during your meals so you won't gain weight. (...) And also, like when I do have my water bottle, I don't feel as hungry, so I do lose weight more. So it does work! So, yeah (...), if you're going to the gym or something, and you're slim, it looks really cool that you have your water bottle with you. (Interview 05/02/2008)

After Johnston (2005) I suggest that the relationship between healthy bodies and consuming bottled water is discursively produced in the landscape of the media as well as through discourses on health and the

²¹ *Metrosexual* refers to a heterosexual urban man who enjoys shopping, fashion, and similar interests traditionally associated with women or homosexual men. (<http://www.oxfordreference.com>, viewed 15 July 2008).

body. Bottled water has symbolic meaning for young women who seek to demonstrate their healthy bodies through embodied performances in public spaces such as the University or the fitness centre. Following Valentine (1999), my research confirms that women emphasise their bodily appearance and sexuality received by themselves and others through consuming (bottled) water. In addition, health discourses in media, consumer culture and the fashion industry produce bodily needs such as consuming bottled water in order to keep the feminine body 'in shape'. Based on Valentine's (1999) work on '*corporal geography of consumption*' I put forward the idea that consuming bottled water is a useful way in which to discover the space of one's body: consumers experience themselves spatially (fat or thin) and as positioned in social space (good or bad consumer choices, sexually attractive, responsible, self-caring).

These viewpoints also link to the notion of responsible consumerism. The following statement demonstrates how public discourses around health and sustaining body shape both consumer identities and performances.

Isabelle: Do you think that the consumption of bottled water is influenced by the media?

Angie: If you are responsible for the kids, then you buy bottled water. And even McDonald's has a healthy choice! (...) If you were a responsible citizen, maybe a good citizen, you'd give your kids the bottled water, maybe in a little kiddie-bag. Or if you are like healthy ... I think it's kind of individualistic as well 'cause everybody has got their own water bottle. If you make good choices, you have your own bottle. (Interview 05/02/2008)

This statement suggests that: social values of bottled water are discursively constructed through public health discourses; bottled water is considered to be a healthy and, therefore 'good' choice, especially for children. Consumer choices are driven by individual values. In a similar light to the notion of green consumerism (see

chapter 4), I argue that the binary between ‘good’ versus ‘bad’ choices is problematic. Consuming bottled water appears to be a ‘good’ choice for female individual consumers to sustain healthy bodies through drinking healthy water. The idea of responsible consumerism is based on dualistic thinking and categorizes ‘good’ and healthy versus ‘bad’ and unhealthy consumer performances. Building on Cloke and Johnston (2005), the categorization between ‘good’ versus ‘bad’ consumer choices shape individual and collective consumer identities. Being a responsible consumer fits well with current societal concerns about healthy living and reducing environmental risks.

Two examples from New Zealand confirm my argument that bottled water consumption is marketed towards women and constructed as a healthy and ‘good’ choice. The first image (see Figure 4 on page 55) is taken from the Good Water homepage (www.goodwater.org.nz, viewed 9 June 2008). As argued previously, the advertising reveals that drinking ‘Good Water’ is a ‘good’ choice for myself as a consumer and the environment because the bottle is ‘bio-degradable’.

Another example demonstrating the feminised nature of bottled water consumption is a Kiwi Blue bottled water advertisement illustrated in the women’s lifestyle magazine *Next*²² (December 2007). However, the promotion is an excellent example of the discursively constructed gendered identities in regards to bottled water consumption. Kiwi Blue is, in addition to Pump, a bottled water brand owned by Coca-Cola and bottled in Putaruru²³. According to the advertisement ‘Kiwi Blue is donating over \$75,000 to The New Zealand Breast Cancer Foundation in 2007 for breast cancer research’ through campaigning ‘Drink Positive – Think Positive and help each other out’. The water bottle is located in the centre of the image; the bottle itself has a pink lid that is

²² Due to lack of copyright permission, I am unable to use the image for my thesis.

²³ See information about Putaruru in chapter 4, footnote 9 on page 50)

surrounded by a pink ribbon held on by two butterflies which seek to bind the loop around the lid. The pink-blue label print incorporates a loop of pink ribbon as the symbol of the New Zealand Breast Cancer Foundation. As breast cancer is a serious concern for New Zealand women, this advertisement is clearly feminised and is directed towards women act as carers for friends, family and themselves. Using a pink colour supports the feminised nature of the image. In addition, the connection of Kiwi Blue bottled water and The New Zealand Breast Cancer Foundation as a New Zealand based campaign stresses New Zealand as a place and emphasises the 'social face' of Kiwi Blue as a corporate bottled water brand.

Drawing on Chatterjee (2007), I found that semiotics used in bottled water packaging are gendered and feminised as well as linked to health risks. It can be seen that Kiwi Blue bottled water uses feminised values to construct female consumer identities as socially and bodily responsible consumers through raising awareness about the risk of breast cancer.

Sustaining pregnant bodies

Another interesting finding that has come out of my research is a correlation between health risk concerns and pregnant bodies. For example whilst talking about gendered differences in the consumption of bottled water, Luis for example, believes that pregnant women should drink bottled water 'just in case there are some bacteria or germs in the water that affect the body' (Interview 17/01/2008). In addition, two other female participants link pregnancy to health and safety issues, arguing health safety issues could become a matter of concern for pregnant bodies.

Isabelle: Do you think pregnant women prefer drinking bottled water over tap water?

Andy: The safety aspect would be important for me. You never know what's in the pipes, so maybe I would go for the safer choice, like bottled water. Furthermore, bottled water has more added vitamins, at least some of them, as advertised on the label. I think that would be important for me while being pregnant because there are probably not so many minerals (...) in the tap water. (Interview 22/02/2008)

Angie: Most of the people I know come from a farm or something like that 'cause they don't care. But, women from the city would probably care more. More likely they would buy bottled water when they're pregnant. (Interview 05/02/2008)

Angie's statement shows that consumer performances of pregnant women might depend on socio-spatial differences. Consumer behaviour of pregnant women might differ in urban spaces such as Hamilton where chemically processed tap water could become a matter of concern. This view can be linked to Johnston (2005, 2006) and Longhurst (2005a) who note that bodies and space are mutually constitutive. The idea of sustaining the pregnant body can also be related to the idea of sustaining the pure body. Drawing on Domosh (2003), who critically examines the contradictory meaning of the concept purity, I suggest that consuming pure water during pregnancy underlines the idea of sustaining the healthy and pure pregnant body. Discourses on health in relation to pregnancy reinforce the image of pregnant women as carers for themselves and their unborn child. This also refers to the dualism between 'good' and 'bad' consumer choices because pregnant women who care about their bodies appear to be responsible whereas those who continue drinking tap water are not.

Sustaining 'sporty' bodies

In examining the gendered differences of bottled water consumption, I found that discourses and images used to promote bottled water are both normatively gendered and reinforce the man/woman binary. Images that portray men usually focus attention on physical prowess

whereas images that illustrate women emphasise bodily appearance by reinforcing the ideal of a feminine body that is slim and toned. For example, Andrew notes that 'it's quite normal that they would portray healthy females in those advertisements in newspaper or on television, you know like you see females with their Pump bottle' (Interview 19/02/2008). However, sport drinks advertisements, such as Mizone, are clearly marketed towards men.

Isabelle: Have you ever seen any commercials of bottled water that are gendered?

Andrew: I have seen one with a guy having his bottle of Mizone, and he could jump like 10 metres. Because he has his bottle, and that's sort of appealing to his, you know, physical prowess of a male if they drink the right water. And you might find a lot of guys in the gym possibly drinking Mizone bottled because of that. So, there is a heavy influence by the media. (Interview 19/02/2008)

Nicky: Most of the time, when I see the sports drinks commercials, those tend to be more oriented towards men. (Interview 17/01/2008)

Because Mizone Sportswater has been referred to by some of my participants, I include Mizone Sportswater advertisement in this discussion²⁴. Two of the four Mizone Sportswater images I used portray women wearing sports gear. The first woman is blonde and 'sporty' looking. She appears to be concentrating while gazing outward. The image incorporates the quote 'CONCENTRATION is the ability to think absolutely NOTHING when it is absolutely necessary' (emphasis in original).

²⁴ Due to lack of copyright permissions, I am unable to include Mizone images in my thesis. The images are available on the Mizone homepage under the option 'download wallpapers' (www.mizone.co.nz, viewed 9 June 2008).

The second woman has brown hair and a toned body. Whereas the blond woman seems to be meditating, the brunette woman seems to be break-dancing²⁵. The image displays the quote 'Whatever your mind can CONCEIVE and BELIEVE, it can achieve' (emphasis in original). The two images focus on bodily appearance portrayed in an indoor environment. In comparison, the Mizone Sportswater images that portray men are taken in an outdoor environment. The first image portrays a man standing on the top of a mountain; the background shows a blue horizon in a mountainous landscape. The image incorporates a caption stating 'IMAGINATION should be used, not to escape reality but to CREATE IT' (emphasis in original). The second image portrays a man with his surfboard standing at the beach at sundown and includes the quote 'Only he who can SEE THE INVISIBLE can do the IMPOSSIBLE' (emphasis in original).

Building on Johnston (2005), I argue that the Mizone Sportswater promotion is normatively gendered. Whereas the women are illustrated as slim, toned and well dressed, the men are looking for adventure in the landscape. Furthermore, the women's facial expressions give the impression of concentration that emphasises that women need to activate their minds in order to achieve physical performance. The men's faces are not shown at all which can be interpreted as if men do not need to concentrate because they are 'naturally' athletic and perform as such.

²⁵ Breakdancing, also known as "B-boying" or "B-girling" by its practitioners and followers, is a dynamic style of dance that is part of Hip Hop culture and emerged out of the Hip-Hop movement in the South Bronx of New York City during the late 20th century. Breakdancing is one of the many elements of Hip Hop culture. The unique form of dancing is very acrobatic and creative (<http://www.hiphopgalaxy.com/History-of-breakdance-hip-hop-2084.html>, viewed 10 July 2008).

Sustaining 'sexed' bodies

Johnston (2005 125) argues that the 'sexed body can be read as a historical outcome of a range of discourse and meanings centring on biological sex, social gender, gender identity and sexuality'. In addition, Mansvelt (2005) notes that socialities of consumption also refer to sexualized and feminised discourses in the landscape of advertising, marketed towards women.

Following Johnston (2005, 2006), I argue that bodies represented in bottled water advertisements are either normatively masculine or feminine. A Perrier water advertisement (Figure 10) printed in Marie Claire magazine is the first useful example that illustrates the ways in which normative, sexed bodies are used to promote bottled water.

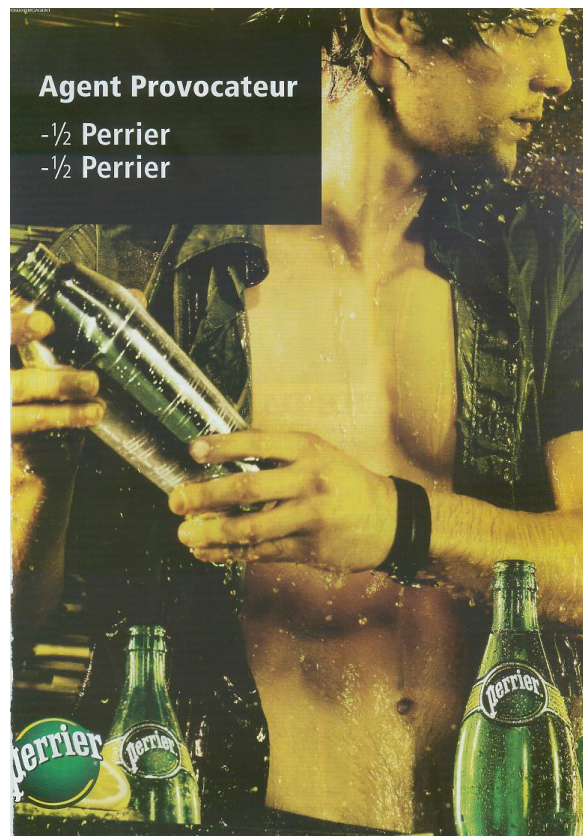


Figure 10 Perrier Water, Agent Provocateur

(Source: Marie Claire magazine No 151, March 2008.
Printed with permission from Marie Claire magazine)

The image portrays a white, young and attractive man who prepares a special cocktail called 'Agent Provocateur' consisting of Perrier water. The cocktail 'Agent Provocateur' underlines the sparkling taste of Perrier water as the man appears to be covered in a spray of Perrier water. 'Agent Provocateur' might refer to a lingerie brand based in the UK which has become very popular with celebrities. Additionally, the line's first perfume 'Agent Provocateur' was launched in 2006 (see www.agentprovocateur.com, viewed 17 July 2008). I suggest that this advertisement is marketed towards women because it reflects the desire for an exclusive lifestyle including luxurious fashion, underwear and perfume; it links Perrier bottled water to the lingerie and perfume label 'Agent Provocateur'; and it portrays a normatively, sexualized masculine body which is aimed at attracting heterosexual women. Accordingly, consuming Perrier water may stand for an exclusive consumer taste and is linked to both heterosexuality and heterosexual performance.

Another strong example that illustrates the gendered nature of bottled water promotion is the internationally known brand Evian Water. Because Evian water is a major player in the global bottled water business and powerful in creating symbolic meanings of bottled water as a commodity, it is important to critically examine the discursive interpretation of the company's marketing strategy. I found two useful images taken from the Evian homepage²⁶ that promote Evian water as 'untouched by man, perfect by nature'. Evian water uses young, attractive, thin and white bodies sitting in front of the French Alps which are represented as perfect, pure and 'untouched nature'. Both bodies are naked from the waist up; the man is wearing white jeans

²⁶ See Evian Water <http://www.evian.com/us/wallpapers.html>, viewed 9 June 2008. Due to lack of copyright permissions I am unable to use the two Evian water images in my thesis. The pictures can be downloaded on the option 'Wallpapers' that offers the consumer the possibility to 'purify your desktop with EVIAN wallpapers'.

and the woman red sports underwear. The man appears to be active: he sits straight while gazing into the landscape, his arms are wide apart and his legs are crossed. The woman has a petite body, she appears to be meditating, her arms and legs are closed in which makes her seem vulnerable and passive. Based on the description of both images, I suggest that both bodies are heteronormatively feminine and masculine in nature and therefore reinforce the binary between woman as (passive, vulnerable) and men (active and strong). According to Johnston (2006 195), 'spaces of nature and wilderness are often places for the expression of very conventional forms of heterosexuality'. I suggest that heteronormative bodies become mutually constitutive with the notion of a pure and untouched mountainous landscape in order to make Evian water meaningful.

Greening the Body

Bell and Valentine (1997) argue that in (post)modern societies, food is associated with social, cultural and symbolic meanings rather than with sustenance and nutrition. They argue that 'food has become largely dominated by ideas of bodily beauty and comportment, rather than ideas of energy and sufficiency (Bell and Valentine 1997 4). Yet, the symbolic meaning of consuming commoditised water has not been addressed within geographies of food. In Andersen's view (2008 208), Evian water 'constructs an alternative sense of place, a pure, untouched environment offered to the ecoknight turned consumer as an escape from the unpleasant realities of modern industrial life'.

In addition, the H²Go water advertisement²⁷ (see Figure 5 on page 60) printed in Marie Claire magazine is another example that combines the notion of sustaining a healthy body with sustaining the

²⁷ For more information on H²Go bottled water see footnote 13 on page 59 in chapter 4.

environment. As stated by Andersen (2000 205), the visual construction of nature in advertisements can be related to key concerns of the environmental movement. I suggest that discursive and visual representations of consuming bottled water are not only adapted to current environmental discourses but focus on sustaining healthy, feminine and 'green' bodies.

Using a feminist perspective, I particular focus on the gendered aspects of the advertising. The image portrays a white woman with a naked upper body holding an H²Go water bottle between her breasts. It seems as if the green lid of the bottle seeks to touch the woman's green lips. The colour green symbolizes nature; the earth is shown in the right corner next to the model's face.

Andersen (2000 210) makes an important contribution in regards to the contradictory meaning of 'greening' bottled water consumption.

The concept Mother Nature helps associate bottled water with purity and inspiration and compels people to express their love for nature by buying individual plastic containers, a substance that degrades the environment, hazards public health, and ultimately has the potential to contaminate our drinking water.

Based on Andersen (2000) and Ganesh (2007), I argue that the H²Go advertisement reinforces essentialised notions of femininity and Mother Earth in which the fragile earth is related to the fragile female body that needs protection. On the one hand, the image connects the pure female body with pure water in order to create a romantic narrative of nature that needs to be protected. On the other hand, the advertisement can be interpreted as an attempt to construct a green consumer identity through greening the body. However, building on Anderson (2000; see also Opel 1999; Wilk 2006) the 'environmental' message of this advertisement is highly contradictory because environmental protection and consuming bottled water is mutually

exclusive. In addition, the H²GoGreen marketing strategy is misleading because it fails to question the need to consume bottled water in countries with safe access to water in the first place.

Conclusion

The overall objective of this chapter was to examine the ways in which bottled water consumption is related to gender, health and distinct notions of sustaining the 'body'. The relationship between sustaining bodies and consuming bottled water is discursively produced in the landscape of the media as well as through discourses on health and the body. I also built on chapter four and illustrated how discursive and visual representations of bottled water are linked to notions of 'green consumerism' through the idea of 'greening' the body.

In this chapter, I sought to enrich feminist perspectives on geographies of consumption through examining the social and gendered values associated with consuming bottled water. By this means, I address the gap in research on symbolic meanings of consuming commoditised water which has not been addressed by current literature on geographies of food. The following chapter brings this thesis to close. I summarize my findings in regard to my research questions and conclude with some possible research prospects.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

This thesis has explored the social values and identities associated with bottled water consumption and focused on socially constructed values and images around nature, gender and health. I have examined the ways in which bottled water consumption is made meaningful through notions of both sustaining the environment and the body. The research shows that consumer subjectivities are not only defined but also embodied through consumer performances and public discourse. Embodied consumer performances have multiple meanings and are constitutively linked to socio-spatial contexts.

In this chapter, I refer to my initial research questions. I seek to illustrate the value of my research and how examining water consumption can contribute to geographies of consumption. This chapter is brought to a close by offering possible prospects for further research on bottled water.

Embodied Consumer Performances

To begin with, I address my first research question: *What are the reasons for increasing bottled water consumption?* I discussed this question in chapter five while focusing on embodied consumer performances. These are categorized into four themes: convenience/portability and taste preferences; health consciousness; peer pressure and urban-rural differences. Some of these are mutually inclusive; health concerns are often constituted by peer pressure and spatial differences in consumption and vice versa. Furthermore, I suggest that embodied consumer performances are gendered in that women are more aware of embodiment than men are. However, the

experiences of my participants emphasise that the linkages between identity formation and purchase of bottled water is complex, contradictory and unstable.

Multiple Meanings of Bottled Water

Research questions two, three and four are interrelated: *How is bottled water presented in the media? Which images and values are used around the promotion of bottled water, and how are these images linked to place, gender and health?* As discussed in chapters four and five, my findings suggest that bottled water as portrayed in the media is discursively constructed through ideas of both sustaining the environment and different configurations of bodies. The use of multiple methods enabled me to engage with these research objectives.

Geographies of consumption including embodied geographies and geographies of food provided a useful framework to explore how embodied consumer performances are constituted through discursive and visual spaces. In combining geographies of consumption with critical perspectives on sustainable consumption, green consumerism and bottled water, I ‘interrogated’ bottled water from a cultural geographical perspective. This theoretical framework allowed me to examine how current discourses on green consumerism influence consumer subjectivities.

Natural and spatial meanings of bottled water

Spatialities of consumption were a useful approach to explore how national and international bottled water advertisements are linked to place, nature and notions of purity. New Zealand bottled water companies, such as Waiwera Infinity and 420 spring water, use socially constructed images of New Zealand as being ‘green’ and ‘clean’ to promote their products. New Zealand Eternal uses iconic Maori and national symbols of New Zealand’s flora, such as the koru and silver

ferns, to emphasise the 'natural' and 'exotic' quality of their product. However, the participants challenged the paradoxical meanings of purity and nature. Most of them disagreed with that idea of bottled water is more natural because purification processes denaturalize water. Consumer identities are influenced by discourse and visual representations but cannot be categorized into one single category.

Gendered meanings of bottled water

Chapter five, 'Embodying the Environment', illustrates that bottled water advertising is gendered and often marketed towards women. Consumer performances have multiple meanings and these are constitutively linked to socio-spatial spaces. The gendered differences of bottled water consumption suggest that gendered associations of consuming bottled water are not only linked to health concerns but to the desire of sustaining the 'aesthetic body'. Furthermore, notions of sustaining healthy, pregnant, sporty and sexed bodies are normatively gendered. Promotional material of bottled water is often marketed towards women, and bodies are demonstrated either heteronormatively masculine or feminine. One example in particular reinforces essentialising images about femininity and Mother Earth. It connects the pure female body with pure water and seeks to construct a 'green' consumer identity through the idea of 'greening' the female body. However, environmentalism and consuming 'green' bottled water is contradictory and therefore, mutually exclusive.

Environmental meanings of bottled water

Bottled water advertisements reproduced in chapter four, 'Sustaining the Environment', helped me to investigate how bottled water is first, linked to sustainability frameworks and second, discursively constructed as natural, pristine and 'green'. Selected examples of bottled water marketing reinforce the dualism established between

'good' and 'bad' consumer choices by using environmental values. This strategy of promoting bottled water as 'green' in particular aims to contest the negative image otherwise associated with bottled water. Sustainable and 'green' consumer practices are considered to be 'good' whereas unsustainable practices are 'bad'. However, drawing on Hobson (2006), I argue that matters of consumption have multiple meanings and, therefore, are not always driven by 'rational' choices. Instead, individual consumer preferences are influenced by a stream of choices and decisions related to social relations of power and authority (Conca 2004). Furthermore, I suggest that consuming bottled water is not compatible with a 'green' lifestyle and notions of sustainable consumption because it is contradictory in nature.

Socially constructed knowledges and media messages in relation to environmental issues are decoded in both empirical chapters. This relates to research question five: *are bottled water consumers aware of negative environmental impacts of bottled water consumption?*

This research demonstrates that social values of bottled water are also related to environmental concerns. Most of my participants agree that bottled water consumption may have negative impacts on the environment. From a consumer point of view, recycling and reusing water bottles appear to be an effective and suitable way to reverse the negative environmental impacts of bottled water. Accordingly, recycling is constructed as an 'eco-friendly' and morally responsible choice and an overall solution to reduce waste disposal. However, this viewpoint is problematic because it fails to question the use of bottled water in the first place. Furthermore, 'green' consumer practices place environmental responsibility on to individuals without questioning the need to produce bottled water in the first place. This also reinforces the binary between consumers and producers.

Future Research

This research makes valuable contributions to geographies of consumption and embodied geographies by developing a new approach to examine our basic need: bottled water. It also offers critical viewpoints on sustainable consumption and green consumerism. I aim to contribute to contemporary research on geographies of consumption and offer new paths to explore the social, environmental and gendered meanings of the 'fluid' community. In this concluding section, I suggest further avenues of possible research on bottled water, from postcolonial to emotional, political and health geography perspectives.

First, a case study of the 'Blue Spring' from the perspective of the commodification of nature could contribute to Māori geographies. In the middle of my research project, a friend took me to the 'Blue Spring' coming from the Waihou River in Tirau near Putaruru where approximately 60% of New Zealand's water is bottled (see chapters four and five). The Waihou ('new water') River used to go through Māori land. Māori understandings of nature and the use of natural resources differ from dominant Western ones. Traditionally, waterways have not only been an important natural resource for Māori but also an essential source of spiritual and cultural wellbeing. It would be interesting to examine the cultural, spiritual and ecological values that Māori and Pākehā place on water. Using a postcolonial theoretical framework of Kaupapa Māori approaches and emotional geographies could contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the environmental and cultural perspectives on the commodification of (bottled) water.

Second, a combination of political economy of consumption and geographies of consumption could offer new grounds for research on

bottled water. The uneven power structures between bottled water supply in developed and developing countries have not been adequately addressed. The growing phenomenon of bottled water is not only relevant for industrialised nations but also for developing countries which have no or limited access to safe drinking water. One research question could be: If bottled water consumption continues to increase in wealthy nations who do have access to safe water, what are the consequences for people in developing nations who do not have access to safe water? According to Hartwick (2000; see also Hartwick 1998), geographies of consumption need a political revival in order to address questions of justice, poverty, exploitation and the environment in regard to commodities. Consequently, there is room to foster more research in this area. This includes a critical examination of uneven power structures between the global bottled water industry and its social and environmental impacts in developing countries.

Third, it would be interesting to examine the ways in which local or national governments react to negative environmental aspects of consuming bottled water on a policy level. Given that environmental discourses on sustainable and 'green' consumption are part of our everyday life, I wonder what solutions local bodies such as Environment Waikato could offer to develop political resistance to bottled water consumption. There is lack of policy regarding bottled water consumption in New Zealand and this issues needs to be addressed at a local and national level. This approach could be inspired by political geographies.

Finally, geographies of health could enrich contemporary research on bottled water. Since bottled water is often correlated to matters of fitness and health, it would be useful to include work on health geography in relation to embodied consumption. For example Dyck (2003) examines the relationship between feminist and health

geographies. Using qualitative methods could be helpful to discover linkages between the construction of health 'in place', embodied consumption and consuming bottled water.

In conclusion, this thesis has shown that there are many further avenues for research on bottled water that could enrich geographies of consumption. Water will continue to be key environmental concern in the 21st century. This research emphasises the multiple and contradictory meanings of bottled water, these are environmental, social, spatial and gendered. Paradoxically, those in developed countries consume a large amount of bottled water because it is a convenient and portable commodity which fits well into the 'needs' of modern consumer society. However, if we are serious about changing the environmental impacts of human consumption, we need to consider the exploitation of natural resources and confront and challenge the use of bottled water.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX ONE

Department of Geography, Tourism & Environmental Planning
Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences
Te Kura Kete Aronui
The University of Waikato
Private Bag 3105
Hamilton, New Zealand



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

Interview Schedule for semi-structured Interviews

The Social Construction of Bottled Water Consumption in New Zealand

Why do you prefer drinking bottled water?

What water brands do you prefer?

Do you think bottled water is healthier than water from the tap? (Why?)

Do you think drinking bottled water is better while doing sports (Why? Do you think minerals and vitamins added to bottled water are better for you while doing sports?)

Do you think bottled water is safer than water from the tap?

Do you think there are gender differences in the consumption of bottled water? (Why?)

Do you think pregnant women should rather drink bottled water than tap water? (Why?)

Do you think bottled water is more natural than water from the tap? (Why?)

Do you think water from a natural source is more natural than water from the tap? (Why?)

Do you know where bottled water available in New Zealand comes from? (Water sources)

Water from the tap is usually free in New Zealand. When you go out for dinner or some drinks, do you prefer to drink bottled water instead of water from the tap? (Why?)

What bottled water brand do you prefer to drink? Is this preference linked to bottled water commercials in the media? (If yes please indicate what kind of bottled water promotion are you aware of)

Do you think the consumption of bottled water is influenced by the promotion of bottled water? (Why?)

Do you think bottled water consumption has negative impacts on the environment? (Why?)

APPENDIX TWO

List of Participants

Name	Gender	Age	From
Pitt	Male	Unknown	Zambia; New Zealand Resident
Vicky	Female	29	China; New Zealand Resident
Andy	Female	27	Germany
Clark	Male	29	China
Andrew	Male		New Zealand
Luis	Male	24	Taiwan
Robbie	Female	22	Taiwan
Marianne	Female	Unknown	New Zealand
Nicky	Female	Unknown	U.S.A.
Ali	Male	Unknown	Saudi Arabia
Angie	Female	26	New Zealand

APPENDIX THREE

Department of Geography, Tourism &
Environmental Planning
Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences
Te Kura Kete Aronui
The University of Waikato
Private Bag 3105
Hamilton, New Zealand



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

Information Sheet for Participant

Information Sheet Content for Participant

My name is Isabelle Kunze. I am a Master of Social Sciences student at the Geography, Tourism and Environmental Planning Department at the University of Waikato. My focus is on human geography in relation to people's behaviour in certain spaces. My research aims to look at people's bottled water consumption on campus. I am interested in what people think about increasing bottled water consumption and whether or not the consumption is linked to certain places or associated with nature, health and gender aspects. I am also interested in how people regard the promotion of bottled water in the media.

What does it mean to be a participant in this research?

This research is required in order to complete the Master of Social Sciences in geography. It does not demand any costs for the participant. I will involve you in this research by conducting a semi-structured interview which will take about 20 to 30 minutes. This interview, which will be tape-recorded, will focus on the consumption of bottled water and values associated with it.

What are your rights as a participant in this research?

- If you choose to be a participant in this research, you have rights to protect your personal safety. These rights are to:
- Refuse to answer any particular question.
- Withdraw from the project within two weeks of the interview.
- Ask any further questions about the research that occur to you during your participation in the research.
- Deny the use of a voice recorder.

What will the information be used for?

Results from the interview will be transcribed and stored on a computer with password access only. I am the only person who will have access to the information and who will select relevant sections for my research. Your

confidentiality is ensured throughout. A pseudonym (fake name) will be used in any write up so that you remain anonymous.

Once the thesis is completed there will be three copies available, two in print and one online accessible copy. This research may also be used for presentations within the Department of Geography, Tourism and Environmental Planning.

This research project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences of the University of Waikato. Any questions about the ethical conduct of this research may be sent to the Secretary of the Committee, email fass-ethics@waikato.ac.nz, postal address, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Te Kura Kete Aronui, University of Waikato, Te Whare Wananga o Waikato, Private Bag 3105, Hamilton 3240.

**Thank you for giving consideration to
participation in this research.**

Isabelle Kunze
22 Hillcrest Road
Hillcrest
3216 Hamilton
Mobile: 0211 3201070
Email: imk6@waikato.ac.nz

Associate Professor John Campbell
Department of Geography, Tourism
and Environmental Planning
University of Waikato
Private Bag 3105
Hamilton, New Zealand
Email: jrc@waikato.ac.nz
Phone: +64 7 838 4046

APPENDIX FOUR

Consent Form for Interviews

Department of Geography, Tourism
& Environmental Planning
Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences
Te Kura Kete Aronui
The University of Waikato
Private Bag 3105
Hamilton, New Zealand



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE In the research project

DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT:

This research aims to look at people's bottled water consumption behavior on campus. I am particularly interested in what people think about increasing bottled water consumption and whether or not the consumption is linked to certain places or associated with nature, health and gender aspects. I am also interested how people regard the promotion of bottled water in the media.

I (your name) agree to participate in the research project 'The social construction of the bottled water consumption in New Zealand' carried out by Isabelle Kunze (under the supervision of Assoc. Prof John Campbell) at the Department of Geography, Tourism and Environmental Planning, University of Waikato, Private Bag 3105, Hamilton, New Zealand (Mobile: 0211 3201017, email: imk6@waikato.ac.nz)

I understand that:

A, All the data collected will remain **secure** under lock or on a computer database accessible by password only.

B, My identity will remain **confidential** and **anonymous**, unless I specifically state otherwise.

C, I have the **right to withdraw** from the research at any time up to two weeks after the interview.

D, I have the **right to refuse** to answer questions.

E, Information used will be used for Isabelles Kunze's masters thesis.

I consent to my interview being audio-taped? YES/NO (please circle your choice)

'I agree to participate in this interview and acknowledge receipt of a copy of this consent form and the research project information sheet'

Signed by participant:

Date:

Signed by researcher (Isabelle Kunze):

Date:

APPENDIX FIVE

Example of Interview Analysis

INTERRELATIONS BETWEEN MAIN THEMES

Question 1: What are the reasons for the increasing bottled water consumption?

- *data from interviews*
- *addresses first main objective which looks at social values and constructed identities associated with bottled water consumption*
- *focus on emotions/values/meanings*
- *'what do people think'?*

PORATBILITY -factor

CONVENIENCE –factor

HEALTH CONCERNS

- Bottled water is better quality
- 'from a natural source'
- dehydration
- safer/cleaner/better taste

PEER-PRESSURE: bottled water more trendy/ fad/

- as influenced by other people's choices/**consumer performances**

URBAN-RURAL BINARY

- Urban: less sustainable/water is processed with chemicals, for example fluorine
⇒ increased bottled water consumption
- Rural: more sustainable water use and storage, rain water, cleaner ⇒ less bottled water consumption

Question 2/3:

How is bottled water presented in the media?

Which images and values are used around the promotion of bottled water?

- *Data based on interviews as well as visual images and advertisements*
- *Focuses on second main objective which seeks to examine socially constructed values and images around nature, gender and health*
- *'How do people perceive bottled water promotion?'*

BRANDING

- labelling not as important since consumer choices are driven by an economic rationality
- Dominant marketing strategy: 'healthy water is good for us'

GENDER aspects: different results

- Bottled water is marketed more towards women
- Men tend to drink more bottled water because they are more into exercising
- Responsible consumer (health concerns)/bottled water is a better choice!
- NZ as a place unique, contradictive results regarding clean and green image!

PEER-PRESSURE

- Constructed through media and dominant discourses in media

- **Consumer performances** influenced by other people's choices
- Links to responsible consumerism – bottled water better for kids!
- No influence through media because water is daily requirement and basic need!
(maybe non-western perspective)

MASS-CONSUMERISM as driving force

Question 4: How are these images linked to place, gender and health issues?

- *focuses on socially constructed values*
- *data based on interviews as well as advertisement and newspaper articles*

URBAN-RURAL BINARY

- Overall assumption tabbed water in urban areas has bad quality/tastes bad/ isn't clean
- Therefore need to meet minimal water standards!

CONSUMER PERFORMANCES

- Bottled water better than tabbed water because cleaner, without fluorine or chlorine, tastes better
- Based on **peer-pressure**
- Individualisation: this bottle is MY bottle!
- Fad/fashion: drinking bottled water is trendy!

GENDERED DIFFERENCES

Bottled water marketed more towards women

- Women are more concerned about their **BODIES**
- **Health**, weight, skin, good looking
- Guys are not attracted to bottled water as much as women are because could look too metrosexual to walk around with bottle of water.

HEALTH

- NZ **health** boards has changes their campaign: drink as much water as possible!
- Linked to responsible consumerism/good choice
- Contradictive results
- Bottled water is not **healthier** or better than tabbed water but tastes better!
- More convenient (portable)

PEER-PRESSURE

- Fad/trendy
- Linked to mass consumerism: bottled water big business
- No soft drink: **healthier** (coke is out!)
- **Health** hysteria

Question 5: Environmental awareness

- *data based on interviews and visual images/magazines/newspaper/TV*

RECYCLING as the overall solution

- NZ as eco-friendly
- **Peer-pressure**

REFILLING

ECOLOGICAL VS. ECONOMIC RATIONALITY

- Consumer behaviour mostly driven by an economic rationality
- Convenient lifestyle is more important than reducing waste
- 'water companies should change their way of packaging'

URBAN-RURAL BINARY

- **RURAL**: environmental friendly
- **URBAN**: non-environmental friendly

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