

ESSEX BUSINESS SCHOOL

'1L=10L for Africa'

The postcolonial marketing of bottled water

Vinicius Brei

Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul

Steffen Bohm

Essex Business School

University of Essex

Working Paper No. 09/08

July, 2009

‘1L=10L for Africa’

The postcolonial marketing of bottled water

Vinícius Brei and Steffen Böhm

Pontificia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul (PUCRS), Brazil, and University of Essex, UK

Email: vinicius.brei@pucrs.br ; steffen@essex.ac.uk

Introduction

Bottled water is one of the fastest growing businesses in the world, showing average growth rates of about 9% a year between 2001 and 2005. It is the leader of the whole soft drinks industry (Euromonitor, 2007). Seven of the ten biggest per capita consuming countries of bottled water are located in Western Europe. For example, in 1946 the per capita consumption of bottled water in France was just 6 litres per person (Marty, 2005), but it reached impressive 171 litres per person in 2005 (INSEE, 2006). How should we explain this enormous increase in bottled water consumption in France as well as most other so-called developed countries? First, we might need to consider ‘development’. Perhaps, bottled water consumption is a sign of developmental value and progress. Perhaps, the more we drink bottled water, the higher the standard of living, the standard of hygiene and health. But then we learn that 99% of the French population is served by good quality tap water, which is trusted by 84% of them (Tns-Sofres, 2006); that tap water costs about 0.03 Euros per litre, compared to 0.38 Euros per litre of bottled water sold in supermarkets and an average of 3.11 Euros per litre when sold in cafés and restaurants (Eurostaf, 2004). This is an apparent irrationality, which cannot be explained through narrow economic concepts. We suggest that the only way to explain the fact that most ‘developed’ people consume so much bottled water, despite usually having access to safe drinking water, is through an understanding of the circuits of commodities, advertising and marketing.

Faced with growing criticism of its environmental performance and a market that seems to become more saturated in the developed world, some bottled water companies have recently switched their marketing strategies to actively appeal to ‘ethical’ and ‘green’ consumers. We specially focus our attention on one major marketing strategy by Volvic, which is Danone’s (one of the biggest food-focused multinationals of the world) best selling bottled water brand. The company has been developing its campaign ‘1L=10L for Africa’ – also called ‘Drink 1, Give 10’ – in the major bottled water markets, such as France, UK, Germany, Canada, Japan, Switzerland, and the USA. In this marketing campaign Volvic has teamed up with inter-governmental and non-governmental organisations, such as UNICEF and World Vision, to bring clean running water to rural parts of Africa. The idea is that Volvic will donate funds to UNICEF and World Vision to provide people in poor African countries with at least ten litres of clean drinking water (usually from wells) for each litre of bottled water sold to Western consumers (Just-Drinks.com, 2008).

What interest us here particularly are the connections between images of development (in the South) and marketing (in the North). While for some Volvic’s campaign is a laudable attempt to be ‘doing good’, helping to put things right in the ‘developing world’, we would like to be more cautious, as we are reminded of images of missionaries spreading Christian beliefs and enterprising values throughout the world. Hence, there are clear issues of post/neo-colonialism at stake here,

which need unearthing. Volvic's 'doing good' has obvious value implications. Ethical and green consumption are one of the fastest growing sectors. That is, large multinationals, such as Danone, clearly invest in ethical marketing strategies because it makes financial sense for them (economic value) to be doing 'good' (ethical value). While we would not want to belittle Danone's ethical considerations or reject them outright, what we think is urgent is a contrasting of the value positions involved in the '1L=10L for Africa' and other ethical marketing campaigns.

Late capitalism and postcolonialism

Mandel (1985) has named the contemporary period as 'late capitalism' – the third stage of capitalist development. The first stage, based on free competition, originated as a result of the industrial revolution around the 18th century and was characterised by the relative immobility of capital. The reason for this immobility is that there were no serious limits to the expansion of capital in domestic markets, which were until then relatively unexplored. Capitalism's monopolist (or imperialist) stage, the second one, initiated around the middle of the 19th century, and was characterised by a qualitative growth of capital's concentration and centralisation. The monopolist agreements between a few companies, which dominated many different sectors of the market, resulted in the end of free competition, stimulating the merger of banking capital and industrial capital, which resulted in the emergence of finance capital. Consequently, few financial groups began to dominate the economy of each capitalist country. These monopolist groups shared among them the world markets of important consumer goods, and the most powerful countries divided the world into colonial empires or in semi-colonial areas of influence. Monopolistic markets led to monopolistic profits and an excess of accumulation, which in turn led to a strong search for new markets where this excess of capital could be invested. The First and Second World Wars were the terrible outcomes of this competition amongst monopolistic powers of capital. The third and contemporary stage, late capitalism, initiated after the Second World War, is characterised by universal and generalised industrialisation on a world scale. Mechanisation, standardisation, specialisation and job fragmentation, which, in the past, were restricted to the industrial sphere of consumer goods production, are now features of all sectors of social life. That is, the market logic – profit as the primary goal of all institutions – has become a performance parameter for universities, museums and hospitals, as it always has been for consumer goods companies. This is thus a process of the general expansion of capital to sectors not yet commodified.

According to Mandel (1985), late capitalism's basic feature is over-capitalisation. That is, due to massive productivity gains derived from innovative production and management technologies, such as mechanisation, computerisation, process standardisation and flexible employee relations, there is always an excess of capital that needs to be reinvested in order to create new profit and capital. Ever new markets are thus created, offering ever new products. However, profit and thus new capital can only be created if these new products also find a buyer. That is, an expansion of production requires an equivalent expansion of demand, otherwise capitalism faces an accumulation crisis, such as the one we are currently in the midst of. One of the most efficient ways to create demand for existing or new products is through marketing techniques, such as advertising. This is why we have seen such an immense expansion of marketing techniques employed throughout society, which is mirrored by the strategic importance that is attached to the marketing function in private corporations as well as public institutions. In other words, in late capitalism marketing occupies such a central role that one could perhaps say that marketing comes even before production. This is to make sure that before a product or service is manufactured or created there is already a demand to buy it. This is why Jameson (1991) sustains that capitalist markets rarely are connected to freedom or choice, since our choices are previously 'determined', and we only choose among the options that companies and institutions provide us. That is, the discourse of 'consumer choice' is one that is pre-determined by marketing professionals.

In all of Mandel's (1985) three phases capitalism has relied heavily on processes of colonisation. These processes have involved direct territorial appropriation of another geo-political entity, combined with forthright exploitation of its resources and labour and the systematic interference in the capacity of the appropriated culture to organise its dispensation of power (McClintock 1992, p. 88). A central ideological justification for colonisation has always been the consideration that the native was considered to be someone 'lacking' or 'deficient' and therefore in need for 'salvation' and 'civilisation'; that is, 'order' and 'progress' (Jack 2008, p. 365). Colonised countries have therefore always been subjected to a whole range of 'development' programmes, the effects of which have been widely documented. Galeano (1998), for example, shows how an entire continent – Latin America in his case – has been exploited by colonial powers over a period of more than five centuries. It is therefore not surprising that authors, such as Dirlík (2002), affirm that the consequences of colonialism are still evident today through the marginalisation and precarious existence of the majority of the world's population.

But the talk today is rarely of colonialism, but of postcolonialism or neocolonialism.¹ This is largely due to three reasons. First, formally speaking most colonised countries have achieved political independence from their colonial masters since the Second World War. This has rarely resulted, however, in full autonomy due to continued economic but also ideological and cultural dependence on the hegemonic powers of the West (Dirlík 2002; Jack 2008). Thus, in this sense the 'postcolonial' refers to an ex-colonial country that is still enmeshed in asymmetrical relations of economic and political power and cultural recognition with the West (Patke, 2006). More generally speaking, authors use the term 'postcolonial' to study the varied effects that colonisation has had on contemporary societies, peoples, states and cultures that have achieved political independence from former colonial masters (Ashcroft et al. 1991; Sidaway, 2000).

The second meaning of the term 'postcolonial' is derived from the understanding that colonial relationships are never only determined by the formal colonial power. As authors such as Spivak (1999), Bhabha (1994) and Said (1978) have shown, the discourse of colonialism and the practices of colonial relations have not only an impact on the culture of the colonised but also the culture of the coloniser. Colonial relations have thus to be understood as dynamic, reciprocal and complex, the outcome of which cannot be simply determined by analysing the formal economic and political relations involved. The term 'postcolonial' thus refers to this more 'advanced', reciprocal understanding of the relationships between colonisers and colonised.

Related to this second meaning is the third conception of the 'postcolonial', which emphasises the possibilities of resistance in any colonial relationship. This resistance can broadly take three forms: First, European colonial discourses (e.g. of 'modernisation' and 'progress') can be de-legitimised and de-centred by highlighting the limits of these discourses, particularly showing the exploitative nature of colonial relationships. Second, the messy, mixed-up, interconnected nature of histories, geographies and identities opposed to these discourses can be revealed. Third, alternative and hybrid histories, geographies and identities, which are not exclusively anchored to Europe or the West more broadly, can be considered (Cook and Harrison 2003, p. 310). Hence, in this sense, postcolonial studies' principal objective is to understand "colonialism from the nuanced perspective that encompasses the experience of subordinated and voiceless groups" (Brace-Govan and Burgh-Woodman, 2008, p. 94). In this way the resistance perspective of the 'postcolonial' category tries to give voice to those people, communities and cultures that have been rendered voiceless by the discourse of colonialism.

¹ Postcolonialism covers a disparate set of positions and practices (Westwood, 2006), which have been semantically examined by Young (2001). Although neocolonialism or postcolonialism are not always treated as synonyms (see Nkrumah, 1965; Young, 2001), for the purposes of this paper we will use both terms interchangeably.

In this paper we are interested in all three meanings of the 'postcolonial'. Specifically, we frame our analysis in terms of how we can understand the asymmetrical development of the consumption of water in 'developed' and 'developing' countries. What Volvic's '1L=10L for Africa' campaign seems to highlight is that basic running water provisions in the 'developing world' can only be delivered through increased bottled water consumption in the rich, 'developed' world. We will critique this assumption by engaging in reflections about the development of 'late capitalism', which, as we will argue, increasingly depends on postcolonial discourses in marketing and consumption. While these postcolonial discourses claim to be doing 'good' through the 'ethical consumption' of products, we argue that it is precisely through this ethical 'add on' to consumer products that established structures of hegemonic domination and colonialism are maintained and even furthered.

The Cultural Meaning of Consumer Goods

Every commodity that is marketed has, in a way, an 'add on', precisely because consumption is not exclusively a material practice. It is not defined by the food we eat, the clothes we dress, the car we drive, nor by the oral and visual images and messages that we receive. It is a result of all these together, constituted as a whole, through a systematic manipulation of signs. In order to sell a commodity in 'late capitalism', a product must be transformed into a sign. Therefore, consumption has lost its old meaning as a need-fulfilment activity; today it is also a process of communication and transference of values, messages, ideas, social status, etc. This is why one of the features of 'late capitalism' is the tendency for the marketing brand to be as important as the features of the commodity itself. Products are not sold due to their inherent (utilitarian) nature, but as a result of new meanings attached to them; what Baudrillard (1968, 1970) identified as commodity reification – the object freed from its function. This process is analysed by Cultural Meaning of Consumer Goods (CMCG) theory, developed by McCracken (1986).

McCracken's (1986) seminal three-stage model probably represents the most accepted model of the structure and movement of meaning. It is based on the idea that at its most basic level culture is the sphere where the meaning of the world is created. In all cultures goods are primarily needed for making the categories of culture visible and stable (Douglas and Isherwood 2006). In contemporary 'consumer society' of 'late capitalism' this function is largely associated with consumer goods. Miller (1987) argues that societies frequently consider objects as having attributes which may not appear evident to outsiders or, in contrast, they ignore attributes which might be inextricably part of that object to these same outsiders. This phenomenon is one of the manifestations of CMCG theory. McCracken's (1986) model claims that cultural meaning is located in three places: the culturally constituted world, the consumer good, and the individual consumer (see Figure 1). He explains the movement of cultural meaning as a two-step process: first, the meaning flows from the culturally constituted world – the original location of cultural meaning – to consumer goods. The two instruments of this first-step transfer are the advertising and fashion systems. The second step is the transfer of meaning from consumer goods to individual consumers, which is composed of four rituals that might be carried out by individual consumers: exchange rituals, possession rituals, grooming rituals, and divestment rituals.

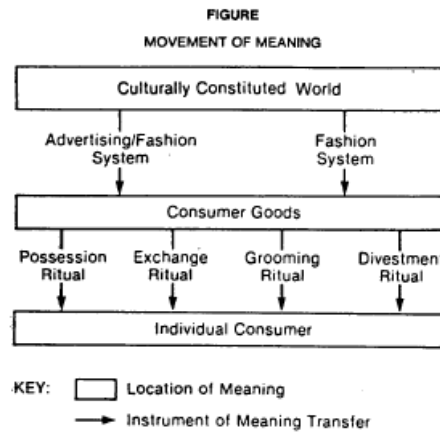


Figure 1 - McCracken (1986, p. 72)

McCracken's (1986) framework establishes two major steps of instruments of meaning transfer: the first is done by advertising and fashion systems; the second, by consumer rituals. In order to become resident in consumer goods, advertising works as an instrument of meaning transfer when it brings together the consumer product or service and the culturally constituted world within the frame of one particular piece of advertising. McCracken (1986) maintains that this symbolic equivalence is developed by the advertising agency, which succeeds when the viewer/reader attributes to the consumer good certain properties he or she knows existing in the culturally constituted world. When this happens the meaning transfer process is complete. The fashion system works along similar lines, but, due to its complex nature, will not be considered in this paper.

The second set of instruments of meaning transfer are consumer rituals. There are four major ones: First, exchange rituals occur when someone chooses, purchases, and presents goods to others, for example, during Christmas, Valentines Day or birthdays. Second, possession rituals are manifested when one spends time cleaning, discussing, comparing, reflecting, showing off, and photographing his or her goods. Third, grooming rituals are the special pains necessary to insure that the special, perishable properties resident in the good are captured and made resident in the individual. This happens, for example, when one is dressing to a special party or dining event, and one chooses certain make-up, hair style, clothes, etc. according to the importance of this moment. Lastly, divestment rituals are the ones in which one tries to erase the meanings associated with previous owners (e.g., cleaning, painting or reforming newly acquired goods), and even the disposal of a consumer product.

McCracken's (1986) framework is arguably providing an important insight into the concrete and specific workings of consumer society in 'late capitalism'. It provides us with tools for understanding how meaning is attached to consumer goods that go beyond utilitarian functions. As we will see, this becomes of importance for understanding the workings of postcolonial marketing campaigns, such as Volvic's. In our case, the question is why postcolonial images of aid and development become important marketing messages that have to be 'added on' to a utilitarian and basic good such as drinking water. However, before we further develop this broad theoretical argument, let us introduce the Volvic case in more detail. In what follows we will, first, introduce the methods and then present a range of data that will form the empirical background for this study. In our analysis we will then introduce a range of additional theories that will help us to substantiate our wider theoretical claims about the role of postcolonial marketing techniques in 'late capitalism'.

Methods

The Volvic bottled water brand is sold in more than 60 countries around the world. The company's '1L=10L for Africa' campaign, however, is only directed at some of the most 'developed' countries, namely, the USA, Canada, France, Japan, United Kingdom, Ireland, Switzerland, as well as Germany, where the campaign began in 2005 (UNICEF, 2009). We have therefore limited our research on these eight countries. In order to understand Volvic's advertising campaign and hence its persuasion techniques (O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy, 2004), we have collected as many of Volvic's ads related to this campaign as possible by mainly consulting Volvic's local campaign websites. To complement this data we have also photographed Volvic marketing material in the streets of major cities, on bus stops as well as in stores where Volvic bottled water is sold. Due to budget and time constraints, we have limited this part of the data collection to two countries, choosing two major cities: Paris in France and Chicago in the USA. Finally, to understand the motivations and behaviours of consumers, we have carried out 45 in-depth interviews in France identifying different aspects of bottled water consumption, such as origin of habits, influence of family and school in the person's habits development, knowledge about water brands, and symbolic associations to those brands.

Broadly speaking we have treated all this data as text. There cannot only be written texts, but also spoken words, drawings, symbols, artefacts, movies, music, etc. (Phillips and Hardy 2002). Texts should not be treated in isolation from each other. Instead, they acquire meaning only in their connection with other texts, through their production, distribution and reception, forming textual and discursive structures. What has been termed 'discourse analysis' thus explores how these texts acquire meaning through their relationship to other texts and their contexts, and how this meaning contributes to the constitution of social reality. It is this structured meaning that creates social effects, not the individual text itself (Fairclough, 1995, 2003).

We have chosen critical discourse analysis based on Fairclough's (1995, 2003) framework as our methodological strategy. Fairclough's framework comprises three levels of analysis: textual analysis (in their many forms), process analysis (the joint analysis of the texts and the discursive practice, including the production, distribution and reception of those texts); and social analysis (i.e., discursive events as instances of socio-cultural practices that drive social consequences of the analysed discursive practice). The data was analysed using Atlas.ti software.

For the textual analysis we have examined the following texts: a) Volvic's websites in the USA, Canada, France, United Kingdom, Ireland, Switzerland, and Germany; due to language restrictions we have not consulted the Japanese website; b) Volvic's '1L=10L for Africa' ad campaign and its sister 'Drink 1, Give 10' campaign; we have selected only ads in English, French or German; c) other marketing communication data, mostly pictures taken on the streets of the countries where the campaign was run, either taken by ourselves or by anonymous people who posted them on the Internet. For the process analysis we have focused on the reconstruction of the order of discourse (Foucault 1969, 1971) related to the '1L=10L for Africa' campaign using the material from our textual analysis. We have analysed how this discourse was produced, distributed and received. To complement this analysis, we have included data from interviews with French consumers. Finally, for the social analysis we have examined the order of discourse vis-a-vis the existing literature, focusing on how Volvic's campaign influences wider socio-economic and politico-cultural changes. Given that this social analysis is by far the most important part in terms of deriving wider social critiques, we have concentrated our energy on this aspect of our analysis.

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

The campaign. Volvic, Danone's best-selling bottled water brand, is sold in more than 60 countries around the world. Its '1L=10L for Africa' campaign (please note, however, that this campaign adopts different names in local markets; see Table 1) began in Germany in 2005 and since then has expanded to France and Switzerland in 2006, Japan and United Kingdom/Ireland (please note that these two countries are treated as one local market by Volvic) in 2007, and the USA and Canada in 2008. For each of these individual markets Volvic adopted a similar campaign strategy: only relatively mature bottled water markets in 'developed' countries have been chosen; for each developed country one or a few corresponding benefiting African countries have been selected, which often have close ex/post-colonial relationships to that patronising country of the West/North; for each of these developed countries Volvic has launched a specific website and selected one celebrity as godmother; in most countries Volvic has teamed up with inter-governmental, non-governmental organisations or enterprises that wanted to associate themselves with the campaign. There have been a number of local variations amongst the individual campaigns, but all them have followed one common persuasive argument: for every 1 litre of any kind of Volvic bottled water purchased (no matter what bottle size, format, price, flavour, and even the type of drink, which in some countries included Volvic's fruit juices and tea), the company has promised to generate 10 litres of drinkable water in Africa.

INSERT PICTURES ABOUT HERE

The actors. There are three major actors involved with Volvic's '1L=10L for Africa' campaign. First, the multinational company Danone and its bottled water brand Volvic, which patronizes the campaign. Second, UNICEF, the 60-year-old world leading international children's organisation, which is active in over 150 countries "to address the ongoing issues that affect why kids are dying" (UNICEF, 2009). UNICEF is supported by dozens of major multinational companies, such as Gucci, Ikea, Merck, Pfizer, Procter & Gamble, American Airlines, GE, ING, Merrill Lynch, Microsoft, PricewaterhouseCoopers, UPS, among others. It provides "lifesaving nutrition, clean water, education, protection and emergency response saving more young lives than any other humanitarian organization in the world", as it claims. According to its website, "while millions of children die every year of preventable causes like dehydration, upper respiratory infections and measles, UNICEF, with the support of partnering organizations and donors alike, has the global experience, resources and reach to give children the best hope of survival" (UNICEF 2009). In the UK and Ireland market, however, Volvic has entered into a partnership with World Vision instead of UNICEF. World Vision is an NGO aimed at helping poor people in developing countries. The third actor comprises all of those Western or Northern consumers at which Volvic's campaign is targeted. The fourth major group of actors are those African communities and countries that benefit from the campaign by way of receiving water wells and other means of access to drinkable water.

INSERT PICTURES ABOUT HERE

Marketing and advertising strategy. Volvic's campaign has been carried out through marketing and advertising tools used within a multi-faceted framework. First, in each local market a dedicated websites presented a very detailed view about the campaign, its beneficiaries, partners, spokespersons, etc. Second, Volvic has used different mass media communication tools, such as TV programs, newspapers/magazines articles and ads, press releases, videos, and testimonials broadcast on internet. We have also found outdoor ads in major cities like Paris and Chicago, displayed on large billboards as well as in bus shelters as well as in or near supermarket stores. A brief summary of the marketing strategies adopted in the different countries is shown in Table 1.

Patron Country	Website	Beneficiary African country	Spokesperson (godmother)	Marketing and Communication Strategy
Germany	http://www.volvic-fuer-unicef.de/	Ethiopia	Markus Lanz	TV ads, press releases, publicity material
France	http://www.volvic-unicef.fr	Niger	Véronique Jannot	TV ads and documentaries, press releases, internet videos, testimonials, press releases, newspapers and magazines
USA and Canada	http://www.drink1give10.com/	Ethiopia	Kim Raver (actress)	TV ads, press releases, internet website, taxi and buses ads, billboards, signs at bus stops, newspapers, magazines
UK and Ireland	http://www.volvic1for10.co.uk/	Ghana, Malawi, Mali, and Zambia	Thandie Newton (actress)	Partnership with World Vision; billboard ads, bus shelter ads, press releases, etc.
Switzerland	http://www.volvic.ch/fr/index.php	Niger	-	Mainly website

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

The symbolic construction of Volvic: A process analysis

Having presented the main textual analysis of Volvic's '1L=10L for Africa' campaign, it is now important to analyse how the different textual snippets hang together to produce an overall order and discourse. That is, the question is now how the campaign discourse has been produced, distributed and received.

What seems obvious by looking at the textual data presented above is that the production of the campaign has been globally orchestrated. All target markets/consumers are 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 are attested by the fact that the company has gone to great length to develop individual marketing and communication tools tailored to local characteristics of each 'developed' country. Although no specific data is available, it is probably safe to claim that these individual marketing strategies have incurred a lot of costs for Danone/Volvic. These marketing funds would have been spent almost exclusively in the North/West, furthering the 'knowledge economies' of the 'developed' world.

In each of the 'developed' countries the production and distribution of the discourse followed a common format (albeit with some adaptation): a website in the local language; a spokesperson named as godmother (always a celebrity); strong media support (mass advertising in public places, such as buses, taxis, bus stops, billboards, magazines, newspapers, but also by sponsoring athletes); and active encouragement for consumers to directly participate in the campaign. This participation was stimulated either through financial and non-financial means. Non-financial consumer participation has made use of the Internet's social networking tools, as Volvic has invited customers to paste their pictures on the website, to write on the campaigns' diary, and to send the website's address, videos, testimonials, or messages about the campaign to friends, etc. The website links that allowed this sharing are pre-tailored and easy to access in many places on the campaign's websites. However, the main way through which Volvic has persuaded consumers to participate in this campaign has been of financial nature. What this campaign has ensured is that Volvic's unique selling point is not just 'bottled water', but 'aid' and 'development' for people, communities and entire countries in need. By linking their product to a wider social aim, the company hopes to persuade consumers to participate in something larger than a simple commodity purchasing act.

The content of this 'larger' picture and discourse that the company has tried to spread has been about the same in all developed patron countries. It has presented 1) African poverty, showing

images of very dry places, poor villages, mothers and children – rarely a male adult has been shown, except in testimonials about the situation before the campaign, or while extracting water from old wells; 2) the comparison of figures of the average water consumption of an inhabitant of a ‘developed’ and ‘developing’ country, directly creating negative emotional feelings – for example, one French advertising has stated that “one French inhabitant consumes 10 times more water on a daily basis than a Saharan inhabitant” (Volvic 2009); 3) the solution proposed by Volvic’s ‘1L=10L for Africa’ campaign, as stated above; 4) the partnership of Volvic and UNICEF (their logos are printed on flags, car doors, wells, etc.), which is generally followed by the mention of UNICEF’s relationship with the United Nations; 5) the spokesperson (celebrity) endorsement, including online videos showing the celebration of Volvic’s successful water extraction in Africa; and 6) in some cases the partnership with another non-profit organization; 7) the happiness (documented in videos and pictures) brought to the poor villages and their inhabitants (mainly mothers and children) thanks to the wells sponsored by the Volvic campaign; and 8) the figures of the millions of litres of water that have been already extracted due to the campaign.

We have analysed the reception of the discourse by interviewing a range of French consumers.² Although we have not found strong evidence for a widespread recognition of Volvic’s campaign in France³, we have interviewed some consumers who actually recognised, and considered themselves influenced by, the campaign. This is what one male student said:

Question – Do you usually read what is written [on the bottles’ labels]?

Student – Frequently.

Q – Are you talking about what is written on the labels?

S – Yes.

Q – Do you think this is important for changing your habits, or do you think this does not cause any change at all?

S – Yes, I do think it can change my habits. For example, here in this Volvic bottle [He shows one bottle of Volvic previously bought spontaneously] it’s written 1 litre for 10. Actually, when you buy 1 liter they allow people in Sahara to extract 10 liters of water. This is the kind of thing that will make me buy water.

Q – Does it make you buy [that brand of water]?

S – Yes, by chance it happened with a brand that I regularly buy, but if this had happened with another brand, I would probably buy this other brand.

(Male, 34 years-old, psychology student)

Despite the relatively weak recognition of Volvic’s campaign amongst French consumers at the time of our interviews, what our interviews have clearly shown is that consumers construct a range of new meanings vis-a-vis their purchasing of bottled water. Almost all 45 interviewees demonstrated significant knowledge about the different images of the major bottled water brands. Interestingly, rarely a consumer associated a brand image with body hydration or thirsty quenching utilitarian functions, as one might assume. Instead, most of them could easily associate abstract or symbolic meanings with their known brands, such as the following female student who simply loves one brand for the shape of their bottles:

Student – There are some people who like to have a small bottle of water.... It’s like a cigarette... to have a bottle of water.... Sometimes it can be a social object, like the cigarette, or the [cell] phone.

² We have faced problems analysing the reception of Volvic’s discourse in all of the ‘developed’ markets under consideration here. Given that the data collection process through in-depth interviews simultaneously in many countries is a very time and resource consuming process, we have limited our interviews to France, Volvic’s homeland.

³ One possible reason for this is that the interviews were carried out during the first year of the campaign in France.

We deeply like to have a beautiful bottle of water. For example, in my purse I carry one bottle of water... it is one of a particular form... it is not a big one [like the traditional 1.5 liters family size].

Q – So it is not any kind of bottle?

S – No, the bottle of water one has is very personal; it tells about one's personality.

(Female, 26 years-old, business graduate student)

What this interview exemplifies is that consumers are open and perceptive to a whole range of symbols and meanings that are associated with bottled water. As there are so many brands to choose from, it literally pays to just have a slightly unusually shaped bottle. Obviously, as the market is becoming more saturated, it is becoming ever more difficult to create unique selling points and marketing messages associated with bottle water. Volvic's campaign has to be seen in the light of these wider market forces and the intense competition for the receptivity of consumers. That is, 'doing good' – helping poor African villagers to gain access to drinking water – can be seen as a necessary market differentiator in order to sell a bottle of Volvic water at all. It is a necessary symbolic construction that allows consumers to identify with the brand and choose Volvic over the many other available bottled water brands.

Why 'doing good' sells: A social analysis

In this third and final part of the data analysis, the social analysis (Fairclough, 1995, 2003), we discuss how Volvic's discourse structures and changes its socio-cultural and politico-economy reality. We theoretically anchor the analysis on three complementary aspects: first, companies' postcolonial strategies in 'late capitalism'; second, the use of postcolonial social marketing tools to create feelings of shame and guilt in consumers of the 'developed' world; and third, how such developments are changing the cultural meaning of bottled water, transforming it into another cultural/symbolic product.

As we discussed above, 'late capitalism's basic feature is over-capitalization, which means that ever more capital has to be invested into sectors that have not yet been used for the accumulation of profits and the generation of new capital. The bottled water sector is an example of this phenomenon, as demonstrated by the impressive growth in per capita consumption of bottled water in France – from 6 litres per person in 1946 to 171 litres per person in 2005 (Tns-Sofres, 2006). A similar exponential growth can be seen in many other countries – notably the 'developed' ones, where practically all the population has good access to quality and relatively cheap tap water. If bottled water is the same consumer good (or brings the same benefits) as tap water to consumers, how can one explain such an impressive consumption growth? One reasonable explanation for this apparent consumer irrationality is the transformation of the cultural meaning of bottled water due to expressive investments in marketing. Bottled water is the most advertised product of the beverage industry. Our argument is that it is only through this change of the symbolic meaning of water that such consumption growth has been possible. Volvic's '1L=10L for Africa' campaign is an example of how marketing techniques are used to change the symbolic meaning of what is otherwise a basic, utilitarian, or even public, good: water.

Changing the symbolic meaning of goods is a process that has been more and more integrated into the production process of commodities. McCracken's (1986) Cultural Meaning of Consumer Goods (CMCG) theory helps us precisely to understand this process of how advertising and other complementary marketing tools have been used to create a new cultural meaning of Volvic's bottled water. Historically, Volvic's brand image has been associated with a quite simple meaning: the purity of its origin, the Central Massif Region in France. Recently, Volvic's marketing discourse had changed slightly, associating its image with either its origin or the 'strength' of the volcanoes,

as its source is located inside the Volcano National Park. The image of the ‘original source’ is a very simple association, which is quite common among bottled water brands.

However, Volvic’s ‘1L=10L for Africa’ campaign is a much more sophisticated symbolic effort to change the cultural meaning of the brand. With this campaign the company taps into, and makes us of, contemporary concerns for aid, poverty, development as well as wider issues of ethics, which have all been very much apparent in the ‘developed’ world in recent years. There are of course a whole range of controversies associated with these concerns. That is, there are many contradictions between categories such as development and under-development, rich and poor, profit and non-profit, charities and companies, trade and solidarity, and so on. Despite these apparent contradictions, it is these categories that are normally found in advertising that deals with African subjects (Bonsu, 2009). Perhaps it can be argued that precisely because of the controversies around these categories advertisers are attracted to them, as they provide maximum exposure to potential customers. There are obvious post/colonial concerns at stake here. All communities and countries benefiting from Volvic’s campaign are located on the poorest continent on earth: Africa, which is well known for its under-development, poverty and dependence on foreign aid – this at least seems to be the general discourse that surrounds the category ‘Africa’. How can such mainly negative terms be positively used to sell bottled water?

To answer this question we first need to note that, as Brace-Govan and Burgh-Woodman (2008) rightly point out, postcolonial relationships are often characterised by crude boundaries between us and them as well as self and other. These boundaries do not help to transcend or even heal the historical scars that have been produced by the colonial relationships of earlier periods of capitalist development. Instead, they deepen the asymmetrical relations between the Occident and the Orient, between North and South, creating ever deeper divisions and reinforcing the historically produced desire for ‘us’ (the rich and ‘developed’) to feel superior over ‘them’ (the poor and ‘under-developed’ or ‘developing’). ‘They are not quite there yet, and hence we must do everything possible to help them’ – is the common rhetoric. This is what Badje (2009) terms ‘postmodern gift-giving to distant others’. Here the ‘other’ assumes the role of an imagined community that one needs to help, which perhaps is not so different to the imagined community of the indigenous other that one has to colonise in order to help them along the path of enlightenment and development. In this way Badje (2009) is right to suggest that this kind of charity and aid often reaffirms the divisive hierarchical make-up of society and thus maintains exploitative relations between North and South. This is affirmed by Jack (2008) who describes the postcolonial discursive construction of the native as ‘lacking’. In this case, the identified lack is ‘water’ that ‘we’, the ‘developed’ consumers are called upon by Volvic to help to fill. Again, it is precisely this assumed ‘lack’ that has been driving colonial relations ever since Columbus conquered America for the Spanish crown. While Columbus had to paint a picture of vast, unexplored riches of gold and silver in the unexplored hinterland of America to convince the Habsburg regime to fund ever more expensive trips across the Atlantic, Danone’s persuasion strategy works along slightly different lines. We suggest that the company literally shames Northern consumers into buying the Volvic brand.

As Bearden and Rose (1990) and Brennan and Binney (2009) argue, social marketing, a term conceived originally by Kotler and Zaltman (1971), often uses emotionally negative appeals, such as shame and guilt, to encourage compliant behaviour from the public and to sell products which appeal to the need of consumers to conform to social norms. Guilt appeals are aimed at encouraging the public to consider their moral obligations towards other people. As Brennan and Binney (2009) posit, people strongly associate guilt appeals with feelings of empathy, because they see that guilt campaigns are designed to arouse sympathy for other people or a sense of affinity with a situation (e.g., environment, social justice and foreign aid agencies campaigns). So, they think they should do something about the exposed situation. Guilt and shame can thus be seen as motivators.

The literature shows that one must first feel guilty in order to feel ashamed. That is, either one has done something wrong or is not doing enough to do the right thing, or one recognises that one is not doing enough to help other people (Brennan and Binney, 2009). This is why guilt is viewed as a 'private' experience, a personal choice, involving pangs of one's own conscience. It results from an individual's knowledge that s/he has acted against her/his own moral or ethical standards (Freedman et al., 1967; Brennan and Binney, 2009). If this feeling is publicly demonstrated, however, then one is feeling ashamed, which can then trigger an action to put the situation right, so to say. This is a key point in Volvic's campaign: it frequently uses statements such as "each French inhabitant consumes ten times more water than a person in the Sahara" (Volvic, 2009). This type of comparison might drive consumers to experience guilt in at least two ways. First, there might be a postcolonial guilt that is connected to the behaviour of previous generations, as they colonised and exploited African countries, which would be deemed 'unacceptable' against today's moral or ethical standards. The second is a more contemporary guilt, which is perhaps not so much connected to a regret over a 'bad thing done' (Tangney, 1996), but more over the 'good thing not done'. That is, one can do better; one can help more, one can give more. In other words, there is a perceived lack of charity (Badje 2009), empathy, solidarity, and other altruist and benevolent behaviours. Through this exploitation of people's guilt and shame, Volvic hopes to elicit an action – the purchase of their bottled water – that promises to go some way towards addressing the perceived lack and making the requisite social change (Brennan and Binney, 2009).

This persuasion strategy is, however, not just targeted at individual consumers. By eliciting social feelings of shame, Volvic tries to multiply feelings of guilt hoping that a maximum number of consumers are brought into its campaign discourse. The company does this by using social networking tools of the Internet, which encourage people to send emails, pictures and testimonials of the campaign to friends and family. By socialising the campaign in this way, Volvic hopes that the brand is being discussed in these social circles indirectly persuading more and more people to feel guilty and ashamed. These consumers can, of course, do something about this perceived guilt and shame by purchasing a bottle of Volvic water.

Overall one could thus say that Volvic does not simply want to sell a utilitarian good, water, but an idea, a symbolic meaning that is tightly connected to altruistic images of improving the lives of people. This is probably why the verb 'to buy' has been rarely used in the campaign. Instead, the verb 'to drink' or the term 'for Africa' have been used more often. We believe that this language has been used to de-emphasise the importance of the act of buying a consumer good, instead connecting what one has to do anyway (drinking) to a highly symbolic, ethical act of doing something for 'other' people; people who are perceived to be poor and in urgent need of help, as they do not have the luxury of having access to a utilitarian good such as water.

Conclusions

This paper has argued that 'late capitalism' is characterised by the production of symbolic meaning that are attached to consumer goods. Goods are no longer purchased simply for their utilitarian function but for their specific symbolic and cultural meaning. We have used McCracken's (1986) theory of the cultural meaning of consumer goods (CMCG) to show how the advertising industry uses specific instruments to appropriate general social discourses and meanings for consumer goods. One of the discourses that seems to be increasingly tapped into by advertising companies is that of aid, development and charity, which connect to wider ethical concerns that consumers in 'developed' countries seem to have been increasingly occupied with in recent years. The aim of this paper has been to unearth the postcolonial relations embedded in these marketing techniques.

To illustrate and provide evidence for this wider theoretical argument, we have put forward an in-depth critical discourse analysis of the ‘1L=10L for Africa’ campaign, which has been run by Volvic, the prime bottled water brand of the multinational company Danone. The meaning constructed by this campaign seems to be that basic running water provisions in the ‘developing world’ can only be delivered through increased bottled water consumption in ‘developed’ countries. We have shown that Volvic uses a range of advertising techniques to persuade consumers that their general guilt and shame about the perceived poverty and under-development in Africa – some of which is historically produced – can be addressed by purchasing a bottle of Volvic water. Rather than transcending and healing the historically produced inequalities between North and South, we have argued that such marketing campaigns deepen these divisions. This is because colonial discourses of ‘us’ vs. ‘them’, self and other, are not problematised and transcended but reinforced. That is, while postcolonial marketing discourses claim to be doing ‘good’ through the ‘ethical consumption’ of products, we argue that it is precisely through this ethical ‘add on’ to consumer products that established structures of colonialism are maintained and even furthered.

References

- Ashcroft, B. et al. (1991) *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures*. London: Routledge.
- Bajde, D. (2009) ‘Rethinking the social and cultural dimensions of charitable giving’, *Consumption, Markets & Culture*, 12(1): 65-84.
- Baudrillard, J. (1968) *Le système des objets*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Baudrillard, J. (1970) *La société de consommation - ses mythes ses structures*. Paris: Éditions Denoël.
- Bearden, W.O. and Rose, R. L. (1990) Attention to social comparison information: an individual difference factor affecting consumer conformity, *Journal of Consumer Research*, 16: 461–71.
- Bhabha, H.K. (1994) *The location of culture*. London: Routledge.
- Bonsu, S.K. (2009) ‘Colonial images in global times: consumer interpretations of Africa and Africans in advertising’, *Consumption, Markets & Culture*, 12(1): 1-25.
- Brace-Govan, J. and de Burgh-Woodman, H. (2008) ‘Sneakers and street culture: A postcolonial analysis of marginalized cultural consumption’, *Consumption Markets & Culture*, 11(2): 93-112.
- Brennan L. and Binney, W. (2009, in press) Fear, guilt, and shame appeals in social marketing, *Journal of Business Research*.
- Cook, I. and Harrison, M. (2003) Cross over food: Re-materialising postcolonial geographies. *Transactions, Institute of British Geographers*, 28(3): 296-317.
- Dirlik, A. (2002) Rethinking Colonialism: Globalization, Postcolonialism, And The Nation. *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, 4(3): 428-448.
- Douglas, M. and Isherwood, B.C. (2006) *O Mundo Dos Bens - Para Uma Antropologia Do Consumo (The World of Goods)*, Rio de Janeiro: Editora da UFRJ.
- Euromonitor (2007) Soft drinks – World, Available at: <<https://ras1.hec.fr/get/uri/http://www2.gmid.Euromonitor.com/Docs/PDFs/RB.pdf>>. Retrieved 4/11/2007.
- Eurostat (2004) *Le marché mondial des eaux préemballées*. Collection Dynamique des Marchés. Paris: Group Les Echos.
- Fairclough, N. (1995) *Critical Discourse Analysis: the Critical Study of Language*. London: Longman.
- Fairclough, N. (2003) *Analysing discourse: textual analysis for social research*. London: Routledge.
- Freedman, J.L., Wallington, S.A. and Bless, E. (1967) ‘Compliance without Pressure: The Effects of Guilt’, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 7(2): 117-24.

- Galeano, E. (1998) *Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent*. London: Latin America Bureau.
- Insee (2006) *Consommation moyenne de quelques produits alimentaires*, Available at: <http://www.insee.fr/fr/ffc/figure/NATTEF05111.XLS>. Retrieved November 27, 2006.
- Jack, G. (2008) Postcolonialism and marketing. In M. Tadajewski & D. Brownlie (Eds.). *Critical Marketing: Contemporary Issues in Marketing*: 367-387.
- Jameson, F. (1991) *Postmodernism, or the cultural logic of later capitalism*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Just-drinks.com. US: Volvic, UNICEF launch initiative for clean water for Africa. Available at <http://www.just-drinks.com/article.aspx?id=92700&d=1>. Accessed on October 27, 2008.
- Kotler, P. and Zaltman, G. (1971) 'Social marketing: an approach to planned social change,' *Journal of Marketing*, 35(3): 3-12.
- Mandel, E. (1985) *O capitalismo tardio (Late Capitalism)*. 2. ed. São Paulo: Nova Cultural.
- Marty, N. (2005) *Perrier, c'est nous! Histoire de la source Perrier et de son personnel*. Paris: Atelier.
- McClintock, A. (1992) The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term "Post-Colonialism", *Third World and Post-Colonial Issues*, pp. 84-98
- McCracken, G. (1986). 'Culture and Consumption: A Theoretical Account of the Structure and Movement of the Cultural Meaning of Consumer Goods. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 13(1): 71-84.
- Nkrumah, K. (1965) *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*. London: Thomas Nelson and Sons.
- O'Shaughnessy, J. and O'Shaughnessy, N.J. (2004) *Persuasion in advertising*. New York: Routledge.
- Patke, R.S. (2006) *Postcolonial Cultures*. *Theory Culture Society*; 23: 369-372.
- Said, E. (1978) *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage.
- Sidaway, J.D. (2000) *Postcolonial geographies: an exploratory essay* *Progress in Human Geography*, 24: 591-612
- Spivak, G.C. (1999) *A critique of postcolonial reason: toward a history of the vanishing present*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Tangney, J.P. (1996) *Conceptual and methodological issues in the assessment of shame and guilt*. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 34: 741-754.
- Thompson, C.J. and Haytko, D. (1997) 'Speaking of Fashion: Consumers Use of Fashion Discourse and the Appropriation of Countervailing Cultural Meanings,' *Journal of Consumer Research*, 24(1): 15.
- Tns-Sofres. (2006) *Baromètre C.I.EAU / TNS SOFRES 2006 – "Les Français et l'eau"* 11 ed. Available at: http://www.tns-sofres.com/etudes/consumer_/270306_baroeau.pdf. Retrieved April 16, 2006.
- UNICEF (2008) <http://www.unicefusa.org/news/releases/volvic-natural-spring-water.html>. Accessed on May 6, 2009.
- UNICEF (2009) <http://www.unicefusa.org/hidden/volvic-usfund.html>. Accessed on May 6, 2009.
- Volvic (2008). "1L=10L for Africa" UK's web site. <http://www.volvic1for10.co.uk/>. Accessed on October 27, 2008.
- Volvic (2009) Vidéos. <http://www.volvic-unicef.fr/index.php?nav1=video&nav2=reportages&objectid=6>. Accessed on June 15, 2009.
- Young, R. (2001) *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.