

Promoting sustainability through social marketing: examples from New Zealand

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Abstract

This paper investigates the social marketing of sustainability in New Zealand and examines the usefulness of advertising campaigns to enlist and empower people, as both consumers and citizens, towards environmental care. It draws on discussions about 'citizen-consumer subjectivities' and the model of the 'political economic person', which link sustainability and consumption through asserting people's capacities as reflecting citizens. Printed advertisements by local and national government agencies about air pollution, fuel dependency and energy consumption are analysed to see whether advertising campaigns can operate on multiple levels for a range of audiences – desirable for broadening understanding of sustainable consumption and dealing with the complexity and experiential aspects of 'doing' sustainability. The advertisements analysed have an authoritative dimension that downplays this complexity and variability. The paper concludes that these advertisements do not go far enough to involve individuals in processes of co-producing knowledge about sustainability, and to vest them with expertise in exercising sustainability in their daily lives. The implications are that advertising campaigns that engage with the complexity surrounding consumption in people's modern lives, and with variability in meanings of sustainability, have the possibility of inciting citizen-consumer political subjectivities.

Introduction

There is a growing body of literature on sustainable consumption in national contexts that include the Netherlands (Martens and Spaargaren, 2005), France (Sanches, 2005), the US (Cohen *et al.*, 2005), Malaysia (Haron *et al.*, 2005) and the Nordic countries (Boström *et al.*, 2004). The concept of sustainable consumption in these various country studies is described by Cohen (2005, p. 22) as 'quite malleable' with its actual practice 'shaped by the political culture and policy styles of specific national contexts'. As such, it is clear that as policy experiments organized around the idea of sustainable consumption proliferate, particular political cultures will give rise to nationally customized outcomes.

This study examines various ways in which sustainable practices have been encouraged through social marketing in New Zealand. As such, it also aims to contribute to the broader literature on sustainable consumption that links consumer and political identities, building on the work of Sagoff (1990) and, more recently, the notion of 'political consumerism' and its implications for how personal politics and practices shape consumption practices (see e.g. Liu *et al.*, 2003; Micheletti, 2003; Boström *et al.*, 2004; Micheletti *et al.*, 2004; Holzer, 2006; Klintman, 2006). While sustainable consumption is a contestable concept with a considerable amount of literature (e.g. Dobson, 2004; Seyfang, 2005, 2006a,b), our interest here is on one specific aspect, namely

marketing of sustainable consumption – of which there is also a growing body of literature in the macromarketing arena (Venkatesh, 1999; Prothero and Fitchett, 2000; Dolan, 2002; Peattie and Crane, 2005; Schaefer and Crane, 2005).

In this paper, we examine the social marketing of sustainability in New Zealand. In particular, advertising is used to investigate how (and what) sustainable practices and consumption are represented to New Zealanders in order to persuade them to better understand and plan for a sustainable society. The advertisements are analysed with reference to the body of work on the discourse of the consumer. The paper looks more closely at recent work integrating citizenship with consumption through the notion of 'citizen-consumer' subjectivities (Couldry, 2004; Sen, 2004; Slocum, 2004; Soper, 2004), and combines this with work in ecological economics by Söderbaum (2000a,b). The analysis of the advertisements is restricted to the socio-political climate in New Zealand surrounding the production of advertising campaigns by government agencies in the period 2000–2006. This covers the New Zealand government's engagement with preparation for the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002 and the subsequent development and implementation of the government's response. The most visible manifestations of this were the Sustainable Development Programme of Action (SDPoA) (DPMC, 2003) and the Local Government Act 2002.

Social marketing

Consumption patterns are the result of choices and activities of a wide variety of actors, including business, government and individual households. Influencing these choices means stimulating and facilitating new economic opportunities – better products and services – and altering the current infrastructure and regulatory framework that lock consumers into unsustainable behaviour.

This focus on the social marketing of sustainability in New Zealand needs to be considered in the wider context of the marketing of sustainability programmes globally. United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP's) Production and Consumption Branch hosts an online database of corporate and public advertising campaigns specifically dedicated to sustainability issues and classified by sustainability themes. The *Creative Gallery on Sustainability Communications* (<http://www.uneptie.org/pc/sustain/advertising/ads>) is a database that compiles advertising campaigns from all around the world produced by companies, non-governmental organizations, governments, local authorities and all stakeholders concerned with the promotion of sustainable development in general, as well as the development of green products and services (UNEP, 2005).

Relevant to conceptions of 'sustainability' and 'sustainable consumption' are issues around citizenship. Collectively, the two concepts mark an increasingly contested arena that impinges upon consumers' and citizens' personal and professional lives. We suggest that these concepts are brought together in advertising campaigns in ways that highlight their interconnectivity, and help convey some of the complexity of 'doing' sustainability. We argue that local authorities and national government are making representations about environmental care with the intent that New Zealanders will demonstrate environmental awareness through their purchasing power in combination with their civic capacities. Advertising campaigns that operate on multiple levels and for a range of audiences simultaneously may provide a source of strength for broadening possible interpretations of sustainability and implicitly dealing with the complexity and experiential aspects of sustainability in practice.

One role of local government is to act as information broker, and the advertising campaigns are often predicated on a public information deficit concerning sustainability issues. However, the social marketing of sustainability by local governments has potential to go further and make people experts in relation to consumption practices and exercising sustainability in their own households. In other words, the advertising campaigns help connect structural, macro processes of social and environmental change with micro or interpersonal processes, thereby, mixing bottom-up initiatives with top-down strategies. Local government policy is, therefore, moving towards making individuals – as consumers – assume some 'accountability to the world beyond their immediate personal concerns' (Soper, 2004, p. 112). This is integral to realizing active citizenship.

There is, of course, a counter-argument, namely that an entirely personalized politics and practice of sustainable consumption runs the risk of being ultimately futile. Without adjustment or transformation of the institutional (fiscal, physical and social) infrastructure, many noble individualized actions are unlikely to have substantive effect. Some commentators believe that, without consideration of the larger political economy, these initiatives may be

little more than window dressing that makes particular groups of consumers feel good about themselves (Sanne, 2000, 2002; Peattie and Crane, 2005; Schaefer and Crane, 2005; Rex and Baumann, 2007). At its worst, this may only serve as a new source of status-conscious acquisition that does not change current circumstances to any significant effect. However, we do not seek to address this debate in the present paper, but to focus primarily on advertising that is already in the public domain.

It is unclear the extent to which these social marketing campaigns are successful. The authors are not aware of evaluation studies on the social marketing aspect and have expressed doubts (Frame, 2004) as to whether examples of consumer research techniques provide an adequate tool for sustainability concepts. Sustainability is a new area for social marketing campaigns and has not yet attracted the research momentum experienced on topics such as drunk driving, HIV/Aids and smoking. Indeed, as Spaargaren (2003, p. 696) notes, 'The research agenda on the politics of sustainable consumption is just barely in the making and most of the work still needs to be done'.

We take an interpretive approach to examining advertising campaigns in the period 2000–2006 and, in particular, to social marketing campaigns by central and local authorities and state-owned enterprises that promote more sustainable practices, including greater energy efficiency. In this context, we define sustainable practices as a broad suite of interventions and behaviour changes of which there are several specific subsets, including the quest for greater energy efficiency. The latter is particularly relevant in the New Zealand context, where there is already a high level of renewable energy and problems in increasing the reliance on oil and gas supplies from offshore at a time when oil shocks are predicted (Glenn and Gordon, 2005).

Sustainable consumption, political economic persons and citizen-consumers

Recent attempts to link the seemingly incompatible concepts of sustainability and consumption have sought to explain why insufficient progress is being made towards achieving sustainable lifestyles (Heiskanen and Pantzar, 1997; Hobson, 2002, 2003; Kok *et al.*, 2002; Sanne, 2002; Gilg *et al.*, 2005; Haron *et al.*, 2005; Heiskanen, 2005; Heiskanen *et al.*, 2005; Schaefer and Crane, 2005). This body of work cuts across social science disciplines, and argues that to understand consumption and sustainability, and how these concepts relate, requires an understanding of mechanisms of the consumer-led society and knowledge-based economy. Within these contexts, people juggle often competing demands of modern life. Consumption is driven by motives other than need, and gets contested and negotiated with a range of others (Hobson, 2003, p. 103). Ideas about what it means to be a citizen are implicated in these processes.

Contemporary society places a premium upon consumption and has treated people's consumer rights as paramount. Consumption has become a social duty, and its symbolic aspects are important drivers for purchasing choices and lifestyle changes (Debord, 1967; Venkatesh, 1999). The discourse, in the Foucauldian sense, of the consumer-led society privileges market imperatives and constructs consumption as a separate and privileged activity to citizenship (Couldry, 2004; Soper, 2004). Members of the public are understood to be consumers seeking value-for-money goods and

services. Their rights and responsibilities emanate from market laws of supply and demand, including the right to demand quality (Burgess, 2001; Doubleday, 2004, p. 118). 'Citizenship' interests are reduced in importance.

As marketing turns to 'lifestyling' (Sanne, 2002), advertising is as much about image production as about production of goods (Venkatesh, 1999). Advertising is beginning to unravel assumptions that 'the individual [simply] chooses a bundle of commodities to maximize utility' without recourse to ethical and ideological considerations (Söderbaum, 2000b, p. 439). Advertising is, nonetheless, a form of knowledge management that functions like a 'pressure group' (Sanne, 2002, p. 279). In the knowledge-based economy, knowledge is both contestable and contested, and who or what is able to control and circulate that knowledge is critical in terms of securing economic, political and social leverage. At the same time, individuals are empowered as rational decision makers exercising purchasing choice. This empowerment precipitates moves towards vesting knowledge about sustainability with 'citizen-consumers', who can exercise expertise in their daily lives and participate as 'reflecting citizens' in political processes (Sanne, 2002, p. 275).

Söderbaum's (2000a, p. 33) 'political economic person' (PEP) seeks to 'make the individual more visible in . . . economic analysis' through internalizing broader, non-market-related values. It requires better understanding of the social, socio-psychological, cultural and biological aspects of human behaviour in relation to environmental issues. PEP recognizes that individuals *do* consider ethical questions and wider implications of their market transactions for identifiable others and society at large (Söderbaum, 2000a, p. 37). PEP also accommodates the possibility of co-operation on the basis of common interests, and considerations of trust and fairness; rather than the contracts between parties with conflicting interests that characterize neoclassical economic models (Söderbaum, 2000b, p. 442). Indeed, producers of more truly sustainable products are likely to seek a much more pluralist approach, that is, a model of stakeholder relations 'that allows for differences, as well as similarities, among individuals' (Söderbaum, 2000b, p. 438).

Markets, therefore, cannot be interpreted exclusively in terms of supply and demand, but must include the possibility of potential and real conflicts existing between different consumer and producer groups (Perelman, 2003; Bebbington *et al.*, 2007). Acknowledgement of this greatly enhances the potential to achieve a more genuinely 'sustainable' consumption. In so doing, it seems possible that specific subsets in the overall consumer population can take political status and therefore exert political influence.

Söderbaum's PEP has parallels with notions of hybrid 'citizen-consumers' as political subjects oriented to the quest for environmental sustainability. With the notion of citizen-consumers, citizenship is an umbrella concept that encompasses individuals' different roles, which are understood to be different manifestations or versions of 'doing' citizenship. Citizen-consumers could be said to have internalized knowledge about environmental problems, so that being sustainable makes intuitive common sense. This (it is hoped) leads to a personal sense of responsibility and duty that gets expressed through consumption habits *and* forms of community and political action.

Being 'sustainable' is frequently associated with specific acts of consumption involving *non-consumption* of particular resources

and consumables. This understanding of consumption helps counter notions of progress and development, and is about altruistic rather than profit motivations. In these terms, being 'sustainable' is associated more with citizenship than with consumption. This is changing, and consumption and citizenship are being integrated around issues of sustainability (Newton, 2005). Living 'sustainably' is increasingly understood to be about the exercise of responsible and responsive citizenship, of which consumption, involving ethical, fairly traded, and/or 'green' products and technologies for example, is an important aspect (Newton, 2005, p. 32; Schaefer and Crane, 2005).

Notwithstanding, the role of citizenship in promoting environmental sustainability has been under theorized (Spaargaren, 2003; Couldry, 2004; Sen, 2004; Soper, 2004). Couldry (2004, p. 22), for example, argues there is 'lack of dialogue between major discourses on consumption and citizenship, the economy and public life' and a need for 'research agendas (and also policy agendas) that look in unconventional places for connections across those divides'. Soper (2004, p. 112) interprets citizen-consumers as 'individuals whose consumer practices and conceptualizations of "the good life" are inextricably linked to their "citizen" concerns for environmental preservation and sustainability'. She writes:

It is by reference to this profile, which presents the consumer as a reflexive and relatively autonomous agent whose self-interested needs can also come to encompass collective goods that one can advance a case for viewing consumption as potentially . . . emerging as a site of citizenship and political pressure for 'greening' the economy and social policy . . . (Soper, 2004, p. 113)

Citizen-consumers live out sustainable relations in their joint capacities as consumers *and* citizens. We suggest that the appropriation of aspects of consumer society in the representation of sustainability through advertising campaigns makes it possible for the consumer-led society to result in the political empowerment of people as citizen-consumers. Hybrid citizen-consumer practices contribute to different ways of managing and achieving innovations about environmental sustainability, and give rise to different categorizations and manifestations of expertise vis-à-vis matters of science and technology (Newton, 2005).

We therefore suggest that social marketing needs to create a renewed focus on people's capacities as citizens. In other words, sustainability and sustainable consumption may work to challenge consumer sovereignty and create a new ethic of citizenship, embodied in citizen-consumer subjectivities. This is an ambitious outcome. The advertisements presented – coming from government bodies in New Zealand – draw on standardized advertising techniques that, to varying extents, quantify knowledge about sustainability in order to present facts and provide concrete strategies for action. This may be at the expense of equipping people with knowledge to respond in their own ways in light of everyday-life realities. Before examining the advertisements, we first put these in the context of sustainability in New Zealand.

Sustainable 'growth' in New Zealand

New Zealand has a small population (about 4 million) and low population density (15 persons/km²). Its major export earners – agricultural products and tourism (about 20% and 9% of GDP respectively) – have strong associations with the natural

environment. New Zealand has one of the highest rates of renewable energy supply among developed countries, mostly hydro and geothermal; this is 30% of consumer energy (compared with 6% for Australia and the US). The country's oceanic location produces weather conditions which would allow for different sources of renewable energy production (including wind turbines).

New Zealand also has a highly deregulated economic climate following the radical reforms and public-sector restructuring of the mid-1980s (Kelsey, 1995; Bellich, 2001). Frame and Taylor (2005) have observed that this deregulated economic climate perpetuates a lack of benchmarks, targets or other objective means of measuring progress on sustainability (PCE, 2002). The deregulated economic climate has led to some larger companies developing their own approaches to sustainability, frequently supported by market imperatives of (perceived) supply and demand for 'greener' products and services. (These approaches have been documented through corporate social responsibility reports, e.g. Milne *et al.*, 2003; Chapman and Milne, 2004; and Bebbington *et al.*, 2005. Advertising campaigns addressing sustainability issues in general, and sustainable consumption in particular, are often from corporate entities concerned with company image in relation to environmental care or stewardship.)

In addition to radical economic reforms since the 1980s, the political environment in the period under consideration in New Zealand (2000–2006) is configured by a Labour-led coalition government, obligations under the Treaty of Waitangi,¹ a competitive economy driven by agricultural exports but more and more science-led, and changing urban–rural relations due to immigration and urbanization patterns.

Discussion of national identity in New Zealand and its implications for collective ideals regarding environment and place have been discussed elsewhere (Bell, 1997; Dew, 1999; Lunt *et al.*, 2002; Pawson and Brooking, 2002; Liu *et al.*, 2005), as have the ways in which New Zealand has approached issues of sustainable production and consumption (Brown and Stone, 2007; Collins *et al.*, 2007; Narayanaswamy and Stone, 2007).

In New Zealand, national identity is often understood to be epitomized by the brands 'Clean and Green' and '100% Pure', which are used in national marketing campaigns to promote tourism and exports. New Zealanders tend to have a strong sense of the characteristics of their natural environment, and these are reinforced in advertising campaigns depicting New Zealand's 'quintessential' natural character. Understandings of nature and natural character have a basis in New Zealand's relatively recent colonial history, which is about starting anew, and in rural farming life, which has traditionally driven the economy. Such understandings are also associated with having nature 'at your doorstep', affording a range of outdoors activities and establishing sport as an important aspect of everyday life (MSD, 2006). Urbanization has intensified in recent years, allied with growing immigration from the Asia-Pacific region. This fuels demand for land, changes land-use practices, and pushes up real-estate prices and is increasingly to the detriment of productive farming land and New Zealanders'

¹The Treaty of Waitangi, signed in 1840 between the British Crown and Māori, recognized Māori sovereignty over their land and resources as well as British citizenship. Subsequent government administrations did not uphold the Treaty, and in the 1980s, a Treaty of Waitangi Tribunal was established to hear Māori grievances.

sense of abundant space and lifestyles associated with traditional quarter-acre sections (i.e. house plots).

Within this context, the resource usage of cities and settlements has been of increasing concern (Freeman and Thompson-Fawcett, 2003). Research portrays the built environment as consuming a large share of global resources and energy (Keilman, 2003). New Zealand is now considered a global 'hotspot' for household dynamics with a significant increase in household numbers, relative to changes in population. The number of households is forecast to increase by 26% from 2001–2021 (Statistics NZ, 2007). This creates a 'serious challenge to biodiversity conservation' through urban sprawl and resultant higher per capita resource consumption in smaller households (Liu *et al.*, 2003). New Zealand is also behind the UK and many other European countries in terms of sustainable housing technologies. Many houses, including state housing, are under-insulated, have single glazing, and are electricity dependent.² Despite urbanization processes, images (and perceptions) of New Zealand as 'Clean and Green' and '100% Pure' prevail. Advertising campaigns about sustainability seem primarily to be concerned with asserting or recreating these images, more than dealing with sustainability *per se*. This relates to discussion below about a 'ready market' or audience in New Zealand for sustainability.

The national government's commitment to sustainable development principles has been presented through a range of strategies relating to energy efficiency and conservation, biodiversity, solid waste and urban design (PCE, 2002). These reiterated what Agenda 21 recognized about the 'participation and co-operation of local authorities', namely that 'As the level of governance closest to the people, they [local authorities] play a vital role in educating, mobilising and responding to the public to promote sustainable development' (United Nations, 1993, Chapter 2). The New Zealand government's 'Sustainable Development Programme of Action (SDPoA)' (DPMC, 2003) established four priority action areas (cities, water, energy and youth development), while recognizing that government decisions need to consider long-term implications and work in partnership with Māori authorities. Both Agenda 21 and SDPoA expect local government to partner with other sectors, encouraging transparent, participatory processes that consider implications of decisions from global as well as New Zealand perspectives. In particular, the Local Government Act 2002 provides for local authorities to take a 'sustainable development approach' by adopting a long-term view, accounting for social, economic, environmental and cultural effects of decisions, and encouraging participation and partnership through council community plans. Much of the rhetoric around this discourse centres on notions of 'sustainable consumption', which remain unclear and are manifested by local authorities using an *ad hoc* mix of tools. (The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment will be reviewing these programmes in early 2007.)

²The Housing New Zealand Corporation is committed to the principles of sustainable development, and is working towards ensuring that all new state houses meet environmental standards and have installed energy-efficiency measures, such as insulation, to improve tenant health and reduce environmental impacts. In 2004/2005, 2317 state properties were retrofitted with insulation and other energy-efficient features against a target of 2100 (HNZC Annual Report 2004/2005).

The social marketing campaigns considered are an important and highly visible component of this mix. The advertisements function to shift responsibility for environmental care onto citizens and consumers. By constructing people as political subjects, they are making individuals the unit of social change. This intention is consistent with *Agenda 21* principles. As Söderbaum (2000b, p. 439) explains: 'In relation to environment and development issues, especially in the context of Agenda 21 . . . it is appropriate to see individuals as responsible actors with a political purpose'. Advertising campaigns like these help connect structural, macro processes of social and environmental change with micro or interpersonal processes, thereby, mixing bottom-up initiatives with top-down strategies (Frame, 2004). Local government policy, as manifested through the advertising campaigns, is therefore doing some work towards making consumption a space for the exercise of citizenship, whereby individuals as consumers can assume some 'accountability to the world beyond their immediate personal concerns' (Soper, 2004, p. 112). 'Sustainable' politics done in this way, moreover, helps counter negative stereotypes of being sustainable, for example by introducing humour, lightness and fun to issues that may be perceived as too depressing, too serious, or simply too 'alternative'. We now look at specific examples.

Social marketing for more-sustainable practices: some New Zealand examples

Environmental campaigns in New Zealand over recent years provide a rich source of examples of social marketing of sustainability. There appears to be a ready market for the (apparent) 'sustainability' message in terms of New Zealanders' national identity bound up with ideas about pristine 'natural' landscapes. Tourism in New Zealand gains leverage from the sense of wholesome, unpolluted and uncrowded open space that is most commonly marketed internationally. Perceptions of New Zealand as 'clean and green', however, may function as impediments towards proactive citizen-consumer action on sustainability. If New Zealand is understood to be '100% Pure', apparent or emerging problems are more likely interpreted as minor and requiring little or no action on the part of individuals. This perception may, therefore, fuel ignorance and a lack of engagement with sustainability issues and participation in the production of knowledge about sustainability. We argue, nonetheless, that there is potential for New Zealand to derive considerable social (and cultural) capital based on examples of national identity and pride. Social capital is about people's capacities to recognize their natural environment as a common or collective good and 'act together, create synergies and build partnerships' around sustainable use and consumption of that collective good (OECD, 2006). It helps create political capital embodied in citizen-consumers' subjectivities.

'The Big Clean Up' campaign by Auckland Regional Council (ARC, 2006) is one example of local government's social marketing response to increasing concern with the environmental impacts of New Zealand's cities and urban culture. This campaign endorses the capacity of individuals (and businesses) to make relatively simple changes to their behaviour with a view to improving overall sustainability. Auckland, New Zealand's largest city, covers 2% of New Zealand's land area and is home to 1.35 million people (30% of the population). Auckland is regularly

voted a major global lifestyle city; yet it has one of the highest asthma rates in the world (afflicting 12–23% of adults and the fourth-highest cause of hospitalization). World Health Standards for NO₂, CO and fine particulates (PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀) were exceeded for 43 days in 2001 (<http://www.arc.govt.nz>). ARC started to tackle this problem through an innovative campaign in 2000, called '0800-Smokey', which provided a platform for the Big Clean Up as a multitopic campaign over the ensuing years (2001–2005). In turn, the Big Clean Up provided materials for a nationwide campaign connected with the National Waste Strategy. These campaigns are, in effect, encouraging participation by people at the 'local level', and attempting to change citizens' and consumers' attitudes and behaviours in ways which facilitate the service-provider roles of local government (Frame, 2004). They are premised upon an alleged public information deficit concerning sustainability issues (Hobson, 2002).

The '0800-Smokey' campaign created a constituency of support for air quality as a key Auckland issue and used this to reduce institutional barriers, internally at ARC, with key stakeholders (central government and the oil industry) and with the wider community. It attempted to change individual behaviours through peer pressure on stakeholders and citizens, to improve air quality (Fig. 1). If a dirty vehicle exhaust was spotted, the public could call a free phone number to report the registration. More than 55 000 calls and 27 000 vehicles were recorded, with a peak of 1500 calls per day. Unfortunately, statistics do not exist on vehicle numbers tuned as a result, or on overall changes in air quality. However, the campaign did increase Auckland's influence regarding air pollution issues. After the 0800-Smokey campaign, the Ministry of Transport brought out a '10-second rule', enabling the police to instantly fine smoky vehicles. The Ministry of Economic Development reviewed fuel specifications and changed the legislation on fuel quality. ARC pushed fuel improvements even further by getting four major oil companies to produce cleaner diesel before being required to do so by new legislation (Frame, 2004).

The Big Clean Up featured strong marketing images and messages to increase awareness of sustainability issues, including waste management, water and air pollution, and congestion. It was designed to engage individuals and households in sustainable living, especially among the public middle ground – not those already committed to a 'green' lifestyle. The idea was to give people 'simple, everyday actions' to help them be more



Figure 1 '0800-Smokey' campaign by Auckland Regional Council (2001) – reflecting billboard.

sustainable, and people could become members by completing an online questionnaire and receiving a personalized plan. After 1 year, membership was almost one in 10 households. The campaign worked on shock tactics (Fig. 2). New Zealanders were not accustomed to being told publicly that their air was dirtier than London's. This was not the clean, green image of the national 'brand' used to attract tourists. An advertising agency was used, and they gave design time free as the campaign was considered to be so cutting edge that they would benefit from the association. Although ARC considered the campaign successful, questions arise about the campaign's resilience without ongoing investment in expensive multimedia advertising (Frame, 2004).

'Govt3' is a Ministry for the Environment programme conceived under the motto 'walking the talk' to improve the sustainability of central government activities. The '3' stands for the 'three pillars of sustainability': environmental, social and economic. Central government agencies are looking for appropriate and effective ways to demonstrate leadership in this area and to give practical effect to sustainability policies, such as the National Energy Efficiency and Conservation Strategy, the Climate Change Programme and the New Zealand Waste Strategy. The programme 'promotes a "learning by sharing" approach where participating agencies learn from each other's experiences' and demonstrate their activities to different sectors and society at large (Ministry for the Environment, 2006). Posters (Fig. 3) were designed for the Ministry's internal waste minimization programme, which achieved a 66% reduction in waste in 2003/2004 with respect to its Wellington and Christchurch offices. As with the Big Clean Up, these posters were made freely available for use or adaptation by other recycling programmes. The posters are good examples of how aspects of sustainability knowledge have been quantified and re-presented to provide particular meanings for end-users.

As New Zealand is unable to import energy from neighbouring countries (cf. Europe) and is too small to create enough resilience

(cf. Australia or North America), it needs to accommodate fluctuations in demand through hydro-storage schemes that permit generation at times of high demand (winter) with periods of maximum rain and snow melt (spring). Campaigns to get consumers to reduce their energy requirements at times of national need have been implemented when hydro lakes run low after drought. 'Target 10%' (to reduce electricity consumption) arose in May 2003 from a major economic and social crisis due to low hydropower lake levels and forecasts for a long, cold, dry winter. To be successful, the campaign had to deliver key messages with authority and empathy and motivate New Zealanders to take action. There was the prospect of widespread rolling power cuts throughout the winter unless savings could be achieved by both residential and business consumers. The public was incensed after a similar situation 2 years previously, and there was widespread negative media coverage. The Winter Power Task Force was challenged with developing an immediate campaign to deflect widespread negativity and convince a nation of the need for power savings. Using smart strategic and creative thinking, the Target 10% public service campaign talked to many diverse audiences in highly innovative ways (Fig. 4). It achieved success in 6 weeks by significantly increasing the number of people aware and taking action to avert a power crisis (IEA, 2005). The advertising had been done in a humorous way, almost frivolous, to make the message accessible and not too provocative, confrontational or one-sided.

'Keeping New Zealand New' was launched in mid-2005 as the latest in a series of campaigns by Meridian Energy, New Zealand's largest state-owned electricity generator. Meridian Energy is committed to using only renewable resources to generate electricity, which in New Zealand comes from hydro (36%), geothermal (37%) and other renewables (27%; solar, wind, biogas, waste heat and wood), which together make up 30% of total primary energy (i.e. the total energy input into the country, including energy used to make fuels; the rest comes from oil, gas and coal) (Ministry of Economic Development, 2006). Meridian Energy ran two television advertisements with the elements wind and water as themes. Both showed natural landscapes evoked through slow-moving and often close-range images of rivers, fields and vegetation, and set against gentle music; viewers could be watching a nature documentary: what is being advertised is not revealed until the advertiser's identity is disclosed at the end, and it becomes subtly apparent that water and wind are sources for electricity generation.

The Keeping New Zealand New campaign has a subtle subtext about creating (or conserving) a nation that has a distinctly innocent, clean, fresh view on life (Fig. 5). It is a very different message from Meridian Energy's 2004 'Use it wisely' campaign, which used a very jazzy style to indicate the central importance of both consumption and energy usage to contemporary society, both urban and rural.

Inevitably, cleaner production technologies still have non-negligible environmental impacts, albeit of a different character to non-renewable energy technologies. Large hydro developments have major environmental and social impacts, and wind farms can be associated (at least in public perception) with noise disturbance and visual intrusiveness. Lack of clarity in public perception about the nature of sustainability may be due to the issue being of less immediate concern than drunk driving or smoking, for example. This lack of clarity is not confined to the public mind, however; it has its parallels in economic thinking.

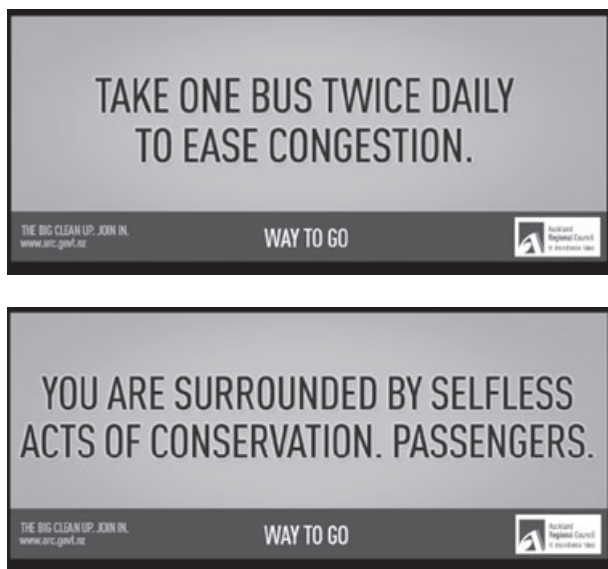


Figure 2 'The Big Clean Up' transport campaign – Auckland Regional Council (2003).



Figure 3 'Govt3' Ministry for the Environment and Greater Wellington Regional Council campaign (2004).



Figure 4 'Target 10%' Winter Power Task Force (2003).



Keeping New Zealand New



Keeping New Zealand New



Figure 5 Electricity campaign – Meridian Energy generator company (May 2005).

Collectively, the above campaigns bring issues of sustainability into the broader, almost omnipresent, discourse of consumption. They show that ‘the greening of domestic consumption’ needs to be understood ‘against the background of the broader societal dynamics in utility provisioning and consumption’ (Spaargaren, 2003, p. 694). Existing consumerism has been configured by the neoclassical approach to economics in New Zealand. But, as Söderbaum (2000b, p. 438) (and many others) notes, ‘neoclassical economics tend to legitimize a development pattern that appears increasingly problematic’. So, while some products take into account considerations of sustainability, they are often tied to concepts of ‘best practice’, which are themselves largely economic, more than social and environmental, constructs.

Sustainable marketing?

The examples of social marketing campaigns by local government in New Zealand in the period 2000–2006 under consideration here tend to present sustainable consumption in factual and instructive terms. The printed advertisements emphasize aspects of sustainability that can be, or have been, quantified. Voluntary change is assumed to be more likely if the reasoning behind taking sustainable actions is made self-evident through public media. This strategy has been adopted for many years in campaigns on road-safety,

alcohol, smoking and substance abuse. While there is literature supporting the notion that these other campaigns are worthy of large amounts from the public purse, there is a clear need to understand the effectiveness of campaigns around sustainable consumption.

The advertising campaigns appear to manage knowledge about sustainability in ways which downplay the uncertainty and experimental processes involved in ‘doing’ sustainability. The advertisements, though, play on social relationships and people’s sense of responsibility to themselves, family members, the natural environment and wider society. Other advertisements studied, such as Contact Energy’s television campaigns ‘Positive-Energy’ and ‘Asthma Week’s (2005) and the Ministry for the Environment’s recycling advertisements (2006), appear to better convey the variability and complexity of ‘doing’ sustainability – which is partly to do with the medium. Sustainability is complex, involving many different people with changing interests, roles and expertise, and trial-and-error processes. It is not easily rationalized or subjected to objective assessment, and is always context dependent. The question is whether sustainability is something too complex and shifting to be advertised successfully through social marketing campaigns by government agencies, or whether its variability and complexity is a source of strength enabling such campaigns to actively enlist people as citizens *and* consumers to broaden understanding of sustainability. In these examples, the government agencies present as experts on sustainability, and sustainable consumption in particular, which goes against acknowledging that citizens and consumers have expertise too in relation to achieving sustainability.

The character of sustainability as an extraordinarily contested concept, subject to multiple interpretation and meanings (Schaefer and Crane, 2005), does not come through strongly in the advertising campaigns. There is the question of whose knowledge about sustainability or definition of sustainable consumption is being represented, and whose knowledge or experience is downplayed or overlooked. Knowledge, rather than information, embodies the particular interests and bias of advertisers because information is commoditized in the knowledge economy. These advertising campaigns are, thus, exercises in knowledge management; that is, the control, use and circulation of information has already been translated into a form the advertisers understand and conveyed to others in ways which elevate their own roles and interests (Sanne, 2002). This knowledge does, nonetheless, interlace with current knowledge and social contexts of the intended (and unintended) audience. As Hobson (2003, pp. 107–108) argues, change is not achieved simply through exposure to scientific knowledge, but through individuals making connections between forms of knowledge that link their own, everyday and experiential environments to broader environmental concerns. This links with concepts of ‘sustainability science’ that are developing around the notion of ‘post-normal science’ (Funtowicz and Ravetz, 1993; Ravetz and Funtowicz, 1999; PCE, 2004).

We suggest that the advertisements work to make sustainable consumption something that is pragmatically led, at the same time as sustainability is embedded within people’s complex modern lives. Hobson (2002, p. 105) observes, ‘the environment is not just about nature, but also the total environment of lived spaces and daily experiences’. So while sustainability may be enforced in these advertisements as a matter of common sense and the ‘right

thing' to do [because the message(s) ultimately comes from 'authoritative' sources], it is also a question of acknowledging how it is politically laden and morally driven.

The intent of the advertising campaigns, even if limited, supports the notion that resolution of environmental and developmental issues is increasingly concerned with behaviour change. Achieving a more socially, ecologically and financially sustainable society requires ideological and attitudinal change, underpinned by political change. To realize this, far greater alignment with power relations is necessary. Improved understanding of how behavioural change can proceed will need new tools to facilitate improved dialogue between individuals, communities, developers and local authorities. This requires far greater interaction across traditional disciplines and categories of expertise than hitherto, which may be perceived by some individuals and institutions as a threat to their interests and established ways of doing things. Opportunities for such behavioural change lie in recent work on public engagement with science and technology, which proposes a '*participatory turn to expertise*' and discusses notions of public and civic expertise (Nowotny, 2000, 2003; Liberatore and Funtowicz, 2003; Backstrand, 2004). A review of these opportunities is beyond the scope of this paper. However, social marketing of sustainability can be a positive first step towards the development of new forms of public understanding and engagement with sustainability. Advertising campaigns have potential to contribute towards constructing individuals as 'citizen-consumers', who can perform as political subjects in participatory arenas.

Concluding comments

This paper contributes to the relatively recent body of knowledge linking consumption with sustainability. We investigated examples of advertising campaigns that have been undertaken with a view towards making sustainability relevant and accessible to people, at the same time as exploring what it means to be a citizen in contemporary New Zealand in light of particular sustainability issues (such as domestic practices and energy usage).

Sustainable use of natural resources and environmental degradation are topical issues in New Zealand, being addressed through local government advertising campaigns. Governments and other advocates of sustainability need to engage with the complexity and contested nature of sustainable consumption to better understand consumption decisions and relationships (or disparities) between people's environmental attitudes and actual behaviours. Far greater understanding is also needed of the political nature of consumer behaviour, as has been pointed out in the area of eco-labelling (Rex and Baumann, 2007). Social marketing campaigns are a possible contribution to more-sustainable practices of citizens and consumers, and draw attention to their limitations. This study accompanies other work on mechanisms to promote behaviour change within communities, such as the Sustainable Households Programme in New Zealand, which aims to change behaviour on waste reduction, resource efficiency and pollution-avoidance actions through evening study groups (Taylor and Allen, in press).

Sustainable consumption is being constructed through advertisements that make reference to people's responsibilities as citizens, as much as their rights as consumers, while satisfying particular interests of the advertisers. In other words, the government advertising campaigns appear to be addressing questions of

citizenship and consumption conjointly, which is a critical starting point for making sustainable consumption a driver for achieving sustainability. The particular adverts analysed do not, however, go far enough to involve individuals in actual processes of co-producing knowledge about sustainability, which would vest them with expertise in relation to exercising sustainability in their day-to-day lives. There is an authoritative dimension to these printed advertisements that confers considerable expertise on the government agencies. Thus, far greater understanding is needed of the political nature of consumer behaviour and how citizens actually respond to advertising campaigns. Other advertisements, for example television campaigns and those by corporate bodies, may operate differently and have different effects.

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