



# '1L=10L for Africa': Corporate social responsibility and the transformation of bottled water into a 'consumer activist' commodity

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## Abstract

In recent years, it has become an increasingly common marketing practice to connect the sale of consumer products to corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, such as aid and development projects in so-called 'developing' countries. One example is Volvic's pioneering '1L=10L for Africa' campaign (2005–2010), which linked the sale of each liter of bottled water in 'developed' countries with the promise by Danone, Volvic's owner, to provide 10 liters of drinking water in Africa. In this article, we engage with this 'cause-related marketing' campaign, using critical discourse analysis (CDA) to uncover its mechanisms and ideological functioning. We show how Volvic was able to transform an ordinary commodity, bottled water, into a consumer activist brand through which consumers could take part in solving global social problems, such as the access to safe drinking water in 'developing' countries. Our analysis of this exemplary case shows the ways that CSR often operates to deflect ethical critiques, consolidate brand loyalty and corporate profits, and defuse political struggles around consumption. By doing so, we suggest that CSR forms part of a complex strategy deployed to legitimize particular brands and commodities. In this way CSR can be seen as playing an important role in the ideological makeup of contemporary consumer capitalism.

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## Keywords

Bottled water, branding, consumer activism, consumer capitalism, corporate social responsibility, marketing

## Introduction

Access to safe drinking water and water scarcity are two of the world's most pressing problems. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2013), there are still more than 1 billion people without access to potable water, the vast majority located in 'developing' countries. In parallel, the bottled water industry has been increasingly criticized for its negative environmental and health impacts (Ecologist, 2007; Mercola, 2011; Which?, 2008). Perhaps partly because of such criticisms, and market saturation, the industry has been facing lower growth figures in recent years, especially in Western 'developed' countries – for example, only 1.3% growth in Western Europe, against 35.8% in global volume sales between 2006 and 2011 (Zenith International, 2012). This is a serious problem given that most of the bottled water industry's revenues and profits still come from Western 'developed' countries, where per capita consumption rates are around 120 liters per person compared to 20 liters per person in Asia and 10 in Africa, and premium brands command higher sales margins than in 'developing' countries (Zenith International, 2012).

One way in which the bottled water industry has responded to the dual challenge of market saturation and increased criticism is the creation of cause-related marketing campaigns (Ethical Consumer, 2009), which is an increasingly common type of corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategy. One high profile and early pioneering example of this type of CSR/cause-related marketing strategy was delivered by Volvic, one of the many water brands owned by the French multinational company Danone, between 2005 and 2010; this was the '1L=10L' (also called 'Drink 1, Give 10') campaign carried out in partnership with UNICEF and other aid and development charities, such as World Vision in the UK. 'The idea behind the program [was] that for each liter of mineral water sold, Volvic [would provide] 10 liters of drinking water to village dwellers in Ethiopia' (Danone, 2010a) and other African countries. In other words, the sale of bottled water was linked to a specific cause: the lack of access to drinking water in parts of Africa. This cause-related marketing campaign was launched in Germany in 2005, and subsequently expanded to many 'developed' countries, including Japan, the USA, Canada and most Western European countries, where it ran until 2010.

Danone (2010a, 2010b) regarded this cause-related marketing/CSR campaign as highly successful because it significantly contributed to sales growth between 2005 and 2010. Just as important for Danone managers is the fact that consumers now increasingly perceive the Volvic brand as 'environmentally conscious' (IPC Media, 2010). This is significant given the widespread criticisms, mentioned above, of the negative environmental and health impacts of bottled water consumption, particularly between 2007 and 2009, which coincided with the peak of Volvic's '1L=10L' campaign (Ecologist, 2007; Which?, 2008).

In this article, we critically engage with Volvic's cause-related marketing campaign building on the growing body of studies focusing on CSR (Googins et al., 2007; Kotler and Lee, 2005; Porter and Kramer, 2002; Shaw, 2007; Ziek, 2009). We are particularly interested in the fact that CSR strategies increasingly view 'the poor' and their social problems as opportunities rather than threats. We suggest that Volvic's campaign was characterized by the aim of transforming an arguably ordinary commodity, bottled water, into a 'consumer activist' brand, which could help to solve the social problem of the lack of access to safe drinking water in 'developing' countries. This transformation occurs when 'conscientious consumers' (Kendall et al., 2007) buy Volvic water, and can be viewed as a typical phenomenon of modern consumerism (Gabriel and Lang, 1995). In this article, we analyze this marketing strategy using critical discourse analysis (CDA), showing the mechanisms through which Volvic became a 'socially responsible' or 'good' consumer product, and discussing how Danone boosted sales by portraying itself as being part of the solution to global social problems.

Volvic's campaign should not be seen in isolation. It was one of the first of its type within the bottled water industry, but is only one example of a wider development that has seen many (particularly Western multinational) companies use CSR (Snider et al., 2003) and closely related discourses, such as business ethics (Shaw, 2007), corporate citizenship (Googins et al., 2007), corporate philanthropy (Porter and Kramer, 2002), cause-related marketing (Kotler and Lee, 2005) and other social marketing discourses. These discourses often claim to be 'doing good to do good' (Banerjee, 2007: 15), particularly in relation to delivering aid and development in so-called 'developing' countries (Böhm and Brei, 2008). What is often common to these corporate discourses is the view that 'doing good' pays off. That is, it is not only 'good' for stakeholders that companies, as 'good corporate citizens', take their social responsibility seriously, but it is also good for shareholders. Hence, CSR is increasingly seen as a form of investment that allows firms – such as bottled water companies – to legitimate their products and processes, sustaining and enhancing competitive advantage and shareholder value.

The pitfalls of CSR, however, have not gone unnoticed. There is now a growing literature that critically engages with CSR discourses (Banerjee, 2007, 2008; Crouch, 2006; Fleming and Jones, 2013; Marens, 2010; Mir et al., 2008; Shamir, 2004; Snider et al., 2003). With the help of critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995, 2003; Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012; Fairclough and Wodak, 1997; Van Dijk, 2001; Wodak, 2004), we contribute to this critical literature by providing an in-depth analysis of Volvic's CSR discourse. We argue that the '1L=10L for Africa' campaign is an example of a marketing discourse that increasingly connects companies to (often global) social problems. Through the process of problematizing (a negative movement), Volvic was able to sensitize its customers, encouraging them to view buying a bottle of water as a positive step towards helping disadvantaged people in the 'third world'. Hence, Volvic aimed to turn regular customers into consumer activists through the sale of its branded water. We argue that this transformation of what is essentially an ordinary commodity, bottled water, into a consumer activist brand is helping companies to actively involve their 'conscientious consumers' and bind them to their brands. Politically, this CSR campaign is part of a wider discursive shift from government to governance, which has seen corporations, often in cooperation with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), increasingly taking

on global social problems, such as poverty and health issues, which hitherto used to be the responsibilities of governments. We argue, however, that the short-termism involved in CSR campaigns such as Volvic's renders this shift ineffective and even dangerous. Going further, we argue that Volvic's cause-related marketing campaign can be seen as an example of the ideological functioning of contemporary consumer capitalism, which allows companies to grow their profits on the back of global social problems, such as access to safe drinking water in the so-called 'developing world'.

The main body of this article is organized into five parts. In the next section, we introduce the concept of CSR and discuss its two major research streams. In the second section, we describe our methodological approach. Then, in the following three sections, we present our in-depth critical discourse analysis (CDA) of Volvic's campaign, providing a textual analysis, a process analysis and a social analysis. We conclude by discussing the wider implications of our critique of CSR and cause-related marketing strategies.

## **Corporate social responsibility (CSR)**

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has become a very well known and widely used term in academia and business, as well as in governmental and non-governmental sectors. It can be seen as an umbrella term that encompasses a range of ethical discourses and practices, such as business ethics (Shaw, 2007), corporate philanthropy (Porter and Kramer, 2002) and corporate citizenship (Googins et al., 2007). Authors from a variety of academic disciplines have engaged with CSR, including organization and management studies (Campbell, 2007; Nielsen and Thomsen, 2010), communication and marketing studies (Kotler and Lee, 2005; Ziek, 2009), international relations (Blowfield, 2005), political theory (Palazzo and Scherer, 2008; Vallentin and Murillo, 2012) and political economy (Gjølberg, 2009), to name but a few.

The concept of CSR has been evolving since the 1930s (Carroll, 1999), but there is still little agreement about what it actually means and what precise actions it entails, despite a wide variety of attempts to define it (e.g. Crouch, 2006; Dahlsrud, 2008; Garriga and Melé, 2004; Roberts, 2003; Schwartz and Carroll, 2003; Wan-Jan, 2006). Broadly speaking, however, CSR can be categorized into two streams. The first and widest – going beyond companies' most immediate stakeholders – is sustained by institutions such as the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), which sees CSR as the continuing commitment by businesses to contribute to economic development and, simultaneously, improve the quality of life of the workforce, their families, the community and society at large (WBCSD, 2010), as well as 'distant others' (Ponte et al., 2009). The key point about this 'societal approach' (Marrewijk, 2003) is that the wider societal aims of development and well-being are seen as part of the CSR agenda. This view is supported not only by international organizations, but also by marketing authors (e.g. Kotler and Lee, 2005, 2008, 2009; Polonsky and Wood, 2001), organization and management scholars (e.g. Kok et al., 2001; Snider et al., 2003), and others (e.g. Palazzo and Scherer, 2008). Such scholars see the emergence of CSR as part of a broader historical shift from government to governance (Rosenau and Czempiel, 1992) involving a new political role for corporations (Scherer and Palazzo, 2011).

The second stream of CSR is more focused on corporate aims. It claims that a firm's financial performance depends on positive 'stakeholder management'; that is, successful cooperation with stakeholders and not just company shareholders (Campbell, 2007; Carroll, 1991; Crouch, 2006; Greenwood, 2007; Klick, 2009). This 'stakeholder approach' – which sees itself as overcoming the classical 'shareholder approach' (Marrewijk, 2003) – has been particularly prominent in the business and management literatures. These more instrumental studies of CSR have focused more on the strategic implications of CSR for corporations and less on the effects of CSR in society (Banerjee, 2007, 2008). This is supported by the view that corporations are more likely to engage directly with CSR discourses and run concrete CSR projects if there are immediate benefits in terms of profits (Crouch, 2006). The fact that CSR can be shown to contribute to profits and shareholder value explains why corporate involvement in aid and development projects has emerged as a powerful corporate discourse in the last few decades (e.g. Hopkins, 2007; Kytte and Ruggie, 2005; Porter and Kramer, 2002).

The notion that corporations can do well by doing good has been particularly emphasized by marketing authors who have urged firms to link consumption with specific ethical, social or sustainability causes (Adkins, 1999; Kotler and Lee, 2005, 2008, 2009). The purpose of this movement towards CSR and cause-related marketing is straightforward: consumers prefer companies that are linked to specific CSR causes and will choose such companies' brands over those that do not run CSR campaigns (Adkins, 1999; Kotler and Lee, 2005, 2008, 2009). This leads some authors to maintain that CSR is simply a (management) fashion geared towards selling more goods and services (Crouch, 2006). In this view, CSR should be seen as a depoliticizing marketing practice (Nickel and Eikenberry, 2009) that aims to cement the role and power of corporate actors, rather than deliver real improvements to people and communities, particularly in the so-called 'developing' world. In short, the apparent move of CSR beyond the 'bottom line' of shareholder value is often done with the very clear purpose of improving that same 'bottom line' (Banerjee, 2007; Shamir, 2004).

The pitfalls of CSR have not gone unnoticed in the different literatures. There is now a significant body of very critical engagements with this emerging discourse (Banerjee, 2007, 2008; Boje, 2008; Fleming and Jones, 2013; Hanlon and Fleming, 2009; Roberts, 2003; Shamir, 2004), arguing that CSR is increasingly part of the problem, rather than the solution (Sklair and Miller, 2010). Some authors remain at a level of internal critique, showing that half-hearted CSR campaigns are not effective (Snider et al., 2003). Others go further, arguing that CSR is just another management fashion (Crouch, 2006) that supports wider corporate and capitalist ideologies (Fleming and Jones, 2013). This leads Marens (2010) to claim that modern CSR scholarship is irrelevant, due to its failure to either articulate a realistic normative position or adequately study its subject. Authors working within a post-colonial perspective argue that CSR campaigns in 'developing countries' often have disastrous impacts on non-elite communities in the South (Banerjee, 2007, 2008; Mir et al., 2008; Shamir, 2004).

Authors who have studied CSR campaigns in very concrete empirical cases often put forward the most devastating critiques of its actual impact on workers, local communities and other stakeholders. Kramer et al. (2012: 846), for example, show how 'CSR literally and figuratively became a weapon used by the corporation to counter the resistance

movement'. Such evidence leads Campbell (2012) to argue that CSR is often a short-term corporate strategy that attempts to mask and silence historical struggles that exist in communities and countries. Rather than actively helping to deal with the social, environmental and economic issues, CSR campaigns that try to respond to and engage with these struggles blur the lines of accountability and responsibility between public and private actors. Let us now turn to our empirical case study, which aims at understanding the workings of CSR in more detail and analyzes a specific cause-related bottled water marketing campaign.

## Method

Volvic, Danone's best-selling bottled water brand, is sold in more than 60 countries around the world. However, the company's '1L=10L for Africa' campaign, which ran between 2005 and 2010, was only directed at some of the most 'developed' countries, namely the USA, Canada, France, Japan, the UK, Ireland and Switzerland, as well as Germany, where the campaign was first launched (UNICEF, 2012). So, our first methodological decision was to focus the data collection on these eight countries. After analyzing Volvic's campaign and Danone's websites in these countries, we realized there were five main actors involved in the campaign. These were first, the multinational company Danone and its bottled water brand Volvic; second, UNICEF, the world-leading international children's organization, which is active in over 150 countries and addresses 'the ongoing issues that affect why kids are dying' (UNICEF, 2012); third, other local NGO partners, such as World Vision in the UK; fourth, the Western consumers targeted by Volvic's campaign; and fifth, the people in the six African countries (Ethiopia, Niger, Ghana, Malawi, Mali and Zambia) who benefited from the campaign, receiving wells and other means of accessing safe drinking water.

We established as our main sampling target the textual material produced by the first three actors (Volvic/Danone, UNICEF and the partnering NGOs). We recognize the importance of access to the fourth and fifth major actors, as this would have allowed us to conduct our process analysis better – that is, the reception or consumption of texts can only be directly accessed by analyzing how both Western consumers and African beneficiaries perceived the campaign. Unfortunately, collecting primary data from consumers in eight different 'developed' countries and local people of six different African beneficiary countries was impossible due to time and resource constraints. This lack of access to the fourth and fifth categories of actors is clearly a limitation of our research.

Altogether, we collected 257 web pages, 129 pictures and 102 minutes of video material from the first three major actors. Our major sources for this data were advertising databases, newspapers, magazines and, most of all, internet sources. We had no positivist ambitions to gain comprehensive access to all available campaign material, even if this had been possible. However, we aimed to triangulate our data with that obtained from other sources available on the internet (research companies, academic and professional databases, etc.) and local data about the campaign gathered in two of the eight consumer countries. So, for example, we obtained sample Volvic bottles sold in retail stores, took photos of Volvic's street ads and interviewed some consumers in order to check the consistency of our corpus of data. In accordance with discourse theory and following Fairclough's (2003) guidelines,

our corpus of data was treated as text (Phillips and Hardy, 2002) and analyzed using Atlas.ti software.

We chose critical discourse analysis as our methodological strategy because CDA has been developed for studying connections between language and wider power relations, and for critically understanding the ideological representations and discursive symbols that constitute society (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997; Van Dijk, 2001; Wodak, 2004). For Fairclough (1995), representations of the world are always also instruments of ideology, power and domination. Hence, ideology should not be understood simply as a synonym for 'world view'. Instead, CDA analyzes ideology as a means through which social relations of power are reproduced.

CDA is directed toward analysis of the ideological effects of texts, considering the diverse ways in which such texts may be interpreted and responded to. This necessarily includes an analysis of the exercise, reproduction and negotiation of power relations, understanding them as ideological processes and struggles (Van Dijk, 1998). Thus, the 'denaturalization' of ideologies is a major objective of CDA (Fairclough, 1995), aiming to reveal the social, political and economic assumptions in discourses and texts (Vaara et al., 2010). The process of denaturalization involves showing how social structures determine properties of discourse, and how discourse in turn determines social structures. For Fairclough (1995: 73), this process requires a 'global' explanatory framework that comprises micro and macro stances of analysis, showing how discourse is shaped by social and ideological structures and vice versa. This is what Foucault (1969, 1971) calls 'orders of discourse'.

Following Fairclough's (1995, 2003) three-level CDA methodological framework, we carried out a textual analysis, focusing on the linguistic micro-processes and functions of the text, basing our interpretation on the text's lexical and grammatical choices, which are placed and considered in the pragmatic context of the text (Vaara et al., 2010). To carry out this textual analysis, we first collected all sampled material. Second, we read, transcribed and analyzed all material, categorizing texts, images and videos, and collected objects in major categories associated with Volvic's discourse (e.g. social activism, institutional partners, the representation of beneficiaries, marketing strategy, campaign figures, Volvic's products, medium of exposition, sponsorship, etc.). Third, we ranked the texts, based on their individual relevance, considering exposition, publisher and reach. So, for example, a campaign item on Danone's home page was highly ranked compared with an item on a page that required substantial navigation around the website (as a proxy of audience probability, since we did not have Danone's website audience data). Last, we built a discourse 'tree', identifying core and secondary arguments. This allowed us to carry out a micro-level linguistic analysis, but it also helped us at the broader level of process and social analysis. Although the micro-level linguistic analysis is largely descriptive and aims at getting insight into the richness of the empirical base, it is a cornerstone of our CDA of Volvic's campaign. This is because texts are capable of circulating and 'hegemonizing' particular ideologies and common-sense thinking (Van Dijk, 1998). Methodologically, this means that discourses are connected to ideologies through the assumptions embedded in texts (Wodak, 2004).

After the textual analysis, we developed a process analysis in which we connected the micro-level analysis across different texts, analyzing their discursive practices, including

the production and interpretation of texts, that is, how texts are received. At this stage, we compared the campaign structure across the various countries, trying to understand the constitution, distribution and interpretation of the order of discourse. Finally, we carried out a social analysis studying the Volvic campaign as a discursive event involving wider social, cultural, symbolic and economic practices. As emphasized by Luke (2002) and Vaara et al. (2010), it was important for us to go back and forth between micro-analyses of texts and macro-analyses of social formations, institutions, power relations and ideology.

It is important to note here that we view the Volvic campaign as a social practice which articulates different elements: action and interaction, social relations, persons, the material world and discourse (Fairclough, 2003). It constitutes a particular and actual discursive event, showing the production, reproduction and transformation of existing social and power relations, which produces specific effects of ideological control and hegemonic domination over alternative practices (Fairclough, 1995). Based on Foucault (1969, 1971) and Fairclough and Fairclough (2012), we have analyzed Volvic's campaign not as a discursive strategy, but as a CSR marketing strategy that has a significant discursive dimension. More importantly, we consider Volvic's campaign as part of a historical process of discursive and non-discursive (material) actors constituting a discourse that produces specific subjectivities and institutional arrangements that people, consumers, organizations and companies are part of.

## **Volvic's '1L=10L for Africa' campaign: A textual analysis**

After briefly introducing Volvic's campaign and its major actors, our textual analysis addresses the main aspects of this CSR marketing campaign in terms of types of meaning (action, representation, identification); genres, discourses and styles; chains of text; and genre mixing and inter-discursive analysis (Fairclough, 2003).

### *Overview of the campaign*

Volvic's '1L=10L for Africa' campaign began in Germany in 2005 and then expanded to France and Switzerland in 2006, Japan and the UK/Ireland (which Volvic treated as one local market) in 2007, and the USA and Canada in 2008.<sup>1</sup> For each of these individual markets, Volvic adopted a similar campaign strategy: (1) only relatively mature bottled water markets in 'developed' countries were chosen; (2) for each 'developed' country, one or a few corresponding benefiting African countries were selected, often those with close ex-/post-colonial relationships to the patron country of the West; (3) for each of the 'developed' countries, Volvic launched a specific website in the local language and selected a celebrity as spokesperson/godparent; (4) Volvic also applied strong media support by sponsoring athletes and deploying mass advertising in public places, such as buses, taxis, bus stops, billboards, magazines, newspapers; and (5) in most countries, Volvic also teamed up with inter-governmental NGOs or enterprises that wanted to become associated with the campaign. There were a few local adaptations among the individual campaigns, but all followed one common persuasive argument: for every 1 liter of Volvic bottled water purchased (no matter what bottle size, format, price, flavor,



**Figure 1.** Volvic + UNICEF brochure.

Original source: <http://www.drink1give10.com> (brochure is not available anymore)

or even the type of drink, which in some countries included Volvic's fruit juices and tea), the company promised to generate 10 liters of drinking water in Africa.

### *Types of meaning*

Texts are multi-functional because they influence ways of acting, ways of representing and ways of being. As Fairclough emphasizes (2003: 27), one can often see these so-called 'types of meaning' (action, representation and identification) emerging in small parts of a text, as well as in the wider textual body. In this section, we describe the interplay among the micro-texts that together build the overall campaign's meaning.

The discourse created through Volvic's texts followed a similar generic structure. First, they presented African poverty, showing images of very dry places, poor villages, and mothers and children, usually portrayed as helpless and passive (see Figure 1). Adult men were rarely shown, except in testimonials about the (hard) situation before the campaign, such as extracting or transporting water from old wells (see Figure 2). After representing African poverty, Volvic's texts then presented a comparison of figures about the average water consumption of an inhabitant of a 'developed' country and an inhabitant of a 'developing' country, directly creating negative emotional feelings. For example, in the French campaign Volvic's advertisement stated that 'one French inhabitant consumes 10 times more water on a daily basis than a Saharan inhabitant' (Volvic, 2009). The solution proposed to solve this cruel reality was found not only in Volvic's texts, but in the texts of all involved actors: the '1L=10L for Africa' campaign (repeated in all communication), followed by a brief explanation of how it worked and why it was important.

The shared solution (i.e. the campaign) was structured around the idea of partnership among the actors involved. Volvic's logo was always shown with the UNICEF logo,



**Figure 2.** Man transporting water (Volvic campaign picture).

Original source: <http://www.beverage.co.jp/volvic/>

which was generally followed by naming UNICEF's relationship with the United Nations. The Volvic and UNICEF logos were printed together on flags, car doors, wells, brochures, etc. (see Figure 1 for an example). In some cases, celebrity endorsement and partnership with another NGO was also emphasized, especially in online videos celebrating Volvic's successful water extraction in Africa. Next, the texts showed the happiness (documented in videos and/or pictures) brought to poor villages and their inhabitants (mainly mothers and children), thanks to the wells sponsored by the Volvic campaign. Finally, the texts concluded with figures about the millions of liters of water that had already been extracted due to the campaign. Of course, the amount of information presented varied depending on the marketing instrument (i.e. there was less information in taxis than on websites).

Analyzing the 'typical' generic structure of the campaign texts presented here, one can clearly identify the two main sets of people involved: those who help – white consumers from 'developed' countries, who have money and purchasing power, and those to be helped – black Africans, especially children and women, who lack not only water but also wealth, happiness, etc. The texts implied a social relation based on one action, as shown in Figure 3: the white hands of a consumer opening a bottle (action) of Volvic, which then creates happiness in a black African child (identification).

The actions involved, either explicitly (i.e. opening the bottle) or implicitly (i.e. buying the bottle, drinking Volvic), were followed by an identification formula: 'buy Volvic = water provision to African children = happiness'. This very basic formula was materialized using different texts, images and sounds throughout the various campaign texts, such as advertisements (Figure 3), websites (Figure 4), bottle labels (Figure 5) and brochures (Figure 6). They all clearly associated happiness with water provision (Figures 3 and 6) and sadness with lack of water (Figures 1 and 4).

The association between Volvic water and (especially children's) happiness was sustained through different identification efforts. Because international organizations such as UNICEF and NGOs usually have better reputations than private companies, the texts made a strong effort to identify these institutional partnerships. As noted above, Volvic's name and logo were constantly shown together with those of partner NGOs such as



**Figure 3.** Volvic's campaign advertising.

Original source: <http://www.beverage.co.jp/volvic/>

World Vision Team (Figure 4) and UNICEF (Figures 1, 5 and 6). The constant and repeated preoccupation with creating feelings of connection among the actors involved (Volvic, UNICEF, NGOs and customers) was evident in the reiteration of the actors' names throughout the campaign texts and the core campaign logo: 'together we can make a difference' (see Figures 1 and 6). The texts tried to downplay the importance of the money Volvic earned by selling its bottled water. Instead, they highlighted the number of liters of drinking water generated in Africa (see Figure 4) or the number of beneficiaries.

To sum up, the campaign texts simultaneously represented aspects of the world (the physical representation of the campaign's major actors, their social positions and the mental states involved – happiness, sadness, guilt, etc.). They also enacted social relations between participants ('help', 'support', 'together'), coherently and cohesively connecting parts of texts (the message changing according to the 'publisher') and associating them with situational contexts (either 'buy' or 'support'). Thus, the different types of meanings in the texts made connections between the real world and more subtle, abstract social practices (Fairclough, 2003; Halliday, 1978, 1994). But our understanding of these connections is not complete without analyzing how different genres, discourses and styles were articulated in the campaign discourse.

### *Genres, discourses, styles*

While genres are different ways of (inter)acting, discourses are ways of representing and are part of social practices. These representations can be of the material world, of other social practices, or reflexive self-representations of the practice under analysis (Fairclough, 2003: 26). In Volvic's campaign, the most used genre, or set of genres, was advertising, strongly supported by other marketing tools within a multi-faceted framework: (1) in each local consumer market, a dedicated website presented a very detailed description of the campaign, its beneficiaries, partners, spokespersons, etc. (e.g. see Figure 4); (2) a less used tool or genre included corporate publications and specialized



**Figure 4.** Volvic campaign's UK website.

Source: <http://www.volvic1for10.co.uk/>



**Figure 5.** Volvic French bottle label.

Original source: [http://water-label.pagesperso-orange.fr/html/volvic\(clairvic7\).htm](http://water-label.pagesperso-orange.fr/html/volvic(clairvic7).htm)

media reports, not so easily accessible and sometimes not available in the mass media; (3) Volvic also used different mass media communication tools, such as TV programs, newspaper/magazine articles and advertisements, press releases, videos, and testimonials from consumers and beneficiaries broadcast on the internet. Volvic's campaign obtained significant mass media exposure, as shown on its [www.drink1give10.com](http://www.drink1give10.com) website (which was active at the time but is no longer so); (4) there were also more locally targeted adverts, such as outdoor advertisements in major cities such as Paris and Chicago, displayed on large billboards, taxis, buses and public telephone booths, in bus shelters, as well as in or near supermarkets; (5) the design of the bottle labels was very similar everywhere: on the front part of the bottles there was the Volvic name, images of volcanoes (a historical association with Volvic's source region) and some text explaining that it was mineral water, plus a small reference to the Volvic '1L=10L' campaign. On the sides and back of the label there was usually a more detailed explanation of the campaign, which varied slightly depending on the size of the bottle and the market where it was sold (see Figure 5); (6) the packs of Volvic bottles also served as communication devices – they were used to announce how many liters of drinking water were generated

when anyone bought a pack ( $6 \times 1.5\text{L}$  pack = 90 liters;  $6 \times 1\text{L}$  pack = 60 liters;  $6 \times 50\text{cl}$  pack = 30 liters); and (7) retailers also supported the campaign by displaying large posters in their stores, stating how many liters of drinking water would be generated if a consumer bought Volvic.

Discourse also figures alongside bodily behavior in constituting particular ways of being, especially in relation to social or personal identities which constitute a style (Fairclough, 2003: 26). In Volvic's campaign this style was expressed through the act of giving, which connected to a well-established social identity in many Western countries, one that emphasizes the importance of charity, donation, philanthropy and giving to those in need. This style/identity was represented in a range of marketing materials in the Volvic campaign and was supported significantly by teaming up with UNICEF and other respected aid and development organizations, which created a sense of activism and urgency about the campaign. It was precisely the wider urgency of the need to help poor African communities that helped to create wide media interest in the different national consumer markets.

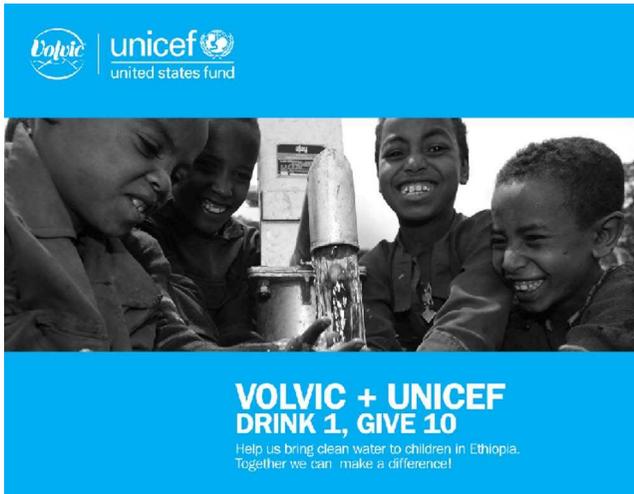
### *Genre mixing and inter-discursive analysis*

The relationship between texts and genres is potentially complex, as a text may not be 'in' a single genre; it may mix or hybridize genres. For example, in the Volvic campaign UNICEF left its traditional genre of informative communication about children's rights, health, nutrition, education, treatment improvements, and related statistical data about these subjects, to communicate with Western consumers through the persuasive set of genres of marketing and advertising. This mix of genres materialized, for example, through the creation of joint websites (e.g. <http://www.volvic-unicef.fr/>) and co-branded brochures etc. by Volvic and UNICEF (see Figures 1 and 6). This can be seen as a form of prospective inter-discursivity (Fairclough, 2003), a blurring of genre frontiers that sometimes makes it difficult to identify which genre (or set of genres) of text one is dealing with – a private company's persuasive marketing/advertising or a transnational not-for-profit organization's informative communication.

Such genre mixing can be framed as what Fairclough (2003) terms 'genres of governance', which are characterized by specific properties of recontextualization. For Bernstein (1990), Fairclough (2003) and Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999), recontextualization is the substitution of one social practice with another, transforming the process in particular ways. One should note that each time UNICEF or any other participant NGO used a set of advertising genres in the Volvic campaign, they appropriated this marketing practice and changed their social realities. Such genres of governance recontextualized these organizations' core organizational goals and practices, approximating them to private, profit organizations, at least in their exposed discourse.

### *Chains of text*

Volvic's campaign involved 'movements of meaning' (Silverstone, 1999), 'chains of text' or mediation (Fairclough, 2003), that is, separate texts that recontextualize one another, generating movement or creating meaning in socially significant ways. Thus,



**Figure 6.** Volvic + UNICEF brochure.

*Original source:* <http://www.drink1give10.com> (brochure is not available anymore)

one can distinguish different discourses, which are different ideas of the same realities.<sup>2</sup> Our analysis of the various types of texts shows that the campaign established a chain that was constituted and recontextualized by the different actors' texts in all the local markets. For example, the three main actors (Danone/Volvic, UNICEF and the NGOs) involved in the '1L=10L for Africa' campaign all had clearly different organizational objectives or perspectives; but by being part of this specific campaign, they all supported one and the same sales argument: buying Volvic is good because this act of consumption generates drinking water for poor African communities. Despite this common argument, the actors' types of texts are different, recontextualizing each other depending on (1) who was the major publisher and (2) where the message was shown.

When Volvic was the publisher, we found typical persuasive marketing/advertising texts shown in Volvic's own communication channels (website, bottles, etc.). In these types of texts, UNICEF's or NGOs' names and logos were either not presented or were less salient, and the discourse was focused on the campaign's core intention: one should buy a bottle of water (action) in order to make a connection to the other person in Africa (as shown in Figure 3). When the publisher of the text was an NGO or UNICEF, the types of text were different. They presented indirect appeals and used different language – not that associated with the typical marketing texts, but more related to non-governmental and international organizations' communication. For example, Figures 1 and 6 both show joint brochures featuring the Volvic–UNICEF partnership. In these brochures, the core intention is masked; they do not mention the action of buying. Instead, they present more subtle representations of such actions and identifications involved in the campaign.

Similar differences can be observed about the identification of the actors and the campaign itself. For example, in the NGO and UNICEF communications, Volvic's

consumer was not treated as a customer but as an ‘ambassador’. Likewise, the same core actors recontextualized the campaign as a ‘program’ (see Figure 1) and as a ‘project’ (Figure 4). Connections among the organizations involved were represented not as a commercial partnership, but as a ‘team’ (Figure 4). The ‘program’ success depended on actions, and these were rarely represented through the action of ‘buying’ (Volvic’s bottles), but to ‘support’ (Figure 1), to ‘drink’, to ‘give’ (see Figure 6), framing the buyer as a consumer activist. Instead of connecting the actions of buying/giving/supporting to a financial/commercial success and Volvic’s profits, the partners’ texts recontextualized the campaign’s financial success in terms of the ‘enormous impact on children’s lives’ (Figure 1).

The chain of texts is even more visibly different when the persuasive message and/or images stimulating and guiding the customer on how to participate were shown. Volvic’s marketing, advertising language, focused on persuasive messages that tried to create negative feelings of guilt and shock, associating them with contemporary concerns for aid, philanthropy, ethics, sustainability and development. But, despite such efforts, the core idea was always explicitly shown: buy Volvic! The UNICEF and NGO communications borrowed a similar structure of argument from Volvic, but their core stimulus to participation was not focused on the act of buying the products. Instead, their persuasive message was a call to action, to ‘get involved’ (Figure 4), and that ‘converting at least one person to Volvic, you will have an enormous impact on children’s lives’ (Figure 1).

In short, the multiple communication channels applied in the campaign (TV ads, press releases, website, taxi and bus ads, billboards, signs at bus stops, newspapers, magazines, etc.) created a network, a chain of texts that needed to be adapted, recontextualized depending on the media vehicle, the publisher, the local actors and the target country. Different genres were used, requiring a systematic transformation from genre to genre, building a single campaign, operationalized differently to adapt to local social practices. Each actor produced their own type of text, focusing on their specific organizational goals, but with the same core argument (i.e. buy Volvic). This globally orchestrated campaign (to be analyzed in the next section) enhanced the actors’ capacity (especially Volvic’s capacity) to ‘act at a distance’, a key defining feature of globalization that facilitates the exercise of power (Fairclough, 2003).

In summary, the textual analysis of the field data shows that Volvic’s CSR marketing strategy helped to constitute, and at the same time was part of, a specific order of discourse. This discourse involves both discursive and non-discursive (material) dimensions of strategic action (Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012). We now move on to the process analysis, which explains the production and reception of this order of discourse.

## **The production and interpretation of Volvic’s discourse: A process analysis**

Having presented the main textual analysis of Volvic’s ‘1L=10L for Africa’ campaign, it is now important to analyze how the different textual elements hang together to produce an overall order and discourse. That is, the question now is how the campaign’s discourse

was produced and received – how the discursive practices ‘bring the community and its behavior into play’ (Vaara et al., 2010: 688).

Looking at the textual data presented earlier, and despite some differences between the different texts and types of texts, it is quite reasonable to conclude that the production of the campaign was globally orchestrated. There are important data that support such a conclusion: all target markets/consumers were located in high income, ‘developed’ countries, which are the main income and profit-generating markets for Danone, one of the world’s leading food-oriented multinational companies. Their importance as markets is attested by the fact that the company went to great lengths to develop individual marketing and communication tools tailored to the local characteristics of each ‘developed’ country (a brief summary of the marketing strategies adopted in the different countries is shown in Table 1).

Like production, consumption is a highly political act that may result in the reproduction of initial or intended meanings or lead to very different kinds of views and actions. It is consumption that ultimately determines whether the ‘force potential’ of a text will be realized (Fairclough, 1992: 82), that is, what the text will accomplish socially (Vaara et al., 2010). Analyzing the consumption or reception of Volvic’s campaign was the most difficult part of our CDA, as mentioned in the Methods section. As noted earlier, we were unable to collect systematic primary data directly from Western consumers in the eight countries. Instead, we gathered data about the campaign’s reception from publications by Danone/Volvic, UNICEF, the marketing industry, newspapers, blogs and consumer testimonials which address several major categories: brand image; campaign results (especially money raised, infrastructure built or liters of water generated in Africa); and Danone/Volvic sales growth. We also searched for reactions in favor of and against the campaign from the media and/or customers. Our main findings are as follows:

- money raised (translated into US dollars): Germany: \$870,000; Japan: \$365,000; globally: \$3.6 million (Volvic, 2013a, 2013b);
- people provided with access to safe drinking water: Japan: 12,000; France: 86,000; the USA and Canada: 25,000 (Volvic, 2013a, 2013b);
- liters of drinking water provided: France: 4.5 billion; the USA and Canada: 500 million liters (Volvic, 2013a, 2013b);
- sales/financial performance: Danone’s Waters division sales maintained an upward trajectory, growing 3.7% in 2009–2010, while the Western European bottled water market decreased –0.1% in the same period (Zenith International, 2012);
- campaign awareness and brand image: IPC Creative Solutions (IPCCS) developed a series of advertorial features spanning across four issues of *Marie Claire* magazine in 2008, which included a competition for readers to win a trip to Africa along with the *Marie Claire* team. As a result of this advertorial campaign, IPCCS reported that there was a positive shift in Volvic’s brand image among 57% of readers, that perceptions of Volvic as an environmentally conscious and ethical brand doubled, and that awareness of the campaign rose by 200%. This, in turn, encouraged ‘strong future intentions’ to ‘support the Volvic campaign to provide fresh drinking water for Africa’ in 70% of readers and consumption of Volvic grew by 23% among those who had seen the campaign (IPC Media, 2010).

**Table 1.** Overview of marketing strategies adopted in each local market of the Volvic campaign.

Patron country	Website	Beneficiary African country	Spokesperson (godmother/ father)	Marketing and communication strategy
Germany	<a href="http://www.volvic-fuer-unicef.de">http://www.volvic-fuer-unicef.de</a>	Ethiopia	Markus Lanz (TV presenter)	TV ads, press releases, publicity material
France	<a href="http://www.volvic-unicef.fr">http://www.volvic-unicef.fr</a>	Niger	Véronique Jannot (actress and singer)	TV ads and documentaries, press releases, internet videos, testimonials, press releases, newspapers and magazines
USA and Canada*	<a href="http://www.drink1give10.com">http://www.drink1give10.com</a>	Ethiopia	Kim Raver (actress) and Rebecca Mader (actress from TV show <i>Lost</i> )	TV ads, press releases, website, taxi and bus ads, billboards, signs at bus stops, newspapers, magazines
UK and Ireland	<a href="http://www.volvic1for10.co.uk/">http://www.volvic1for10.co.uk/</a>	Ghana, Malawi, Mali and Zambia	Thandie Newton (actress)	Partnership with World Vision; billboard ads, bus shelter ads, press releases, etc.
Switzerland	<a href="http://www.volvic.ch/fr/index.php">http://www.volvic.ch/fr/index.php</a>	Niger	–	Mainly website

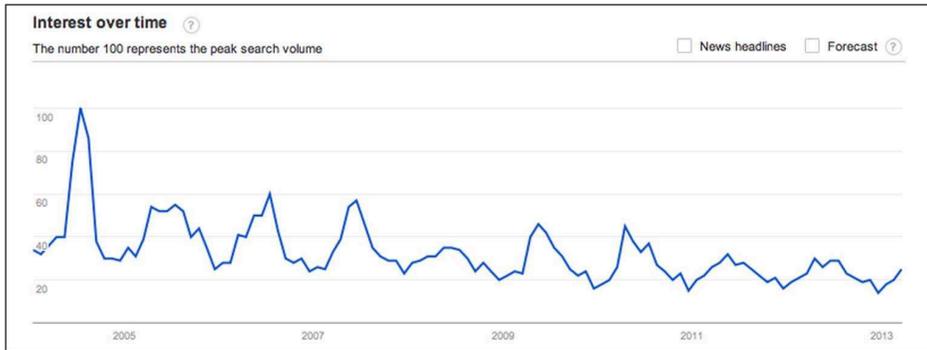
Note: \*In 2010, the North American campaign changed its focus and it is now called 'DIG10 – Drink 1, Give 10', in partnership with the Rainforest Foundation US. Volvic says that – as a 'socially engaged brand' – the campaign has so far helped 117,000 indigenous people in Central and South America to protect their rights and forests (Business Wire, 2011; Volvic, 2013b).

Source: field research.

The *Marie Claire* campaign may have also contributed to Volvic brand awareness. Google Trends shows that peak searches of 'Volvic' all occurred during the core years of the campaign from 2005 to 2009. In 2010 – the year of the re-launch of the '1L=10L' campaign in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to help Sudan<sup>3</sup> and the new Volvic 'DIG10' rainforest campaign – there was a new peak in 'Volvic' searches (see Figure 7).

We found that negative reactions against Volvic and/or the campaign were extremely rare. For example, a Google search of the first 100 results for each of the different related keywords such as 'Volvic; Drink 1 Give 10; 1 liter = 10 liters; 1L for Africa' resulted in only one negative text against the campaign. This was an article by Sutcliffe (2008) who argued that, instead of buying Volvic to help Africans, one should directly donate to the NGO Water Aid, as each penny given to an NGO is better spent. We found no other consumer or professional texts that criticized the campaign.

These data, figures and stories can be interpreted in three ways. First, one could say that shoppers indeed acted as 'consumer activists' and took on Volvic's discourse: that is,



**Figure 7.** Web search interest: Volvic. Worldwide, 2004–2013 (Google, 2013).

Source: <http://www.google.co.uk/trends/explore?q=Volvic.+Worldwide%2C+2004%E2%80%932013+#q=Volvic%2C%202004%E2%80%932013%2C%20Worldwide&cmpt=q>

they bought Volvic’s ‘good’ water and/or improved their awareness or image of the Volvic brand. Of course, one should be wary about claims made in this corporate publications genre. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that Volvic/Danone and the wider marketing industry were keen to highlight the campaign’s financial success in terms of increased sales and profits. This message was clearly targeted at institutional investors and the wider food and drinks industry – an important audience for Danone, given its status as a major publicly quoted multinational company.

Second, it is significant that we found little evidence of overtly positive reactions from consumers or the media in favor of the campaign. One would expect Volvic’s marketing and advertising genre to show the campaign’s success, as seen in its customers’ ‘participation’ through testimonial videos, blogs, messages, etc. on social networking websites. However, we found little evidence to confirm that this ‘participation’ was very successful, that is, it seems that customers did not take up the invitation to share online experiences in their millions. Surprisingly, even Volvic itself did not include substantial end-consumer testimonials in its communications. More precise conclusions about consumers’ engagement with the campaign would only be possible by targeted collection of primary data from Volvic’s customers in the eight countries involved. This, however, was beyond the objectives and limits of our research.

Third, despite the lack of explicit consumer reactions to the campaign, either positive or negative, it is important to mention that there was a continuous growth in this type of CSR marketing strategy in the bottled water industry over the 2005–2010 period. For example, Brei and Böhm (2011) identified 10 different bottled water brands that adopted similar strategies targeted at consumers in about a dozen ‘developed’ countries. In other words, cause-related marketing strategies clearly grew after 2005 when Volvic started its ‘1L=10L for Africa’ campaign and became one of the pioneers in this corporate development.

From our analysis, we can conclude that the purpose of this cause-related marketing strategy is twofold. First, Volvic’s campaign aim was to involve consumers in social activism projects, delivering drinking water to poor African communities. In this regard,

the societal approach to CSR (Marrewijk, 2003) – which we identified in our literature review as viewing CSR as a commitment by business to contribute to society at large (WBCSD, 2010) – is clearly visible in the ‘1L=10L’ campaign. However, our research confirms that this consumer activist engagement was also clearly geared towards the financial performance of the company, resulting from a positive ‘stakeholder management’ (Campbell, 2007; Carroll, 1991; Greenwood, 2007; Klick, 2009). We would thus have to agree with Crouch (2006), Banerjee (2007) and Shamir (2004), who all argue that the apparent move of CSR beyond the ‘bottom line’ is indeed done with the very clear purpose of improving shareholder value. Let us use this insight as a primer for our last analytical section, which looks at the wider social consequences of Volvic’s discourse.

### **Transforming bottled water into a ‘consumer activist’ commodity: A social analysis**

Historically, Volvic’s brand image has been mainly associated with the purity of its origin – the Massif Central region in France – and the ‘strength’ of volcanoes, due to its location inside the Volcano National Park. The ‘1L=10L for Africa’ campaign was a clear departure from this fairly simple marketing image. It aimed to link the brand closer to contemporary concerns about consumer activism, aid, poverty and development, as well as wider issues of ethics, sustainability and philanthropy, which have all been very apparent in the ‘developed’ world in recent years (Crane and Matten, 2007). Volvic’s shift in marketing strategy was, we argue, a typical example of a strategy increasingly deployed by the bottled water industry since it started to come under pressure to account for its environmental and health impacts (Ecologist, 2007; Mercola, 2011; Which?, 2008). We argue that Volvic’s campaign can be interpreted as a response to these concerns, moving the brand away from a selfish consumerism that is seen as socially and environmentally damaging toward an image of the ‘consumer activist’ who helps to improve people’s lives in poor African communities, and alleviates one of the world’s most pressing problems – the lack of access to safe drinking water.

As we have already noted, all communities benefiting from the campaign were located in the poorest parts of the world, mainly Africa, where people were portrayed as being helpless, poor, passive and lacking help (see Figure 1, earlier). In contrast, white people, such as the campaign spokespeople, were always shown to be active, wealthy and successful, yet also concerned, charitable and socially engaged (see Figure 8). In this way, the dominant images of the campaign replicate the long-standing, deeply entrenched and familiar binaries of development discourses.

Marketing’s entry into the aid and development discourse – with leading figures now actively arguing that marketing can play a positive role in helping to alleviate poverty around the world (Kotler et al., 2006) – must be seen in relation to the (colonial) history of development discourses (Werhane et al., 2010). We do not doubt the charitable feelings of Volvic consumers or even those of the company, nor their desire to help. However, we cannot help but see companies being attracted to cause-related marketing campaigns because of the shocking images that are often involved when dealing with African



**Figure 8.** News about Volvic’s campaign spokespeople.  
 Source: <http://www.gsiplastic.com/petday07/pdf/2DANONE.pdf>

poverty (Bonsu, 2009). It is in this sense that cause-related marketing turns acute social problems into opportunities. The discourse of poverty and helpless black children produces a kind of negative void, which companies can then fill with positive marketing messages (Kotler and Lee, 2008, 2009).

Moreover, the positive agenda created by Volvic's campaign helped to mask the environmental and health impacts that this type of consumption causes (Ecologist, 2007; Mercola, 2011; Which?, 2008). In other words – and perhaps this is how Banerjee (2007, 2008) might phrase this – the 'good' (providing drinking water and helping African children) needs to be weighed up against the 'bad' (negative impacts of bottled water consumption) and perhaps even the 'ugly' and exploitative (increased sales and profits for Danone on the backs of poor African children).

Having said that, the short-term goals of improving sales and responding to concrete consumer concerns about bottled water consumption only provide half the explanation for why Volvic engaged in this major cause-related marketing campaign. Equally important, in our view, are the long-term benefits of binding consumers to a 'good' brand by positioning it in a favorable web of discursive representations (Nan and Heo, 2007). That is, Volvic did not simply want to sell a utilitarian good, water, but an idea, a particular symbolic system of representation and discourse tightly connected to positive, altruistic images of improving the lives of underprivileged people in poor countries (Werhane et al., 2010). This is probably why the word 'buy' was rarely used in the campaign. Instead, terms such as 'drink' and 'for Africa' were used much more frequently. This language de-emphasized the importance of the act of buying what some would argue is an unnecessary and environmentally damaging commodity, instead connecting what one has to do anyway (drinking) to a highly symbolic, ethical and meaningful act of doing something for 'other' people, who are perceived to be poor and in urgent need of help.

The way the company linked their product to a wider social aim, a cause and activism, had at least two important consequences. First, it persuaded consumers to engage with something larger than a simple commodity-purchasing act (Kotler and Lee, 2005). Bottled water was thus transformed from a commodity to a legitimate instrument of consumer activism. The campaign texts clearly demonstrate this, as the act of buying Volvic's water was constantly associated with UNICEF, NGOs and African children, all typical actors of consumer/social activism movements (Hilton, 2007). Second, through its campaign, Volvic invited its customers to do something meaningful for a collective consumer activist project, that is, to show global awareness and care for others. This emotional and political involvement radically changes consumption relations, transforming passive shoppers into active, involved consumer activists (Hilton, 2009). Passive shoppers can quickly and easily change their minds and their brand choices. So involving consumers as activists helps to create and maintain positive brand awareness and corporate image (Nan and Heo, 2007). Even more importantly, their higher psychological and behavioral connection with the company and the brand substantially increases the probability that they will become loyal customers. This is a very desirable marketing goal, given that a long-term, loyal customer base is directly related to increased long-term profitability (Oliver, 1999).

From a political economy point of view, therefore, the Volvic campaign provides some evidence for why companies are increasingly keen to engage with this type of CSR marketing strategy: they increase sales and profits (Cochran and Wood, 1984), strengthen the relationship with customers (Adkins, 1999) and counter resistance movements (Kramer et al., 2012). This helps to explain why the strategy of 'doing good to do good'

(Banerjee, 2007: 15) now features so strongly in corporate discourses (Hopkins, 2007; Kytte and Ruggie, 2005; Porter and Kramer, 2002).

This CSR/cause-related marketing campaign should also be seen in the context of the broader historical shift from government to governance (Rosenau and Czempiel, 1992). One of the reasons why companies now engage with social development issues such as access to safe drinking water is because governments have increasingly shifted responsibilities for the provision of basic resources and services to private actors, such as companies, NGOs and community groups (Brugmann and Prahalad, 2007). As Harvey (2005) emphasizes, this process of neoliberalization involves a historically novel role for corporations within a new system of governance. In the view of Scherer and Palazzo (2011), this is part of a much needed 'democratization' of corporations which now act together with other private actors such as NGOs, taking over a political role previously performed by governments and other state actors.

The Volvic campaign discussed in this article illuminates the problems of short-termism and precariousness that have often been overlooked by proponents of what Scherer and Palazzo (2011) call 'political CSR'. While Volvic's involvement with the cause of providing access to safe drinking water in Africa can be seen as laudable and, within Scherer and Palazzo's (2011) framework, as having a political function, the company's termination of the campaign in 2010 must be seen as a failure of that very politics. It shows that when certain social issues no longer fit into the marketing strategy of corporations, then these private actors can simply walk away from this politics – as Volvic did at the end of the campaign, when it returned to its volcano image of 'purity' and reduced its CSR activities to smaller cause-related campaigns aimed at different targets, such as indigenous rainforest people (see Business Wire, 2011; Volvic, 2013b). Moreover, despite the fact that the social and political issue of safe drinking water in Africa has not been solved, no authority can hold Volvic to account for having walked away.

The Volvic case thus provides empirical evidence for some of the pitfalls involved in this recent neoliberal shift from government to governance, which increasingly sees corporations as playing a vital political role in solving social problems. While our analysis has shown that Volvic's campaign made positive, short-term contributions, it also raises important questions about the sustainability of such contributions. It is highly doubtful that companies, whose main purpose is to safeguard increasing returns for their shareholders, can be trusted to run long-term projects such as improving access to safe drinking water for poor communities in Africa and other regions. As such, it clearly demonstrates the problems of relying on corporate interventions as an effective substitute for state provision.

Taking this analysis further, one could see Volvic's campaign as an example of the wider ideological functioning of contemporary consumer capitalism. It can be characterized as ideological because the company's short-term CSR strategy covers up and blurs historical struggles over the provision of drinking water (Campbell, 2012). While more than 1 billion people in the world lack access to safe drinking water (WHO, 2013), the dominant, neoliberal governance approach has favored the privatization of water provision services in many 'developing' countries (Otto and Böhm, 2006). This has often led to rapid increases in water tariffs and a stratification of consumption: those who can afford to pay are fine, while those who cannot often face severe health consequences and

other hardships. CSR campaigns such as Volvic's mask the grave realities of inequalities in 'developing countries' and the socio-historical struggles associated with them (Banerjee, 2007, 2008; Mir et al., 2008; Shamir, 2004).

Volvic's brand managers might argue that their campaign has helped to make Western consumers aware of the global inequalities existing on the planet, moving them into a position of being able to do something concrete and practical about it. In our view, however, the purchase of an ethical bottle of water is at best no more than a short-term fix for a deep political, social and economic problem. At worst, we argue, it functions as a vital ideological cover-up, which conceals ongoing historical struggles for global equality. In addition, the campaign masks the fact that companies often engage in such processes of 'doing good' precisely to boost sales and legitimize their entire existence by providing an indirect response to the growing critique of the shareholder-corporate model and its environmental and health impacts. So, we would agree with Crouch (2006) when he claims that CSR must be seen as a new management fashion that is ultimately geared towards selling more goods and services. However, what is equally important is that this very act of 'doing good' is an important ideological moment for consumer capitalism that allows it to more or less continue on its current path without changing its model. That is, while significant environmental and health hazards are still associated with bottled water consumption, this critique is pushed into the background by cause-related marketing messages that highlight the 'good' aspects of this type of consumption. Volvic and its bottled water become part of the solution, not part of the problem.

## Conclusions, limitations and future research

In this article, we have analyzed the '1L=10L for Africa' campaign by one of the best-selling global bottled water brands, Volvic, owned by the multinational company Danone. This cause-related marketing campaign, which promised to deliver 10 liters of drinking water to poor African communities for every liter of bottled water sold in Western countries, is just one of the many CSR campaigns that are increasingly being offered to customers as part of the unique selling points of consumer products. In the bottled water industry alone there are at least 10 other brands, including Ethos Water, One Water, Charity Water and Thirsty Planet, which are all connected to a range of CSR promises (Brei and Böhm, 2011). Rather than celebrating this development, as so many marketing writers do (Adkins, 1999; Kotler and Lee, 2005), this article used critical discourse analysis to evaluate the precise functioning of Volvic's campaign and its social and political implications.

One of our prime purposes with this article has been to add empirical evidence to the growing critical CSR literature, which is often fairly abstract, theoretical and norm-driven. While our data and analysis had some clear limitations in relation to the views of consumers and beneficiaries, nonetheless our case study demonstrates that campaigns such as Volvic's have three major consequences. First, they change the cultural meaning of the product (Brei and Böhm, 2011). As we have shown, Volvic's CSR campaign transformed the humble bottle of water into a tool for social activism, aimed at alleviating the shortage of water and the suffering of poor, distant others. Second, the campaign also sought to change the status of consumers; the campaign discourse sought to transform

them from passive shoppers into active, engaged consumers, who participate in positive social action by buying bottled water. The more bottled water you buy, the more you help other people and the more socially active you become. Third, when transformed into social activists, companies substantially strengthen their relations with their customers, generating more sophisticated and long-term ties. Companies capture customers' imaginations and attention, binding them to their brands through emotional and political involvement. By doing so, such CSR cause-related marketing campaigns improve the prospects of long-term, sustainable profits and shareholder value.

It is, however, important to understand this recent move towards cause-related marketing/CSR campaigns as a significant ideological moment in the workings of contemporary consumer capitalism. We showed that such campaigns fulfill the function of creating new 'unique selling points' for branded products, with which consumers can identify, making a direct contribution to company profits. Our case study confirms that CSR is certainly 'talking the talk' regarding the need to go beyond narrow shareholder value approaches to corporate activity. But our findings support the position of Crouch (2006), Banerjee (2007) and Shamir (2004) who maintain that, in the end, what is still of primary importance, especially for publicly quoted companies like Danone, is the direct or indirect contribution of their CSR activities to generating shareholder value. Beyond this quantitative measure, as we have shown, cause-related marketing campaigns also have a wider significance. They provide an important qualitative and discursive framework legitimizing corporate actors and the system of consumer capitalism and accumulation in general. As such, Volvic's '1L=10L' campaign worked because it addressed Western consumers' real concerns about the injustices and inequalities in our contemporary world. The ideological work of the campaign here is that through the act of consuming bottled water, an easy fix or patch for these concerns is provided without engaging with the root causes of these inequalities, and the growing environmental and health concerns associated with bottled water consumption are displaced.

In this article, we have focused on Volvic's CSR campaign because it was the first of its type in the bottled water industry and set an important precedent. Given that this campaign has ended, there is a need for future research that analyzes the CSR discourses of other bottled water companies. It would be interesting to find out, for example, to what extent they built on the Volvic campaign model, whether they were equally short-term, and to delve deeper into the social effects of such campaigns, especially in relation to the views and experiences of consumers and beneficiaries. Finally, there is also a need for further case-study research on cause-related marketing campaigns by companies in other sectors, especially those which have come under sustained criticism, such as the oil, paper and atomic energy industries. Given the continued inequalities suffered by so many people around the world, understanding the ideological workings of such campaigns and situating them within the wider framework of contemporary consumer capitalism is an important task.

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## Notes

1. We have focused the data collection process on the '1 for 10' campaigns launched between 2005 and 2009 in these eight 'developed' countries. However, Danone has continued to launch newer versions of the campaign. For example, the campaign was launched in April 2010 in Saudi Arabia with the same features of the campaigns analyzed in this article (Business Intelligence, 2010). The beneficiaries of this campaign are in another Islamic country – Sudan.
2. We thank one anonymous reviewer for this remark.
3. We have not found significant data about Volvic's campaign results in UAE. Thus, we decided not to include this part of the campaign in our analysis.

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