"In Ecostore We Trust":
Uncovering the Symbolic Meanings Of Sustainable Products & Their Use in Building Consumers’ Self-Image

Samuel Soo

A dissertation submitted to Auckland University of Technology in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business (MBus)

2011

Faculty of Business and Law

Primary Supervisor: Dr Ann-Marie Kennedy
Attestation of Authorship

"I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning."

Samuel Soo
Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the symbolic meanings consumers took from a brand of sustainable products. This interaction between consumer and product is modelled by McCracken’s (1986) model of symbolic meaning transfer, which served as the study’s lens of interpretation. The symbolic meanings of products are important as consumers use these to build their self-image. This transfer of symbolic meaning is completed through the act of consumption. The study looked to provide an understanding of the role of consumption in order to inform attempts to initiate a shift in cultural values towards consumption. The undertaking of this research is significant as it contributes to a greater understanding of the sociological and symbolic function in conceptualisations of sustainable consumption. This would help to inform solutions that improve the sustainability of modern consumption.

The study interviewed seven consumers of Ecostore products, a brand of sustainable household cleaning and body care products. The questions in the interview were informed by the model of symbolic meaning transfer and sought to allow participants to tell their consumption stories and rituals of the product. Questions explored the actions that participants took with Ecostore-branded products. The data collected was analysed by way of thematic analysis.

The findings uncovered symbolic meanings of virtue, personal and collective values, health and trust in Ecostore products. Participants used these symbolic meanings to create their self-image through the ritual of consuming them. These rituals included the actions of buying, using, gifting and the disposal of the product. The self-image that participants built expressed that they were virtuous, responsible, contributing and risk-adverse members of society. Further, the personal and collective values of participants could be expressed through the consumption of the product. This ability to build self-image from Ecostore products was important to consumers and contributed to their decision to select them over others.

This study has contributed to knowledge in the area of sustainable consumption by highlighting the symbolic significance of the consumption practice in the context of sustainable products. The symbolic meanings identified could be reflected in new product development, marketing management and advertising communications. This could help to increase levels of the consumption of sustainable products.
# Contents

1 INTRODUCTION .......................................................................................................................... 10

1.1 BACKGROUND ....................................................................................................................... 10

1.2 PROBLEM ORIENTATION .................................................................................................... 11

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE ......................................................................................................... 12

1.4 CONTRIBUTION OF STUDY ............................................................................................... 13

1.5 ORGANISATION OF STUDY .................................................................................................. 14

2 LITERATURE REVIEW ............................................................................................................ 15

2.1 OVERVIEW ............................................................................................................................... 15

2.2 SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION ............................................................................................ 15

2.2.1 Conceptualisation of Sustainable Consumption ............................................................... 15

2.2.2 Addressing Sustainable Consumption .............................................................................. 17

2.3 MEANING OF PRODUCTS ..................................................................................................... 19

2.3.1 Symbolic Value of Products .............................................................................................. 20

2.3.2 Symbolic Value of Brands ................................................................................................. 22

2.3.3 Products as Self-Image ....................................................................................................... 25

2.4 MEANING OF CONSUMPTION ............................................................................................. 26

2.4.1 Self-Image Through Consumption .................................................................................. 27

2.4.2 Consumption Rituals ......................................................................................................... 28

2.5 MODEL OF SYMBOLIC MEANING TRANSFER .................................................................. 31

2.5.1 Premise of the Model ........................................................................................................ 31

2.5.2 McCracken’s (1986) Rituals ............................................................................................. 33

2.5.3 Critique of McCracken (1986) ........................................................................................ 35

2.5.4 Value of the Model ........................................................................................................... 36

2.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY ............................................................................................................. 37

3 METHODOLOGY ..................................................................................................................... 38

3.1 INTRODUCTION ..................................................................................................................... 38

3.2 RESEARCH PURPOSE ........................................................................................................... 38

3.3 EPISTEMOLOGY ....................................................................................................................... 39
3.4 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE ............................................................... 41
3.5 METHODOLOGY .................................................................................. 43
3.6 METHOD ............................................................................................. 45
   3.6.1 Development of Selection Criteria .............................................. 45
   3.6.2 Development of Interview ......................................................... 48
   3.6.3 Pre-Testing of Interview ............................................................ 48
   3.6.4 Participants ............................................................................... 49
   3.6.5 Data Collection ......................................................................... 50
3.7 DATA ANALYSIS .................................................................................. 53
3.8 ESTABLISHING TRUSTWORTHINESS ............................................... 56
   3.8.1 Credibility ................................................................................ 56
   3.8.2 Transferability ......................................................................... 56
   3.8.3 Dependability .......................................................................... 57
   3.8.4 Confirmability ........................................................................ 58
3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS ............................................................ 58
3.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY ....................................................................... 59

4 FINDINGS .................................................................................................. 60
   4.1 INTRODUCTION ............................................................................... 60
   4.2 VIRTUE ........................................................................................... 60
      4.2.1 Being Good ............................................................................ 60
      4.2.2 Making a Difference .............................................................. 64
   4.3 VALUES ........................................................................................... 67
      4.3.1 Personal Values ..................................................................... 68
      4.3.2 Creation of Self-Image ........................................................... 71
      4.3.3 Collective Values .................................................................. 75
   4.4 HEALTH .......................................................................................... 78
      4.4.1 Personal Health ...................................................................... 78
      4.4.2 Health of Other People .......................................................... 80
      4.4.3 Health of the Environment ..................................................... 82
   4.5 TRUST ............................................................................................. 84
   4.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY ..................................................................... 88

5 DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS ................................................................ 89
5.1 INTRODUCTION .........................................................................................................................89
5.2 INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS .................................................................89
  5.2.1 Self-Image of Being Virtuous ...............................................................................................90
  5.2.2 Self-Image of Being Responsible .........................................................................................92
  5.2.3 Self-Image of Being a Contributing Member of Society .......................................................93
  5.2.4 Self-Image of Being Risk Adverse .......................................................................................95
  5.2.5 Expression of Personal Values in Self-Image .......................................................................96
  5.2.6 Beyond Sustainability ........................................................................................................98
5.3 ACADEMIC CONTRIBUTION ...................................................................................................99
5.4 MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS ................................................................................................101
5.5 LIMITATIONS ..........................................................................................................................102
5.6 DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH .............................................................................104
5.7 CONCLUDING STATEMENT ....................................................................................................107

6 REFERENCE LIST .......................................................................................................................108

7 APPENDICES ................................................................................................................................128
List of Tables

Table 2.1  Key Characteristics of Ritualised Behaviour and Ritual  29

Table 2.2  Instruments of Symbolic Meaning Transfer From Product to Individual  34

Table 3.1  Justification of Ecostore as a Sustainable Consumer Product  47

Table 3.2  Stages of Conducting Thematic Analysis  54
# List of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Model of Symbolic Meaning Transfer</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Area Explored in This Study</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# List of Appendices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>Ecostore Products</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>Ecostore Background</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>Interview Guide</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>Participant Information Sheet</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>Consent Form</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>Ecostore Rituals</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>In-depth Interview Transcripts</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Concerns over sustainable development of the global population first came to the attention of the public in the World Commission on Environment and Development’s Brundtland report in 1987 (Sanne, 2002). Unsustainable levels and patterns of consumption are a major cause of ongoing environmental degradation, particularly in industrialised countries (Connolly & Prothero, 2003; Durning, 1994; UNDP, 1998). Modern consumption is unsustainable\(^1\) as it is reliant on finite and non-renewable resources and generate unacceptable environmental impacts (Jackson, 2006). Many agencies have estimated more than five planets will be necessary to support the current flow of energy and materials (World Wildlife Fund, 2006). Resources are being used at a rate greater than they can be regenerated.

The issue of sustainability continues to increase in prominence today (Chan & Lau, 2004). Research in the field of sustainability can be considered vital and urgent given its implications for societies and environments. Rampant consumption is taxing on finite and non-renewable natural resources (N. Myers & Kent, 2004) and has contributed to issues such as global warming, pollution and soil erosion (Tanner & Kast, 2003).

Households affect the environment through their use of energy and water, waste generation, transport patterns and food choices (A. M. King, Burgess, Ijomah, & McMahon, 2006). Research in understanding consumption practices is a means of addressing the environmental degradation. Some academics have debated whether the issue is consumption levels or patterns of consumption (Kong, Salzmann, Steger, & Ionescu-Somers, 2002; Mont & Plepys, 2008). However, there is a consensus that an adjustment of individual actions, lifestyles and behaviours is necessary. Advancing

---

\(^1\) In a strict sense there are no truly sustainable consumption levels, as all products will inevitably have some negative environmental impact. Instead, products that have low environmental impacts are regarded as environmentally sustainable.
knowledge can be considered both urgent and critical given the rapid rate of resource depletion and ongoing adverse impacts on the environment.

1.2 Problem Orientation

Schaefer and Crane (2005) identified that consumers do not necessarily establish profound relationships with products, but instead use products in highly visible ways and are conscious of the inferences that others draw from them. As well as performing utilitarian functions, people consume products to create their self-image (Baudrillard, 1997; Belk, 1988; Featherstone, 1990; Kernan & Sommers, 1967; Solomon, 1983). Consumer products are capable of serving self-image because they are embedded with symbolic meaning (Belk, 1988; Leigh & Gabel, 1992; Solomon, 1983). Brands incorporate the symbolic meanings of products as well as functionality and experiential benefits (Park, Jaworski, & MacInnis, 1986). The symbolic meanings of products are important because they complement the product's utility and influence consumption behaviour. According to Banister and Hogg (2004, p. 850):

"Consumers often decide whether to accept or reject products and brands on the basis of their symbolic (as opposed to the functional) attribute, investing items with either positive or negative symbolic meaning."

Thus, identifying what the symbolic meanings are for sustainable products and how consumers transfer symbolic meanings to their self-image gives an insight into what motivates the decision to use them. The symbolic meaning is not always constructed by the manufacturer or marketer, as consumers themselves invest symbolic meaning in products (Sirgy, et al., 1997). Consumption is the means by which consumers invest symbolic meaning. Symbolic meanings represent what individuals see in the products they consume, as well as being products in themselves of what has been invested in them. Because products can be invested with symbolic meaning, they can function as symbols to a person's individuality and uniqueness (Hoyer & MacInnis, 2004).

Symbolic meanings have implications for increasing the general consumption of sustainable products. The symbolic meanings of products are determinants of their consumption (Solomon, 1983). Schneider, Ledermann, Fry and Rist (2010) found that where products’ symbolic meanings contradicted with a person’s identity, behaviours
Introduction

would be refused. This suggests that in order for sustainable consumption to take place, individuals must first see symbolic meanings in sustainable products that align with their desired self-image. Personalised meaning, in contrast to cultural and advertiser-construed, has also been suggested to have higher levels of enduring involvement, greater salience and result in stronger motivations for cognitive processing and elaboration (Fournier, 1991).

The model of symbolic meaning transfer\(^2\) (McCracken, 1986) is used as a lens of interpretation for this study. According to this model, consumption actions are a means of transferring symbolic meaning from products to an individual's self-image. Crewe and Gregson (1998) have previously called for research attention towards how the symbolic meanings of products are “unhooked” and transferred, and how consumers construct meaning and change the value of the products they consume. They suggest an approach emphasising rituals of consumption and cultural and symbolic dimensions of exchange. The model of symbolic meaning transfer (1986) orientates the research objective to address this gap. The research objective will now be stated.

1.3 Research Objective

The purpose of this study was to analyse the symbolic meanings that consumers see in a brand of sustainable consumer products and how this symbolic meaning may be transferred to their self-image through the individuals' consumption practices. As such, the research objective of the study was to answer the following:

What symbolic meanings do consumers take from sustainable products to build their self-image?

This research objective will be achieved though the use of the model of symbolic meaning transfer (McCracken, 1988) to explore the consumption experiences of individuals who consume a particular brand of sustainable products. The model describes how types of consumption actions enable the transfer of symbolic meaning from product to an individual's self-image. The symbolic meaning of products is

\(^2\) This model is explained in detail in Section 2.5.1.
formed through the cultural world, consumer interaction, interpretation and branding. The achievement of the research objective will help develop an understanding of consumer’s feelings, experiences and perceptions related to sustainable consumer products. The value in answering the research objective will now be outlined.

1.4 Contribution of Study

This study is amongst the first to explore the symbolic meanings of sustainable products through actual consumption actions. Previous studies have focused on the purchase decision and have not accounted for what happens after. The symbolic significance in consuming sustainable products has yet to be accounted for (Soron, 2010). Examining the consumption actions and rituals around sustainable products is a means of developing an understanding of this symbolic significance.

The findings of this study highlight the symbolic meanings that individuals see in sustainable consumer products. These symbolic meanings are drawn and cultivated through the ritual actions consumers take with products. By providing an in-depth account of consumption histories and practices, the movement of these meanings from product to self-image can be understood. Consumers actively draw symbolic meaning from products to their self-image. This transfer of symbolic meaning for sustainable products is illustrated in the findings of this study. The study also contributes to current knowledge through identifying the nature of the self-image that consumers built.

Studying what symbolic meaning consumers of sustainable products wish to acquire presents multiple benefits. These benefits pertain to marketers and governments, as well as wider society that stand to gain from more sustainable consumption behaviours. Uses of the symbolic meanings could be in new product development, marketing communications, as well as social marketing campaigns to increase the general consumption of sustainable goods. These areas of practice can help to encourage a shift in cultural values in the way individuals think about their consumption.
1.5 Organisation of Study

This chapter has provided an overview of the background to the issue and has outlined the focus of this study. It has presented the objective of the research and has highlighted the significance of undertaking the study. The contribution of this study has been discussed. The remainder of this study is structured as follows:

Chapter Two provides a review of literature that relates to the research objective. Firstly, the study's conceptualisation of sustainability is provided. Previous approaches to address issues of sustainable consumption are reviewed. The review of literature illustrates a gap in knowledge pertaining to the symbolic meanings of sustainable products. Symbolic meanings are used to build the self-image of the individuals who consume them. Knowledge around the symbolic value of products, brands and consumption actions is synthesised. The model of symbolic meaning transfer (McCracken, 1986) that is used as a lens of interpretation is explained with its value in achieving the research objective stated.

Chapter Three provides an overview of the epistemological beliefs and theoretical perspective of the researcher. It presents the approach to the collection and analysis of data. In-depth semi-structured interviews were used to collect data around participants' consumption experiences of a particular brand of sustainable products. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. The ways in which trustworthiness have been established for the study are outlined. Finally, Chapter Three the ethical considerations of the research are addressed.

Chapter Four presents the findings of this study. In answering the research objective, the symbolic meanings of the selected brand of sustainable consumer products are explored and outlined. The meanings are explained and supported through quotes from the interviews.

Chapter Five concludes this research by demonstrating that the research objectives have been achieved. It states the key findings of the study. The value of these findings are laid out and linked back to knowledge in the field. Chapter Five notes the contribution of the study and outlines its implications for managerial practice. The limitations of the study are stated and addressed. Directions for future research in the area are considered before providing a concluding statement.
2 Literature Review

2.1 Overview

This chapter reviews literature surrounding sustainable consumption and related concepts to provide a background to the research objective and support the decisions and assumptions that have been made in the study. Research in the field of sustainable consumption is overviewed. The symbolic meaning of products is an important influence in the decision to consume and this is discussed. The role and function of branding in imbuing products with symbolic meaning is also outlined. The chapter concludes by providing an overview of the model of symbolic meaning transfer (McCracken, 1986) and outlining its value in its use as a lens of interpretation.

2.2 Sustainable Consumption

The focus of this study lies in sustainable consumption. Sustainable consumption broadly refers to the purchase and use of more efficiently produced products (Seyfang, 2005) and environmentally friendly consumption practices (Halkier, 1999). This study acknowledges the view that actions of consumption may not be necessarily sustainable in themselves, only that the nature of the consumption can be less unsustainable in respect to the resources used or environmental impacts generated. The conceptualisation of what sustainable consumption is will now be further outlined.

2.2.1 Conceptualisation of Sustainable Consumption

The term “sustainable consumption” first entered the international policy arena at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit (Seyfang, 2005). It was contained in the action plan for sustainable development. Proposed solutions to sustainability issues included promoting eco-efficiency and using market instruments to shift consumption patterns (UNCED, 1992). Policy documents have frequently defined sustainable consumption as the following:
"The use of goods and services that respond to basic needs and bring a better quality of life, while minimising the use of natural resources, toxic materials and emissions of waste and pollutants over the life cycle, so as not to jeopardise the needs of future generations." (European Environmental Agency, 2005, p. 13)

There have been a number of reviews of what sustainable consumption means to different groups (see Cohen & Murphy, 2001; Jackson, 2006; Jackson & Michaelis, 2003; Seyfang, 2004). Currently, there is no consensus on what precisely sustainable consumption entails. Sustainable consumption has ultimately been used as an umbrella term for a variety of social and environmental issues (Mont & Plepys, 2008). Despite this, it has grown to become a core area of policy objectives in both national and international domains (Seyfang, 2005). Governments have increasingly incorporated sustainable consumption into policy, which demonstrates the growing importance of the issue and the necessity for solutions. To develop a solution, researchers need to understand the value individuals see in acts of consumption.

Dolan (2002) noted that previous conceptualisations of sustainable consumption did not incorporate the social and cultural meaning found in consumption practices. Soron (2010) adds that sustainable consumption has important communicative and identity-orientated functions that are missing from current conceptualisations. The ways in which individuals consume also house meanings and possess value that extends beyond the utilitarian. As such, Dolan (2002) calls for sustainable consumption to fully engage in the sociological and anthropological significances of consumption. Much of modern consumption is symbolic, so it is thus necessary to draw on theoretical frameworks that incorporate this. Previous literature that has attempted to conceptualise sustainable consumption has not accounted for the symbolic meaning of products in the acts of consuming them.

Schaefer and Crane (2005) outline a number of views of consumption, each possessing a different relationship with the concept of sustainability. Here, the view of consumption that has been adopted for the research is “sociological and anthropological”. Under this conceptualisation, consumption is not examined from an information or psychological perspective, but from a social and cultural one. This view emphasises:
“Less on how people perceive, evaluate and select different consumption options and more on the function that consumption has in their lives, both individually and as members of social groups.” (Schaefer & Crane, 2005, p83)

The sociological and anthropological view of consumption emphasises the importance of consumption in facilitating social and cultural expressions. As such, consumption can be conceptualised as being an intrinsically positive force in allowing individuals to construct and express their self-image (Borgmann, 2001). This is the conceptualisation of sustainable consumption that informs this study and is justified through the reported findings. The conceptualisation is valuable as it begins to recognise that consumption has an important function in building one’s self-image. The following section will review where research attention in sustainable consumption has been previously, and where a gap in knowledge currently exists.

2.2.2 Addressing Sustainable Consumption

Early attempts to address the issue of sustainability focused on production aspects such as operational efficiencies and environmentally benign processes. However, it was quickly noted that any gains in these areas were counteracted by increasing consumption (Rothenberg, 2007). Thus, researchers have since turned their attention to individual consumers and their consumption as a means of addressing sustainability issues.

The literature in sustainable consumption has often focused on identifying who the green consumer is (e.g. Abeliotis, Koniari, & Sardianou, 2010; Diamantopoulos, Schlegelmilch, Sinkovics, & Bohlen, 2003). The green consumer was seen as a solution to consumption issues. As such, researchers were interested in identifying who they were. Some of the areas they have sought to explore were the green consumers’ demographies (Roberts, 1995; Schultz, Oskamp, & Mainieri, 1995; Straughan & Roberts, 1999), their personalities (Balderjahn, 1988; Kinnear, Taylor, & Ahmed, 1974) and their attitudes (Shrum, McCarty, & Lowrey, 1995). However, the issue with this focus on the consumer is that the findings of these studies have repeatedly contradicted one another (Kilbourne & Beckmann, 1998; Straughan & Roberts, 1999; 3

---

3 This study understands the green consumer to be one that is engaging in sustainable consumption.
Wagner, 1997). One explanation is that sustainable consumption behaviour is not consistent in itself (Alwitt & Pitts, 1996; Moisander, 2007; Peattie, 1999; Thogersen, 2004; Uusitalo, 1990). Green attitudes do not always correlate with green consumption behaviours. Researchers have called this the "attitude-behaviour" gap.

The "attitude-behaviour gap" has been extensively explored in a number of studies (Connolly & Prothero, 2003; Hughner, McDonagh, Prothero, Shultz, & Stanton, 2007; Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002; Kraus, 1995; Padel & Foster, 2005; Swann, 2002; Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006; Young, Hwang, McDonald, & Oates, 2010). One example of this gap is that while just under half the population hold favourable attitudes towards organic produce, only about ten percent of the population purchase organic produce (Hughner, et al., 2007). Some explanations offered are that other factors such as price, perception of performance and convenience take precedence in decision criteria (Carrigan & Attalla, 2001; Weatherell, Tregear, & Allinson, 2003). Others in the field state it is due to a lack of alternatives, a disbelief of claims and a lack of information (de Pelsmacker, Driesen, & Rayp, 2005). This means that consumers do not always feel that they can trust the claims of manufacturers and brands. This compromises the consumers' commitment to social and ethical issues, of which sustainability is one.

This study takes that belief that all consumers, rather than just green consumers, have some capacity and potential to make some or more sustainable consumption choices in their lives (Kardash, 1976; Young, et al., 2010). It does not attempt to provide an explanation of why consumers may or may not always consume sustainable products consistently. The focus of this research moves away from who the consumer is and instead looks at what role the process of consumption has to consumers. Products and their consumption have important psychological roles that have been previously underestimated by sustainability researchers (van Dam & Apeldoorn, 1996). This study intends to contribute to current knowledge by identifying what symbolic value any consumer may obtain through the consumption of sustainable products.

Consumption activities have a distinct cultural meaningfulness that has been neglected in production-focused perspectives on sustainable consumption (Dolan, 2002). The practice of consumption is an individual's primary means of self-definition (Durning, 1994). This is because consumption is “inextricably linked with values and social meaning” and products act as “signifiers of cultural allegiance and social
relationships” (Seyfang, 2004, p. 324). Sustainable consumption needs to start drawing from consumer research addressing consumption to understand the drivers and roles it plays in self-image creation (Soron, 2010). Consumption is able to create self-image because products have symbolic meanings. This study will explore the symbolic meanings of sustainable products to develop understanding of why consumers choose them. Developing this understanding of consumption is valuable as it supports a shift to a consumer culture that addresses sustainability concerns (Dolan, 2002).

Some authors have previously called for a major shift in the cultural values of consumption to address sustainability issues (Dolan, 2002; Michaelis, 2003). Consumer culture is seen as being responsible for the growth of unsustainable consumption levels (Featherstone, 1990; Michaelis, 2003). However, shifting culture is not easy. Consumer culture is embedded in existing material and social infrastructure and as such, can face resistance (Heiskanen & Pantzar, 1997; Schein, 1997). Any attempt to initiate a shift in culture needs to first understand the nature and the role of consumption. This study proposes that examining the consumption practices around sustainable products is a means of achieving this understanding through the findings of symbolic meanings. The following section will lay out why the symbolic meanings of products are important to consumption.

2.3 Meaning of Products

Consumers purchase products and services not only for their functional utility, but also for their symbolic meaning (Baudrillard, 1997; Bauman, 1990; Campbell, 1987; Dittmar, 1992; Elliott, 1999; Levy, 1959; Miller, 1995). This notion has long been recognised as important for consumer research (Levy, 1959; Mick, 1986; Solomon, 1983; Zaltman & Wallendorf, 1979). Levy (1959) noted that transactions between marketers and consumers are, above all else, exchanges of meaning. If these exchanges can be understood, then there is potential for increasing the general consumption of sustainable products. This section reviews knowledge around the symbolic meanings of products and brands and their subsequent value in the process of self-image creation.
2.3.1 Symbolic Value of Products

Consumer research has suggested that products have value on a number of levels. Firstly, products have utilitarian value in fulfilling functions and resolving problems (Fennell, 1978; Fournier, 1991). This purely utilitarian role has already been widely acknowledged (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Furby, 1978; MacInnis & Jaworski, 1988; Prentice, 1987). Secondly, products have experiential value in sensory pleasure, the arousal of emotion and serving as pacifiers and comforters (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; E. Myers, 1985; Prentice, 1987; Settle & Alreck, 1989; Wallendorf & Arnould, 1988). Thirdly, products have value in their ability to express one’s self-image through their symbolic value (Belk, 1988; Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Furby, 1978; MacInnis & Jaworski, 1988; E. Myers, 1985; Settle & Alreck, 1989).

These beliefs about the value of a product have led to researchers adopting different stances towards understanding consumption behaviour. Research in understanding the nature of human motivation for consumption behaviour can be seen as being in two distinct schools of thought. These are based on the values seen in products as outlined. The rational school suggests that consumers are economic and act to maximise the total utility of given scenarios (e.g. Bettman, 1979; Howard & Sheth, 1969). As such, consumers are seen to behave based on objective criteria of price, performance and comparisons (Bhat & Reddy, 1998). However, a growing number of researchers have noted that this school of thought does not adequately capture the motivation formed from consumers’ emotional wants (Dichter, 1960; Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982; Holbrook, 1980a, 1980b; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Levy, 1959; Sheth, 1979). Consumption offers experiential and symbolic value, drawing and following from the three types of product value outlined. Under this belief, Consumers use personal and subjective criteria such as taste and desire for expression to guide their consumption decisions. Consumers are driven by functional and utilitarian needs, as well as their motivations for the symbolic and expressive (Bhat & Reddy, 1998; Sirgy & Johar, 1999).

The focus of this study lies in the symbolic value of sustainable products. The area of sustainability is a modern science and as such, consumers have an uncertainty in knowledge (Giddens, 1991). Consumers are not certain of the value their actions have on the environment. Consumers raise questions of "who to believe" and "how to
decide how to believe" (Macnaghten, 2003). As such, the choice to purchase sustainable products is difficult to make under the rational school of thought. Furthermore, other authors have noted that the rational and utilitarian consumer is unlikely to be the basis for addressing sustainability (van Dam & Apeldoorn, 1996). For these reasons, research in sustainable consumption needs to be developed from the symbolic and expressive perspective of consumer behaviour. This presents the greatest potential to further the conceptualisation of sustainable consumption presented in Section 2.2.1.

Consumer products have long been recognised as having the capacity to carry and communicate cultural and symbolic meanings (Baudrillard, 1997; Douglas & Isherwood, 1978; Featherstone, 1991; McCracken, 1986, 1988a; Sahlins, 1972). Products can be used to create cultural notions of self, demonstrate social connections and acquire or sustain lifestyles (Douglas & Isherwood, 1978; McCracken, 1988a; Prentice, 1987; Solomon, 1983, 1988). The symbolic meanings have long been recognised in impacting consumption behaviours (Levy, 1959, 1964; Solomon, 1983; Zaltman & Wallendorf, 1979). As yet, there has been no empirical investigation of the role of symbolic meanings in the context of sustainable products. Developing an understanding of the symbolic meanings of sustainable goods is valuable in identifying what symbolic meanings consumers desire in their consumption.

Focusing on the symbolic value of products is useful because consumers' behaviours towards products are largely based on the ascribed symbolic meanings (Kleine & Kernan, 1991). For example, a magician's hat and a top hat share similar physical properties. However, one is used for entertainment and the other is a historical formal headpiece. This distinction in their usage is due to the symbolic meanings that are held in the products. As it has been noted that symbolic meanings are often determinants of a product's consumption (Solomon, 1983), it is valuable to explore the symbolic meanings of sustainable products to develop understanding of why individuals select these over non-sustainable products. Researchers have understood the symbolic meaning of products to impact consumption in different ways. This stems from the different conceptualisation of symbolic meaning that researchers have taken.

---

4 To the best of the author's knowledge.
One of the earliest conceptualisations of symbolic meaning in consumer research was in the work of Levy. Levy (1959, p117) regarded products as being “symbols for sale”. The symbolic value of products was simply another dimension that complemented the functional value. This conceptualisation focuses on uncovering the structures of symbolic meaning. Other authors, such as McCracken (1986, 1988a) instead focused on the transfers of symbolic meaning. Under his view, products serve a cultural function through representing symbolic meanings that were previously abstract. McCracken’s (1986) focus on the transfer of symbolic meaning explains how products come to acquire symbolic meaning, as well as how consumers use symbolic meaning. Products not only gain symbolic meaning from their physical attributes and interpretation from society and culture, but also from the branding of the product (McCracken, 1986; Mick & Buhl, 1992). The role and value of brands in imbuing symbolic meaning to products will now be discussed.

### 2.3.2 Symbolic Value of Brands

Products are images that are perceived by consumers as having symbolic meanings (Dolich, 1969). The symbolic meaning of products is also attached to individual brands, and thus symbolic meaning is communicated through the use and consumption of brands (Gottdeiner, 1985; McCracken, 1986). To understand the symbolic meanings of a product, the role and influence of brand needs to be acknowledged. This is because brands reflect the meanings that consumers see in products (Keller, 1993). At its most basic level, the role of the brand is to create an image that differentiates a product offering from that of competitors (Dibb, Simkin, Pride, & Ferrell, 1997; Gardner & Levy, 1955; Kotler, 1997).

The process of branding differentiates products through changing the symbolic meanings of the product. For example, the Levi’s brand adds new symbolic meanings of quality and history to its jeans over unbranded products. This allows Levi’s to be differentiated from other products and have symbolic value. Brands can imbue symbolic meaning because they associate products with new personality dimensions (Aaker & Schmitt, 1997; McCracken, 1986, 1989; Plummer, 2000) as well as ideas and attributes (Gardner & Levy, 1955). The abstract qualities of a brand allow symbolic and value-expressive functions to the consumer (Shavitt, 1990). For example, the Levi’s consumer can express their taste and status through wearing the product.
The product and brand are distinct from each other and are capable of undergoing change independent of each other (S. King, 1973). As such, manufacturers use brands to imbue new symbolic meaning for products with similar or the same attributes. For example, milk can be sold under the brand of Anchor or Home Brand, providing differentiated symbolic meaning yet retaining the same product qualities. Brands have significance in providing symbolic value through extending beyond the product’s utilitarian value. The brand is often seen as separate from the functional product, yet to the people who consume it, it is still just as real as the product itself (Kim, 1990; Meenaghan, 1995).

Brands develop symbolic meanings from a variety of sources. The product attributes and benefits are a part of this symbolic meaning (Keller, 1993; Plummer, 2000). Additionally, the symbolic meanings of products are created from a combination of brand management and society's interaction and interpretation of products and brands (Underwood, 2003). This forms a more substantial contribution to symbolic meaning than the product's attributes alone. Advertising and marketing create beliefs about what is desirable and acceptable (Belk, 1985). The practice of advertising communicates the meaning of brands and products to society (Domzal & Kernan, 1992). Consumers use advertising to discover what the symbolic meanings of brands are, through connecting aspects of the cultural world with products (McCracken, 1986). Advertising brings together the product and a widely accepted symbol of meaning in such a way that the audience sees a similarity between the two. This allows the particular symbolic meaning to be a part of the brand (McCracken, 1990). The advertising system educates consumers about products, and this is how symbolic meanings become ascribed to them. For example, the product of Coca-Cola can carry symbolic meanings of happiness and fun. The process of branding is the means of attribution of social and symbolic dimensions to products (Davies, 1992).

The brand concept management framework of Park et al. (1986) proposes that all brands should be based on a brand concept in accordance with consumers’ functional, experiential and symbolic needs. These needs follow the three types of value seen in products as outlined in the preceding section. Park et al. (1986) view the concepts of symbolism and functionality as unilateral, thus brands are either considered as functional or symbolic brands. Functional brands satisfy immediate and practical
Literature Review

needs, while symbolic brands satisfy needs of self-expression with their practical usage only being incidental. For example, in the category of writing instruments, Bic would be considered a functional brand as its primary value lies in being able to write. Conversely, Montblanc would be considered a symbolic brand because of its use as a status appeal, with its ability to write only incidental. Park et al (1986) advises that the brand concept must be maintained and that brands must either be functional or symbolic, but not both. However, other researchers have seen functionality and symbolism to be more distinct (Bhat & Reddy, 1998). As such, brands are seen as being able to operate on both functional and symbolic levels. This research follows this belief in maintaining that while sustainable products and brands can have symbolic value, they still serve functional needs. Some brands and product categories may have heightened symbolic or functional value, and this is acknowledged by this study with considered selection criteria highlighted in the methodology chapter.

Brands are important tools for managing the symbolic meaning of brands. As brands are often regarded as a symbolic creation in itself, the management of symbolic meaning needs to underlie marketing strategy (Brown, Kozinets, & Sherry, 2003). The symbolic meanings of brands have implications on consumer behaviour. Brands can be effective for motivating consumer choices because they impact on the affective domain (Travis, 2000). Rational decision-making becomes translated to emotional preferences. This suggests that brands can be tools for shifting consumer attitudes to more sustainable consumption (Ottman, 1993; Pickett-Baker & Ozaki, 2008; Pooley & O’Connor, 2000). Affective processing has been shown elsewhere to be a key means for converting passive green consumers into sustainable consumption patterns (Ottman, 1998; Pooley & O’Connor, 2000). Exploring consumers’ consumption of a brand of sustainable product presents a means for understanding the motivators of such behaviour. Consumers are not necessarily loyal to individual brands, but what the brands represent to the consumer.

"It is not to brands that consumers will be loyal, but to images and symbols, especially to images and symbols that they produce while they consume." (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995, p. 251)

Brands are important sources of symbolic meanings for products. Any investigation that involves branded products must acknowledge that symbolic meanings are
attributable to the process of branding. Sustainable products do have product attributes that imbue some symbolic meaning, but the branding of sustainable products grants far greater symbolic meaning. Consumers see value in the symbolic meaning of products as they can use them for their own means. These symbolic meanings can help consumers to manage their self-image and this will now be overviewed.

2.3.3 Products as Self-Image

Consumer products have long been considered as being extensions of the self (Belk, 1988; Dittmar, 1992; Sartre, 1943). Products can be used to construct a consumer’s social world and then to define the consumer’s place in it (Douglas, 1976). This is because, as outlined in Section 2.3.1, products carry symbolic meanings. Consumers use these symbolic meanings as a means of creating, fostering and developing their identities (Belk, 1988; Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998; Leigh & Gabel, 1992; McCracken, 1988a; Solomon, 1983). These symbolic meanings allow individuals to express themselves and communicate with others (Dittmar, 1992; Douglas & Isherwood, 1978; Gabriel & Lang, 1995; McCracken, 1988a; Wattanasuwan, 2005). As such, consumers choose products and brand with symbolic meanings that are perceived to be congruent with their personality (Aaker, 1999; Graeff, 1996; Kassarjian, 1971; Sirgy, 1982). Products can also serve as tangible linkages to family (Belk, 1988; Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001) or past experiences (Prentice, 1987; Wallendorf & Arnould, 1988). Understanding the symbolic meanings of sustainable products is important, given that:

“The core of man’s cultural activity lies in his capacity to generate meaning, to communicate, to transmit and to order those meanings; it lies in the creation of a specifically symbolic level of existence.” (Silverstone, 1981, p. 2)

The centrality of symbolic meaning in a person’s life indicates it is important to consumers. Consumers value the self-image function of products. They deem products as significant based on what identities they enable, and how important the product is in contributing to an overall sense of self (Kleine, Kleine, & Kernan, 1993). Exploring this sense of self allows researchers to understand the way consumers make choices in the context of symbolic meanings attached to brands (Onkvisit & Shaw, 1987).
Connolly and Prothero (2003) suggest that if sustainable consumption is considered as communication, it can be used in identity construction and could thus further advance the prospect of a green commodity culture. As indicated in the Section 2.2.2, a shift in consumption culture is often seen as what is necessary to address concerns of sustainability.

A valuable starting point for understanding consumption culture is examining those who have already shifted. Consumers who are already using sustainable products have started using the products to build their self-image. The symbolic value of products is cultivated over time and stem from the "psychic energy" that is invested in them (Rochberg-Halton, 1979). Consumer products are regarded as part of the self as they have emerged in part, from the self (Belk, 1988). The act of purchasing products is one such means of investing self in products. The symbolic value of products is drawn from an individual’s consumption experiences associated with a particular product (Holbrook, 1994; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). Consumption practices and rituals are a means for consumers to ascribe and transfer symbolic meaning from products to themselves (McCracken, 1986). Thus, consumption actions serve a role in managing the symbolic meaning of consumer products. The following section examines the role of consumption in creating value from the symbolic meanings of products.

### 2.4 Meaning of Consumption

The practice of consumption is an essential ritual of modern life (Wattanasuwan, 2005; Wright & Snow, 1980). It has been asserted that the act of consumption is not a practice; rather it is a moment in almost every practice (Warde, 2005). As well as serving its utilitarian function, acts of consumption are a means of developing and managing the symbolic meaning of products. Exploring consumption actions is useful as all meaning is created through actual experiences and interactions (Blumer, 1969; Hirschman, 1986). This section reviews knowledge around the act of consumption in building one’s self-image. This follows the conceptualisation of sustainable consumption provided in Section 2.2.1.
2.4.1 Self-Image Through Consumption

Consumers are often highlighted as being active producers of symbolic meaning through their appropriation of products, as opposed to merely being passive receivers (Chevalier, 1999; De Certeau, 1984; Money, 2007; Storey, 1999). They take symbolic meanings from products and work these into the construction of their self and their world (McCracken, 1986). Consumers achieve this through consumption of their products. The desire to consume is in part, due to the consumer's desire to construct their self-image (e.g. Belk, 1988; Richins, 1994).

The act of consumption is a highly social function, and as such consumption becomes a language through which personal values such as status, taste and social relationships are expressed (Bourdieu, 1984; Douglas & Isherwood, 1978; Schaefer & Crane, 2005). Consumption is not only for sending messages, it is also used to receive them as well (Appadurai, 1986). Acts of consumption are deliberate actions that consumers engage in. Individuals are conscious of the inferences drawn from the products they consume (Schaefer & Crane, 2005). Consumption actions thus serve an important role as they involve the careful selection of products. The act of consumption is a cultural strategy in which people make visible their social and cultural differences (Dolan, 2002).

Self-image is no longer created through involvement in a moral community or in occupation, and instead is seen as being formed in relation to one's consumption (Bourdieu, 1984; Veblen, 1899/1998). Individuals seek symbolic meaning through what products they buy and use (Du Gay, 1996; Friedman, 1994; Miller, 1995). This is because, as demonstrated in Section 2.3.1 and Section 2.3.2, products and brands carry symbolic meaning. In modern times, the symbolic meaning of consumption is a major factor in creating and maintaining one's self-image (Giddens, 1991). It has long been evident that individuals use consumption to express themselves (Prelinger, 1959). In fact, the drive to create self-image is virtually inseparable from the act of consumption itself (Elliott, 1997; Gabriel & Lang, 1995).

Utilising a theoretical framework that considers the creation and transfer of meanings within the consumption process will allow identification of why people consume sustainable products over non-sustainable products. To the author's knowledge there has been no examination of the symbolic meanings in sustainable consumer products and how these may be transferred from the product to the individual's self-image.
Illuminating what these meanings are and what happens to them are critical steps in understanding the motivations for purchasing and using them.

Consumer researchers have previously been active in investigating how broader cultural factors such as social setting, mass media, product symbolism, cultural ideals, rituals, and traditions influence the consumption experiences of consumers (Belk, Wallendorf, & Sherry, 1989; Hirschman, 1988; McCracken, 1988a; Rook, 1987; Scott, 1990; Thompson, Locander, & Pollio, 1990). However, there has not yet been an investigation into the same cultural factors for the context of sustainable products. Understanding the meaning of consumption and meaning obtained when individuals consume is vital for achieving sustainable consumption (Connolly & Prothero, 2003).

Sustainable products may have particular ideals, rituals and traditions that feature in the act of consumption. This merits attention, as it is these ideals, rituals and traditions that may determine and highlight why they are consumed over other products. Any differences between behaviours towards sustainable versus non-sustainable products may also give rise to differences in symbolic meaning. Consumption rituals are important to understand the symbolic meanings in sustainable consumer products as they represent routine behaviour. As demonstrated in this section, the act of consumption has important symbolic qualities. Thus, ritualised consumption serves to continuously draw out any symbolic meanings of products over extended periods of time. The distinction of the consumption ritual and its role in the creation of self-image will now be discussed.

### 2.4.2 Consumption Rituals

Products are employed in their symbolic capacities to complete rituals (Solomon & Anand, 1985) and ritualised behaviours. Although the notion of ritual may conjure images of religious acts, this also includes rituals that are cultural (e.g. Valentine’s Day), family (e.g. bedtime), and personal (e.g. household rituals) (Rook, 1985). The understanding of ritual used in this study is drawn from the conceptualisation provided by Tetreault and Kleine (1990). Their work provides a distinction between habit, ritualised behaviour and ritual. Ritualised behaviour serves as the focus of this study as it best reflects the means in which consumers take symbolic meanings from
their products. The fundamental characteristics of ritualised behaviour versus ritual are outlined in the following table.

Table 2.1 Key Characteristics of Ritualised Behaviour and Ritual\(^5\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ritualised Behaviour</th>
<th>Ritual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Gradual assimilation</td>
<td>• “Instantaneous” transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mundane repetition across time and place</td>
<td>• Bracketed in time and space, repetition over cycle of time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Private enactment</td>
<td>• Public enactment, requiring at least two actors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from (Tetreault & Kleine, 1990)

Rituals\(^6\) were noted over three decades ago to be a constant reinforcement of the symbolic meaning of products (Erikson, 1977, 1982). As rituals are repeated across time, they serve a central role in developing and maintaining one's self-image. Rituals allow consumers to interact with products of culture and invest symbolic meaning in them (Belk, 1988; McCracken, 1986). Individuals select products, and combine meanings in a process of experimentation (Belk, 1988; Wallendorf & Arnould, 1988). Individuals use rituals to continuously draw symbolic meanings from products into their self-image (Munn, 1973; Turner, 1969). Rituals themselves can also have their own symbolic meanings too (D. Marshall, 2005).

Consumer researchers have often suggested that consumption rituals have great potential for conceptualising and interpreting aspects of consumption (Belk, 1979; Kehret-Ward, Johnson, & Louie, 1985; McCracken, 1986, 1988a; Rook & Levy, 1983; Sherry, 1983; Solomon & Anand, 1985). Rituals are critical to furthering understanding of consumer behaviour, as they involve the actual consumption of products (Luna & Gupta, 2001). Even recent research (e.g. Larsen, Lawson, & Todd, 2010) continues to support the notion that consumption rituals reinforce symbolic

---

\(^5\) Refer original paper (Tetreault & Kleine, 1990) for full discussion.

\(^6\) With the distinction noted, rituals are used through the remainder of this study to refer to ritualised behaviour.
consumption. The rituals of dancing to music and discussion of music helped to associate the symbolic meanings of music to the individual’s self-image (Larsen, et al., 2010). Participants needed to perform such rituals to demonstrate ownership or possession of a particular musical preference. As such, Luna and Gupta (2001) have called for ongoing investigations of rituals, given their significance in driving consumption behaviours. This is important to the context of sustainability, as Section 1.1 has shown that consumption behaviours are a major cause of environmental degradation and wider sustainability issues.

In order to use rituals to investigate consumption behaviour, it first needs to be understood as part of a theoretical framework. This is because there have been differences in how researchers have used the notion of rituals to investigate issues. Rook (1985, p. 252) defines rituals as a “type of expressive, symbolic activity constructed of multiple behaviours that occur in a fixed, episodic sequence and tend to be repeated over time”. Rook's view focuses on the form that rituals take. McCracken's (1986) view of rituals differs, in that he emphasises the goal of ritual behaviour. According to McCracken (1986, p78) rituals are a “social action devoted to the manipulation of cultural meaning for purposes of collective and individual communication and categorisation”. This is the understanding of rituals that has been applied in this study. It recognises the centrality of symbolic meaning in the process of consumption as has been highlighted in this chapter. Through considering rituals as being beyond utilitarian and merely operational, the use of symbolic meanings in building one's self-image can be investigated. This will allow the sociological and anthropological view of sustainable consumption to be furthered.

McCracken (1986) developed a meaning-based framework that explains the process of symbolic meaning transfer. This is based on his beliefs about symbolic meaning as being transferable as outlined in Section 2.3.1, and the role of rituals in self-image creation as outlined in this section. Rituals are seen by McCracken as an important part of the process of meaning transfer, as individuals need to claim, exchange, care for and use products in order to appropriate the embodied meanings (Cheal, 1988; McCracken, 1988a; Rook, 1985). McCracken’s (1986) model serves as a lens of interpretation for this study. The model will now be overviewed and explained in the following section.
2.5 Model of Symbolic Meaning Transfer

McCracken's (1986) model of symbolic meaning transfer is valuable as a lens of interpretation to uncover findings that answer the research objective. The premise of the model, its components and application is overviewed in this section. Critique of the model will also be addressed. Lastly, the value of using the model will be discussed.

2.5.1 Premise of the Model

McCracken's model was developed on the understanding that consumers constantly canvas the consumer world for products with useful symbolic meanings (McCracken, 1988). The model examines the relationship between culture and consumption. It embraces notions of symbolic meaning creation involving products, marketers, consumers and rituals (McKechnie & Tynan, 2006). The model of symbolic meaning transfer is replicated in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1 Model of Symbolic Meaning Transfer

Source: (McCracken, 1986)
According to the model, symbolic meaning is located in three places. These are the cultural world, consumer products and individual consumers (McCracken, 1986). There are two points of transfer of symbolic meanings. Symbolic meanings are transferred from the cultural world to product and also from product to consumer (McCracken, 1986). Symbolic meaning is drawn from the cultural world and transferred to consumer products. Then, symbolic meaning is drawn from the consumer product and transferred to individual consumers. Various instruments of meaning transfer enable these movements.

The cultural world supplies products with symbolic meaning. McCracken (1986) identifies the cultural world as being the original location of all symbolic meaning. The cultural world supplies symbolic meaning to products through two instruments of transfer. These instruments of transfer are the advertising and fashion systems. Consumers recognise symbolic meanings in products because they become aware of them through systems of advertising and fashion.

The vehicle of advertising and marketing in creating symbolic meaning has already been detailed in the contents of Section 2.3.2. McCracken (1986) view follows the perspective outlined as he conceptualises the advertising system as one of the instruments of symbolic meaning transfer. Advertising imbues symbolic meaning to products from the cultural world. Arnould, Price and Zinkham's (2004) modern conceptualisation of McCracken's advertising instrument extends to other aspects of marketing communications.

In the Eighteenth century, aesthetic and stylistic considerations began to take precedence over utilitarian ones for some individuals, in what McCracken (1988a) calls the growth of the fashion system. Status was redefined and ever since, consumers have used products to carry symbolic meanings. These symbolic meanings may pertain to status or one’s self-image. The fashion system is the other instrument of meaning transfer from the cultural world to product. Fashion connects the cultural world with the product through establishing and reforming cultural categories and principles. For example, the fashion system has developed traditions of rings being used for weddings. As well as connecting existing meanings, the fashion system can invent new symbolic meanings. For example, uniforms develop new symbolic meanings once beliefs form around the personality or characteristics of the people.
who wear them. The fashion system is dynamic in that it can change what symbolic meanings consumers see in products.

According to the model, these instruments of advertising and fashion are how consumer products come to acquire symbolic meaning. In this model and as illustrated in Section 2.4.1, consumers draw symbolic meaning from consumer products and into their self-image (McCracken, 1986). The model and the contents of Section 2.4.2 demonstrate that consumers achieve self-image through engaging in rituals to repeatedly draw out the symbolic meanings of the products they select. As shown in Section 2.3.1 examining these symbolic meanings are valuable because they determine what consumers do with their products. McCracken (1986) identifies four categories of consumption rituals that are used to transfer symbolic meaning from products to consumers. These will now be discussed.

### 2.5.2 McCracken's (1986) Rituals

McCracken's formation of the model's rituals is informed by his conceptualisation of rituals that has been shown in Section 2.4.2. The four categories of consumption rituals are possession, grooming, exchange and divestment. These categories are described in this section with further detail and examples in Table 2.2, overleaf.

Possession rituals allow consumers to "take ownership" of products (McCracken, 1988a). Possession rituals include housewarming parties, trying on new clothes and meal times. They allow consumers to overcome the alien meanings of mass-produced products and assimilate these into their lives (Campbell, 2005). It can be as simple as talking about a product.

Grooming rituals further reinforce symbolic meanings (McCracken, 1988a). They refer to the actions consumers take to maintain the performance or life of a product. These include washing a car, polishing furniture and the ironing of clothes.

Exchange rituals refer to occasions where consumers exercise interpersonal influence. They are situations where consumers involve others in the life of a product. This could take the form of a birthday gift or recommendation on a product.
Lastly, consumers engage in divestment rituals, such as repairing and cleaning items for sale (McCracken, 1986). They represent what consumers do with the product after it has been used for its utility or function.

Table 2.2 Instruments of Symbolic Meaning Transfer From Product to Individual

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ritual</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Examples of Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Possession Rituals** | Rituals involving the acquisition of a product that involve claiming "possession". Actions are attempts to draw qualities from the product that are bestowed by other forces. The products form markers and move the symbolic meanings from the products and into an individuals’ life. | Purchase  
Display  
Putting away  
Reflecting on product  
Comparison of products  
Discussing product  
Personalisation |
| **Grooming Rituals** | Rituals where symbolic meaning is drawn out on a repeated basis. The purpose of the ritual is to insure that properties are drawn to life in the life of the consumer. More practically, it is the use of the product for its intended function. | Using the product  
Product maintenance  
Cleaning  
Repairing  
Refilling |
| **Divestment Rituals** | These rituals involve products being emptied of invested meaning. It is an implicit acknowledgement of the mobile quality of the meaning with which products are invested. Practically, it is what consumers do with the product once it has been used for its function. | Cleaning packaging  
Disposal  
De-personalisation |
| **Exchange Rituals** | These rituals are a means of exercising interpersonal influence. In acting as gift-givers, consumers are made agents of symbolic meaning transfer through the selective distribution of products with specific properties. | Gifting  
Recommendation |

Source: Adapted from McCracken (1986, pp. 78-80)
These consumer rituals are examined in this study. The following section considers the critique and value of the model to justify and explain its choice as a lens of interpretation.

2.5.3 Critique of McCracken (1986)

This section reviews critique on McCracken’s model of symbolic meaning transfer (1986). It also considers how this study has addressed or mitigated the potential limitations of the model in serving as a lens of interpretation.

The structuralist perspective that informs the model of symbolic meaning transfer has been subject to criticism. It has been felt that the structuralist perspective subscribes to the view that there is a one-to-one relationship between products being consumed and their symbolic meaning (McKechnie & Tynan, 2006). As such, the model has been critiqued for being focused on a one-flow of culture between products and their uses (Bradshaw, McDonagh, & Marshall, 2006; McKechnie & Tynan, 2006). This view has been seen to minimise the role of the consumer in simply being a receiver (DeBerry-Spence, 2008). This unilateral trajectory transmittance is seen by some researchers as the major limitation of the model (DeBerry-Spence, 2008).

While there has been some support for such a position on locations of symbolic meaning and its use by consumers (Appadurai, 1986; Lunt & Livingstone, 1992), there has been criticism on the grounds that a two-way process exists. The consumption process as viewed is seen as less linear for other researchers. They state that the consumer is more involved in their role of the construction of symbolic meaning (Venkatesh & Meamber, 2006). A number of academics have identified that consumers play an active role in linking the product and consumption meanings (Kozinets, 2001; O'Donohoe & Tynan, 1997). Consumers actively produce symbolic meaning in addition to being transferred the symbolic meaning through the advertising and fashion systems (Schröder, 2002; Scott, 1993, 1994; Tharp & Scott, 1990).

Several authors have developed approaches that attempt to remedy and overcome the limitations identified. Kozinets (2001) presents an alternative model of how cultures of consumption are produced through an interplay of individuals, subculture, wider...
culture and cultural producers with consumer-media articulations occurring in a mass media culture of consumption. He views the consumer, which he refers to as a fan, as being driven by an affective relationship with entertainment media. It features a heavy investment of self in cultural text that underscores the consumption practices. However, the model is not suitable for this study as Kozinet’s model is premised on building foundations between simulation and reality. The entertainment and media category is much more affective than the category of everyday consumption, so its applicability to this study and research objective is limited. Furthermore, the research objective of this study does not seek to understand how or where the symbolic meanings may have originated from.

This study avoids the identified limitations of the model of symbolic meanings transfer, as the model only serves as a lens of interpretation. The model is used to provide a premise and framework for understanding that consumers use consumption rituals to draw symbolic meaning and build their self-image. Based on the research objective, the entirety of the model is not used. Instead, the study focuses on a particular aspect of the model of symbolic meaning transfer. This aspect lies in the interaction only between product and consumer. This is further outlined in the following chapter. With this in mind, the study is not intended to be a replication or extension in any way. Thus, the structural limitations identified by other authors are not present in this study. The value of the model as a lens of interpretation will now be outlined.

### 2.5.4 Value of the Model

According to Slater (1997) researchers need to contextualise consumer practices in terms of social relations, structures, institutions and systems. Using McCracken’s (1986) model as a lens of interpretation allows the examination of such ritual practices in the processes of symbolic meaning transfer. It places the act of consumption in the context of the cultural world and the consumer. This is reflective of what the research objective seeks to explore. The model is also seen as a start for development of an understanding that recognises symbolic meanings as being pluralistic in nature and influenced by a number of sources (DeBerry-Spence, 2008).
The model illustrates that products have symbolic meanings that consumers use to build their self-image. It provides a basis for understanding the movement of these symbolic meanings (DeBerry-Spence, 2008). As illustrated in the contents of this chapter, this model is reflective of the beliefs of many researchers in consumer research, as well as the beliefs of the author. The model is valuable because it demonstrates that symbolic meanings are central to the consumption of the product. Using the categories of rituals that McCracken (1986) identified allows a researcher to examine the full biography of a product category and its environment (see Kopytoff, 1986). Here, the product category being explored is sustainable consumer products. Crewe and Gregson (1998) have noted that researchers do not always examine actions post-purchase and as illustrated in Section 2.2.2, much of sustainable consumption literature has focused on the purchase action. The model of symbolic meaning transfer evidently includes actions and rituals that lie beyond the purchase. Thus it is valuable to apply the model to the context of sustainable products to explore an aspect that has been previously ignored.

2.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided an overview of literature that has been used to guide the decisions and assumptions made in this study. Sustainable consumption is a critical and urgent area of knowledge to develop as it has major implications for the environment, economies and all aspects of society. To address this issue, authors in this field have called for a cultural shift in attitudes, values and behaviours. In order to initiate this shift in culture, this study proposes understanding the current culture behind sustainable consumer products. Products and their brands have long been noted for possessing symbolic values. These symbolic values are in part, why they are consumed. The act of consumption is a means of transferring symbolic meaning to an individual’s self-image. The work of McCracken (1986) models this process. McCracken’s understanding of consumption rituals as instruments of meaning transfer has been used to provide a lens of interpretation for this study.
3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction
This chapter starts by outlining the purpose of conducting the research. It provides an overview of the researcher’s beliefs about knowledge and how it is collected. These have influenced the methodological decisions made in the study. The method of collecting data, the participants involved and the means of data analysis are explained. This chapter provides a detailed account for the research approach. Establishment of the study’s trustworthiness and ethical considerations are also discussed.

3.2 Research Purpose
The aim of this research was to explore the symbolic meanings behind a brand of sustainable products and how they are transferred to the consumers’ self-image. It sought to identify the meanings inherent in sustainable products through the specific consumption actions that individuals took. The model of symbolic meaning transfer (McCracken, 1986) overviewed in Section 2.5.1, has informed the study's understanding of this process. Understanding these meanings and how they may or may not be transferred will aid examination of why consumers are motivated to consume sustainable products over others.

Thus the research question that is the purpose of this study is:

What symbolic meanings did consumers take from sustainable products to build their self-image?

McCracken’s (1986) understanding of consumption rituals as outlined in Section 2.5.2 was used to identify and categorise the actions taken with the product. The focus of this study as a part of this model is highlighted in Figure 3.1.
Based on the research objective, the focus of the study lies in the transfer of symbolic meaning from sustainable products to the self-image of consumers. The model of symbolic meanings transfer is useful as a lens of interpretation to identify the symbolic meanings and understand how consumers use them.

### 3.3 Epistemology

An epistemology refers to a researcher’s stance on what constitutes acceptable knowledge (Bryman & Bell, 2007; Packer & Goicoechea, 2000) and the nature of the relationship between researcher and participant (Guba & Lincoln, 1985, 1994; Hudson & Ozanne, 1988). The epistemological belief of this research is the view of constructivism.

Constructivism assumes that knowledge is created through interactions, the interpretations of behaviours and the social situations in which they occur (Adler, 1997; Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Greene, 1994). Based on the research objective, this
Methodology

study seeks to examine consumers' interpretations of the symbolic meanings of sustainable products. These interpretations are created through the interaction of the participant and the researcher (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The researcher works with participants to facilitate their constructions on the subject matter being studied (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). This human participation in the construction of knowledge is highlighted in the following:

"The perspective of the observer and object of observation are inseparable; the nature of meaning is relative, phenomena are context-based and the process of knowledge and understanding is social, inductive, hermeneutical, and qualitative." (Sexton, 1997, p. 8)

Developing knowledge is dependant on the interpretations created between participant and researcher (Carson, Gilmore, Perry, & Gronhaug, 2001; Guba & Lincoln, 1985). These interpretations are called constructs and provide meaning to behaviours and communications. They are the means by which subjects of interest can be examined.

Constructivism involves developing an understanding of why people interpret things in particular ways. Under the constructivist view, how one constructs knowledge is a function of experiences, mental structures and beliefs. Individuals use these to interpret products and events. As such, constructs are unique to participants. This is because participants have backgrounds and experiences that create their lens of interpretation (Schwandt, 2000). Similarly, the background and experiences of the researcher are also an influence on how constructs are interpreted (Guba & Lincoln, 1985, 1994; Hudson & Ozanne, 1988). As a result, there can be multiple realities, which are created in the context of each individual (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988). One of these realities is that of the researchers' when they themselves interpret the constructions of participants (Schwandt, 2000).

Given that multiple realities exist in constructivism, there is no one truth. Instead, the aim of this perspective is to generate a consensus of the participants' constructs. The researcher needs to understand the similarities and differences of constructions. This allows the researcher to become more aware of the context and meaning of constructions (Anderson, 1986; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Peter, 1992; Peter & Olson,
Methodology

1989). The researcher gains a consensus of multiple realities through comparing the representations of different individuals. Ultimately, this will create a general worldview of that group of individuals regarding the subject studied (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988; J. Smith, 1989).

Constructivism is in line with the beliefs around the model of symbolic meaning transfer (1986) that is used in this study as a lens of interpretation. As already explained in Section 2.4.1, the actions of consumption can have symbolic functions attached to them. This is because products have symbolic meanings. However, for symbolic meaning to be assigned to actions it must be agreed upon by actors in the environment. Therefore, in order to research the symbolic meaning of products, the researcher needs to use the interpretive understanding of the people who consume them. Constructivism is a view that permits this interpretive understanding to occur.

Constructivism is suitable for achieving the research objective as it recognises that individuals construct their own interpretation of reality. Different people will see different symbolic meanings in the same sustainable products. Furthermore, different individuals will desire a different self-image. Constructivism presents criteria for coming to a consensus on an agreed view of what symbolic meanings sustainable products possess, and what role this has in the creation of self-image. This will allow the objective of the research to be fulfilled.

3.4 Theoretical Perspective

A theoretical perspective guides the choice of methodology and helps to create their selection criteria (Crotty, 1998). The above assumptions of constructivism have lead to a theoretical perspective based on hermeneutical beliefs. Hermeneutics has been previously outlined to be compatible with constructivism (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). It allows for the interaction of participant and researcher that is needed to achieve a consensus among the findings.

Hermeneutic philosophy is concerned with the interpretation of understanding (Bernstein, 1983; Bleicher, 1980). Hermeneutics was originally developed to help explain how researchers interpret text written in historical eras (Gadamer, 1960/1998). Gadamer’s (1975) proposition was that the interpreter cannot put aside
their frame of reference, nor would the interpreter ever want to. The researcher is seen as serving an active role in the collection and interpretation of data. The researcher's background serves as a frame of reference to support the interpretation of constructions (Thompson, Pollio, & Locander, 1994). This background and knowledge is referred to as pre-understanding (Arnold & Fischer, 1994; Gadamer, 1960/1998).

Pre-understanding can be evident in forms such as beliefs, practices, metaphors and rituals. The researcher may have pre-conceived notions about the subject matter being studied. Pre-understanding exists prior to interpretation because the researcher is already a part of the participants’ and subject matter’s world. They may have acquired or developed knowledge through their personal experiences or studies as a researcher. Pre-understanding supports the interpretation of constructions through providing a reference point by which the research can assess differences in opinion (Arnold & Fischer, 1994).

Hermeneutics also sees constructions as different for each individual due to the individual’s own background and experience. The personal histories of consumers frames their perception in meaning systems (Holt, 1997; Thompson, et al., 1994). Hermeneutics views constructions as social in that they are realised and created through social interaction. As such, hermeneutical techniques allow for the interaction between researcher and participant to create a consensus among the findings. These beliefs are shared by the view of constructivism as outlined in Section 3.3. Reaching this consensus is necessary to generate the findings of the worldview that will fulfil the research objective.

The focus of hermeneutic research is to highlight an “unspoken” background of socially shared meaning which individuals use to interpret experiences (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982; Thompson, et al., 1994). Hermeneutics stresses that language is the means in which understanding occurs (Gadamer, 1960/1998). Language is seen as communicating a person’s construction on subject matter (Arnold & Fischer, 1994; M. W. Johnson, 1987; Rorty, 1979; Winograd & Flores, 1987). Language links the construction with its meaning (Arnold & Fischer, 1994). As such, language aids the researcher in obtaining a deeper understanding of an individual's constructions. Hermeneutic philosophy supports the achievement of the research objective as it
recognises that meaning is interpreted from the cultural and historical context from which it is taken.

The hermeneutic circle is a central concept to hermeneutic philosophy. The hermeneutic circle is the belief that the understanding of constructions is developed through pre-understanding and an iterative process of understanding text. The meaning of the whole text is determined by individual elements of the text and vice versa (Bernstein, 1983; Crotty, 1998). The hermeneutic circle aims to produce an understanding that is free of contradictions through its iterative process. It supports the issue of objectivity, because a researcher cannot ignore a recurring construction from multiple participants (Arnold & Fischer, 1994).

Hermeneutics is suitable for this study as it allows for the understanding of constructions and recognises that meanings are communicated through language. Consumers will use language as a means of articulating what symbolic meanings they see in sustainable products. Consumption stories are an important source of insight in highlighting the symbolic meanings formed through social and historical relationships (Laverty, 2003; Thompson, 1997). Hermeneutics focuses on illuminating seemingly trivial aspects of experiences to create meaning and understanding (Wilson & Hutchinson, 1991). As such, hermeneutic philosophy is suitable in allowing the interpretation of language and constructions of meanings. This will allow the research objective to be answered.

3.5 Methodology

Methodology is the way in which the researcher believes they can go about finding the reality and knowledge they think can be found (Guba & Lincoln, 1985, 1994). It informs the design and approach about methods being used (Crotty, 1998). This includes what contexts are studied and how data is collected and analysed (Silverman, 2006). The methodology used in this research, which align with the researcher's epistemology and theoretical perspective, is semi-structured in-depth interviews.

The selection of semi-structured in-depth interviews followed the beliefs of the researcher. As outlined in Section 3.3, constructivism sees knowledge as created through the social interaction between researcher and participant, while Section 3.4
explained that hermeneutic philosophy sees language as the form in which meanings are communicated. The in-depth interview emerges as a methodology that is in congruence with these beliefs and allows the research objective to be achieved. The research objective is concerned with the symbolic meanings of sustainable products and their use in building an individual's self-image. The in-depth interview allows consumers to provide consumption stories that will generate findings that fulfil the objective of the study. Furthermore, the in-depth interview is suitable when the research objective or question is clear (Taylor & Bogdan, 1988). It allows for the probing of issues that help participants to recall decision-making processes and communicate it (Sampson, 1996).

The aim of the in-depth interview is to provide a deeper understanding of consumers' experiences and feelings. In the same belief as Thompson and Haytko (1997) the primary objective of the interview lies in allowing each participant to articulate the networks of meanings that constitute their personalised understanding of the subject matter. The in-depth interview allows the researcher to enter the perspective of the participant (Patton, 1990). In interviews, dialogue is seen as a collaboration between the interviewer and participant (Holstein & Gubrium, 2004; Silverman, 2006; Wimpenny & Gass, 2000). This follows the perspective of constructivism that has informed this study. The collaboration allows interviews to be participant-led to some degree (Bryman & Bell, 2007).

The semi-structured in-depth interview in this study used an indicative question framework, with further questions being formulated in concert with the participants' responses. The purpose of further questioning was to expand descriptions of specific experiences. As noted by McCracken (1988b) the success of the interview lies in drawing out the participant in the right manner at the right time. Probes and follow-up questions were informed by the interviewers'7 familiarity of the research and insights gained in the interview process. This follows the concept of pre-understanding that is discussed in Section 3.4 as a key belief of hermeneutic philosophy.

The qualitative interview is seen as being particularly valuable in accessing consumers' attitudes and values (Byrne, 2004). In holding a constructivist perspective, the interviewer and the interviewee are seen as being actively engaged in constructing

---

7 The researcher was the interviewer in all cases.
their social worlds and reality (Silverman, 2006). The interview becomes a means of contemporary storytelling, where consumers provide accounts in response to inquiries (Gubrium & Holstein, 1998). The relevance of the in-depth interview is that they will enable a greater understanding of sustainable consumption behaviour and the symbolic meanings of sustainable products. This will reveal findings that relate to the study’s research objective.

3.6 Method

Methods are the specific techniques and procedures of conducting research (Madison, 1988; Silverman, 2006). They are the means of gathering responses from participants (Crotty, 1998). This section details the process that was undertaken to collect data, and the means of data analysis. The source of data for this research was provided from in-depth interviews with consumers of a particular brand and category of sustainable consumer products. The development of the study’s selection criteria will be outlined, with the selection explained.

3.6.1 Development of Selection Criteria

Selection criteria in this study were used to determine the category of product and brand that would serve the focus of this study. The selection criterion was developed from the conceptualisation of sustainability and consumption ritual provided in Section 2.2.1 and Section 2.4.2 respectively, as well as the research objective. Per Table 2.1 in Section 2.4.2 the key characteristics of the consumption behaviour examined is mundane repetition over time and wholly private enactment. Furthermore, as this study is intended to address issues of sustainability, the products selected need to align with the conceptualisation of sustainable products provided in Section 2.2.1.

Various categories of products were assessed in relation to these selection criteria by the researcher and research supervisor. Categories of food and fashion were considered, but as their enactment is not consistently private they did not meet the selection criteria. Ultimately, the category of household cleaning and body care products was selected for the focus of this study. The use of these products is inconspicuous, private and repeated over time. As they are not designed to be seen, their role in building self-image is also seen as occurring within an intensely private
sphere (M. L. Smith, 2007). This means the category is useful in answering the research objective, which focuses on the transfer of self-image from product to consumer and not from any other actors or aspects of the cultural world. This follows the focus of the study as indicated earlier in Section 3.2.

Household cleaning and body care products form part of the FMCG (fast moving consumer goods) sector. The FMCG sector is categorised by short-life, regular purchases (Neal, Quester, & Hawkins, 2006) making it a critical area for sustainable consumption. The FMCG sector is widely recognised as being one of the most developed in sustainable consumption in having the most established range of sustainable options (McDonald, Oates, Thyne, Alevizou, & McMorland, 2009). As such, the household cleaning and body care category presented a number of sustainability or environmentally focused products and brands. As explained in Section in 2.3.2, the branding of the product is an important influence on its held symbolic meanings. This research intended to focus on a single brand of sustainable product to minimise the differences in symbolic meaning occurring from different branding.

The brand of products selected for this study was Ecostore products. Background to the company, brand and rationale for its selection will now be outlined to illustrate its fulfilment of the selection criteria.

Ecostore Company Limited is a New Zealand-based manufacturer, distributor and retailer of sustainable household and body care products (Ecostore, 2010). The company promotes the use of safer, healthier plant and mineral based products that contain no “unnecessary” chemicals (Ecostore, 2010). As a player in the household cleaning products industry, they remain very small, but have grown rapidly since gaining access to the supermarket sector (Harris, 2007). The New Zealand market for laundry powders alone is estimated to be worth approximately $300 million per annum, but in 2004, Ecostore was estimated to have taken less than 0.01 per cent of market share (Rands, as cited in Harris, 2007). The products are noted to occupy the highest price quartile of products and the public do perceive the products as being

---

8 A full overview of products with the Ecostore brand is provided in Appendix 7.1.
9 A more detailed business description and background is provided in Appendix 7.2.
10 Herein referred to as Ecostore, denoting both the brand and products.
more expensive (Harris, 2007). Ecostore responds to this by maintaining their slogan of “a little goes a long way” (Ecostore, 2010).

Ecostore was selected as it represented a collection of products that were a sustainable alternative, compared to other products in the household cleaning and body care category. There are a number of product attributes across the Ecostore ranges that justify its classification as a more sustainable alternative in following the conceptualisation provided in Section 2.2.1. These are detailed in Table 3.1 overleaf:

Table 3.1 Justification of Ecostore as a Sustainable Consumer Product

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manufacturer Claim(^{11})</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plant and/or mineral based products.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No &quot;nasty&quot; chemicals (specified as triclosan, petrochemicals, optical whiteners, synthetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perfumes, synthetic dyes, sodium lauryl sulphate, added phosphates, chlorine bleach,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ammonia, triethanolamine, monoethanolamine, parabens, propylene glycol, nonylphenol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ethoxylates). GE-product free.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safer ingredients procured from renewable resources whenever possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formulated to be better for consumer health, safer for the environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet the highest environmental standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Packaging is recyclable, bottles made of High Density Polyethylene; cardboard boxes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>made of mostly recycled materials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not animal tested (accredited by “Choose Cruelty Free”).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No enzymes in laundry products.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member of the RSPO (Roundtable for the Sustainable Production of Palm Oil).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand-based company. Most products manufactured locally.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Tick(^{12}).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factory has Diamond Enviromark and is ISO14001.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option to buy bulk volumes (at online or retail store). Option to refill products (at retail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>store location).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment processes incorporating environment and sustainability aspects.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (Ecostore, 2010)

\(^{11}\) Self-declared unless otherwise specified.

\(^{12}\) Sustainability certification system used in Australia and New Zealand (see Harris, 2007).
Methodology

Ecostore was one of the first “eco-brands” in the New Zealand FMCG market and is widely recognised through its national distribution through all major supermarket retailers. The Ecostore brand covers a wide range of different products, which would aid collection of data across a number of product types. Ecostore is a brand that does not function under a pre-existing parent company, which is less common in the supermarket FMCG category. Ecostore formed the focus in the study's collection of data. The research utilised in-depth interviews that focused on consumer’s experience of the purchase and use of Ecostore products. The development of the in-depth interviews is outlined in the next section.

**3.6.2 Development of Interview**

Based on the research objectives, an interview guide\(^\text{13}\) containing indicative research questions was drafted. The model of symbolic meaning transfer (McCracken, 1986) identifies the types of consumption actions that facilitate transfer to self-image and these informed the questions to be included. There was at least one question pertaining to each type of ritual, as well as further questions, to help to provide an understanding of the participants’ context. The full list of draft questions was discussed with the research supervisor who provided feedback and suggestions.

**3.6.3 Pre-Testing of Interview**

The pre-testing of the interview was carried out at multiple levels. Firstly, the researcher drafted questions and these were discussed and tested on the research supervisor. Upon feedback and results, the interview guide was adjusted. The interview was then tested on a postgraduate student and a general consumer. These different levels allowed for changes and refinements to ensure that the interview questions were effective in eliciting discussion and allowed for potential issues such as the level of fatigue to be addressed before occurring.

The questions were refined to ensure that they were in an appropriate format, in a logical order and that they were clear to participants. Per the research objective, the questions were to allow participants to discuss the symbolic meanings of the brand of

\(^{13}\) Interview guide supplied in Appendix 7.3.
sustainable products and how they may have used these to build their self-image. The pre-testing of the interview also allowed the researcher to practice and refine his interview technique.

### 3.6.4 Participants

Individuals were required to have purchased and used Ecostore products in the past to participate in this research. This was necessary because the research objective calls for people who have already had experiences in consuming the product. As such, the interview questions focused on personal usage of the products. Consumers of Ecostore products were valuable to explore as they hold expert opinion on the product and brand through their lived experiences. Following the constructivist beliefs of the researcher explained in Section 3.3, actual experiences with Ecostore products help participants to construct knowledge, as their background serves as a lens of interpretation. The premise of the model of symbolic meaning transfer (McCracken, 1986) provided in Section 2.5.1 sees symbolic meanings as created in the interaction between product and consumer. In order to investigate what the symbolic meaning is, the interaction needs to have already taken place. This follows much other consumer research that has explored symbolic meanings of brands through the actual experiences of people who have consumed them (e.g. Star Trek fans in Kozinets, 2001; Harley-Davison owners in Schembri, 2009). Rather than simply provide a biography of these consumers, these studies have uncovered the nature and meaning of the consumption. The meaning of consuming these products was relevant to all people, including people who were not current Star Trek or Harley-Davison consumers. Thus, studying the consumption of Ecostore consumers is a means of understanding what any person may gain from using Ecostore products.

The frequency and history of participant's Ecostore consumption did differ, with some being frequent and loyal purchasers, whilst others being more occasional. Under the constructivist view explained in Section 3.3, all perspectives on reality were of value (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Variation in participants' consumption history and personality impacted on the length of the interview, which varied from 30 minutes to over one hour.
Methodology

Participants were recruited through personal networks of the interviewer due to convenience. The nature and purpose of the research was verbalised in person and electronically. Prospective participants were provided an information sheet\(^\text{14}\) outlining the focus of the research. They were invited to forward the information sheet to others who they thought might have been interested in participating. The sample is suitable for the study as purposive sampling is generally used in research of a qualitative nature (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Additional participants were recruited at the site of the Ecostore retail store with permission of the company. Shoppers were advised of the nature of the research and asked if they would be interested in participating. Contact details were obtained with a time for the interview arranged with each participant.

Overall, seven participants were interviewed in this research project. Denzin and Lincoln (1998) maintain that six participants is more than adequate for qualitative interviews. Participants ranged in age group from their mid-twenties to forties. This group has been previously noted as being more sensitive to environmental issues (Diamantopoulos, et al., 2003). In taking a constructivist belief, the research does not claim to be generalisable to the wider population, but only representative of the population studied (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988; J. Smith, 1989).

3.6.5 Data Collection

In-depth interviews were conducted in-person. The interviewer contacted individuals who agreed to participate and arranged a time and location to meet. Interviews were held in a private office. As advised by McCracken (1988) and Thompson et al. (1989) the interviewer sought to create an atmosphere in which participants felt at ease and comfortable in expressing their feelings and discussing their experiences and perceptions. An atmosphere of trust between interviewer and participant is important, as it is a condition of reciprocal disclosure (Oakley, 1981). Informing the participant of the aim and nature of the research created this trust. This was done through verbal communication prior to the interview and in the participant information sheet.

\(^\text{14}\) Participant information sheet supplied in Appendix 7.4.
Participants were asked to bring an Ecostore product of their choosing to the interview, which was generally done. The interviewer also provided some products for display. The presence of the product in question would allow the interview to be more focused, as well as allowing participants to interact with the product. Having the packaging present aided the participants in recalling their experiences with the product.

At the start of each interview, the researcher introduced himself and outlined the structure of the session. Participants were encouraged to provide as much detail as possible when answering. Participants were asked to sign a consent form\textsuperscript{15} prior to the commencement of the interview. Opening questions were designed to keep dialogue in an open-ended manner. Doing so allowed and encouraged participants to offer their own definitions of activities and ideas (Silverman, 2006). This is important as language can alter and communicate the subjectivity of one’s reality (Harmon, 1990). As such, the interview reflected the language used by participants where possible. For example, some of the participants used the term “eco”, with others tending to use “green” when describing the product concerned. The language used by participants was reflected in the researcher’s responses and phrasing of questions. This follows the beliefs around language that is a part of hermeneutics as outlined in Section 3.4.

Interviews followed general guidelines across conducting interviews (Armstrong, 1985; Carson, et al., 2001). This includes the use of encouragers to signal understanding, maintaining eye contact, use of appropriate gestures, and utilising the active listening technique. The researcher attempted to avoid any academic terminology, allowing the participant to guide the order of topics, and avoid interrupting an answer. As per McCracken’s (1988b) recommendation, the interviewer attempted to portray himself as accepting and curious, being prepared and eager to listen to their testimony with interest.

Grand tour questions were used throughout the interview to encourage the participant to share information with minimal prompting. These are described as general, open-ended inquiries (J. Johnson & Weller, 2002). An example of this is in asking a participant to describe their first purchase of an Ecostore product.

\textsuperscript{15}Participant consent form supplied in Appendix 7.5.
Methodology

Participants were encouraged to elaborate on their stories and habits of using the products (Thompson, Locander, & Pollio, 1989). The interview guide served as a foundation for conducting the interviews. In practice, the interviews were adjusted based on the individual participant. For example, the responses of participants may have meant some areas of interest were addressed earlier or later in the interview. This naturally resulted in different ordering across participants’ conversations. Further, some areas were more relevant to some participants, so attention was applied to the tone and emotion behind participants’ responses. Questions were also developed where it was felt that the topic of interest was more pertinent or relevant to the participant.

The interviews were characterised by a conversational quality in which the participant largely set the course of the dialogue. This was to ensure that the participant felt at ease in answering and that discussion did not become too technical. The interviewer focused questioning on aspects of the experiences being described. Where conversation moved off-topic, or areas that were not relevant to the research objectives, the interviewer moved conversation to the next question from the interview guide. The semi-structure improved data collection through allowing people to reflect on their own behaviour. It has been previously noted that people often shift perspectives after examining an issue (Warren, 2002). This was evident in data collection as several participants noted that they were not as “green” as they would like to be upon later reflection. Notes were only taken minimally during the interview to monitor conversation subjects and orient conversation. This was aimed to encourage participants to feel comfortable and converse in as close as informal manner as per normal conversation.

Concluding the interview, participants were supplied with the researchers’ contact details. They had the option from withdrawing from the research up to one month after the interview by contacting the researcher. The consent form provided an opportunity for participants to receive a summary of the findings by supplying their contact details. Interviews were audio taped with the consent of the participants and transcribed verbatim by the interviewer within two days of conducting the interview. The researcher transcribed the interviews into a word processing format. This process allowed the researcher to develop a strong familiarity with the data. Familiarity allows a more thorough examination of dialogue and greater accuracy in
Methodology

analysis (Bird, 2005; Heritage, 1984; Reissman, 1993). In agreeing with the beliefs of hermeneutics, transcribing after interviews would enable reflection, impacting later interviews and the formation of understanding of the subject matter being studied.

Pseudonyms were used to replace participants’ names in interview transcripts to ensure anonymity and satisfy ethics responsibilities. In keeping with the hermeneutical technique outlined in Section 3.4, transcripts were reviewed multiple times. This allowed reflection on what areas should be probed in later interviews and development of an understanding of the whole. The review of data aided the recognition of themes, which were emerging and repeating.

3.7 Data Analysis

Data was analysed by way of thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is defined as the search for themes that are important from a description of any particular phenomenon (Daly, Kellehear, & Gliksmann, 1997). Identification of themes involves careful reading and re-reading of data (Rice & Ezzy, 1999). Thematic analysis involves a form of pattern recognition in data, with themes becoming the categories for analysis (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Thematic analysis is an appropriate means of data analysis as the research intends to see patterns across a number of individuals and their experiences with Ecostore products. This allows a worldwide view as outlined in Section 3.3 to be understood, fulfilling the objective of the research. The process of conducting the thematic analysis is outlined in Table 3.2 overleaf:
Table 3.2 Stages of Conducting Thematic Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>Memo taking (Field &amp; Morse, 1985)</td>
<td>Notes were taken during and after interviews about potential ways of categorising the data. Interviews were transcribed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Becoming immersed in data</td>
<td>Initial reading of each transcript individually and noting initial ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>Open coding (Berg, 1989)</td>
<td>All transcripts were read together with codes freely generated. Data for each code was collated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>Category “collapsing”</td>
<td>The list of categories was reduced through sub-grouping of broader categories. Data relevant to each potential theme was compiled.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five</td>
<td>Coding feedback</td>
<td>Feedback was sought from the research supervisor to guard against bias and ensure text units were accurate representations of the assigned theme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six</td>
<td>Re-reading</td>
<td>Re-reading transcripts and testing final list of categories. Confirming if it works within coded extracts and entire data set.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seven</td>
<td>Coding</td>
<td>All transcripts coded based on final categories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eight</td>
<td>Compiling</td>
<td>Sections of interviews were aggregated based on the same code (maintaining context).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nine</td>
<td>Reviewing themes</td>
<td>Aspects of each theme were defined, named and refined.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ten</td>
<td>Writing up</td>
<td>The researcher selected examples to offer commentary to link examples. Final analysis of data and link back to research objective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eleven</td>
<td>Link to literature</td>
<td>Researcher linked commentary to current literature, to interpret patterns, summarise thematic networks and state key implications.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Burnard, 1991)

The interpretation followed the concept of the hermeneutic circle, as overviewed in Section 3.4 (Thompson, et al., 1994). This means that in practical terms, this entailed
an iterative process of reading, documenting and systemising the interview transcripts (Thompson, 1996). The data was analysed through the researcher developing a holistic understanding of each transcript by reading it and noting similarities across the analysed transcripts (see Hirschman, 1992; Thompson & Haytko, 1997; Thompson, et al., 1989). Through this process earlier readings will inform latter ones, and reciprocally, later readings would allow for the recognition and exploration of emergent patterns (Thompson & Haytko, 1997). The researcher attempted to make meaning of the data in identifying the key themes and patterns that emerged. Notions were developed on what the substantive content areas were, before being aggregated into meaning categories. These were used to develop the themes of the study.

The initial reading allowed a sense of the whole to emerge. The researcher then noted key phrases, metaphors and patterns of meaning that emerged. Through numerous iterations, interpretation was developed allowing a grasp of thematic similarities and meaning-based linkages. Participants were then compared and points of similarity were noted. Thematic structures were continuously challenged and modified as the researcher examined the transcripts. This was done in concert with the research supervisor to ensure that the text units remained accurate representations of the assigned codes and themes.

The final stages of the thematic analysis revolved around defining the themes and the write up of the report. Themes were analysed in detail and related back to the research objectives. The objective of the thematic analysis is to tell the story of the data. In achieving the research objective, a thematic analysis would allow the consumption stories of Ecostore products to be understood. These consumption stories would provide findings that allow the research objective of the study to be answered.

A reflexive journal was used throughout the data analysis. The journal contained the researcher’s notes on emerging and potential themes. This included observations and personal thoughts and reflection throughout all phases of the research to support the process of thematic analysis.
3.8 Establishing Trustworthiness

The study addresses the area of trustworthiness as a measure for reliability and validity (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993; Guba, 1981; Guba & Lincoln, 2000). The concepts of reliability and validity assume that there is a singular truth, so the concept of trustworthiness is addressed instead for research built on a different belief of reality. This research, as explained in Section 3.3, follows the belief of constructivism in that multiple constructions of reality can exist. Establishing trustworthiness is thus necessary for the research to be seen as credible (Guba & Lincoln, 2000).

3.8.1 Credibility

Credibility is equivalent to internal validity. Internal validity refers to the confidence in the findings of the research that the singular truth has been found with all other possible explanations eliminated (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). In taking a constructivist perspective, it is believed that there is no singular truth, and that instead multiple constructions of reality are able to exist. Therefore, for this research to be presented as credible, it is required to illustrate that the multiple constructions were represented and interpreted accurately.

Credibility was achieved through the research supervisor confirming that interpretations were made in a logical manner from reviewing the interview transcripts and coding stages. The research supervisor judged whether text units were valid representations of the themes they had been assigned. The research supervisor had 100% agreement that the text units were true representations of the assigned themes. In providing a rich description of context and method in this study, others would also be able to assess the credibility of the study (Denzin, 1989; Geertz, 1973; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The rich description of context is achieved through the provision of the interview transcripts in Appendix 7.7.

3.8.2 Transferability

Transferability equates to external validity. External validity relates to how well findings may be generalised in using different methods and samples (Cook & Campbell, 1979). As a constructivist perspective has been taken, it is believed that
Methodology

individuals possess different constructions as a result of their differences in background and experience.

For this research, having findings that are generalisable would overlook the particular context of the study. This is because generalising would take away the context of the study. Furthermore, generalisation is also not possible as the phenomena is seen as intimately tied to the context in which it is found (Guba, 1981). Instead, transferability in this study is focused on ensuring sufficient information and description of the context has been provided. This allows other researchers to assess how applicable the findings would be on their own particular population of interest (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). The responsibility of transferability lies on other researchers, simply as it is not possible to predict what other contexts the findings would be transferred to (Guba & Lincoln, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

A rich description has been provided to other researchers through a thorough discussion of findings in the following chapter and the full interview transcripts of responses in Appendix 7.7. Providing this rich description satisfied the transferability for this study as it ensures enough description of context has been supplied for other researchers to assess the transferability of findings to another research context.

3.8.3 Dependability

Dependability is concerned with the reliability of the research method. Reliability refers to the ability of findings to be replicated using similar methods and a similar sample (Ford, 1975). Dependability is usually achieved through replication, but in doing so assumes a singular truth of knowledge. In incorporating the constructivist view, multiple constructions on knowledge can exist. As a result, it is not possible for the same findings to emerge from a similar study (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). Instead, for the research to show its dependability, it must indicate that methodological processes, decisions and interpretations have been conducted in a logical manner (Guba & Lincoln, 1985).

Dependability was assessed through the use of a reflexive journal. The journal included information on the processes and decisions made in the research, the data and findings, as well as interpretive notes that explain the logic of the researcher’s
interpretation of the data. As well, the methodological considerations have been illustrated fully in the content of this chapter. Throughout the course of the study, the researcher liaised with the research supervisor to ensure that the processes taken were logical and dependable. The research supervisor agreed that the researcher’s processes were conducted in this manner.

### 3.8.4 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the objectivity of interpretation. This would mean that multiple researchers would agree on the interpretation of findings. However, based on the theoretical beliefs of the study, the interpretation of data is inevitably biased based on the researcher’s "natural subjectivity" (C. Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 194). To address this issue, the focus shifts from investigator objectivity to data confirmability (Guba, 1981). For findings to be confirmable it must be found that the findings were not biased or influenced by the motivations, interests or the background of the researcher.

Practicing reflexivity is one means of achieving confirmability. This involves intentionally revealing the researcher's underlying assumptions that are used to formulate questions and present findings in particular ways (Guba, 1981). For this study, confirmability was established through the use of the reflexive journal throughout all stages of the research. Memos were recorded (Field & Morse, 1985) regarding the researcher's ideas and thoughts on the subject matter. This included the researcher's thought processes and ideas for coding, as well as ordering and reviewing thoughts on the research process used (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The action of writing helps the researcher develop a reflexive attitude (van Manen, 1966). It allows for any thoughts, decisions or emotions that may influence interpretation of data to be outlined (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The research supervisor used interview transcripts and the reflexive journal notes to confirm that findings were drawn from the data in a non-objective manner (Guba & Lincoln, 1985).

### 3.9 Ethical Considerations

This research followed the ethical principles that are established by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC). An application for ethics
Methodology

Approval was submitted, and approved by the AUTEC committee on 30th August 2010 (AUTEC Reference Number 10/173).

Involvement in the research was voluntary and with the consent of participants. Prior to the interview, participants were provided a written explanation of the aim and process of the research verbally and in writing. A consent form was completed at the interview, and this allowed participants to consent to being recorded on audiotape. An opportunity to obtain findings of the interview upon completion was also provided.

Confidentiality and anonymity of participants were ensured through the use of pseudonyms in the analysis, with only the researcher and research supervisor having access to the data. Consent forms and data were kept separate in a locked cabinet for a period of six years. As the interview involved aspects of personal habits, which may have been sensitive, participants were provided the option to pass on any questions if desired. Further, if participants appeared uncomfortable in their response, the interviewer would move to the next question.

3.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter has reviewed the researcher’s perspective and approach undertaken for the research. The chapter has outlined the decisions made regarding how data was collected and analysed. The researcher holds a constructivist belief, and this led to the use of hermeneutical techniques. The study utilised a sample of consumers of Ecostore products. Data was collected by way of semi-structured in-depth interviews. Thematic analysis investigating the symbolic meanings of the product was used to analyse the data. In order for the research to be seen as credible, the trustworthiness of the approach has been established.
4 Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the findings of the research. Based on the research objective and methodology, the findings of this study are presented as themes. These themes pertained to the symbolic meanings that participants took from the brand of sustainable products to build their self-image. These findings are explained and supported with text units from the in-depth interviews. The chapter is organised by the symbolic meanings that were identified in the thematic analysis.

Actions taken with consumer products, as illustrated in Chapter Two, are a means of transferring symbolic meanings from products to the consumer's self-image. A summary of the types of consumption actions taken with Ecostore products to develop these findings is provided in Appendix 7.6. The symbolic meanings consumers sought to build their self-image are outlined in the contents of this chapter.

4.2 Virtue

Participants indicated that they saw symbolic meanings of virtue in their use of Ecostore-branded products. In consuming Ecostore products they felt virtuous that they were doing the "right thing". Ecostore products were perceived as being "better" than others in the product category. When participants purchased and used Ecostore products, they felt they were being "better" individuals. The consumption actions of purchase and use facilitated this transfer of symbolic meaning. Participants felt they were able to make a difference through their choice of Ecostore. This purchase decision reflected a commitment or responsibility to the environment.

4.2.1 Being Good

Participants saw the symbolic meaning of goodness in Ecostore products. This was in respect to a number of factors. David's initial sentiment indicated he feels it is good for his self, as well contributing to a greater good, which he does not initially specify:
I guess the feeling is that yeah, one, better for you, but two, having a small impact on the greater good. (d178)

Upon further questioning, it becomes clear that the goodness he referred to was in the environmental and health sense. This was echoed across other participants and is explained in the excerpts below:

[I thought the product was quite good on] the fact that it was plant-based. Definitely stuff that comes from natural, plants and stuff has a tick in my book being better environmentally. Skin friendly and garden friendly also as well, and the fact that it says no nasty chemicals. (d408)

I think it beats normal brands in the job that it does, simply because it does the job and it’s good at caring for our environment as well. (t512)

Ecostore products were seen as good for the environment due to its product attributes. The action of purchasing the product was the instance in which the symbolic meaning of goodness was transferred to David. He sees caring for the environment through the purchase action of Ecostore, as contributing to becoming a more virtuous individual because he is embracing notions of environmentalism. He alludes to the virtue he sees in his purchase action:

Certainly feel like it is the right thing to do. And a positive step towards kinda improving the environmental things. I certainly understand, that I probably could do more, and could be more proactive, but I think by virtue of doing something at all, is a good thing, you know, every little bit helps. (d489)

David’s assertion that he could be doing more is indicative that he sees purchasing Ecostore is a contribution to the environment. His recognition of virtue in his action suggests he is conscious of the symbolic meaning transfer from the Ecostore product to himself. He does suggest that the virtue in taking the action is limited relative to other aspects of his lifestyle. His sentiments suggest that as he develops more capacity in respect to time and finance, his commitment to his values of environmentalism will
also grow. In a similar respect, Tanya also states that buying Ecostore products is in part, derived from being seen as a virtuous action:

[I was convinced to try them through] probably, just wanting to do the right thing. (t546)

Much like David, Tanya sees virtuous gain through the purchase of the product. For these participants, buying the product was seen as being a good thing, both to the environment and in respect to themselves. Lauren agrees that buying Ecostore is the right thing to do. Conversely, when she purchased another “eco-friendly” alternative that wasn’t Ecostore, she felt an inner-consciousness of guilt:

So I have convinced myself that there is another product that is just as green, but somewhere in the back of my mind there’s a little voice that says, don’t, you know very well Lauren that if it is doing a better job, it is not likely to be as kind to the environment. (l583)

Lauren’s sentiment suggest that she sees Ecostore products as the best choice in terms of helping the environment, even over other products that are also branded in a similar environmentally focused manner. In purchasing another product, Lauren needed to mentally justify to herself to enable the purchase to take place:

So I just have had just a little internal argument about whether I can believe them or not and convinced myself I can without actually checking, because I’m not sure I would have the same results if I checked the label but I need, need the job done. (l571)

Her sentiment suggests that she felt some guilt in not purchasing Ecostore and that she initially felt it difficult to place precedence on her own needs over the needs of the wider environment. Lauren sees using Ecostore products as compromising her resources of time, effort and finances. As a result, in choosing Ecostore she feels she is building a self-image that she is willing to makes sacrifices for the greater good of the environment.
Findings

Being good was relevant for Lauren and Jennifer in being, and becoming mothers. Lauren’s decision to buy Ecostore was influenced by a desire for her child to have the opportunity to have the same nature-based experiences as she did in her childhood:

> I understand that there's a trade-off and I'm not prepared to, I would rather have a bib with a few stains on it than put more caustic chemicals into the waterways. How about you? You're quite happy with that I think. Do you want your child to be able to go fishing when he's a big boy? 'Cause there might not be any fish left. (l194)

Through the action of purchasing Ecostore, Lauren genuinely felt she was taking action in enabling her son and other generations to share the same experiences of nature. By purchasing Ecostore, Lauren transferred the symbolic meaning of being a good mother, by protecting the experiences that she considered important. Jennifer also transferred symbolic meanings of being a good mother, through the grooming action of Ecostore products:

> [I see Ecostore products as] non-toxic so you know not so harmful. I guess especially now being pregnant and stuff, I'm just conscious of what's going into my body, I always have been but that's quite important to me right now. (j225)

She felt that in using products that were safer, she was being a good mother by mitigating exposure to substances that may harm her child. As reflected in her sentiment above, Jennifer sees symbolic meanings of naturalness and safety in Ecostore products.

Participants saw degrees of virtue in Ecostore products, enabling the creation of virtuous self-image. Part of this virtue lies in using Ecostore products to contribute to a greater good. Participants felt they could use their consumption actions to draw symbolic meanings to reflect their commitment to make a difference and support worthy causes. These form the next themes that will now be discussed.
4.2.2 Making a Difference

Ecostore products were seen as contributing beyond their utility. Through selecting and consuming them, participants felt that they could make a difference in relation to the environment. Several of the participants differed in that they were more sceptical of their contribution. Part of making a contribution was in order to fulfil a perceived commitment that participants felt they had.

The symbolic value for Ecostore products was evident in the fact that participants were prepared to offer beyond what they would have for standard products. David was willing to pay more because he recognises a contribution of the product beyond its utility. However, David did not place Ecostore products over other products that are branded a similar environmentally focused manner. His perception of contributing was derived from the belief he was using an alternative, environmentally friendly product. His price parity for a purchase was directly linked to the perceived environmental impact of the product in question:

"I'd pay more for kitchen spray] because I think it's probably a closer, has, the effect it has on the environment for a dishwashing powder liquid has [is] not quite so harsh. Or for washing powder. (d211)"

Lauren differed in that she did place Ecostore products as making more of a difference than other environmentally friendly branded products. She felt she was contributing to a greater degree when using Ecostore. Conversely, she felt guilt in not using Ecostore products, as she perceived others to be not as environmentally friendly (l583). Only in using Ecostore did Lauren feel she was making the most difference.

Several participants felt that their consumption choices did impact on the capacity to make a difference in respect to the environment. To David and Karen, buying Ecostore enabled them to make a difference to the environment:

"Always looking to try and help the environment a little bit. (k56)"

"[I would try Ecostore] because I try and do little bits and pieces that I guess help [the] environment or have the less detriment or effect possible. All small"
Participants often indicated that they did not place certainty over the value of the contribution they were making in purchasing Ecostore products. There was evidently confusion over how purchasing Ecostore could be making a difference:

Like that sustainable stuff I never really thought of the other ones not being really sustainable. Like, I mean like how do you make something like dishwashing liquid sustainability? I don't know. Like do you cut down a tree and put it into the ground? (b290)

The perceived contribution of using Ecostore products was generally seen as being marginal. However, it is evident from the sentiments above that participants still saw value in the contribution they made. Jennifer sees a small contribution being made in her purchase of Ecostore products, but it becomes more substantial when aggregated with the efforts of others:

I guess you sort of read things and look at things on TV and it's just horrifying and you sort of think if you can do some small things and help what's going on, you can do your little bit and your part, and if everyone did that then hopefully it might make a difference. (j242)

Participants generally agreed that the personal investment required in using Ecostore products over others was not substantial whilst still making some level of difference. This difference may have been purely symbolic. For Karen, the ritual action of purchase was seen as having a small contribution to the environment. Buying Ecostore products was one means of making a difference and show that she was starting to make the changes that she could in her lifestyle:

Any way, little way you can help, I think is good like even down to trying to not use too much Gladwrap and those kind of things. Recycle your rubbish bins and everything. I mean, I'm not completely eco, but if I lived on a farm or something I would be, but that's quite hard in urban [society], [laughs] to be able to do that. (k156)
Findings

There was evidence of participants using the products in a manner that maximised the contribution that they made. This helped participants to build the image that they were committed to environmental issues. For example, David follows a set procedure in his divestment ritual of disposal:

> [With] recycling, for instance, I make sure I, although sometimes you want to be lazy, you just wanna chuck your tin of baked beans in the bin. I make sure that I make the effort to wash it out and put it into the recycling... also I like cleaning the stuff before it goes into recycling so it doesn't have all the horribles in it that can kinda leech into places. (d492, d372)

In the act of rinsing the packaging for another product, David ensures his actions have value. The time and effort he invested in rinsing maximises the difference he feels he makes to the environment. For the Ecostore product, David also followed the same procedure of finishing the product before rinsing and recycling. This indicates that his investment in disposal was formed from his own self-image as opposed to being a response to an Ecostore product's attribute or symbolic meaning.

In making a difference, participants built a self-image that they were contributing members of society. Part of this contribution was fulfilling a responsibility that they had as individuals. Consumption actions are purposeful, and participants suggested that they felt they were fulfilling their responsibility as an individual in making environmentally friendly choices. The choice of Ecostore made participants feel they met their responsibilities. Lauren's responsibility of looking after the environment was consciously chosen. She decided that her household should be committed to using more environmentally friendly alternatives. This was a result of her direct influence as she was responsible for the shopping. In the current stage of her life, she reflects on Ecostore products as acting in accordance with the mental commitment she had made:

> If I think back to when I did go to a supermarket regularly before we had Robert yeah I can imagine myself standing there and trying to choose between a Down to Earth liquid [and Ecostore], I mean I will always choose an eco friendly product, is that true? Let me just think. No, it is. (l17)
She recognises the choice to use Ecostore products entails more effort. In Lauren's grooming actions with Ecostore, she needs to act differently in order to use the product for its intended function:

*It’s not just the decision just to use an eco product; you’ve also got to make a commitment to put more time and effort into your daily chores. That’s why those chemicals came into use, because people couldn’t stand boiling their washing and throwing in blue stuff to make it look whiter. (l111)*

In having to complete extra actions and exert more effort, Lauren further transfers the symbolic meaning that she is being committed to the environment. Lauren makes the shopping decisions and completes the cleaning duties for the household. As such, she is creating a self-image for her household. This is important to her, as she wants to encourage similar habits in her husband and son. She also builds the self-image that she is being a responsible decision maker, as her choice to use Ecostore is on behalf of her wider household.

Participants had, or desired values that they saw in the symbolic meanings attached to Ecostore products. The closeness of these values to the symbolic meaning was an important influence on their decision to purchase them. This forms the next theme.

### 4.3 Values

Participants indicated that the values they saw in Ecostore products were important to them in their decision to purchase. They desired products that reflected their personal values, because they recognised that their choices would help build their self-image. Consumption actions were used to reinforce participants’ sense of who they were. In other cases, the decision to use Ecostore products helped to draw out previously dormant values. The consumption action was sometimes seen in a group context so consumption actions were used to build an image for a collective. These functions are detailed and discussed below.
4.3.1 Personal Values

The decision to choose Ecostore was influenced by the fit of the values of the product to the personal values of the participant. Participants desired products with symbolic meanings that fit with the existing self-image they felt they held. The preference of Ecostore over other brands was borne from the personal values of participants. For example, Tanya describes herself as having a green personality and holding strong values on respecting the environment:

*I definitely think I have a green focus. And I really care about nature and I care about keeping, having respect for the place that we live and keeping it beautiful.*

(t96)

She believes that the Ecostore product carried symbolic meanings pertaining to ethics, naturalness and caring for the environment. These align with her personal values. She identifies the symbolic meanings of Ecostore and their alignment to her own in the excerpt below:

*I picked it because I believe in the values that I think Ecostore has. I think they have similar values to my personal ones... I believe that they are ethical in that they don’t do animal testing. Their products are derived from plants. And they don’t use chemicals, so they believe in putting natural goodness into your body, and not exposing your body to harmful substances or chemicals. I also think they, it seems like they care about the environment.*

(t14, t22)

When Tanya buys Ecostore products she reinforces the existence of her own personal values. The products’ symbolic meaning of environmentalism aligns to her personal value of caring for the environment. She uses the consumption of the product to justify her self-image that she is an individual who cares greatly about the environment.

A second aspect of this theme is that participants used the symbolic meanings of Ecostore to develop new or previously dormant personal values. These values were present in the childhood of participants, as well as being influenced by other people around them. The decision to use Ecostore in the present reinforces participants’ belief that those values are still there. For example, in his schooling, David received a Steiner education, where values of environmentalism were encouraged:
I come from a school [Steiner] where environmentalism was a key part of things and so anything that was unnatural you always looked for an alternative, if possible. (d33)

His education and childhood was identified as being an important influence on the personal values he holds today. Participants also identified that their values of environmentalism are shared amongst their families and wider social groups:

I think it has always been a part of my family’s values. And also my school’s and peers’ values as well. (d476)

Our family, our whole family, has those same values in terms of the environment and caring for the Earth and caring for other people. (t76)

David identifies Ecostore as carrying symbolic meanings of environmentalism as he considers them to be an environmentally friendly alternative. In progressing through adulthood he reflects that he is being exposed to a greater number of opportunities to enact behaviours that agreed with the values he developed from his childhood. When David purchases Ecostore products he fulfils the values that he developed in his youth. His choice to use Ecostore products over others is part of his fulfilment of his values that were developed through his schooling and childhood.

Tanya described that her previous living arrangements meant others had always established the choice of products. She felt she was constrained in being able to select products with symbolic meanings that would align with her self-image. When she moved into her new flat, she was enabled to buy products that did align with her personal values of environmentalism. She discussed the change she experiences in now being able to express her personal values in her consumption choices more freely:

It’s just an age thing, I’ve never, I’ve [always] lived in flats, with like randoms, as they get older or not we’re not going to do that any more. The next step will be buying my own home, so I will be the decision maker. And it just comes with age,
Findings

*you discover, well I have discovered what is important to me and that is crucial, to who I am now.* (t869)

The ritual action of purchasing Ecostore drew out her personal value that was dormant. These values were dormant on the basis that she did not have opportunities to act in accordance with them. Tanya's value of being "green" had always been held, but not immediately apparent:

*I felt it [being green] is integral to who I am. It's always been there.* (t865)

Her purchase of Ecostore products reinforced her belief that she was now committing to her values of environmentalism. Other participants did not identify environmentalism as a personal value they had always held. Sylvia is a longstanding Ecostore customer and readily trials new products, identified that her decision to purchase Ecostore stemmed from being against products that are animal tested. The decision to purchase Ecostore instilled new values that she did not originally intend. She recognises the new values from the use of the Ecostore product:

*I felt fine [using chemical products], but when something, but when something that came along and took all that away, in the beginning there wasn't an Ecostore. Like when I was younger, no one cared. It is relatively new, the whole, the being eco.* (s206)

It was only retrospectively that she did recognise that Ecostore did carry symbolic meaning of environmentalism. She felt that it was a new personal value she adopted as the result of committing to the product on the basis of her other values. Sylvia was cynical of caring about the environment, but still agreed that it was a natural fit with her other personal values:

*I was like about thirteen when I decided to become a vegetarian and then from there it just progressed and then moved into those sort of areas. Sort of a natural flow really, once you make those choices in your life you can end up going down the road [laughs] you try to, you know, encourage free-range and organic and not tested on animals.* (s194)
Findings

Her identification of a metaphorical path suggests that her longstanding personal values lead to the adoption of new values around environmentalism. Sylvia's commitment for Ecostore products stems from her commitment to use non-animal tested products. She is uncompromising on other factors such as price because she is absolutely committed to her personal values. She feels that using other products would compromise them and is actually something she has never done or considered:

\[ \text{The chemical stuff is really reasonable. You see it at the supermarket and you go god, that's a lot cheaper. The price doesn't even come into it, I wouldn't even, it wouldn't stop me buying it. I think it probably is a bit more expensive. That's what Kelly [colleague] said when we mentioned it to her. She goes you know, that's really expensive and I was, like really? (s599)} \]

Sylvia sees Ecostore products as being representative of her non-animal testing values. When she purchases Ecostore products she transfers the belief that she is committing to these values. She retrospectively recognises a price premium, and in paying this, sees herself as maintaining and asserting her personal values even more. She adopts the new personal values because of the other symbolic meanings she sees in Ecostore products.

The consumption actions of Ecostore products facilitated the merging and evolution of participants' personal values. In adopting other values, participants were consciously developing their self-image and potentially moulding their behaviours and actions to fit a desired image. This concept of self-image creation is the second aspect of the theme of values.

4.3.2 Creation of Self-Image

Participants saw Ecostore products as carrying symbolic meanings that they aspired or desired as part of their self-image. Sylvia saw Ecostore products as being about environmentalism, and she identified this as aligning with her self-image of being a vegetarian (s194). It was a natural process for her to adopt such values as part of the image she perceives. In her purchase of Ecostore products, Sylvia felt she was building her self-image.
Karen, who only recently adopted the use of Ecostore products, saw the purchase of the product contributing to a new, wider 'eco' image. She describes initially becoming aware of being eco in a recent conversation:

"A friend of ours was telling us about how it's good for the environment. Because it doesn't, something about fish? That we will, it doesn't affect the fish in the water and we figured, we might as well give it a go. Always looking to try and help the environment a little bit. And that's how we kind of got onto it... not the product itself, just the idea of doing eco products. (k54, k61)"

She describes her subsequent decision to commit to being an eco individual. The eco individual was a concept that she visualised and later consciously made a decision to aspire to. The purchase action of Ecostore products fits with the self-image she wanted to achieve:

"I thought that if I can be as eco as possible I would go down that track. Yeah and it was really interesting just to see what they had. And how many different things can be eco [laughs] but you kinda don't think that can [be]. (k150)"

Through purchasing products that carried symbolic meanings of eco, Karen was able to create a self-image that she cared about the environment. The actions of purchasing Ecostore products transferred the symbolic meaning that she was becoming an eco person. Purchasing Ecostore was important in establishing this self-image, as Karen felt constrained in other changes she could make to her current lifestyle:

"As green as I can be [laughs]. I don't know if I'm completely green, I still kinda have the odd, the recycling and everything like that. Like as I said, if I had a farm or something I would definitely do as much as I could please myself, but in urban society, I don't think I can be as green as I want to be. But ideally, I would like to be. (k497)"

Ecostore products were seen as one means of becoming a more overall eco person. In her purchase action of on Ecostore product, Karen reinforced her belief that she was becoming a more eco individual. She also suggested that buying Ecostore lead to her reflecting on how she could adjust other aspects of her purchasing behaviour.
Findings

For Lauren, using Ecostore products resulted in a display action of her consumption. She felt that the results of the products were noticeable to her friends:

And because I've made a more eco friendly choice I struggle to keep my nappies as white, my bibs as white, and to eliminate odours and stains as easily and their toilet cleaner doesn't clean, that's the thing, I really struggle with trying to get other people on board as well because eco friendly products do not do the same job as hard out chemical ones do, as quickly. (l103)

This display action of the product’s results transferred the symbolic meaning of being eco-friendly from the product to Lauren. She saw symbolic meanings of caring for the environment in Ecostore products. The self-image that Lauren desired was important to her as she asserts that she is an individual committed to the environment. Her social defiance of displaying less clean clothes reinforced the existence of her self-image that she was more concerned about the environment than matters she deemed cosmetic. This also gave her the opportunity to educate and encourage her friends if this became a topic of discussion.

Lauren stated that she had established a self-image of being an environmentally conscious consumer amongst her social group. This image was created through the display of products, discussion, gifting and recommendation of the product. All these actions involved Lauren drawing out symbolic meanings from the product to herself. For example, through the action of discussion with her friends she demonstrated her passion for the values of the product, and defended the choice to use them:

I'm quite pushy and I can be quite opinionated and once I get really excited about something I do tend to want to share it with people whether its wanted to be shared or not. And that really could be aggravating for other people so I've learned over the past few years people do not like being pushed into being green. (l301)

The action of discussing the product and encouraging others helped Lauren to build the self-image that she was committed to the environment. She is aware that her actions do create an image of herself amongst her social group. The commitment to
Findings

her values of environmentalism can run in conflict with her social relationships, as she identifies people do not always like been pushed into change. Instead, Lauren encourages her friends to be greener through small changes and more implicitly, the exchange rituals of recommendation and gifting:

*The one thing that I always recommend is the [Ecostore] Baby Sleepy Time Bath. We always use their baby products quite extensively. I swear by it... I have given that away as a present, as a gift for baby shower stuff. (l209, l214)*

When Lauren gifted her friends Ecostore products she transferred symbolic meanings from the product to herself. The symbolic meanings she saw in the product was helping the environment and caring for the health of the family. Her actions of recommending and gifting helped Lauren to build the self-image that she was an individual who cared about others. She also saw the adoption of Ecostore baby products as building the self-image that she was a good friend, because she demonstrated her care for her friends’ children’s’ health.

For other aspects of participants' self-image, the symbolic meaning was not inherent in the Ecostore product, but instead in the action. That is, the particular consumption behaviour of Ecostore was not dissimilar to the behaviour taken with another product. For example, all participants recycled as part of their divestment action for Ecostore and other products. The recycling action was an important habit to maintain as it contributed to a part of participants' self-image:

*I recycle like a maniac anyway. (b131)*

*Fastidious recycler... I always recycle, everything. Everything recyclable, pretty much. (d362, d366)*

Although the action of recycling Ecostore products did not differ from what the participants would have done with other products, the ritual action of recycling continues to transfer symbolic meaning that is used to build self-image. Through the process of recycling, participants establish themselves as committed to being against waste. Being against waste is part of the self-image that participants support the environment through their actions. Participants saw the act of recycling as convenient
and thus, required little cognitive effort to choose to do so throughout the course of their lives. The action of recycling as divestment has symbolic meaning embedded in a manner not dissimilar to how individual products obtain their symbolic meanings from the cultural world.

Recycling, and other actions taken with products were often seen by participants as being on behalf of a collective. Participants could also use the symbolic meanings from Ecostore products to build an image of their collective. The collective may have been their family or their household. The concept of collective values forms the next aspect of this theme.

4.3.3 Collective Values

Participants used the symbolic meanings of Ecostore products to build an image for their collective. As a collective they may have held different values due to the individuals that were a part of it. Symbolic meanings of the products may have also pertained to some of participants’ personal relationships within the collective. The symbolic meaning of people was also seen in Ecostore products. This was because participants recalled that the product held some connection with others. For some, the product was previously used in their family or recommended by a parent or sibling. In other cases, the decision to purchase or use Ecostore products was seen as being collective.

Two participants purchased or used the product after the recommendation of another person. Brian decided to trial the product after becoming aware of it and discussing it with his flatmate. Karen tried the product as her partner had already used it:

*I was living with a flatmate, who used to buy it and bought some [for myself]. (b88)*

*We moved onto the eco one because my boyfriend likes using that stuff and I started using it too... And he was using that, he likes using the loofah and the body wash and so that side of things, which I've never done. (k5, k29)*
Karen saw the sharing of grooming products as indicative of her and her boyfriend becoming more of a collective through greater use of shared products. She saw the shared choice of buying and using the product contributing to a sense of a collective for her and her boyfriend. This was because she started factoring in his preferences and needs in the purchase decision:

[I do find the body wash expensive]. But it’s kinda worth it. One, cause I know it good for his skin. And we might as well use the same one instead of having a soap. (k83)

She used the symbolic meaning of the Ecostore product to build not only her self-image of being eco, but a collective image as well. Sylvia noted that she and her partner share the same personal values, and this translates to the household products they purchase. She sees Ecostore products as being aligned with these values. Sylvia sees the agreement on choice of products as being reflective of her and her partner being compatible for each other:

We [my partner and I], probably had the same ideals from the beginning... I guess we just developed along the way, and you know, some, or something when you’re with a person you have to have those similar values as it probably won’t work [laughs] so it kind of just, it just became the same values, same ideals. (s1034, s1038)

In other cases, the collective identity may have arisen out of participant’s living arrangements. Tanya describes her flat as being a collective identity:

Yeah definitely, it [the imagery and symbols of her home] represents a collective. That’s exactly right and that’s exactly what our flat is. We’re totally collective, we’re a mini collective society and that’s the way we treat it. You know, democratic kind of thing. (t397)

She purchased Ecostore products as part of her wider flat’s shared groceries. The purchase of Ecostore products was identified as an important norm for the flat. Tanya identifies that the value of environmentalism as being necessary for participation in the collective:
We [as a flat] are very focused on buying products, which are good for the environment... [The new flat mate] kind of has to fit in with the household, I guess, values as well. (t7,t233)

Tanya entered the household as the newest flatmate and purchasing the brand was seen as a necessary step for her to be established as part of the flat:

I adapt to whatever environment I’m in, as I said before, whether I’m at work [or elsewhere] I observe to see what is appropriate behaviour and I’d say that my environment that surrounds me at the moment is very much natural. (t855)

She saw Ecostore products as carrying symbolic meanings pertaining to the values of the household. In buying the product she felt she was buying into the values of the household. Because she did believe in the values of the wider collective, she readily adopted this change to her purchasing behaviour. She felt that this also demonstrated to others that she was fitting in to the values of the flat, the collective. The flat's actual norm of purchasing Ecostore was implicit and not something she was ever communicated to directly:

[Buying Ecostore for the flat] just goes without saying... it's like the unspoken rule... we didn’t speak, we've never spoken about the brand... it would just simply be that the notion to buy an organic brand, but wouldn’t need to be written down as well. It’s the given. (t261, t279, t658)

Tanya simply observed the flat's behaviour and identified that the symbolic meaning of the product fit with the image of the flat. Buying the product reflected her socialisation in the household. Conversely, Lauren is influential in setting the values of her household as a collective. As the main supermarket shopper, she exerts control over what products are purchased. In the action of purchasing Ecostore, she feels she is instilling green values in her family:

We’re quite committed as a household to a greener choice for my laundry liquids. I would usually flick between Ecostore and B_E_E (pauses) but usually I will go for Ecostore. (l20)
Lauren sees Ecostore and B_E_E products as carrying symbolic meanings of caring for the environment. The purchase choice helps build the self-image that Lauren is a green individual, and the image that the household and her family also hold values of environmentalism. Lauren's purchase of Ecostore establishes a precedent for her household to follow. Through being the designated shopper, Lauren sees her actions as being on behalf of her family as a collective. Rather than only transferring symbolic meaning to her self-image, the meaning is also transferred to image of the collective as a whole.

Lauren’s decision to purchase Ecostore for the family and recommend it to others stemmed from her belief that the product carried symbolic meanings pertaining to health. The symbolic meaning of health is the next theme that will be discussed.

4.4 Health

Participants perceived Ecostore products to be good for health. This may have been literal in referring to their own health, or the health of others, or metaphorical in the health of the environment and lived experiences. The symbolic meaning of health was used to build a self-image that participants were concerned about the wellbeing of people and the things that were important to them. The aspects of this theme will now be discussed.

4.4.1 Personal Health

Two participants, Karen and Jennifer, described one of the reasons they purchased Ecostore products was due to their allergies. Jennifer identifies allergies as a main reason for purchasing the product:

*I like the fact that, they’re obviously like non-toxic and you know, as far as cleaning products and stuff like that goes. I actually suffer from allergies so something like that is really good. That is sort of one of the main reasons why we use their stuff.* (j64)
Karen also reflects on previous experiences where other products did react with her skin:

> It [products with synthetic ingredients] can react with my skin a little bit. I don’t have a real sensitive skin but I can get sensitive, especially on my face, I don’t use it on my face, but I’d rather not risk it if I can. (k325)

Karen’s use of Ecostore products in her grooming did differ slightly from other products. Previously, she had been using soap but switched to Ecostore body wash. Because she felt the product was more natural and milder, she was not concerned about contact with her face. With other products, she was more conscious because of the greater perceived risk to her skin. The symbolic meaning of natural and milder in Ecostore products was used to build participants’ self-image that they looked after their own health. When Sylvia uses Ecostore products in her grooming, she feels that she is maintaining her good health and mitigating the risk of poor health:

> I’m just a bit worried about, you hear all the bad press about it and you go, maybe they do cause cancer, maybe it is what we’ve done wrong... what we’ve done to ourselves living with the chemicals we bathe ourselves on a daily basis. So you go, well if it’s something you can take out of your life, then why not?... I’m not worried about saving the planet so much as I am about not using chemicals myself, so I guess at a selfish level to try and protect myself from what potentially could be dangerous I suppose, and more to protect myself really, and the animals. (s508, s501)

Ecostore products present an opportunity for Sylvia to mitigate risks to her health. She values using Ecostore as it is not something perceived as requiring much effort but carries the insurance that she is working towards protecting herself. She uses the symbolic meaning of the product to build the self-image that she is an individual who values her health.

Other participants also mirrored the belief that Ecostore products would mitigate some health risk. As David identifies, other products were seen as potentially exposing some risk to peoples’ health:
Findings

There’s a lot of research that, I don’t think is particularly conclusive saying that these things are safe. But there’s a lot of, I guess not hugely scientific findings but reasonably, substantial findings that say chemicals are bad for you. So if you can have a product that does the same job, that doesn’t use them, I definitely think is good. (d21)

Ecostore were seen as carrying symbolic meanings of safety and protecting one’s health. Participants felt good using Ecostore products as they felt they were not exposing themselves to any health risks. This was because Ecostore products were seen as safe and good for health. Using the product created the self-image that they avoided the risk of health problems. This was because the Ecostore product held symbolic meanings of naturalness and health.

4.4.2 Health of Other People

Lauren established herself as an advocate for Ecostore products in her social circles. She regularly recommended the Ecostore baby products to her friends (I209). She focused on this category specifically because she felt that infants were physically vulnerable:

I’ve never seen anyone’s baby have a skin reaction to any of the Ecostore products. I have seen pretty much, seen lots of babies react badly to Johnson’s and I can’t really think of any more. But you know, the really highly fragranced stuff. (I463)

Her recommendation of the products was derived from her belief that the products were better for the health of the individual who it was used on. In giving visibility and accessibility to the product, she felt she could influence the health of her friends’ children:

I know its so interfering but I can’t help it... often what can happen when people are new parents and when babies get a rash they go to the doctor. And probably the doctor will prescribe them some sort of an ointment and then you get a whole stream of intervention. It’s like it seems like such a silly thing but a rash from a
Lauren saw the advent of having a child as being an opportunity to encourage others to adopt more environmentally friendly modes of behaviour. In this action of exchange she transferred the symbolic meanings of health and prevention from the product to her self-image. She saw herself as being a person who cared about the health of others, and recommending and gifting the product helped her to build this image. The exchange also gave Lauren personal satisfaction, as she felt positive in protecting the health of those she cares about. She was also able to transfer some of the symbolic meanings from the product to her friends, as many continued to use the Ecostore products on an ongoing basis.

Sylvia also saw Ecostore products as being a safe option, through reducing her exposure to chemicals. She recommended her mother to also use the products. She cared about the health of her mother, and saw encouraging the products as a means of helping to protect her mother’s health. The recommendation action was relatively straightforward, based on the strength of their relationship:

*I just told her, I said you should start using this and stop using the chemicals... it was instant. She just chucked everything out.* (s722)(s745)

In the action of recommendation she transferred symbolic meaning of health and safety from the product to herself. She build the self-image that she was a good daughter in protecting the health of her mother. Her mother readily made the change to Ecostore and also started to examine other aspects of her lifestyle.

*[My mother was] not very green at all. But mum is now, mum is very aware, she's really careful to try and be healthy.* (s726)

As well, in her occupational capacity she ordered Ecostore products for her workplace, as she sought to protect her colleagues’ health as well. She hoped that her supply of Ecostore products would serve as passive, indirect encouragement for others to trial and use.
Findings

[I chose Ecostore for my workplace] Because I wanted to buy eco stuff. Because I wanted to buy natural products to try and help my work friends. (s849)

She saw buying Ecostore product for her workplace as helping her colleagues. In this action she built the self-image that she was a caring individual. The product carried symbolic meanings pertaining to caring for one’s health. For other participants, the concept of health also extended to non-humans, such as the environment.

4.4.3 Health of the Environment

Participants identified that the environment was something that was worth protecting. Some felt they had a responsibility to protect the environment and its health. Ecostore products were seen as enabling participants to make changes in their lives to support the health of the environment. Participants visualised concerns of the environment in specific issues that pertained to them. These issues also indicated where participants might have felt they could have contributed. Brian for example, focused on the impact of waterways, whereas David considered landfills:

Good to know that you’re doing the right thing from a personal perspective, but also good to know that I’m not, again going back to recycling because it’s a good example, good to know that I’m not putting plastic in a landfill that will be there for hundreds of years and will definitely impact on society further down the track. (d510)

Participants all visualised the health of the environment differently and this pertains to how the environment was connected to them in their everyday lives. This is evident in Lauren’s dismissal of the global environmental issues of carbon warming and support of more local and visible aspects of the environmental world in her own life:

I care a great deal about this planet. I think we’ve gone way beyond our point, I mean global warming, is irrelevant. It’s important, but irrelevant on a day-to-day basis. It doesn’t make any difference to what we’re doing. Litter does. Litters unpleasant. You walk outside to your front door and you will see litter everywhere. So you know, that’s the kinda thing that I think. Small changes. Every time I leave the house I pick up three pieces of litter. I don’t try to pick it all up,
but if everyone, that’s the sorta change I try and bring on to my friends, you don’t have to change your whole life. But if you could just use this liquid then that’s great…We have more to think about now. And it will, what we do now will influence how things are in ten to fifteen years. It’s not about global warming its pollution. It’s about keeping our waterways clean. (l346)

Participants saw a connotation of the environment as being a living organism and considered the value of their actions as contributing to the health of this organism. Using Ecostore products would support the life of the ecosystem. Participants used the symbolic meanings of the product to build the self-image that they cared about the health of the environment.

Part of supporting the health of the environment, was in the hope that it would support experiences that it provided. Lauren saw the purchase of Ecostore products as ensuring that her child would experience nature as she did as a child:

I need to know that he will be able to take, it’s not about whether he gets to go fishing or not, because he probably will, fishing is kind of my [metaphor]… well when I was a kid, we used to fish off Princes Wharf down in the city…We’d go down there and my dad sits there. We used to catch crabs and fish like little Kahawai and stuff off Princes Wharf that was only like thirty-five years ago, I doubt very much that you’d catch anything down there now. A couple sailors maybe. But, so that’s like him there. But there are other places I can take Robert [son] to go fishing but in thirty-five years it’s up to me to work out whether he can take his children to that place. And that place that we take him is many miles out of town already. (l365, l370, l375)

Lauren sees symbolic meanings of supporting the health and sustainability of experiences in Ecostore products. When she purchases the product, she transfers these symbolic meanings to herself as an individual. She builds a self-image that she is being a good mother through contributing to the possibility that her son can enjoy experiences of nature. She sees these experiences as valuable, and desires for her son to have them as well.
Lauren and other participants' belief that Ecostore was a good thing and that it made a genuine contribution to wider issues was supported by the belief that the brand was trustworthy. The theme of trust is important as it underlies the previously identified symbolic meanings of Ecostore products.

4.5 Trust

Participants described Ecostore to be more trustworthy than other brands in its claims. The symbolic meaning of trust in products validated the belief that a valuable contribution was being made. Participants placed trust in the brand in that they thought Ecostore was a genuine, environmentally conscious brand and organisation and that supporting them was the right thing to do. Sylvia elaborates on their trust of the brand over others, including other eco-brands.

[I] think a lot of people have got on the bandwagon of it for sure, a lot of people are you know, throw around the word eco around willy nilly, and you can actually see things that sorta claim to be eco, you know just like how they throw organic around, lots of products you see these days say they’re organic and natural and they’re healthy and then you actually read the ingredients and they’re not at all. Which is really disappointing that it’s been able to be used so freely, so I guess that’s another reason not to shop around because, in Ecostore we trust [laughs]. (s924)

Tanya also clearly demonstrates her belief and trust of the Ecostore brand:

I believe that they are ethical, I believe that they have integrity as a brand, I believe that they care about the environment and animals and people and the wellbeing of all of those three things. I believe that they’re holding themselves accountable to their personal values. Because when they did this, when they brought this stuff out, this whole green movement wasn’t in fashion. It was a long time ago, like I don’t believe they’ve done it commercially to make money. I think they’ve done it because they had a vision. (t777)

This finding of trust is key, as the trust that these participants demonstrated in the Ecostore brand caused them to prefer them to other eco brands. Furthermore, the
trust of the brand made the participants feel that any contribution they were making was more substantial. There was high evidence of general scepticism against other brands and products:

I don’t know actually whether it is actually a better product or whether it is greener but it tells me it is... I’m a sceptic [laughs]. I have a personal, I have a very deep inquiring mind and I never take anything as read. (I130, I401)

As always with these things, unless you actually go through every single product and check you know chemical by chemical what’s in them, you don’t know how hundred percent green they are. But I think from the claims made on the packaging, its pretty obvious that they are better than some of the synthetic chemical-based materials. (d397)

These excerpts illustrate that these participants were at least sceptical of some of the brands and products within the category. The brand of Ecostore provided a symbolic meaning of trust. This mediated the participant’s opinion of the contribution they could make in using the product because they trusted the claims of the brand. Also, the symbolic meaning of trust was used to build participants' self-image that they were trustworthy. As illustrated earlier, Lauren and Sylvia recommended products to others (l209)(s722). Trust in the product was important because these actions of exchange were reflections of themselves. There was evidence that Sylvia used her trust to influence her mother:

I believe you and I trust you [mother to Sylvia], and I was like, good. (s754)

Sylvia was comfortable recommending the Ecostore product because she trusted the claims made by the product. The symbolic meanings of trust also links to the other themes that have been identified in this chapter. Firstly, trust links to the theme of virtue (Section 4.2) because participants had some belief that the product was a better option for the environment and that it did make a difference. Secondly, the symbolic meaning of trust underlies the theme of values (Section 4.3) as participants held some certainty over the values that the product had. Thirdly, trust links to the theme of health (Section 4.4) as it supports participants’ belief that it was better for their own
Findings

health and others. As illustrated, the symbolic meaning of trust is an important foundation for participants to build their self-image in many respects.

The finding of trust illustrates the strength of the Ecostore brand. The trust was held in what the range represented, as opposed to individual products. The brand itself was drawn from a number of beliefs, as the following excerpt will illustrate:

I support everything New Zealand. It's very important, it makes everything better.
It makes it better if it's made here, it gives people jobs. (s590)

Sylvia trusted the Ecostore brand as she saw it as a small, New Zealand company that was competing with large, uncaring corporations. She sees symbolic meanings of New Zealand in the product. This allows her to build her self-image of nationalism through choosing products that are made locally. Other participants also mirrored degrees of this belief as well. Jennifer sees her choice of Ecostore as supporting a worthy organisation:

I kinda think I'd rather cut out the middleman and not give Foodtown my money.
I'd rather give it straight to those guys... I have a feeling that these guys are quite genuine about what they do. (j28, j319)

The trust placed in the brand allows Jennifer to build the self-image that she is contributing to a worthy cause. Her reference to Ecostore as people stems from the interpersonal experiences she has had through visiting the store. Her ritual action of refilling and stocking up products transfers the symbolic meaning. Jennifer believes her action of purchasing from the retail store demonstrates her support of Ecostore’s philosophy and beliefs. Similarly, Sylvia places trusts in the brand and is happy to support them. She demonstrates passion and empathy for the brand in the following interview excerpts:

[I'm happy to pay the higher price of Ecostore] because it's a small market and it's a premium product and you're paying because it is on such a smaller scale then the other brands and anything you're buying in the supermarket is being made in the zillions, isn't it? You have to pay premium for all that. So it's fine. (s612)
A lot has changed in the years, so it’s good that they didn’t think that they could just make what they did ten years ago and keep making it. They’ve got to keep changing the formula and keep up with the market, otherwise someone else will just come in, won’t they? (s395)

In her purchase of the product, she builds the self-image that she is an individual who is committed to helping the underdog. The symbolic meaning of trust grounds her belief that they are a genuine organisation with company values that align with the personal values of Sylvia’s.

Lauren’s trust in Ecostore was borne out of her explicit actions of information seeking. Describing herself as a sceptic due to her background in marketing, she decided to spend time looking into the ingredients of one of the products. She describes her results as below:

At the end of it I discovered it was a perfectly safe, really good product that had nothing in it that I felt uncomfortable about putting on my child and that actually gave me a lot of confidence in the rest of the range... generally speaking I think that says that they have the same level of integrity across their whole range. That might be naïve, but they’ve done their job by convincing me of that. (l282, l287)

I hope, I really hope, that they are doing it for the right reasons. I believe of what I’ve read of their company philosophy and the information on their website that what they do really are for genuine reasons. (l402)

The results of Lauren’s research enabled her to see symbolic meanings of trust in the Ecostore brand. As reflected in her sentiment above, she also felt she can trust the other products that she did not look up. Similarly, Sylvia does not feel the need to look into products because she has trust in them:

Probably not so much [research] on Ecostore because I think they’re at that point where they’re not going to slip some chemicals in there because it would be so detrimental for the business it wouldn’t be worth it. But for any other product I
Lauren and Sylvia both note they did not engage in extensive or regular research. Despite this, they have still recommended the products to others (l301, s754). This is because they trust the products themselves. The symbolic trust is used to build the self-image that they are also trustworthy individuals, because they have recommended products that they truly believe in.

### 4.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the findings of this study. Several themes of symbolic meanings emerged from the in-depth interviews. The themes pertained to the areas of virtue, personal and collective values, health and trust. Symbolic meanings in these themes were used to build the desired self-image of participants. The particular actions that participants took with the Ecostore-branded products reflected the symbolic meaning they saw in them. Excerpts from the transcripts support the themes of symbolic meaning. The following chapter will discuss the importance and value of these findings.
5 Discussion & Conclusions

5.1 Introduction

This final chapter provides a summary and discussion of the findings of this study. It seeks to place the findings in current knowledge by illustrating the extent of similarities and differences. To achieve this, the chapter draws relevant knowledge from related studies in the field. The importance of the findings is highlighted with academic and managerial implications. The potential limitations of the study are discussed. Lastly, directions for research are outlined, with a conclusion made.

5.2 Interpretation and Discussion of Findings

This research commenced by indicating there was a gap in knowledge around the symbolic value of sustainable products in consumption. It has illustrated a logical progression of literature that supports the belief that products carry symbolic meanings that are used by consumers in consumption rituals to create their self-image. Brands are a means for products to acquire symbolic meaning. The model of symbolic meaning transfer (McCracken, 1986) illustrates the process of symbolic meaning transfer that is examined and as such, has served as a lens of interpretation for the study.

Attempts to address the growing concerns in sustainability have moved to understanding the culture of consumption. This study intended to support the formation of a cultural shift in consumer values through identifying the symbolic meanings of a brand of sustainable products. It is hoped that identifying these symbolic meanings will contribute to recognition of the symbolic function of consuming sustainable products. By exploring the experiences of existing consumers of Ecostore products, insights to drive greater levels of the consumption of sustainable products could emerge. This belief guided the study’s research objective, being:

What symbolic meanings did consumers take from sustainable products to build their self-image?
The following section will outline how the research objective was fulfilled in this study. It will do this through discussion of the specific findings that relate to and answer this research objective.

Participants recognised the symbolic meaning in the brand of sustainable products and used their consumption rituals as means of building their self-image. The findings of this study suggest that the choice to buy and use Ecostore-branded products carries a greater cost than non-sustainable products. This cost may have been in the sense of financial, temporal, product performance or exertion. Participants were willing to choose a sustainable product with a greater cost because they desired the symbolic meanings of the products in their own self-image. The findings of the study align with the beliefs illustrated in Chapter 2 about the symbolic value of products and the identity function of consumption. The specific findings that were identified will now be discussed.

5.2.1 Self-Image of Being Virtuous

The findings contained in Section 4.2.1 illustrated that participants saw symbolic meanings of virtue in Ecostore-branded products. Participants saw these products as “good” and the decision to use them as the “right thing to do”. This symbolic meaning was developed through participants’ beliefs about the products’ attributes and the brand of Ecostore. Participants used this symbolic meaning to build the self-image that they were virtuous individuals. They achieved this through their ritual consumption of the Ecostore product.

Participants made the decision to purchase Ecostore products because they saw value in creating a virtuous self-image. Participants saw the decision to purchase Ecostore products as having moral dimensions, because the product represented symbolic meanings of virtue. Making virtuous choices in the past helped to build the self-image those participants would continue to make virtuous choices in the future.

Participants gained satisfaction from making a choice based on the virtue of a product and the creation of a virtuous self-image. As such, a virtuous self-image was desirable to participants. They could use the symbolic meaning of Ecostore to create this self-
image. Participants were motivated to select Ecostore products for this reason. Ecostore products enabled participants to fulfil the desired utilitarian function and also further contribute to the creation of the self-image of being virtuous.

The symbolic meaning of virtue existed without participants being entirely cognisant of how the products were specifically good or better for the environment. However this did not matter, as participants were still able to use the symbolic meanings in building their self-image, simply because they believed that the virtue was real. This mirrors the findings of Pickett-Baker and Ozaki (2008) who found that participants felt good about buying brands that were less damaging to the environment, despite possessing limited knowledge of the product’s actual impact. The implication of this finding is that sustainable products can have symbolic meanings of virtue without necessarily having attributes that imply it to be. Per the model of symbolic meaning transfer (McCracken, 1986) explained in Section 2.5.1, instruments of advertising and fashion can imbue products with symbolic meanings. If marketing communications can accentuate the symbolic meanings of virtue seen in sustainable products, the consumption of these products may increase.

The self-image of being virtuous is important to encouraging the consumption of sustainable products. Previous research sees the consumption of sustainable products as being a socially conscious form of consumer behaviour (Moisander, 2007; Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006). If sustainable products have symbolic meaning that enables consumers to build the self-image of being virtuous, their consumption may rise simply out of the individual’s satisfaction that is gained through acting in virtuous ways (Ritov & Kahneman, 1997). The satisfaction from acting in virtuous ways reflects the consumer’s willingness to contribute to the public good (Kahneman & Knetsch, 1992). Ensuring that sustainable products carry symbolic meaning of virtue will serve to encourage sustainable consumption behaviour, because it is desirable for consumers to be seen as virtuous.

Being a virtuous individual links to the image of being a responsible individual. Through acting in virtuous and moral ways, participants could demonstrate they accepted responsibility for the things they felt were important to them.
5.2.2 Self-Image of Being Responsible

In their consumption of Ecostore products, participants created a self-image that they were being responsible and that they recognised they had responsibilities. Participants saw symbolic meanings of caring for the environment in Ecostore products. By using a product that they felt helped the environment, they were able to fulfil their commitment to this responsibility. The findings suggest that consumers consider the consequences of their consumption. Through this recognition, and acting on it, participants could build the self-image that they were acting in a responsible manner. Other research has suggested that consumers do take into account the consequences of their consumption (Moisander, 2007). The findings of this study add to this by suggesting that the act of accounting for the consequences of consumption enables consumers to build a self-image of being responsible.

The notion that consumers express their feelings of responsibility in their purchase behaviour has been noted in other research (de Pelsmacker, et al., 2005). The findings of this study further extend this notion by demonstrating that the feelings of responsibility are also expressed in consumption behaviours beyond the purchase action. For example, participants ensured they recycled the packaging of the Ecostore product to maintain the self-image of being a responsible member of society. Participants used all actions taken with sustainable products to build the self-image that they were responsible, rather than only the purchase decision. This is because products have symbolic meanings that are present in every action participants take, and not simply during the purchase action.

Participants differed in what exactly they felt responsible for. Previous research in sustainable consumption sees concern as occurring in three categories. These concerns align with the self-image of responsibility. The three categories of concern are concern for the environment (biospheric), concern for others (social-altruistic) and concern with self (egoistic) (see Axelrod, 1994; Merchant, 1992; Schultz, 2000; Stern & Dietz, 1994; Stern, Dietz, & Kalof, 1993). Examples of these types of concern were evident in the findings of this study.

Firstly, Tanya and David felt that in buying Ecostore, they act on their concern and responsibility of the environment. Secondly, Lauren gifts Ecostore products to her friends out of the concern that other products would compromise the health of her
Discusson & Conclusions

friends' children. Thirdly, Sylvia uses Ecostore products out of the concern that other products can have negative impacts on her health. Because participants are acting on the different types of concerns they have, they are able to build the self-image that they are responsible individuals. They can demonstrate they care about the wellbeing of things, others and themselves in their consumption actions. This can result in a personal sense of satisfaction because satisfaction is largely dependant on what happens to the things individuals care about (De Young, 2000; Wallach & Wallach, 1983). The three types of concern reflect what participants care about in their lives.

The self-image of being responsible is important to sustainable consumption. It has been previously suggested that sustainable consumption is a process that leads individuals to feel both responsible for and empowered in addressing the risks to both themselves and the wider environment (Connolly & Prothero, 2003). This means that symbolic meanings that enable the self-image of responsibility are necessary for consumers to engage in sustainable consumption. Consumers need to have concern or responsibility towards an issue for them to be motivated to change their behaviour. This is because sustainable consumption does not deliver an instant personal gain as the benefit is for society is and is very much future-orientated (McCarty & Shrum, 1993). The participants chose to purchase Ecostore products over others purposefully. They recognised that buying Ecostore was symbolically demonstrating their commitment to the things they felt responsible for.

The importance of the self-image of responsibility is that when consumers perceive themselves as having a responsibility, having a subsequent sense of contribution becomes a necessity (De Young, 1993). The image of being responsible reflects the consumer's beliefs about what is worthwhile protecting. Making contributions based on the consumers' sense of responsibility forms the next self-image identified from this study.

5.2.3 Self-Image of Being a Contributing Member of Society

The findings in Section 4.2.2 have shown that participants see Ecostore products as carrying symbolic meanings of making a difference. The fact the products may have had a marginal environmental value in practice was not significant because it was the symbolic meaning that participants were contributing that was important. By using
products that they felt made a difference, participants built the self-image that they were contributing members of society. The contribution they made was not necessarily related to any observable improvements in environmental quality. Instead, the contribution they made is symbolic and as such, has emotional benefits that are based on the symbolic meaning of the products (Hartmann & Ibáñez, 2006).

It remains to be discussed what exactly participants felt they were contributing to. Their area of contribution follows the three categories of concern that were described in Section 5.2.2. Participants saw themselves as contributing to concerns of the environment, the wellbeing of others, and also to the wellbeing of themselves. These different concerns allow for the creation of differentiated self-image. Contributing to the environment helped participants to create the self-image of being an environmentalist. Contributing to the wellbeing of others allowed participants to create the self-image of being a good mother, daughter, son, friend or colleague. In looking after themselves, participants could create a self-image that they were looking after themselves and cared about their wellbeing. This is evident in the findings of this study as one participant did describe herself as feeling selfish in her selection of Ecostore products. She felt others could have interpreted her caring for her own wellbeing as a selfish action, because she was not contributing to another person or area.

The self-image of being a contributing member of society has importance for the area of sustainability. According to Axelrod (1994) some individuals will seek satisfaction from knowing they have contributed to resolving important societal and global concerns. This satisfaction can motivate people to make decisions that they feel contributes to their different concerns. This means that if sustainable products have symbolic meanings that pertain to making a contribution, the consumer will be motivated by the satisfaction that can be achieved through consuming them. Furthermore, it has been suggested that consumers of sustainable products need to have felt that their actions have made a contribution (Autio, Heiskanen, & Heinonen, 2009; Straughan & Roberts, 1999). The findings of this study indicate that consumers of Ecostore products did feel that they made a difference, at least symbolically, which is why those chose to consume them over non-sustainable products.
Discussion & Conclusions

Participants symbolically contributed to the areas of concern they felt responsible in part because they were risk adverse. They wanted to help avoid a negative consequence in the wellbeing of something that was important to them. The self-image of being risk-adverse will now be discussed.

5.2.4 Self-Image of Being Risk Adverse

As outlined in Section 4.4, Ecostore products carried symbolic meanings pertaining to protecting the health of the individual, the health of others and the health of the environment. Participants used the symbolic meaning of health to build the self-image that they were risk-adverse. This is because using Ecostore-branded products made participants feel they were mitigating risks to their health, the health of others, and the health of the environment. Ecostore products were seen as natural and better for the individual than non-sustainable products. In actuality, the health value of the products could be debatable. However, this does not matter because as long as consumers saw the product as being good for health and safe, they would still use the symbolic meaning of the product to create the self-image that they were being risk-adverse.

The concept of risk in sustainable consumption has received attention in previous research (Halkier, 2001, 2004; Tulloch & Lupton, 2002). The motivation to purchase sustainable products is related to the desire to avoid risks that may pertain to the self, others or the environment. Once again, the three types of concern explained in 5.2.2 are pertinent. Participants reduced the risk of environmental issues, the risks to the health of their friends’ children, and the risks towards their own health. The self-image of being risk-adverse means mitigating the concerns that consumers have about the wellbeing of the things that they care about in their lives. Clearly, there is interconnectedness to the self-image of being virtuous, the self-image of being responsible and the self-image of being a contributing member of society. This is because sustainable products carry many symbolic meanings that pertain to all these different self-image, as outlined in the contents of this chapter.

The self-image of being risk-adverse has importance for encouraging the consumption of sustainable products. It has been previously suggested that the desire to protect one’s health and the health of others is a strong motivator of sustainable consumption (Gan, Wee, Ozanne, & Kao, 2008; Harper & Makatouni, 2002; Miller, 1995; Padel &
Foster, 2005). Two participants in this study were mothers and it was evident in their discussions that this was a major influence on their decision to use Ecostore. Lauren identified that she wanted to protect the health of her son, as well as the environment-based experiences that he could have. The self-image of being risk-adverse is related to the self-image that these participants were being good mothers. Similarly, in Sylvia’s recommendation of a product she deemed safe to her mother, she built a self-image that she was a good and caring daughter through her symbolic mitigation of risk.

Participants clearly differed in their background and experiences, and this led to them holding different personal values. While they all held different values, all participants were still able to use their consumption actions of Ecostore products to express their own values as part of their self-image.

5.2.5 Expression of Personal Values in Self-Image

As illustrated in Section 4.3, participants saw symbolic meanings in Ecostore products that aligned to the personal values they held or desired. Although the individual personal values differed between participants, the Ecostore product and its consumption were still seen as a means of obtaining, developing or expressing the personal value in their self-image. For example, Tanya considers herself as having a green focus and this motivates her to purchase products and brands that she sees as environmentally friendly. She demonstrates this personal value through her consumption of Ecostore, thereby creating the self-image that she cares about the environment. The findings of this study follows other research in indicating that the purchase and consumption of products is related to attempts to achieve and maintain ideals that are conceived by the self or others (Hawkins, Best, & Coney, 1998).

The symbolic meaning of Ecostore products may have reflected some desired personal value. Participants may have had an ideal-self concept, such as being an environmentally responsible individual, but the actual self-concept may have been far from this. In order to bridge this gap, participants transferred the symbolic meaning through their routine consumption of Ecostore products. Consumers used their consumption of products imbued with symbolic meaning to compensate for the inadequacies and inconsistencies between the actual and desired-self-image (Elliott,
Discussed & Conclusions

1997). The symbolic meaning of a product provides a means for the consumer to portray an image to others (Belk, 1988; Grubb & Grathwohl, 1967; Grubb & Hupp, 1968; Solomon, 1983). For example, Karen sees Ecostore products as being representative of being environmentally conscious and sees using it as a step to becoming an environmentally conscious individual, at least symbolically. The significance of this finding is that consumers are influenced by the image they have of themselves (Zinkham & Hong, 1991).

Some participants had dormant personal values. These were previously developed through earlier experiences. For David, values of environmentalism were instilled at an early age through his education built on Steiner philosophy. The Ecostore product carried symbolic meanings of environmentalism. Thus, he saw the symbolic meanings pertained to his dormant values and that he could realise these through consuming the product.

As well as a self-image, participants also used the symbolic meanings of Ecostore products to create an image for a collective. This was because one aspect of the consumption was done in the context of a collective. For example, Lauren spoke about wanting to create a sustainability-focused household. She saw Ecostore as being good for the environment. In her action of purchasing Ecostore, she was establishing and confirming that her household and self were being sustainability-conscious. The collective has potential for influencing consumption behaviour. Tanya moved into a flat where there were strong values of environmentalism. She identified that behaving in accordance with the values of the collective was necessary for participation. The implication for sustainable consumption is that the image of a collective can be a strong influence over an individual’s behaviour. As all consumption can be understood as occurring in some collective context, such as being a New Zealander, collective values have considerable potential for increasing the consumption of sustainable products against a large population. This will only occur where the values of the collective are in congruence with the symbolic meanings that are seen in sustainable products.

The implications of the findings of the study on the area of sustainable consumption will now be outlined.
5.2.6 Beyond Sustainability

The findings of this study suggest that participants used the symbolic meanings of Ecostore-branded products to develop aspects of their self-image. The products contained symbolic meanings that participants desired and this lead to them choosing Ecostore over non-sustainable products. However, participants were not always consistent on their purchases of sustainable products. Although the ritual served important symbolic function, participants did not feel they needed to use sustainable products in every occasion.

Participants may have used neutralisation techniques (Chatzidakis, Hibbert, & Smith, 2007) to justify selfish goals over the purchase of sustainable products. For example, some participants reflected on their non-consumption of Ecostore products as being due to the additional cost they saw in its use. Lauren saw using Ecostore products as requiring more time and effort. As she felt she was no longer able to invest this extra time and effort, she felt she had to use another product. She does recognise the loss of the symbolic meanings in creating her self-image. As outlined in Section 4.2.1, Lauren feels she needs to exert cognitive effort in allowing herself to accept a product that did not contribute as much to her self-image. This relates to other research which suggests that there is a greater relative cognitive effort in acting on one's values over utility (Biel & Dahlstrand, 2005). Thus, the decision to use Ecostore is harder for consumers to make because the value is symbolic and not utilitarian.

It has previously been noted that consumers fail to understand the connection between the buying decision and environmental consequences without information such as labels, to remind them (Rokka & Uusitalo, 2008). Sustainability as a concept was not well understood by participants, who generally focused on general environmental aspects. The lack of sustainability language is important. This is because cultural change occurs not when people argue, but when they start speaking differently (Rorty, 1979). Previous work by Macnaghten and Jacobs (1997) noted that an individual's own sense of agency in relation to sustainability has been weak. As such, there exists a sense of powerlessness for consumers, in spite of accepting there was an individual responsibility. This suggests that in order for consumers to act on their self-image, information provision must be in place. This will support the idea of sustainability entering the dialogue of consumers.
Sustainable consumption has been identified as being a socially constructed concept (Autio, et al., 2009). This is both in terms of what counts as being sustainable and what responsibilities are assigned to consumers. Consumer culture has continuously moulded into a multi-layered construction (Belk, 2004; McCracken, 1988a). Based on the findings of this study, it may be that this aspect of consumer culture has hindered how participants have come to (or not) conceptualise sustainability. A culture emphasising sustainability could actually come from consumers themselves. The findings of this study have shown that many aspects of sustainability are already present in the self-image of consumers of sustainable products. The self-image of consumers of sustainable products could be used to construct a consensus of what it means to be a consumer of sustainable products.

Previous literature has been criticised for assuming that environmental awareness is a pre-condition for sustainable consumption (Meyer, 2001). The findings of this study agree that consumers who did engage the purchase of sustainable products did not necessarily have any awareness or specific intention to help the environment. At face value, Ecostore products were needed to fulfil utilitarian functions. But as the findings of this study have shown, the symbolic meanings of the product allowed participants to build their self-image. Developing an understanding of this process and allowing consumers to see the value of their own actions will only serve to increase consumer consciousness and subsequently, the levels of consumption towards sustainable products. The contribution of this study to the academic field will now be outlined.

5.3 Academic Contribution

This study explored for the first time, the symbolic meanings in a brand of sustainable products through their respective consumption actions. By focusing on a specific brand of household cleaning and body care products, this study has been able to provide an account for the symbolic meanings. It has provided a basis for understanding that consumers recognise and use the symbolic meanings of sustainable products to build their self-image. This process has been illustrated fully in the contents and findings of this research.

Few studies in sustainable consumption have ever examined the product situations beyond the intention to buy (Rokka & Uusitalo, 2008). As this is an area not
extensively explored, this study contributes greatly to this body of knowledge. Existing consumer research has tended to focus on the area of purchase decision-making to the neglect of understanding the thinking behind choices and actions of sustainable consumption. The findings of this study highlight the importance of looking beyond the purchase. Consumers take purposeful actions throughout the life of a product, because products possess symbolic meaning at every stage, even at disposal. The actions are highly valuable to consumers as they not only allow the product to serve a function, but also allow symbolic meaning to be taken from the product and into their self-image.

Exploring beyond the functional to the symbolic and identity functions served by products is important for the goal of consumer research. The findings illustrate that consumers recognise the symbolic meanings in sustainable products and that the desire to choose these are based on its value in building their self-image. This research contributes to academic knowledge as it has helped to identify the meanings of sustainable products in relation to the lives of its consumers, a general objective of consumer research (Levy, 1981). Fulfilling this understanding for the category of sustainable products is of particular importance given its implications for the wellbeing of society and the environment. This study has provided an important academic contribution in furthering knowledge around the symbolic meanings of sustainable consumer products. This will lead to further research that will help to develop the cultural shift in consumption values that could be used to address sustainability issues.

Another contribution of this study is the finding that while consumers wished to imbue their self-image with sustainable products, they did not always purchase sustainable products. Some barriers to the purchase of sustainable products were costs, social contexts and norms. Some facilitators to the purchase of sustainable products were health, social context and norms, and feelings of social responsibility. There is evidently potential to increase the consumption of sustainable products among people who are already doing so at some level. The findings of this study suggest that consumers themselves could develop stronger cultures of consumption through their own understanding of their behaviour. This study has provided a strong foundation to further understanding the true and full value in acts of consumption.
The findings of this study also have important managerial implications and these will now be outlined.

5.4 Managerial Implications

The findings of this study have managerial implications for marketers in new product development, marketing management and advertising communications.

This study has provided an analysis into the symbolic meanings of a brand of sustainable products. Recognising these symbolic meanings and reflecting them in brand and product attributes would be a potential means of motivating consumer responses. From a product development perspective, this could mean attempting to incorporate these symbolic meanings in the products or the products' functionality. As it has been noted that people drive to consume products is in part because of what they represent, reflecting the symbolic meanings could mean more people choose to consume sustainable products over non-sustainable products. For example, an advertising campaign could show that the product means caring for the family and that using the product shows being a good mother.

An important finding of this study is that the meanings of sustainability were not well noted or understood in the dialogue of participants. Instead, more generalised notions of environmentalism and virtue were emergent in the study. This suggests that sustainability is not always a key motivator of purchasing these products. Instead, a multitude of other symbolic meanings compel people to choose sustainable products. An implication of this study is that consumer education of greater information provision around sustainability is necessary if this is intended to be a motivator of a cultural shift in values of consumption. Knowledge may also be useful for consumers who are already engaging in sustainable consumer products as the findings of this study suggest there is potential to grow their consumption of sustainable products. Education could be achieved through social marketing that utilises the identified symbolic meanings to encourage consumption of sustainable products.

In order for communications to be effective, meanings must be shared by members of the culture at some basic level (Blumer, 1969; McCracken, 1986). Marketers need to have a more thorough understanding of consumers and the meaning of products in
order to improve their strategic decisions, such as target market and product positioning (Keller, 1993). Current research suggests that marketing communications for sustainable products are not being exploited to its potential (Pickett-Baker & Ozaki, 2008). Using the symbolic meanings identified in this study in new advertising communications would help consumers identify the products, which can help them create their self-image. After all, effective advertising is those that reflect consumer perceptions and expectations faithfully (Domzal & Kernan, 1992). As illustrated in the findings, consumers can gain a sense of satisfaction through acquiring self-images of being virtuous, responsible, and contributing members of society. Communicating this in advertising communication or social marketing could encourage greater consumption levels of sustainable products.

### 5.5 Limitations

While this study has contributed to knowledge around sustainable products and their symbolic meanings, it is necessary to address some potential limitations of the approach taken.

This study used McCracken's (1986) model of symbolic meaning transfer as a framework for investigating the symbolic meaning of a brand of sustainable products. The focus of the research laid in the process of meaning transfer between product and consumer as illustrated in Section 3.2. It could be interpreted that the full use of the model may have helped to develop a fuller understanding of the symbolic meaning transfer process. The scope of this study was limited due to temporal limitations.

A potential limitation of the research approach was the focus on a single brand of sustainable consumer product. A possibility is that this focus may have influenced participants by implying that Ecostore was the "optimal" choice. To address the possibility of this limitation, the interviewer ensured that participants were advised that the focus on Ecostore was only to guide the questioning of the interview. The interviewer was clear to assert that Ecostore was not seen as necessarily being a better choice, nor that any brand was any worse.

The selection of the Ecostore brand may have influenced participant's discourse, as they considered Ecostore in multiple senses of brand, company, manufacturer and
As there were multiple interpretations of who exactly Ecostore was, the intended focus on the products in sustainable consumption could possibly have been compromised. However, this study contends that considerations of Ecostore in multiple senses are only complementary to the findings of the study. In using the model of symbolic meaning transfer (1986) as a lens of interpretation, analysis was grounded on the interaction between product and consumer. These actions would inevitably focus on Ecostore as a product. Questions in the in-depth interview related to the products only. The products themselves were used as props in the in-depth interviews to invoke participants' memories. Thoughts on Ecostore as a store or company would only add to the findings or future research by highlighting where symbolic meaning may have been sourced. This also gives clear grounds for future research to explore.

A potential methodological limitation is due to the interview technique used. This was the first occurrence of the researcher conducting interviews and with a greater level of experience a more focused probing or questioning may have emerged. There were some instances in which participants may not have elaborated on their experiences fully. However, it was felt that the interviews were completed to a sufficient standard. The quality of the interview was supported through the use of indicative questions as part of the interview guide. As outlined in Section 3.6.2 and Section 3.6.3 the interviews were developed with the research supervisor and pre-tested before taking place. Furthermore, the full transcripts are provided for review in Appendix 7.7.

In some cases, participants were unable to recall some of their earlier consumption experiences in the interviews. Some experiences occurred years ago and may not have been salient in the mind of the consumer. This has been defined as memory recall bias (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Use of a visual aid, the product packaging, did help participants to recall more recent experiences and the researcher did provide allowance for participants to consider their thoughts before responding. In addressing this potential limitation, the study focused mainly on statements and sentiments in which the participant spoke with certainty. Based on the research objective and research approach it was felt that accounts provided were of sufficient accuracy. In any case, it was not expected that participants would provide extensive, data-rich accounts of their consumption experiences. Furthermore, in holding a constructivist perspective
this is not seen as an issue, as all knowledge is created through the interaction between researcher and participant.

The participants in this study were selected based on their past usage of Ecostore products. As explained in Section 3.6.4, this was necessary as the model of symbolic meaning transfer (1986) sees symbolic meanings as understandable only in the process of transfer, which is achieved through actual consumption. As such, the scope of this study cannot identify anything that happens with an Ecostore-consumer from a non-Ecostore consumer, because the latter is excluded from data collection. Instead, the value of the research lies in understanding the product and act of consumption, rather than the type of consumer. The findings of this study have illustrated what any consumer may gain symbolically from using sustainable products, rather than only certain types of consumers. As explained in Section 2.2.2, this study avoided a focus on consumers, as ultimately, it would have been likely that any findings would be contradicted by future studies.

5.6 Directions for Future Research

This study has provided a starting point for extending consumer behaviour research into the area of sustainable consumption. Due to the scope of this study there remain a multitude of areas that future research could examine.

This study used the model of symbolic meaning transfer (1986) as a lens of interpretation for investigating the symbolic meanings of a brand of sustainable products. As noted in Section 3.2, the focus has been on the rituals of the consumer as an instrument of meaning transfer from consumer product to the individual’s self-image. As discussed in Section 2.3.2 the branding of products is an important source of symbolic meaning. However, it was outside the scope of this research to explore the process of branding and other instruments of meaning transfer from cultural world to product. The presence of these instruments is evident in the findings of the study. The process of products acquiring symbolic meaning is an equally important consideration of the wider symbolic meaning transfer process. This is an area that merits attention as it has potential for providing brands and marketers better management and utilisation of the symbolic meanings seen in their products. This may result in increased consumption of sustainable products.
Other instruments such as packaging, sponsorship and advertising also instil symbolic meanings unto brands and their products\(^\text{16}\). Future research could examine the full process of how the symbolic meanings identified in this study have come to be acquired by products. For example, research exploring sustainability labelling (e.g. de Boer, 2003) has yet to account for the symbolic value of sustainable products. This suggests that producer-generated instruments of meaning transfer are an area that still remains unexplored in sustainable consumption. The findings of this study suggest there is potentially much value in exploring the packaging and semiotics of sustainable products. There were multiple references to the packaging and product design throughout all participants’ transcripts. This suggests that these were potentially influences on the symbolic meaning that participants saw in Ecostore products. Furthermore, some participants claimed some of their purchase decision behaviour was guided by the packaging of the product.

Future research could attempt to replicate the approach of this study into other industries and product categories. Under the typology of Fournier (1991, p739), the household cleaning and body care products investigated in this study are categorised as "objects of utility". The significance of such objects is tied to it characteristic attributes and benefits and the inherent need it provides (Fournier, 1991, p736). The FMCG category could be considered low-involvement and low-investment compared to the category of a motor vehicle. Previous studies have indicated that high involvement purchases have more value placed on environmental performance over frequently purchased products (Sriram & Forman, 1993). For products, where the price parity is greater, such as for a hybrid car, there may be other symbolic meanings in a consumer’s decision to purchase. Previous research in sustainable consumption has identified that the same consumer will not use the same information sources or decision-making criteria across different product sectors (McDonald, et al., 2009). As the lifetime of these products is greater than that of products in the FMCG category, the ritual actions may also differ in their significance. Comparing these with the symbolic meanings found in this particular study may be illuminating to the wider process of symbolic meaning transfer and the symbolic meanings of sustainable products as a whole.

\(^{16}\) See Tharp and Scott (1990) for an overview of the role of marketing processes in creating symbolic meaning.
A direction for future research that would concretely extend the notion of symbolic value from this study is in examining the practice of purely symbolic consumption. One example that pertains to sustainability is the practice of airline carbon offsetting. Consumers voluntarily purchase carbon credits for their flights, seeing no instantaneous or tangible benefit. As this consumption has no utility, the entirety of its value would lie in its symbolic meanings and symbolic function. This makes this type of consumption extremely valuable to explore because the function of facilitating self-image is the only immediately visible motivator of such voluntary behaviour. Findings from this practice could certainly further accentuate the belief that the symbolic meanings and image construction function of sustainable products are key influencers in the decision to consume them over non-sustainable products.

Another direction for future research is adopting another framework and applying it to the area of symbolic meaning for sustainable products. One possibility is the model of Kozinets' (2001) that was referred to in Section 2.5.3. His model is based on the firm belief that passionate fans of a certain phenomena are capable of becoming meaning creators. Using a more focussed sample of participants, such as only those who frequented the retail store or are involved in environmental groups may deliver valuable findings. It may emerger that regular purchasers are more participative in creating the symbolic meanings from the products they consume. The groups they belong to may have collective values that emphasise these symbolic meanings. As discussed in Section 5.2.5 these collective values may be influential on the consumption behaviour of individuals.
5.7 Concluding Statement

This study is the first to explore the symbolic meaning behind sustainable products. It addresses a gap in current knowledge towards sustainable consumption. Previous research has focused on the purchase decision without recognising the symbolic qualities of sustainable consumption practices. Sustainable products have important symbolic meanings that have not yet been considered. Consumers see symbolic meanings that they desire in the creation of their self-image. This study has used the model of symbolic meaning transfer (1986) to help identify the symbolic meanings in a brand of sustainable products through its consumption rituals.

This study has achieved its research objectives of exploring the symbolic meanings of sustainable products and movement of this meaning to the consumer's self-image. The findings of this study suggest that individuals see a number of symbolic meanings in Ecostore-branded products. These meanings pertain to the areas of virtue, personal and collective values, health and trust. These symbolic meanings are important to consumers. They seek these symbolic meanings to build a self-image that reflects that they are virtuous, responsible and contributing individuals. They gain satisfaction from the creation of this self-image. Consumption rituals enable this movement from product’s symbolic meaning to consumer's self image. Consumers also use sustainable products to express their personal and collective values. The findings of this study have important implications for sustainability. Providing an understanding of the symbolic value in consumption informs attempts to initiate a cultural shift in consumer values towards practices of consumption.

Despite the noted limitations of the study, the nature of this research was exploratory and builds on the growing knowledge in this field. As outlined in Section 5.7, the study could be extended in future research to give a fuller understanding of how symbolic meanings may come to be acquired by products. It is hoped that such understanding will lead to solutions that ultimately address the sustainability and environmental issues that society faces today.
6 Reference List


References


References


References


References


References


doi:10.1177/1470593106061261


# 7 Appendices

## 7.1 Ecostore Products

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Products</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen</td>
<td>Spray Cleaner, Auto Dishwash Powder, Dishwasher Tablets, Dishwash Liquid, Rinse Aid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laundry</td>
<td>Laundry Powder, Laundry Liquid, Wool &amp; Delicates Wash, Fabric Softener, Oxygen Whitener</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bathroom</td>
<td>Handwash, Soap, Bodywash, Shampoo, Conditioner, Bubble bath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaning</td>
<td>Cream Cleanser, Shower Cleaner, Toilet Cleaner, Glass Cleaner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby</td>
<td>Baby Soap, Baby Nappy Balm, Baby Body Wash, Baby Shampoo, Baby Sleepytime Bath, Baby Moisturiser, Baby Powder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Insect Repellent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.2 Ecostore Background

our story so far

Health and wellbeing are at the forefront of product development. We love hearing from people whose eczema or allergy symptoms have improved or disappeared all together just by switching to ecostore. And we never compromise on performance either; our plant and mineral based cleaning products are independently tested to work alongside leading conventional brands. Our body and baby care ranges are gentle on your skin, are beautiful to use and they smell great too!

We are a leading New Zealand manufacturer wholesale distributor and retailer of sustainable household and body care products. We promote the use of safer, healthier plant and mineral based products with no unnecessary chemicals. Our comprehensive range currently consists of more than 100 products, almost all of which are manufactured in New Zealand to the latest environmental and sustainability standards in our own ISO14001, Diamond Enviromark Factory.

A different approach to business

ecostore was founded in 1993 by Malcolm and Melanie Rands from their home in an eco village in New Zealand. Their dream was ambitious - to create a healthier more sustainable world. One of the ways they found to do this was to set up a business providing everyday household products that could help people be healthier and ‘green up’ at home. The second way was by setting up the Fairground Foundation. Fairground is a charitable organisation that is funded by ecostore profits to promote sustainability through ‘on-the-ground’ action.

Small beginnings

ecostore started out as a mail order business selling eco friendly products to a small group of dedicated greenies and organic gardeners - many of whom have remained loyal customers to this day. Within four years they had earned a reputation for our genuine, eco friendly and high quality products within a wider community. ecostore
quickly outgrew its location in the Rands’ basement and was moved to Auckland where most of their customers lived.

Where we are at now

Eighteen years on our products are made in our own ISO14001, Diamond Enviromark accredited manufacturing plant. In 2003 we launched our cleaning range into supermarkets throughout New Zealand and we are exporting to Australia, United States, Hong Kong, Japan and Korea.

Safer ingredients

* We use plant and mineral based ingredients to create safer, healthier products that do the job just as effectively as the petrochemical based ones.
* We practise the precautionary approach - if there is any doubt about the safety of an ingredient for the environment or for people's health we will look for a safer alternative.

Outstanding performance

* We evaluate whether each product meets our performance criteria - to be comparable, if not better than the market leading conventional brand.
* All ecostore products are tested by 3rd party laboratories.

Value for money

* Our plant and mineral based ingredients are more expensive than petrochemical ones but we manage to keep our prices down by economically concentrating our formulations.
* Each of the ingredients we use is functional; we don't add fillers to give the perception of better value.
* Cost per use is significantly less than many other supermarket brands.

Source: www.ecostore.co.nz
7.3 Interview Guide

Pre-Session

- Set up appropriate seating
- Set up recorder, test and check that tapes are labelled
- Test recorder is functional
- Bring along range of products in case participant does not bring
- Set up refreshments
- Set out participant information sheets and consent forms

Session Intro Phase

- Introduce, verablise information on participant information sheet and consent forms
- Allow opportunity for participant(s) to review and ask any questions
- Ask participant(s) to review and sign consent forms
- Explain structure of the session
- My research explores the cultural meaning of sustainable consumer goods and how this goes through a process of transfer from manufacturer to consumer. Today you’ve brought in an Ecostore product that you use and the questions I will ask today will relate to how you use it in your everyday life. I would like to know what you think of the product, and the brand.

Session Body Phase: Indicative semi-structured in-depth interview guideline

*Introductory*

Just to start, could you tell me a little about yourself- such as your set-up at home, background and what you like to do in your spare time
What is your view on sustainability?
What do you think is meant by it?
What “greening” have you done at home?
**Brand**

Do you recall your first instance with an Ecostore brand?

So when you think of the Ecostore brand, and its products, what kinds of things come to mind?

How do other brands or products differ? (e.g. Price and quality)

Can you recall your last instance of Ecostore, whether it be an advertisement, website, supermarket or other? (opinion of this)

Could you tell me which types of Ecostore products you typically use and the reasoning behind this?

Did you make a switch from other brand? (reasons)

**Product Possession**

Could you please walk me through a typical time when you purchase the product you've brought with you today?

Was this instead of another product?

What were the reasons for the purchase?

What did you hope to gain from using the products?

What frequency do you buy it?

Could you just go over a typical time when you take the product home?

**Product Usage**

Could you describe the last time you used the product, if you can recall?

Was there any specific difference in how you might of used it, compared to your normal products?

How often do you use it?

Did it meet your expectations of its product performance? Did you notice any difference between this and the other brands you previously used?

What did (will) you do when you ran (run) out of product?

Did you recall what you did with the empty packet?

Did you repurchase the product?

**Product Re-supply**

And what did you do when you ran out of the product?
Do you recall what you did with the product? Does this differ from what you might do with another brand?

**Comparison**

How does the Ecostore brand and products compare with the others in the marketplace?
What would you say are the competing products or brands for Ecostore?

**Exchange**

Do you recommend Ecostore to any of your family or friends?
Are these people you would normally consider to be “greenies”?
Have you ever gifted or shared the product with others?
Has green products in general, ever came up in conversation at home or at work?

**Session Close Phase**

- Announce end of session
- Opportunity for further questions on research
- Ask if they would like a copy of findings (obtain contact)
- Reiterate that they may still withdraw, supply contact details

Thank them for their time

Session end
7.4 Participant Information Sheet

Date Produced: 24 August 2010

Project Title
The movement of cultural meanings in sustainable consumer goods

An Invitation

My name is Samuel Soo. I am a student at Auckland University of Technology enrolled for a Master of Business in the Faculty of Business and Law.

I invite you to participate in my research and I would appreciate any assistance you can offer me. As part of my research dissertation I am conducting research examining the meanings that are associated with sustainable consumer goods. Your participation in this research is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time prior to the completion of data collection.

What is the purpose of this research?

This research will examine how cultural meanings are created and moved at different stages of purchase and use. It will do this by examining consumer experiences with sustainable consumer goods. The resulting dissertation will go towards partial completion of my Master of Business degree. There may be further publications resulting from the findings in the form of a book, conference presentation or journal article.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You were identified as you were seen shopping at the Ecostore. You are being invited to participate in this research as it is particularly looking to people who are current and active users of Ecostore’s products as I wish to explore the personal experiences and thoughts of this group on the products.

What will happen in this research?

You are being asked to attend an interview that will be approximately one hour in length. I would ask if you could please bring an Ecostore product you use (of your choosing), as the questions asked relate to your views and use of a particular Ecostore product (the product will be used only to guide the conversation). It will be informal and conducted in a public venue of your choice. It will be recorded by audiotape, but this will only happen with your consent.

What are the benefits?

The research will benefit knowledge in this field by furthering understanding of consumption practices and how products carry cultural meanings. In specifically exploring sustainable products, it may lead to identification of the cultural meanings necessary to encourage shifts towards more sustainable consumption patterns. I wish to understand what we can do to encourage the use of sustainable products.

What are the risks?
The risks are envisaged to be low. Some questions will relate to your personal use of Ecostore products and this you may uncomfortable in disclosing personal habits. To alleviate this risk, you always have the option to pass a question. I will remind you of this during the interview as well.

**How will my privacy be protected?**

Your name will not be used in any of the documentation or in the research paper. The original recordings will be kept in a secure location and destroyed after a time period of six years.

**What are the costs of participating in this research?**

This research should take up no more than 1 hour of your time.

**What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?**

I would appreciate if you could reply to this letter within 1 week of receiving so that I am able to organise necessary travel arrangements to conduct the interview. Please be aware that you are in no way obligated to participate and can withdraw from the research at any time until 1 month after the interview by getting in contact with me.

**How do I agree to participate in this research?**

If you agree to participate in this research please contact me and I will be in touch to coordinate an appropriate time to conduct the interview. You will need to complete a consent form, which is also attached. I will collect this form from you at the interview.

**Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?**

If you would like to receive a summary of the findings and implications of the study I would be happy to send this when it is completed. You may request this by ticking the box on the consent form or alternatively, contacting me at the details below, at any stage of the research.

**What do I do if I have concerns about this research?**

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Dr Ann-Marie Kennedy, ann-marie.kennedy@aut.ac.nz, 09 921 9999 ext 5825.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTEC, Madeline Banda, madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz, 921 9999 ext 8044.

**Whom do I contact for further information about this research?**

Researcher Contact Details:  
*Samuel Soo*

Ggb5051@aut.ac.nz

Project Supervisor Contact Details:  
*Dr Ann-Marie Kennedy*

Ann-marie.kennedy@aut.ac.nz

09 921 9999 ext 5825

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 30 August 2010, AUTEC Reference number 10/173
7.5 Consent Form

Project title: The movement of cultural meaning in sustainable consumer goods

Project Supervisor: Dr Ann-Marie Kennedy

Researcher: Samuel Soo

☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 24 August 2010.

☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.

☐ I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.

☐ I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.

☐ If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant information including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.

☐ I agree to take part in this research.

☐ I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research: Yes ☐ No ☐

Participant’s signature: ..........................................................………………………………………

Participant’s name: ..........................................................………………………………………………...

Participant’s Contact Details (if appropriate):
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................

Date: Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 30 August 2010

AUTEC Reference number 10/173

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.
## 7.6 Ecostore Rituals

Summary of rituals identified:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ritual Type</th>
<th>Ritual Action</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Possession</strong></td>
<td>Purchase</td>
<td>Buying the product at a supermarket</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Display</td>
<td>Making the product visible in the laundry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Storage</td>
<td>Putting away the product in cupboards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personalisation</td>
<td>Storing the product in another container</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>Thinking about the product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>Talking about the product with friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comparison</td>
<td>Comparing products at the supermarket</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grooming</strong></td>
<td>Usage</td>
<td>Washing laundry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maintenance</td>
<td>Refilling product in container</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exchange</strong></td>
<td>Gifting</td>
<td>Giving the product to a friend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recommendation</td>
<td>Telling a friend to trial the product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Divestment</strong></td>
<td>Cleaning</td>
<td>Rinsing out the container before disposal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disposal</td>
<td>Recycling the packaging</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.7 In-depth Interview Transcripts

Interview: Brian

Interview: Lauren

Interview: Karen

Interview: David

Interview: Sylvia

Interview: Tanya

Interview: Jennifer
Interview: Brian

I: So if you could you walk me through a typical time purchase an Ecostore product?

P: Um

I: So like at a supermarket

P: I’m not a constant user of their product

I: So, is there a particular time that you first bought it?

P: I think I bought it for woollens, do they have a woollens wash?

I: I’m not too sure of that

P: Sounds familiar. But yeah it just looked all right, compared to the alternatives

I: How was it different to the alternatives, in your opinion?

P: It’s a New Zealand brand, I guess. The connotations that I had it would seem to be a lot more mild anyway, so I thought oh yeah

I: Why did it seem a bit more mild?

P: Presumably, because the product is being natural

I: So you definitely saw a natural fit for the...

P: Yeah, yeah it was just one of the things that pushed me towards it, I mean, I like didn’t buy it specifically, because I don’t go out of my way to buy it

I: So did you actually need it?
P: I did need it then. I had actually gone down to buy a woollen wash. I had something that
said must be hand washed with woollen thing and I go and its supposed to be mild yeah, and
putting it through the washing machine and wash it so I was like yeah and it sorted like
added up to like, the price was alright

I: So do you remember what you did at the supermarket? Like how did you approach the...

P: Well listen, this is how I, I think this is how I approached it. I sorted like wandered there, I
didn’t have any knowledge of what ones there were in the first place so I sorta looked at all
the alternatives and then chose that one

I: So what kind of things did you look at?

P: Price was one of them, I don’t know apart from that, looking at the packaging

I: Was it a bit more expensive that the other ones?

P: Can’t remember

I: So when you went home, do you remember how you stored it and then how you went
about using it?

P: Well, I had to use it immediately, which is why I bought it, I just used it and rinsed it and
the put it back with the rest of the clothes I was cleaning

I: So do you remember how you used it? Did you take it out of the box and...

P: I looked at the instructions, and yeah followed the instructions and used it. I have actually
bought the washing powders as well. I mean I just used it as like the other ones. I mean I
read the instructions as I hadn’t used the product before and I just wondered, being an
Ecostore product would I have to use this differently? How much am I supposed to use
compared to [others]?

I: Did you end up using it differently?
P: Nah, just scoop it out of the thing and put it into the washing machine and turn on the washing machine

I: And how well did it do against how well you would think it would do?

P: Well, it, well my clothes were clean and they didn’t have smell coming out, for that it did an all right job. It didn’t do a bad job.

I: So have you used up all the product?

P: Ah yeah, I’ve used up all the product.

I: And did you buy it again?

P: Well, I've changed where I've lived since then, and I don't buy this stuff anymore

I: Oh, how would that, where you live, impact on what you bought?

P: Well, where I was, I was living with a flatmate, who used to buy it and bought some and I was buying for myself and now I'm not really the main purchaser and they sort of, and when I've gone to do shopping for them because there regular like you get the other stuff, I sorta got the other stuff for them.

I: So you were saying you had a friend who purchased Ecostore products? Do you remember what kind of reasons they had for purchasing it?

P: He bought it because he had skin allergies or something, he had sensitive skin and he had been like to dermatologists, and his mum was like a nurse and all this kinda stuff. And I think she told him that this would be better off for him than other products

I: And it was when he used it?

P: Yeah, he kept using it, for like two years, so presumably it was yeah

I: I guess that was something you may never talk about or...
I: Do you remember what he kinda said?
P: Well, it comes up with those motivations came up and yeah.
I: Like how you asked him why the product and he said its because of my sensitive skin?
P: Yeah. So I think previously I just bought all the product so like whatever Fab or Surf or whatever. So I always had Surf there. He must of, either his mum must of bought it for him, or he bought it but then he came back one day and it was like up there and you know, what's up with that? And that's when it comes out
I: So it seems he definitely took the advice of his mum and...
P: Yeah, and his dermatologist. He was, had problems and it wasn't just like, you know that doesn't feel nice on my skin, because he reacts and he like...
I: So when you ran out, so you've finished the product now?
P: Yeah it all got used up
I: And did you remember what you did with the packaging or...
P: Oh, I recycle like a maniac anyway
I: So was just like one more thing to recycle?
P: Yeah, I didn't recycle in [a] particular way. I just chucked it into the blue bin
I: Yup. So what other Ecostore products do you use?
P: I have used the dishwasher liquid as well
I: And do you see much difference? Or similarities between Ecostore products against...

P: I mean's it's certainly a thicker, sort of richer type of liquid compared to some of the other ones, the cheaper ones. So you can use less, and yeah

I: So in terms of, do you keep buying them, or do you just try a couple?

P: I try whatever's on sale or whatever happens to be cheap. If it's on sale I'll give it a crack. See if it can do good things

I: How do you try different Ecostore products?

P: I haven't tried many of the other ones. Just the cleaning type ones.

I: Any particular reason for that?

P: I mean I'm not, I mean I don't really see them like feel a great drive to use them over other ones cause I don't really think about after I've used it, I mean if its going down the drain and being friendlier you know, to the waste water centre

I: Do you feel that they are better than other ones?

P: I presume they are [laughs] I haven't done any research. But I certainly feel that they are

I: In terms of environmental

P: Yeah. Being plant-based, or whatever. I definitely have the image that they are

I: So you said the dishwasher one was a bit thicker. So did you use it any differently?

P: Compared to some of the other ones, the one with a dolphin on it. That's really thin. I need to use tonnes of that. Spray it everywhere. But, I sort of used the same as I would a thicker one
I: So you didn’t think it made a difference?

P: I don’t think so. No not really

I: So you’ve also used the laundry powder. What’s your take on that?

P: It seemed effective. Like I mean, I dunno, it seemed alright. There’s definitely, I dunno it wasn’t fragranced or anything?

I: I think kinda of, looks similar to others. Possibly just packaged differently?

P: Yeah, I mean it was alright yeah. I find the bag quite annoying, having to open and close that. To be honest, I mean, that’s one thing I remember about, because I have to open it up and then take this thing off it and then put my hand there. And then if your hands wet it gets stuck on and then that was. I remember that was [clicks finger] for me

I: But it wasn’t the tipping [point] that you wouldn’t [buy it]

P: No, no. It was just annoying. I mean, you know

I: Could you appreciate that you couldn’t spill it or?

P: Well, I mean my laundry environment isn’t really

I: So have you ever seen Ecostore ads or

P: Um, I think I have. I’ve been to their website

I: Or even of their packaging. What do you make of it?

P: It’s pretty simple. Cause they’re trying to be...

I: So what would you say they are trying to say? What is the particular way of packaging they have?
P: Well its simple. There's not a lot of excess in the labelling. Its clean white packet, it's not fancy like the other ones. Not like a bright green liquid like the other ones

I: Bright green means?

P: It's not really a natural colour is it [laughs]. It's like the colour of radioactive waste. Oh yeah, its certainly one of the logo and pictures of kids, caring about your kids and caring about the environment. Plain cardboard packaging. Not glossy

I: So do you kind of take in the stuff they have on the packaging?

P: Yeah, well I don’t really have much else to judge it by, to be honest

I: So did you look or take more notice of it when you were buying it?

P: Oh yeah, definitely take it in; take notice. I sort of have to read things better because like I definitely read the instructions a lot more than I would have with the others and stuff because I go like 'aww', you know its supposedly different, so I better make sure

I: Like how it's a bit more natural?

P: Yeah. Pretty much. It seems like a different product than the other ones. I better check to out just to make sure it works properly

I: So do you find out that it pretty much ends the same or...

P: In terms of the outcomes, it still does its job well. Like I haven't found it wanting or putting it on like it sucks it doesn't actually clean anything

I: So an okay or a good job?

P: It does a good job. It does everything I ask it to do. I haven't really read any of the sustainable on there

I: So I guess that wasn't one of the reasons you brought...
P: Um it was, I mean it’s a good thing. I definitely value that sort of thing. Big recycler and try
not to be wasteful. And generally, but it would be one of the things that add up to the
purchase. I mean I wouldn't be like, I'm gonna get that, because its gonna take a lot more
than that.

I: So you consider yourself quite green?

P: Fairly. I mean certainly greener than the average. Do the whole compost thing and I
[have] pots for recycling and that sort stuff

I: So other stuff, in terms of what you buy and use. Would you consider yourself quite green
in that way?

P: [laughs] Probably not that much to be honest. I mean it’s definitely a consideration. But I
don't like, go out there to buy something

I: But you do things that are...

P: Yeah, and its definitely part of my equation when it comes to looking at stuff.

I: But not the determining factor?

P: If two things being equal, it would be the determining factor. But I mean, I'm not going to
buy that over something else if the price is a lot better.

I: Cool. So have you ever gifted or shared an Ecostore product to anyone else?

P: I haven't, haven't. I have considered it. I dunno. To someone who might value that sort of
thing

I: Or have you recommended it?

P: I haven't recommended it.
I: Is that kinda because you can't think of anyone in particular or...

P: I don't recommend a lot of things to be honest. I mean, yeah like that sustainable stuff I never really thought of the other ones not being really sustainable. Like, I mean like how do you make something like dishwashing liquid sustainability? I don't know. Like do you cut down a tree and put it into the ground?

I: So, if someone like shouted to you sustainability, what kind of things would you think?

P: Yeah, I dunno. If I was thinking about detergents, I know some detergents and stuff are made out of oil and petrochemical stuff so I don't think that's very sustainable. Sustainable things, the word is quite definitive, like plants like being replanted and stuff out of water and like good for the environment

I: So do you also think of things we buy? How does that factor into sustainability?

P: Um, plastic stuff is obviously not very good. Uh, I mean, I look at packaging that is recyclable and quite important

I: So do you shy away from things that are made of plastic or...

P: If possible, if like. I never take plastic bags or stuff. If I can avoid it, I'll definitely avoid it. And um like, I don't like products that have tonnes of plastic that can't be recycled. Cause lots of packaging stuff can't be recycled.

I: That's something you think about when you're deciding which one to buy?

P: Yeah, sometimes it is yeah. If I have a choice.

I: Do you have a particular kind of example? Any example, of just when something may have had too much packaging?

P: Oh, well sometimes I order stuff from overseas. And then it comes with tonnes of polystyrene. You can't recycle polystyrene at all really. You just go oh, that's pretty bad.
I: But if wouldn’t put you off ordering?

P: It certainly concerns me at the time. And I still think about it. I still think about all the stuff that comes in a big as box with a whole lot of polystyrene. I feel bad; I do feel bad about that.

Don’t know if they can make some kind of plant-based polystyrene.

I: So do you end up just throwing that into the garbage?

P: I mean, how do you recycle polystyrene? It’s really expensive to recycle. You gotta take it to a special place.

I: And you don’t really wanna pay for that do you?

P: Nah nah, and I don’t even know where that place is. Because one of my mates, he’s got a store and he was trying to get rid of a lot of polystyrene and stuff and he was like this place is going to cost tonnes

I: Did he end up doing it?

P: No he didn’t. For like a business he just can’t afford to recycle it as he has a lot of cold store stuff and then to get rid of it, he just can’t afford to do it. So he was pretty gutted about that. But yeah, I mean packaging is a concern like certainly stuff, which has got a lot of packaging, I think poorly of it. Depends what it was if I had alternatives, yeah, I would definitely choose those. But you know, sometimes if I want something bad enough, I go [sighs] I feel bad.

I: So did you think Ecostore has less packaging?

P: Yeah, I’d say that. I mean I don’t know how much packaging you can really save on that, on a box like that or that. But they’ve got convenient shapes that are pretty clean and they are recyclable

I: So there aren’t any Ecostore products that you always use? You’re just occasional?

P: Uh, yeah just occasional
I: So that's only when...

P: When I have to buy stuff usually I don't do the shopping and when I do, I really just get the refills for like the dishwashing liquid. Like once you've already got the package you don't want to be wasteful you don't want to buy another bottle. You buy the little baby refill things as well

I: So like going into a phase of using the refill ones?

P: Yeah, yeah I've been using them like any other product you usually buy and you keep buying that and why are you gonna change?

I: So usually when it does change its because of changes in your own life or?

P: or if the bottle is becoming crappy [laughs] that you gotta get a new one. Yeah, but even so those are all recyclable. Those are sort of pushing the recyclable value by saying buy this bag to save you buying another bottle. Ah, I feel bad I should be buying it now [laughs]. I saw their store in Freeman's Bay you know

I: Oh, have you ever been in there?

P: I used to walk past it, I'd look in and everything

I: So like look in the store or look into the store?

P: Uuh, I looked into the store. And I've been into their website just to look at their products and stuff

I: Oh, so what was your reason for looking into their website, were you interested or?

P: Um yeah, I was interested yeah. I've seen the brand and I've walked past the store a lot. So I wondered what they were about. I think at the time I had certain things; I can't remember what they were now that I was interested in
I: So what kind of impression did you get from their website?

P: Oh it was alright yeah. It was just really for information and see what they are. Uh, I didn’t look into the sustainability side of things

I: So you don’t remember what the information you were looking for was?

P: Nah, it was about two years ago. I wasn’t for looking anything specific at all. I think I was looking at some products in particular. No, I didn’t go there to find out about a product

I: Oh so you looked at something like two years ago?

P: Yeah, it was probably something like that

I: Uh, so has your impression of Ecostore changed at all?

P: Nah, it didn’t change

I: Or maybe looking at before you used it and after you used it?

P: Well, after I used it I sorta knew that it would perform the task, I mean like I sometimes you think that oh, because something is eco-friendly it might not have as much clout as something that is less natural, purely effective

I: So that was your pre-perception and then when you used it?

P: Yeah, yeah. That’s fair to say, I mean I wasn’t sure. I mean like anything, you’re not sure how something’s going to perform until you use it. But I found it to meet my expectations

I: So what do you make of green products in general?

P: I am for them [laughs]. I mean in general. I mean like, yeah. It’s not always enough to make me buy them. It depends on what the product is. I guess to some extent if it were a cosmetic or soap I would prefer a natural one
I: Yup, and what are kinda the reasons for that product?

P: I just don't know that you wanna be rubbing all kinds of unnatural stuff all over your skin

I: So just thinking about cleaning products, do you see those as being in close contact with the skin

P: Yeah, yeah.

I: So would like green household products be that important for that category?

P: I probably wouldn't buy it specifically because it was green. I don't really... I'm not really the cleaning purchaser but I buy natural shampoos and stuff like, boxes of shampoo because I prefer those. I don't really know why

I: Something like fewer chemicals on yourself?

P: I like the idea of it. I still use other shampoos and stuff

I: Ah, so you see green as being like natural and like?

P: Pretty much

I: But maybe not like less on the environment maybe?

P: I hadn't really put too much thought into where they're coming from like I mean, oh yeah that's right that other ones do say they, you know they aren't going to hurt the environment and go down the drain. They say they are I can't remember what it is. They're biodegradable

I: And its one of the factors that you...

P: Yeah. I don't know where it comes from but I know where it's going. I don't want to be putting poisonous things down the drain. Yeah, yeah, yeah I care about the ocean and stuff

I: Yeah, so in terms of the green things that you do, planning to change anything?
P: Well I catch a bus and stuff. I don’t like driving too much. And I prefer a smaller car which
doesn’t chew petrol or... I mean like I’m not really like an outwardly, sort of, but if I can
incorporate it easily into my routine without too much damage to my what I’m going about
then I’m, will do it. I can’t throw bottles into the rubbish bin. I can’t throw recycled paper in
rubbish bins. I have to carry it round until I find a recycle bin. That’s kind of the point. I don’t
know, in terms of buying things I don’t really think about it that much to be honest [laughs].

I: [laughs] so is this something that you’re going to think about more?

P: Like, I guess within, thinking about sustainable stuff I don’t really think the amount of
product I’m using is that massive, I don’t think it will make much of a difference

I: Like a small fish in a large ocean?

P: Yeah like that, it’s only just like a squirt or whatnot. I think landfill stuff, like I see how
much stuff I’m throwing away in the rubbish bin, I find that more concerning than like
where stuff comes from but don’t know

I: Yeah, so like more what you’re putting out then what you’re pulling in?

P: Yeah, yeah. So that’s probably a fair assessment

I: So what would be your impression of what you are putting out at the moment?

P: I definitely buy too much packaged crap and I think that’s definitely - and I buy lots of
stuff online and overseas so that

I: Uh, so do you feel a little guilty when you do that?

P: Oh yeah, I do, especially when they come in polystyrene. No there’s nothing really to
specify another options but if they could somehow have biodegradable polystyrene made
out of tree and fibres whatever

I: Oh, that’s not really a bad idea actually
P: I thought about trying to make it. Oh you know, try to develop it. 'Cause yeah, I wanna do that. Tough world.
Appendices

Interview: Lauren

I: So, if you’d just like to start by perhaps walking me through a typical time that you purchase an Ecostore product.

P: Okay. How do you mean, like a typical time, how would I...

I: So just like a typical time that you would, like perhaps take it off the shelf.

P: Describe a typical time that I would. Well usually I would be flat out, have my? Well actually to be honest, we very seldom go to the supermarket, I’m usually an online shopper so from that point of view I usually shop from an existing list and because I’ve made the choice to use Ecostore products in the past, whenever I do my shopping it uses products that I’ve selected before so I don’t normally go in and make a choice based on what I can see in front of me, because I’ve made that Ecostore choice in the past it doesn’t change because my choice isn’t challenged by seeing other products very often. If I think back to when I did go to a supermarket regularly before we had Robert [son], yeah I can imagine myself standing there and trying to choose between a Down to Earth liquid, I mean I will always choose an eco friendly product, is that true? Let me just think. No, it is. We’re quite committed as a household to a greener choice for my laundry liquids I would usually flick between Ecostore and B_E_E, [pauses] but usually I will go for Ecostore. What else would you like to know?

I: That’s great. So maybe if you tell me about the first time you made the Ecostore choice?

P: First time. Well actually I can. It based on, well I’ve got a particularly stylish friend, Sarah and she pretty much purchases everything on how fashionable they are, how well presented they are, and I remember standing there and talking to her about how nice the bottles are and how nice the colours are and how much Phillip [husband] would like them being in graphic design

I: So you definitely saw it as more than just a product?
P: Oh, I mean they're beautiful, look at their labels. They're all, I mean everything they that's not your typical dishwashing liquid is it. It's all pretty and image and they're very, very image focused aren't they?

I: Yes they are

P: Seriously. Its interesting as well, because one of the things I've really like about their products is because the packs are basic white, once you peel the label off you can reuse it without having any branding, they are actually really nice for reusing

I: So you reuse the packaging? Quite often?

P: Oh yeah, the whitener, the Napi-San equivalent. I use that for storing play dough that I make at home. It's a bottle with a handle, it's the dishwasher powder [container] I use that for paint. The dishwashing powder comes in a little plastic bottle with a little handle; it's a one litre. It's really good, I mean I make, being quite green overall I tend to make a lot of my own paints and things, and play dough and stuff like that, for our little boy

I: So you definitely try to use up the. You don't ever throw it away, you always...

P: Um, no. I do recycle, I do try not to but you go through, like I've been to the Ecostore store in Ponsonby and sort of looked at things like buying the bulk packs of laundry liquid to try to reduce the amount of packaging I'm using. But I found it frustrating that they don't reduce their price. So the bigger pack doesn't mean a lesser amount per litre. They just charge five times as much. So that was a bit of a...

I: So did that stop you from buying it?

P: Yeah, yeah cause at the end of the day, if I buy bulk I expect a discount. And Ecostore products are not cheap. I can do...

I: So, do you usually, where do you buy them usually?
I: So was that a one off or?

P: Well, I went to have a bit of a nosy, I’ve bought stuff from their website as well but to make a special trip, even I’d say ridiculous isn’t it, special trip to their website is too much of a hassle for me and I didn’t find that there was any particular benefit. I mean I get their emails, their regular newsletter, I don’t find that there’s any particular benefit in that either, I don’t, nothing that they send out prompts me to action

I: So you just buy their products?

P: I buy their products because they’re pretty. I don’t, how I, if I’m honest there are some products that I have gone to and then gone away from. I always buy their hand wash, I like that

I: So what were kind of the reasons that you went away from it?

P: The reasons that I went away from their products was, its kind of a tricky one. As well as the job that I do at the moment, I work as a post-natal home helper. So I go into other peoples houses and do anything from helping with their baby to cleaning or ironing or whatever, so I’m often in other peoples houses using the products that they use in their homes and very few people apparently, are as green as me. I really thought that it was a, I thought we had hit a really major cultural change and that really most of the people in my peer group were making a greener choice. This is not true. There is no end of nasty, caustic chemicals available out there and I found, that when I went into other people's houses and used the products, the hard out chemicals stuff that they used, I can clean a bathroom in half the time that it takes me to clean the bathroom to the same degree with eco friendly products. I found, I use reusable cloth nappies and there’s a certain amount of staining, certain amount of odour, that goes with using cloth nappies and there’s the traditional way of dealing with that and that is using lots and lots of bleach. Lots of whiteners. Lots of full on fragrances. Yummy washing powders and stuff. And because I’ve made a more eco friendly choice I struggle to keep my nappies as white, my bibs as white, and to eliminate odours and
stains as easily and their toilet cleaner doesn’t clean, that’s the thing, I really struggle with trying to get other people on board as well because eco friendly products do not do the same job as hard out chemicals ones do, as quickly or...

I: And this is based on your experience?

P: Yeah, so really, it’s not just the decision just to use an eco product; you’ve also got to make a commitment to put more time and effort into your daily chores. That’s why those chemicals came into use, because people couldn’t stand boiling their washing and throwing in blue stuff to make it look whiter.

I: So you found that you had to work a bit harder to use [them]?

P: Yeah. And I didn’t realise how much harder I was working until I started working at others people’s houses and used the products that I would not choose to use. So, since I’ve started doing that I’ve actually steered away from a few green products because I’m working and I have a toddler and as much as I would like to make those choices...

I: So it was really a decision of this is how much time that id like to...

P: Yeah and I really feel terrible about that. But I still use a couple of products. Well actually, I’ve changed to Down to Earth for my laundry liquid because it does a better job

I: Well that one’s reasonably eco-friendly, I think?

P: Well. That’s the thing. I don’t know. This one [Ecostore] tells me because its Ecostore and I don’t know actually whether it is actually a better product or whether it is greener but it tells me it is.

I: And we believe them?

P: And we believe them because they use nice black and white photos. And soft lemon and pale blue, and yeah, it feels right. They market very well to my demographic
I: When you first tried it, when you were interested in the packaging so you had a go at using it, do you remember if you used it in a particularly different way to your normal product?

P: Yup, it was the washing liquid. Because it was that whole conversation about which one bottle, because B_E_E has also, but not to direct at that, B_E_E was the main competitor in my mind because its quite similarly marketed, so and Sarah was saying I liked this one and just anyway...

I: So she liked it and she recommended it to you?

P: She didn't recommend it, it's funny, we were just talking about which one would look better in our laundry because our laundry at that time it was quite sort of on display and we were sharing a house at the time. So I think, I dunno. I definitely know we decided not to. Because B_E_E was, it might even just have been a nuisance to her because she liked the B_E_E liquid as well. Anyway, we made a choice not go with the B_E_E one; we made a choice to go with Ecostore. I found it frustrating that you don't get laundry liquid that comes in a similar bottle like this [holds up washing liquid] you can't tell how much you used, its really hard you don't know and it says, we don't have one here, use this much but what do I do, do I get a measuring cup or do I? So I started with the B_E_E one and with the Ecostore one I started putting this, what's this, 500mls so I would put marks on it with like a felt pen onto the side of the bottle so I knew if I squeezed out that it would come to that much

I: So you wanted to control how much you were using?

P: Absolutely. Because there's a, um. What is the point, if you're trying to be green and reduce your impact on the environment and you can't tell whether, I might be using twice as much as I need to so...

I: So you felt you had to keep it up?

P: Yeah um so, I'm not answering your question. I know I'm not answering your question.  Am I?

I: Yeah
Appendices

170 P: Yeah, I found it a pleasant product to use. It smells nice, looks nice, it mostly does what it
171 says. But I don't think it does as good a job
173
174 I: As the other ones?
175
176 P: Yeah, I guess that's the thing. You have to make a choice. Whether you really, I quite often
177 find myself standing there with my friends with their circle white bibs and thinking, look at
178 my baby's bib. It is filthy-looking but it works just as well
179
180 I: Have they ever pointed it out?
181
182 P: Oh yeah. They say to me, you know you can get that out with Napisan. Well, yeah do you
183 know that Napisan is destroying the planet; do you know that you're no better off for using
184 cloth nappies and Napisan than you are using disposable nappies? I really am committed to
185 the whole thing and I...
186
187 I: So how do you respond to them? Do you say Napisan destroys the environment?
188
189 P: [laughs] Well yeah, basically I, I understand that there's a trade-off and I'm not prepared
190 to, I would rather have a bib with a few stains on it than put more caustic chemicals into the
191 waterways. How about you? You're quite happy with that I think. Do you want your child to
192 be able to go fishing when he's a big boy? 'Cause there might not be any fish left.
193
194 I: Oh and do they take your advice?
195
196 P: Oh, no they get annoyed with me. Everyone thinks I'm just a complete big pain in the ass.
197 Because I make them challenge themselves. I make them question what they are doing. And
198 people don't like to be questioned on what they are doing because very often because
199 there's enough internal battles that's going on without adding to the mix.
200
201 I: So you recommended it or?
202
203 P: I recommend the, I love the, love the hand wash. Am totally committed to that. The one
204 thing that I always recommend is the baby sleepy time bath. We always use their baby
products quite extensively. I swear by it, sorta like a nice smelling, relaxing liquid that you
put into the bath water. So it's not like baby wash and yeah, I have really, really positive
associations with the smell of that. It smells like a new baby. And I, every person I know that
I've recommended it to have tried it. I have given that away as a present, as a gift for baby
shower stuff.

I: Um. So what was your thinking behind giving that as a gift?

P: I have seen so many babies develop rashes and skin irritations and nappy rash and all
sorts of stuff from people overusing, the baby does not get dirty, really. They don't get dirty.
They don't roll around, they don't walk around, they don't do anything except lie in their,
they get a bit pooey and stuff but you clean that up and they don't need to be washed and yet
I see these mums with their Johnson's highly fragranced hand washes and baby washes and
powders and creams and ointments and everything is so, so harsh really for a tiny baby's
skin. So my thinking is that if I can establish, is that by giving someone something that is
going to be better I can establish their habit of purchasing or using that product, before they
make their own decisions. So I can put it in their hands and make them use it by giving it as a
gift and that hopefully they will like it and keep using it instead of bathing their child in
chemicals. So yeah, the sleepy time bath is a big one for us and the baby wash. We still use
that, the soap we use that a bit, we really, we have used almost all of the Ecostore products,
shampoos, everything

I: So what was your thinking, that you like one of their products, you'll go for the rest?

P: Yeah. And plus they all look nice together

I: Oh, so you keep the bottles?

P: Oh, its interesting, its funny because the hand wash pump I actually put the Ecostore hand
wash in other brand's pumps, because although one of the things I like about the bottles is
that they are solid white and that the branding is easily removed and I can reuse them, I
found the hand wash pump to be much, too much like a brick it doesn't look that nice in a
bathroom

I: Not aesthetically pleasing?
Appendices

P: No, its not. I mean it is nice enough and the labels nice, but I prefer to use a clear container, I don't know why. Its just, its just a thing, its just looks too much like...

I: I'm the same. I like to know how much is coming out

P: Yeah, I just, it looks too much, that pump to me looks like something you'd find in a garage. It's really bad, it's probably not so much the solid white it's probably; I don't know it something about it I don't know

I: It's probably the shape

P: Yeah. Its tall, taller, something. So, it's really sad if people come into my bathroom and use my hand wash, mmm, that smells nice, that lovely orange you know, orange and patchouli smell but then they'll look at the container and go oh, that's some other brand and go out and buy another brand. Trying to, they like what I got but end up buying the wrong thing, thinking that's what it is

I: And you don't want them to think

P: Oh, I don't care. I don't really care. Its like just you know, its not a very good sales point for them, I suppose. I have actually gone to the trouble once, of checking, like actually going through ingredients on the baby time, sleepy time bath. And looking up every single ingredient on it

I: Oh, great

P: Oh to see what it was. Oh great, obsessive

I: Is it because you didn't trust them or?

P: Any marketing, I don't trust any labelling. I worked for Coca-Cola for quite a long time. I learned a lot about omission [laughs], misdirection, and omission on labelling which, and inference rather than say, I learned how, I learned a lot about how consumers are hoodwinked by being led to believe that something without the appropriate knowledge, I'm
Appendices

pretty funny about labels generally. I will check and check and read. I have to say, it took me
a really long time to check, a really really long time and at the end of it I discovered it was a
perfectly, safe really good product that had nothing in it that I felt uncomfortable about
putting on my child and that actually gave me a lot of confidence in the rest of the range. I
figure, yeah if you can actually go and check every thing on their label and its all true on one
product, odds are, given baby products tend to be more, I think people who make baby
products are more careful, but generally speaking I think that says that they have the same
level of integrity across their whole range. That might be naïve, but they’ve done their job by
convincing me of that

I: So with that uh, dreamtime baby bath, you gave that to someone?
P: I have, many times

I: So what are the kinds of people that you’ve given it to. New mums?
P: I love it. New mums, always. Always

I: Were they kind of green people?
P: No, I probably, none of my friends are green really. Hardly any, a couple. But only because
I shame them into it, really

I: But you thought that, you wanted them, you wanted them to have the idea that they didn’t
have to

P: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, I figure that I, you know, you just can’t, I have tried really hard to, I’m
quite pushy and I can be quite opinionated and once I get really excited about something I
do tend to want to share it with people whether it’s wanted to be shared or not. And that
really could be aggravating for other people so I’ve learned over the past few years people
do not like being pushed into being green, because as soon as they start looking into one
area of their life, they tend to look at their whole life and go, oh my god, I can’t have my big
car if I’m green and I can’t have my whatever so I’m just going to push it all out and have it,
and if I don’t do it all, so I’ve taken the approach now of just trying to help them make small
changes in isolated areas of their lives and hopefully my influence ultimately will rub off,
and you know I've got people composting, and I’ve got a couple people using, not Napisan, maybe not an Ecostore product but a more [environmentally friendly one].

I: Uh, so did you sell it in as an eco product?

P: No

I: Or one that was more safer?

P: Yeah

I: Because you didn't think the green angle would work?

P: No, yeah. But I mean, people know. I try to encourage people to do things, like I say, if you soak clothes in this, you can pour the water out into your garden and all that sorta stuff. You don't have to pour it down the drain, you can water your plants with [it]

I: Grey water?

P: yeah, its just kind of, it's a real, really difficult thing. To encourage people to do that. I really, I really thought we were much further along.

I: And you were a bit disappointed that...

P: I'm just amazed.

I: Is that kind of your thinking? That I’m sharing with other people that you wanted them to come aboard?

P: Yeah, yeah well I care a great deal about this planet. I think we've gone way beyond our point, I mean global warming, is irrelevant. It’s important, but irrelevant on a day-to-day basis. It doesn’t make any difference to what we’re doing. Litter does. Litters unpleasant. You walk outside to your front door and you will see litter everywhere. So you know, that’s the kinda thing that I think. Small changes. Every time I leave the house I pick up three pieces of litter. I don't try to pick it all up, but if everyone, that's the sorta change I try and
bring on to my friends, you don’t have to change your whole life. But if you could just use
this liquid than that’s great. I care a lot; probably having a child has made the biggest
difference to me. And probably, I think once my friends start having children, it’ll become
easier to influence them as they have a vested interest in the future. Before that all we were
doing was going out clubbing, I even met Phillip [husband] at a dance party. That’s all we
did, went out every weekend until Monday. But all that’s changed. We have more to think
about now. And it will, what we do now will influence how things are in ten to fifteen years.
It’s not about global warming, its pollution. It’s about keeping our waterways clean. You
know, we all [sighs]...
I: So having a child, because you’re not thinking about yourself, you’re thinking about
someone else now?
P: Yeah, I need to know that he will be able to take, its not about whether he gets to go
fishing or not, because he probably will, fishing is kind of my...
I: Metaphor for?
P: Yeah. We’d go down there and my dad sits there. We used to catch crabs and fish like little
Kahawai and stuff off Princes wharf that was only like thirty-five years ago, I doubt very
much that you’d catch anything down there now. A couple sailors maybe. But, so that’s like
him there. But there are other places I can take Robert to go fishing but in thirty-five years
its up to me to work out whether he can take his children to that place. And that place that
we take him is many miles out of town already.
I: Like a fear of missing out?
P: Yeah, basically. [inaudible] like being able to share experiences. And something as basic as
being able to go out without being a farmer or anything else and, go out and procure food for
yourself from the environment. It should be a basic right as a human being or as any living
thing. You should be able to, without going to the shop, be able to get safe food to eat from somewhere. Or without stealing from someone else. And I'm not sure that that will be available for him to do with his children. 'Cause it's not just about him, it's about the American Indians, the native Americans, you should always consider in everything you do, you should always consider how that is going to impact on the next seven generations. It's not just about your kids and their kids, seven generations isn't long, it's like 200 years. But we don't do that. We're lucky if we consider what's going on next week and honestly, if the Ecostore people, I don't know, I don't know how much of this is about the environment and how of this is about making money off a current trend. If it wasn't popular, would the Ecostore company owners be doing this or would they be doing something else, if it made them more money?

I: So what's your take on this? What do you think?

P: I'm, I'm, I'm a sceptic [laughs]. I have a personal, I have a very deep inquiring mind and I never take anything as read, and I like to yeah, and I really like to. I hope, I really hope, that they are doing it for the right reasons. I believe of what I've read of their company philosophy and the information on their website that what they do really are for genuine reasons.

I: So, that is something you have checked out?

P: Oh yeah

I: Because you wanted to know, and be an informed consumer?

P: Yeah, yeah I. Yeah, its because it's a big call saying we are eco friendly 'cause there's a whole lot of companies saying we are eco friendly and they're not. They're just not. Its not, its just all, its all by degrees as well. You just never know, so I have gone to great trouble to really look at it and I had to go, that's why I went to their store as I had to see what the store was like, and see what the store had to offer. I bought nappies at the store. I thought it was interesting that at the Ecostore store they had other non-Ecostore products available that had also supported the green ethos. Nappies and crystals and socks. So that was good. It frustrates me enormously that you can't get their bulk packs in the supermarket.
Appendices

415 I: Yeah but that’s not a reason to go to the store? It’s also pricier.

416

417 P: Yeah, but I thought you might be interested to know. The supermarket stuff, the stuff they
418 have at the supermarket seems to me quite a limited range compared to what they have
419 available at the store. Or online. But as I said, I’ve worked for Coke and know how
420 supermarkets can be in terms of their buying and what they’ll agree to stock and put onto
421 the shelves. That’s not necessarily the Ecostore’s first choice I’m sure.

422

423 I: So of the friends who tried the baby bed time, or just another Ecostore product, how did
424 they find that?

425

426 P: I have had quite a lot of feedback from other people on washing powders and things not
427 doing the job.

428

429 I: Is that the general consensus?

430

431 P: yup. I think the Ecostore’s getting a bit of a reputation, I think

432

433 I: Amongst your social group?

434

435 P: Yeah just for quite not doing the job. Not, but the thing is, that when we come back to is
436 that it’s not going to do the job because it doesn’t have the chemicals in it that you have
437 normally been using. And you have to make a choice. So you know, we’ve had a lot of
438 extended, philosophical arguments, how what is more important. Some of them, you know
439 some of them use some products and not others like my friend Francine will use the hand
440 wash and all the mums I know use the sleepy time bath and the baby wash.

441

442 I: Oh and they still use it?

443

444 P: Oh, as the kids have grown older they’d be dropping off the sleepytime bath about when
445 bubs is about nine months to a year old but after that you wouldn’t see it in the bathroom
446 again.

447

448 I: So what did they move onto? Another Ecostore product?
P: The baby wash, if they've used the sleepy time bath they'll move onto the baby wash. The
Ecostore baby wash

I: Oh, okay. So that's because they want to kind of keep it up?

P: Yup. Because it doesn't, I've never seen anyone's baby have a skin reaction to any of the
Ecostore products. I have seen pretty much, seen lots of babies react badly to Johnson's and
I can't really think of any more. But you know, the really highly fragranced stuff.

I: So part of your recommending was so that they could keep the children safe?

P: Ah, I know it's so interfering but I can't help it. Yeah it is; that's my main reason. It's that it,
it's really, often what can happen when people are new parents and when babies get a rash,
and then you go to the doctor. And probably the doctor will prescribe them some sort of an ointment
and you get a whole stream of intervention. It's like it seems like such a silly thing but a
rash from a product that is highly chemical can be the beginning for an intervention in that
child's medical life. That will set habits for a lifetime. Oh, my child has I have, have to worry
about my baby because it gets rashes. Must be something it's eating or must be something so
they start prescribing all sorts of stuff and it's not necessary.

I: So it's like one step for the rest of their life?

P: Yeah. So yeah, I think I do a good thing, I hope I do a good thing. I've got one friend that I
recommended the stuff to, the Ecostore range of baby products and she went and bought
four bottles of sleepy time and five bottles of baby wash and four bars of soap everything
and I swear to God she is probably still using them. They do last, a long time. So that's one
thing I liked about it.

I: So she bought all that after your recommendation?

P: Six months before the baby was born she had rows of Ecostore products stacked up on
the changing table ready.

I: So you obviously sold her in on that?
P: Yeah. I’m, I’ a major advocate for, I am probably the most passionate. I think about the
Ecostore baby products are the best ones you can get in a supermarket. There might be a
little competition from another brand, I think they are called Mahu, they have prettier
bottles as well.

I: Is that on the eco-angle as well?

P: Yeah, yeah, yeah, green. Actually one of their [main points of] emphasis is on a gentler
product. For baby skin, but they do have a green philosophy too, yeah. But they’re definitely
prettier bottles for whatever that means. It goes, I actually have to be honest; I actually have
that product in my bathroom right now because it goes with my shower curtain.

I: Because you wanted everything to match?

P: Um, yeah

I: Was that for your sake or?

P: Phillip and I have a pretty strong aesthetic appreciation. So yeah, yeah. it matches my
shower curtain

I: Or did you want other people to see that? Do you worry about other people or?

P: No, I need it for myself. I don’t think other, other people would even notice whether my
baby wash matches my shower curtain. But it is deeply important to me

I: Because it makes you feel?

P: It makes me feel in order. I feel, normal. I quite like, yeah anything in our house, we’ve
sold our house a little while ago and have a shitty little rental that we’re living in until we
buy another house. And even in our shitty little rental every cushion, you know there’s a
picture on the wall with a bit of red on it that refers to a cushion or chair over there, its just
like. I can’t, I can’t I need that. I do need that
I: Cool, you've covered a lot already, that I was going to say. So when you use the product, did you treat them just like the other ones?

P: Probably the biggest difference is, because they are a little more expensive in my mind, I don't know if they are, I'm not actually, I'm not the kind of person who will stand there and look at all the prices. Once I've made my choice on a product, I'll keep buying it. But I would be more careful about how much of it I use, the Ecostore hand wash I dilute it by half, always. So as soon as I empty half of this container into another container I will fill it to the top with water and I will probably top up the pump as well because I can get twice as much out of that and it works just as well so why would I bother, as I said I would probably be a bit less diligent about measuring out a cheap laundry liquid, but with that one, I marked on the bottle the increments so that when I use it I can hold it, it's a pain in the ass but because, its not a clear bottle but I can hold it up the light and kind of know how much I'm getting, 'cause that's what it's getting down to, how many washes do I get for this $10, is it 10 washes or is it twenty because if I buy this product, 20 washes, out of the same amount of money. And when you've got a little kid, and a husband, that's a, there's a lot to wash. You now, there's a, I do three loads of washing a day, for three people, which is something wrong there. That's a lot of washing. Lets say two loads of washing a day for a household of three people. And its full loads, so I'm doing, what's that, fourteen loads, I need, need a bottle of laundry liquid to last me a week I need it to go from one supermarket, shop to the next. So I am a little more vigilant about, about how much I use because it does cost a bit more

I: So are you still using Ecostore for laundry?

P: Well no, uh, it kinda depends on what sort of state my conscience is in. I think I have committed to changing to down to earth laundry liquid, yeah. And it has, do you know what, it's actually been something that I've really, like I've really had a bit of a, crisis of conscience about it. Like I really, really...

I: You were quite attached?

P: Yeah, I've had to really think about whether, I guess, the biggest thing that I have, I've actually sat down and thought do I really accept and believe the message of a green product and from Down to Earth in the same way that I have for Ecostore and I have made the decision that I do accept their word. I guess, its not that I've actually gone, yeah, I've actually
I've actually decided whether I believe these people as much as I believe these people.

I: So what was that based on? Was that packaging, design?

P: Well yeah. Actually do you know what it was? It was actually a justification in my own mind that allowed me to buy a product that I’m not, that I have checked these products, that I have checked these labels gone to the Internet, checked the ingredients. On one product and that’s enough for the range. I did not do that with Down to Earth but I needed to make a change to a different product because I needed the job done better. So I just have had just a little internal argument about whether I can believe them or not and convinced myself I can without actually checking, because I’m not sure I would have the same results if I checked the label but I need, need the job done.

I: Could you, potentially just convince yourself because you wanted to?

P: Yeah, totally. I need to believe, I needed to change products because Ecostore was not delivering. So I have convinced myself that there is another product that is just as green, but somewhere in the back of my mind there’s a little voice that says, don’t, you know very well Lauren that if it is doing a better job, it’s is not likely to be as kind to the environment.

I: So there is kind of a trade off between eco or its good [effectiveness]?

P: Yeah. That’s, that’s what I’m getting to now. I am, having to been forced into a situation where I was using eco friendly products and totally not eco friendly products side by side in my daily life and you know, different people’s houses but you know, it really gave me a major wake up call as to, can I just say, one of the problems that have come up, with Ecostore products is that they don’t have good child safety caps on some of their products. Some of them have changed, but their toilet cleaner, which traditionally toilet cleaner is left in the bathroom, usually at ground level, doesn’t have a safety lock on it. Having said that, the smell of it is so awful, I hate the product so much, and I will never buy it again.

I: The Ecostore toilet cleaner?
P: Yeah, and my child would take one whiff of it and oh my god, I'm not going to drink that if he managed to get it open. Yeah, but oh yeah that comment has come back from more than one of my friends. That I, I think there was one, the dishwasher powder didn't have a child proof cap on it but then it changed at some point, but yeah, there definitely has been, historically, a lack of child safety caps on their products. Yeah, and I think that's important because the people I know who have, as I say that is one thing that goes along with having children is that change to eco friendly products. So yeah, a good portion of your market is going to need child safety caps.

I: Do you think that's because parents want to look after kids, more than themselves?

P: I think, as you get older, different people are pitching their products to you. I don't know that we make that many decisions, ourselves based on what we believe or actually want. I think most of our decisions, are made based on information that's fed, almost everyone making their nutritional decisions based on ads on the TV and I'm astounded by some of the things I see on TV and how much that people don’t understand that this is not scientific research you're getting. This is a blurb that was written by someone who probably has a marketing degree and has been given a sales target that we need to shift this many units, what can we tell our market to do that

I: Yup, so you're um quite critical of that?

P: It's quite weird, don't you think given my husband's job [graphic designer at promotional marketing agency]. I think as we grow older, you start to, I don't know, you start to have kids you start reading different magazines, instead of picking up a Cleo, Cosmo, Vogue, whatever and being confronted with all these pages and pages of ads for lipsticks and fragrances and [inaudible] whatever, you pick up a Little Treasures magazine and you're getting ads for breast pumps and Ecostore washing liquid and whatever, you just, you just move into a different demographic and suddenly your focus has just been shifted onto a whole new range of products and whoever is standing at the front with the best look, is the one that going to get my money. Well, maybe not my money, but some, but then again here I am, I'm still trying new products

I: So you've gone through a few eco store products? Have you gone back to any?
Appendices

P: Have I gone off and back to any? We, I use the shampoo a couple of years ago and I didn’t like it, but then Phillip started using it. So I went off it but then he started using it because he doesn’t care, he’s got short hair. I used the shampoo and conditioner and found that, that it didn’t really do the same as some of my nicer ones. I’m not sure if nicer is right, but you know, you put that next to something that’s from Redken, or I don’t know it doesn’t make my hair shiny in the same way [laughs] it doesn’t make it smell beautiful in the same way.

But maybe I will try it again, who knows? I mean it’s in the house. Citrus fusion. It’s a great name. I don’t understand why there’s a picture of a pinecone on the front of citrus fusion

I: Uh, I don’t know either

P: Maybe we’re missing something. They are quite abstract. I mean, that’s a poppy, on the patchouli

I: Abstract and then somewhat irrelevant

P: But yeah that’s not uncommon. For the people, the marketing people are not necessarily talking to the product people and yeah, so it’s a nice image. So yeah, the shampoo I didn’t like that Phillip is now using, the dishwashing liquid comes and goes a bit. That’s the other thing; I will always make a greener choice, Phillip will not necessarily. So if he does the shopping you get quite a different shop to what I would get

I: But you don’t influence?

P: Oh yeah, I mean I do. That’ll be why he bought the Ecostore shampoo, but then he’ll stand there in front of the dishwashing liquid and then go, are you kidding me, I can get 500mls or two litres for the same price and he’ll come home with the two litres. Unless I specifically say to him if you go to the shops, you buy this, you must buy blah blah blah. Yeah, I have a real problem, just going back to the measuring, one of the things that I really struggle with is that there’s no measurements of the, actually do they have?

I: Oh they have a cup

P: Oh yeah, they do? Okay, so they do in that, but nothing in that, in and in their dishwashing powder as well there’s no measure in the dishwashing, so I started using a formula, a scoop
from a formula container to scoop, to like measure how I use dishwashing powder. Its quite
a big difference between what I feel like, give it a shake and the dishwasher powder
container and the machine, and go, that looks right and actually if you measure it out, I
would probably put in, I don’t know, one and half to twice as much if I free pour, so...
I: So would you have an issue if other companies didn’t have measurements? Or is it just
because it’s Ecostore?
P: Uh, no, it doesn’t. It does bother me generally, because I feel that companies do that
deliberately so you will overuse and restock more regularly. It particularly bothers me with
Ecostore stuff because if I use twice as much I actually, I feel that I am negating effort that
I’m putting in by using an eco friendly product because using twice as much is almost as bad
as using a less eco friendly product

I: So when you use Ecostore products you always make sure?
P: I try. But you know, who, has enough time, really, in their day to spend that much time
talking about something like that. When I go to use something, I just wanna go, done. I
don’t really wanna stand there measuring it out with little cups and things
I: Do you end up doing that for Ecostore products?
P: I do. I do. But not this shampoo and stuff, it something where they go, you should get this
many washes. I should be able to work out how many washes I get out of a dishwasher
powder or a laundry powder where you’re using a specific amount. A specific amount
should do the job. I quite often, one of the reasons I steer away from the clothes washing
stuff is, well, because I felt it wasn’t doing its job, I was using more and more of it
I: Negating the...
P: Yeah and still the not getting quite the job I wanted out if it anyway, so that is kind of why
I started to look at the change. ‘Cause if I’m using twice as much and it’s still not doing the
job, then it’s just not doing the job. If it was just me, and I was single, and I was just washing
work shirts or blouses, or you know just things that I was sitting in an office wearing I would
happily use their products, but I can't get chocolate and mud [out], and I know it sounds so
cliché, you know, it's a Persil ad, isn't it, in the making? But you can't get that stuff out, in a
wash. Without soaking in an Ecostore product but I can get it out with other products. If I
went for something like Persil, it would be gone. Even something like Down to Earth is not
as effective as that but you gotta draw the line somewhere otherwise you won't end up
green. And I find my green line is getting fuzzier as I get busier and I don't like that.
Appendices

Interview: Karen

I: So if you’d just like to start, by telling me about your first experience of an Ecostore product?

P: First experience would have been the body wash. And I’ve think we’ve done some, yes we've done the liquid washing liquid one and we moved onto the eco one because my boyfriend likes using that stuff and I started using it too.

I: So the body wash one was the first one? Do you remember how you went about buying it?

P: I think we [normally] buy another product and then we saw that one on the shelf, ‘cause there's only two, three body wash products on the shelf at supermarkets and I saw that one and I’d thought I’d try it. Plus I like the flavours [laughs]. I think it was vanilla, vanilla and something is my favourite now, but this one smells good too.

I: So did you smell it at the supermarket?

P: Yup.

I: Do you do that with all your shampoos?

P: I buy all my shampoos from the hairdresser, so no. But normally if I did like sprays and stuff like that I would.

I: So you said your boyfriend liked the product?

P: Yup, ‘cause he’s got like quite sensitive skin, I’m not sure what the other one he was buying. QV or something, I think it was QV? And he was using that, he likes using the loofah and the body wash and so that side of things, which I’ve never done.

I: And that was because he had sensitive skin?

P: Yup, yup.
I: So what did you think of the Ecostore one?

P: Much nicer, it's got a nice silky feel to it. And your skin feels nice and moisturised at the end of it. It feels like it's actually doing some work and it always soaks up, like normal soap you always have to rub on quite a bit, I know it doesn't make sense to say soap up, but it feels right to say soap up [laughs].

I: So that was for the body wash? You're still using it?

P: Yes

I: So is that the only body wash you still use?

P: That's the only Ecostore product we still use. We were using the dishwashing liquid for a while, but I think that was the one we found wasn't actually washing that well.

I: Oh okay. What attracted you to buy it in the first place?

P: A friend of ours was telling us about how it's good for the environment. Because it doesn't, something about fish? That we will, it doesn't affect the fish in the water and we figured, we might as well give it a go. Always looking to try and help the environment a little bit. And that's how we kind of got onto it.

I: So your friend, they sold you into the product?

P: Not the product itself, just the idea of doing eco products.

I: Were you using the body wash at that stage?

P: No. I probably only

I: So the dishwashing liquid was your first?

P: I can't remember which came first though. I tried another dishwashing liquid, which was an eco one; I think the body wash may have come from the first, eco store products line.
I: So you didn’t like the dishwashing liquid?

P: No, we didn’t quite like it and it was quite expensive so we stopped using it.

I: So was it price?

P: Yup, definitely for that one. I’d keep going if it weren’t so expensive.

I: So do you find the body wash expensive?

P: Uh, yes. But it’s kinda worth it. One, cause I know it good for his skin. And we might as well use the same one instead of having a soap, and liquid soap there. And you can usually find it on special so it’s not too bad. Its quite expensive, but it’s quite worth it.

I: Have you tried any other eco body washes? Not sure if there are any others in the market.

P: Uh I think, I don’t think I did. Oh look; I do go to the Ecostore down in Ponsonby, um by Newmarket…

I: Freeman’s Nay?

P: Yup that one. Had a look in there, there was heaps of stuff in there that I would have brought but I just didn’t have the money, and knew I was going to Australia [move permanently to] anyway so I thought what’s the use in buying it? ’Cause those ones were in big lots, those ones.

I: So what was your motivation for going into the store?

P: Because I saw the Ecostore [retail store] and really wanted to, cause I don’t really like, the only thing I don’t like about the product is the bottle it comes in. I don’t know if you were going along that side of things. But, we always pour this product into a bottle with a pump on it. Because I, opening this stuff all the time, to put on my loofah is so annoying. So that was the only thing I didn’t like about the product. So I was going into the Ecostore to look to
see if there was any bigger ones, so I was like I’m buying a little one, why don’t I buy a one litre and hope that’s got a pump on it or something. That was my main gripe.

I: That’s quite a lot of effort, for a body wash

P: It was actually. Well, I didn’t know the store was there until I went past it for work. And I saw it, and thought I’d stop in. so, it wasn’t like I specifically went into there to do that. But I was thinking about trying to find something that had a pump, yeah.

I: Oh that’s interesting. So what did you make of the store?

P: The store’s really good. It had heaps of stuff in it that I didn’t realise that they made or that they included in their things, not just stuff for the bathroom but kitchen, and gardening stuff everything, so, but I didn’t really have a look at the prices but know they would be more expensive, and plus it’s in like Freeman’s Bay so you kinda can guess it’s gonna be a little bit more. But, I think, can you get them online?

I: Yeah you can get them online.

P: Yeah, can get them online. Ah yes, I have actually looked online too.

I: Okay, um, any particular reason?

P: To look online?

I: Yup

P: I just thought it could maybe get cheaper. Or get bulk.

I: So um, you definitely wanted to buy the product, but the price was?

P: Yup

I: Was that for the body wash or just anything?
P: I was looking mainly at the body wash, but then that was when I realised how many other things they actually have, that supermarkets don’t have. But, yeah I didn’t buy anything. There wasn’t anything we needed at that stage.

I: So why were you interested in the other products? Did you like the body wash and thought the others ones would be...

P: Well yeah, I thought that if I can be as eco as possible I would go down that track. Yeah and it was really interesting just to see what they had. And how many different things can be eco [laughs] but you kinda don’t think that can.

I: So you’ve thought about eco lately?

P: So umm, you kinda try to, ‘cause you know how much stuff is out there. Any way, little way you can help I think is good like even down to trying to not use too much Gladwrap and those kind of things. Recycle your rubbish bins and everything. I mean, I’m not completely eco, but if I lived on a farm or something I would be, but that’s quite hard in urban [society], [laughs] to be able to do that so...

I: But you would keep trying to?

P: Yup, I definitely would

I: So you would be trying to change other aspects of your life, that you would be trying to be greener?

P: Yup, yup. I mean if I had a worm farm, I would definitely, I mean if I could have a worm farm should I say I would definitely have it?

I: But you can’t because of where you are living, and things like that?

P: Yup, and time [laughs].

I: Just going back to the body wash, you always buy it?
P: So do you wait for it to be on special or?

P: No, if we run out of it I just go and buy it. But if it's on special, I will like buy four or five bottles at the same time.

I: So you stock up?

P: Yup.

I: So is that like mainly because you know you will want the product?

P: Yup, we will run out of it, because there's two of us that use it. We use it up quite quickly.

I: So you haven't tried the shampoo?

P: No, because I get my stuff from the hairdressers.

I: Any particular reason?

P: Because the kind of hair that I have, because they recommend, because I've got curly hair and I straighten it, I get the stuff that's quite good for my hair. I never looked at the eco stuff.

I: Have you tried normal shampoos?

P: Uh yeah, I have but I'd rather... I just don't like them. Like you can buy the cheapest one on the rack and that's probably the worst one for you in terms of shampoo in terms of straightening and stuff. So I would try and go for the other, boutique stuff, not that I like spending too much money on that either.

I: Oh, so that's quite funny, like how when it comes to body wash you're okay with buying, cheap, relatively cheap one?
P: Uh no, because I, uh, okay before we went onto this? Probably because I've always used
cake soap so I just stayed with that. I never liked, never thought I would like the idea of
having liquid soap. And then I, 'cause I used to just use it without a loofah. And now that I
use a loofah, I just think oh, this is so much better. And I use maybe four to five squirts of it
whereas with normal soap I use heaps kind of thing

I: So was Ecostore the first one that you used?

P: Body soap, no, because we used QV at first. And then we moved on.

I: And that was because of his sensitive skin?

P: Yeah, yeah and QV I think from the chemist, I think only from the chemist. And this one
you can get from the supermarket, and I think that's pretty much any supermarket, so you
know.

[Intermission]

I: So what happens when you get home with the product, do you put it

P: If our pump bottles empty I will clear it.

I: Oh, sorry just before that, like do you take in a bag or plastic bag, or do you bring your own
bags?

P: Oh, at the supermarket? I usually have, cause I usually go to Pak n Save and they don't do,
you have to pay for plastic bags. So I usually have the green ones, I don't take it into the
store, I just take the trolley to my car and then pack my green bags. Saves me ten cents, well
forty, fifty cents sometimes. It all adds up

I: And that's the main reason behind it?

P: Um, yeah, and it's also, those green bags, are easy, like the eco bags are easy to carry and
stuff and they fill, you can fill quite up a bit with them. But sometimes I do, if I go to a store
that provide the bags for free, I will get the supermarket bags ’cause then I will use them as rubbish bin liners.

I: Yeah, ’cause then you can still reuse it?

P: Yeah.

I: So when you take the product home, is there any particular place you store it?

P: Just in the bathroom.

I: Would you just treat it like any other body wash, would you use a bit more or...

P: No I just treat it like any normal body wash. I mean I try not to use too much at once.

‘Cause it’s quite, now that we’ve got a pump bottle, you can pump quite a [inaudible] at a time, but I only pump once and that’s enough.

I: So you put it into a pump bottle because?

P: It’s just easier.

I: Could you maybe have wanted to aesthetically, or

P: ’Cause it’s just sitting in our container, the thing we have in our bathroom, to have a shower, it sits right in it, you can’t turn it so it’s like you gotta take it out, put it on your loofah, and then do it, and then put it back in and then the lid gets moved around and stuff like that. So I just chuck it in that straightaway.

I: So did you enjoy using the pump cause you can control the amount?

P: Yup. And it’s just easy. You can put your hand and just pump on it, instead of having to open that up and pour it out.

I: Cool. So the first time you used it, what were your expectations of the product?
Appendices

P: Well, I didn't know what it really would be like to have a liquid one. So I think I was using way too much. So over time, I've realised that you don't need so much. I quite enjoy using the loofah now too because it really scrubs the skin, exfoliates, that's the word. Exfoliates your skin at the same time. And it just felt nice and silky, kinda smooth feel to it and your skin didn't feel dry or anything afterwards, some cakes soaps do, I was always using the Protex cake soap, so I was, in that way I was really going down something a little more I don't know if its eco, but it's a lot better for your skin those ones. And then using that one I quite like it, and the smell is quite nice too.

I: So do you always sniff it?

P: Well the vanilla one I do. Well this one I don't. The rose and [cardamom].

I: Oh, so have you tried a couple different ones?

P: Yeah, I think there is only this one and the vanilla flavoured, well just the ones that I usually find in the supermarket anyway.

I: Do you stick with one now?

P: Kevin [boyfriend] would, I think he quite likes that one. I just buy a variation, whatever's there, not really fussed.

I: Um, so you wouldn't go back to cake soap?

P: Nope, not now.

I: So you would, you wouldn't go to another body wash?

P: I probably would, if I wouldn't be able to get hold of it, like when we go to Aussie. Don't think I will be able to get it there, so I will find something else. Yup, but if I was in New Zealand I would definitely buy that stuff.

I: So in Aussie, what kind of body wash would you be looking for?
P: I would probably look for an eco one again. But if there's not one, but ones that kinda of, well first thing would be price and smell, so if I don't like either then its eco then I would probably look at it at some other body wash. But all those other ones seemed to be perfumed and yucky, you know.

I: So you don't like perfumed?

P: No, because it can react with my skin a little bit. I don't have a real sensitive skin but I can get sensitive, especially on my face, I don't use it on my face, but I'd rather not risk it if I can.

I: So that's why you look for eco?

P: Yup

I: So is that also [the case] in makeup or moisturiser?

P: Yup cause I'm using another moisturiser from another eco company called Skinfood, yup, so they put no phos, what it is no petrochemicals, I think there is something else, that they don't have also? I only got onto them because at my last work I did a campaign for them and really liked their products anyway, and sampled a lot of stuff [laughs].

I: So, that's good. So you've tried to look for the eco options?

P: I think so, I didn't realise it for my face stuff.

I: What about maybe food or?

P: We did, the thing we really did was, free range eggs. But I don't know if you can call that eco, can you? In a way?

I: Its got different dimensions. You know, even the word eco, or green or sustainable, like what do you make of all those?
Appendices

P: I don’t think really of anything else on the food side of things. I try not to use, as I said
Gladwrap as much, I try to use containers more. I try to not to throw plastic bags away, try
to recycle everything.

I: Do you remember what you do with the empty bottles?
P: Just throw them into the recycling bin.

I: But you always recycle them?
P: Yup

I: But that maybe, you always empty it straight into the pump one?
P: Yup

I: So is there other body washes in pumps?
P: Yup, I can double check tonight for you, I’m pretty sure there are because the QV one
came in a pump. And I think one of those [hold up Ecostore body wash bottle] fits in one of
those.

I: So you put the whole thing

P: Yup

I: So when it comes to emptying, do you try to scrape up every drop?
P: Yup, I just tip it upside down into the other one and leave it there for a couple of hours
just to let it drip out.

I: ‘Cause you wanna?
P: ‘Cause you wanna... because it would be the same if you got to the end of that and use that
and try to tip it upside down to get as much [as you can].
I: So what do you make of the Ecostore brand, in general?

P: I think they're doing quite well actually, they're starting to get in the supermarkets quite a bit more, and there's only a couple of eco products on the shelves so it seems like they are infiltrating quite well. I think, I have, 'cause I know the product now, I see it all the time, I do not know much

I: Is that for work or?

P: Uh no, just when I do supermarket shopping and something. Uh, I don't know how much advertising or brand experiencing they're doing [laughs], but it's good that they have a store open and website and stuff like that.

I: So even like the Ecostore brand, is it like green or?

P: The look and the feel for me? Yeah, I mean even like the way they've done the name quite simple, they didn't really put too much unfriendly stuff in it if you know what I mean, trying to talk marketing talk here, I'm not really marketing. It just seems quite natural to me, the bottles are all quite, they just seem to look like quite normal bottles, they haven't seemed to do something special with them and most of the fronts seem the same and things like that. So still showing that they're aren't putting too much into it and trying to keep it as natural as possible, I suppose.

I: So when you and your boyfriend purchased the first one, did you check out the packaging much?

P: Yup, I checked on the back 'cause I didn’t know anything, I used some other dishwashing liquid before and that’s where I read all the stuff on the back about the chemicals that they don’t have in it, and then when he was buying the QV, and I went to the supermarket and saw this on the shelf, I just wanted to, I compared that to QV and they were both the same, and I think this one was cheaper than the QV at that stage, so we tried it.

I: Sorry was that the dishwash?
P: No it was the body wash. So I’ve used some of their dishwashing, then he was using a
different type of body wash, I was just using cake soap and then he saw.

I: Have you ever gifted an Ecostore product?

P: No I haven’t. I might have told family about it, I don’t know.

I: Could you recall any instances, of when you may have recommend it? Or if it came up in
discussion?

P: Um, not really the soap. I know in our old flat we used to use the other variation of
dishwashing liquid? And I tried to get them all to use that but they decided it would cost too
much money for the flat.

I: So you wanted them to use the Ecostore one?

P: Yeah.

I: And that was because?

P: I just thought it would be better for the environment.

I: And you wanted all your flatmates to be?

P: Yup. And I did all the dishes mostly anyway so [laughs].

I: That’s awful.

P: Yeah, that’s why we left there.

I: But ultimately it came down to the price for them?

P: Yup. Definitely for them.

I: Oh, so you felt that the dishwashing liquid was better for the environment.
Appendices

450  P: Yup.
451
452
453  I: ‘Cause it wasn’t
454
455  P: Because of all the chemical free agents that it had in it.
456
457  I: So I guess, for all those, the types of people that you tried to get the dishwasher on, wasn’t,
458  weren’t very greenies?
459
460  P: Umm, no I think they were. But I think it just came down to price for us at the flat.
461
462  I: Was it quite a big difference?
463
464  P: Yeah, ’cause you can get a thing of dishwashing liquid for like two bucks, and that costs at
465  least seven or eight, or sometimes nine. I can’t be bothered keeping track of prices any more.
466  So yeah, it’s quite expensive. And you get a smaller amount than what you would with a
467  regular brand, and the normal types of dishwashing liquids.
468
469  I: So um, body wash, dishwashing liquid
470
471  P: That’s it.
472
473  I: Um, so you haven’t tried of the laundry powders?
474
475  P: Nope, haven’t tried any of that stuff.
476
477  I: Any particular reason?
478
479  P: Probably cost. That’s pretty much it.
480
481  I: ‘Cause if your boyfriend does have sensitive skin, like does he have problems with his
482  washing?
I: Okay, sweet. So just lastly, do you consider yourself a green person?

P: Uh no. He never really seems to actually, and I've never really thought about it, no, I don't think so.

I: As green as I can be [laughs]. I don't know if I'm completely green, I still kinda have the odd, the recycling and everything like that. Like as I said, if I had a farm or something I would definitely do as much as I could please myself, but in urban society, I don't think I can be as green as I want to be. But ideally, I would like to be.

I: So do you feel like you wish you were?

P: Yup,

I: But it comes down to?

P: Time, price and ease. Those are the three things, yeah.
Interview: David

I: So if you’d just like to start, by walking me through your first experience of an Ecostore product?

P: I think it was actually here at work. I saw it being used as dishwashing liquid, in the kitchen there, and thought that’s pretty cool. It’s good to see that work is kinda being green bean and using you know, eco friendly products. And then after that I saw it in a supermarket and yeah, ended up buying it.

I: So what did you like about the product?

P: I like the fact that it didn’t use nasty chemicals [laughs] and that it was, I guess an environmentally friendly alternative, definitely we should do as much as we possibly can, to be careful with the environment and this is, I guess this is a small step towards that.

I: So what didn’t you like about the chemicals?

P: What didn’t I like about the chemicals? They, well first of all are bad for humans, there’s a lot of research that, I don’t think is particularly conclusive saying that these things are safe. But there’s a lot of, I guess not hugely scientific findings but reasonably, substantial findings that say chemicals are bad for you. So if you can have a product that does the same job, that doesn’t use them, I definitely think is good.

I: So, where did you get that impression from?

P: From the packaging which said, well so the name, you said which impression?

I: That chemicals were bad.

P: Well I guess, probably from peers, family friends, teachers. I come from a school [Steiner] where environmentalism was always a key part of things and so anything that was unnatural, you always looked for an alternative, if possible.
I: So you felt your school was an influence on you as a person?

P: Yup, I think so. School, parents, and yeah friends.

I: So do you know of any friends, parents or friends who use Ecostore products?

P: My parents do. I have plenty of friends from school, who do, yes. Friends from the kinda other sets of peers not related from the school, not so much.

I: So how you know they used it?

P: Seeing them use it in their houses. So yeah, or seeing them actually sitting in the house.

I: Did you make any comment or just notice it?


I: And that was before you purchased it?

P: Probably since. Before I purchased it, this [office workplace] would have been the only place I’d seen it.

I: So do you remember what you did when you went to the supermarket and bought it for the first time?

P: It was certainly with a general shopping load, so I wasn’t going to the supermarket to specifically buy the product but I guess it was on the list of things that I was looking, you know, cleaning products or washing powder or something like that, so I would definitely have taken in the prices and on the shelves and look at all the different alternatives, and then decided that the additional cost was worth paying to get the product. But I do believe that the first time I bought it that it was on special anyway so, that would have heavily influenced the first purchase.

I: So did you take a good look at the packaging at the store?
Appendices

P: Not really. I guess just a relatively brief look. As I said I wasn’t specifically looking for that product solely so you know it was part of a wider shop, so no it would have been a relatively brief look, as I said I would have read the packaging of another product, one of the products at work first, so I had a good idea of what it was about and and noticed that it was plant-based and Ecostore so that would have...

I: So you said you noticed it at work first. So when you saw it, did you have a look at it when you were at work or?

P: I did not initially, but like I saw it quite a few times obviously so. I did have a read at the packaging at one stage, yes.

I: And were quite convinced that you would try it if it were, that you'd look for it in the supermarket.

P: Uh, uh yes. I thought to myself; if it wasn’t hideously expensive and not worth it, I would definitely buy it, definitely try it.

I: And why was that? That you would want to try it, even if it was a little more expensive?

P: Because I try and do little bits and pieces that I guess help the environment or have the less detriment or effect possible. All small steps.

I: So how do you feel when you use an Ecostore product?

P: Um, good I guess. Helpful, environmentally friendly, responsible, yeah.

I: So which of the Ecostore products are you using, or have used in the past?

P: Obviously I’ve used the dishwashing liquid, the rinse aid, I’ve used the dishwasher powder, have also used the washing powder, and I think I have actually used one of the kitchen sprays as well.

I: Oh wow, that’s quite a lot.
Appendices

P: So basically, when there’s an option to buy if there’s relative price parity between what
I’m buying and an Ecostore product, I’ll purchase the Ecostore product every time, over a
conventional chemical-based one.

I: So, in terms of those products are there any that you always buy? Or do you switch
between different brands at times?

P: I always buy the rinse aid, I’d say I do switch between the different brands of other
products, the kitchen spray, or the cleaning spray in particular, there are about three or four
different eco varieties I guess, and I always buy one of them.

I: Do you see Ecostore as being as equally good as the other eco brands?

P: Ah, yes.

I: So when you use the other ones...

P: So, good from an environmental perspective or from a performance, product performance
perspective?

I: Um, both I guess.

P: From a product performance perspective, yes they all are about on par I’d say. And they
all work very well. From an environmental perspective I’d say, they’re probably about the
same as well.

I: So I guess what would make you pick Ecostore over the other brands?

P: Price

I: Only?

P: Pretty much. Yup, as I said, I’ll pay slightly more to buy an Ecostore product over a regular
non-eco brand?
P: Yes, that's right. However, if there is another eco brand of the same product but not Ecostore, but again the price is similar, if the price is lower than Ecostore that I'll buy that. So price is definitely a determinant but I guess if it's within that eco brand of products, I'll choose the lowest one within that.

I: So you've tried an Ecostore product in quite a lot of different categories? Is it because you're looking for um, why was that?

P: Why have I tried it in a lot of different ones?

I: Uh, yeah.

P: As I said, basically if I'm buying a cleaning product or a product within a set of or a category that has Ecostore products I will, if prices are reasonably equal, I'll always try to buy an eco product and Ecostore has a lot of products across the lot of those different areas, like it has a lot of those areas covered. And within those sets it's often the cheapest, so I will therefore buy the Ecostore. Kind of, therefore that's the reason I try a lot of them and if I am buying a new product and I see an Ecostore, you know, a new Ecostore range in there, and again if the price isn't too bad I'll definitely buy that over a non-eco product.

I: Oh, great. Does that extend to other things, not just laundry powder like cleaning products, but like other things that you buy?

P: Yup. Absolutely, I'll try and buy organic over non-organic, wherever again the price is reasonable, sometimes it, organic seems to price itself out of the market, you might pay ten bucks for a five hundred gram block of cheese, so in those cases I won't buy organic but if there is reasonable price parity, obviously often there isn't, that it's not exact, but I'm happy to pay slightly more for an organic, or I guess an eco, a greener alternative as opposed to your standard store.

I: And that goes back to the feeling of that when you buy these products, they...

P: Yes, I guess the feeling is that yeah, one better for you, but two, having a smaller impact on the greater good.
I: So you said you always use the rinse aid? What’s the reasoning behind that?

P: Price is reasonable. And rinse aid is pretty nasty chemically. So I guess it’s better than a bad product [laughs].

I: So do you see some like the rinse aid against the laundry powder against the dishwasher, is chemicals more important to some of those categories?

P: Uh, yes. Rinse aid I know is horribly chemically. So I’ll try and buy an eco choice, pretty much always for that. Laundry powder is pretty bad, so you know if the eco choice is available there and it’s not too much more hideously expensive I will buy it, but I guess dishwashing liquid I’m not quite so fussy on, but again, if there’s a reasonable price parity, I’ll buy an eco one. But again if, if the price difference is big, particularly with dishwashing liquid for instance, I will buy a non-green product.

I: This might be a tricky question. How would you say the price parity between an eco-choice and a non-eco choice, for dishwashing liquid or rinse?

P: Rinse aid? Probably a dollar. So if it’s a dollar more expensive I’d buy Ecostore. If it would be say two bucks more expensive on its like four of five bucks or something like that, five or six bucks.

I: So would there be some products that you would be willing to pay more? If you can kind of compare the different products?

P: Yes, I guess so. The rinse aid I would be willing to pay more. The kitchen spray I would be willing to pay more. Dishwashing liquid, I wouldn’t, wouldn’t pay more.

I: And that’s because?

P: Because I think it’s probably a closer, has, the effect that it has on the environment for a dishwashing liquid has not quite so harsh, has for rinse aid. Or for washing powder.

I: So maybe we’ll just run with one product?
I: So maybe you could tell me what happens when you take the rinse aid home?

P: Okay, sweet. I purchase it, put it in the shopping trolley

I: Oh sorry, where do you shop?

P: Pak n Save

I: Do you bring your own bags or?

P: Um, no. [laughs]. Put it in the trolley cause you don’t get given plastic bags you have to purchase them, I don’t purchase plastic bags but we use cardboard boxes, so we take them to the car, empty it, take the stuff from the shopping trolley, and take it out to the car and put all the stuff in the cardboard boxes, which we reuse for like three or four years because they're pretty good cardboard boxes. And take them home, so yeah we definitely don’t use disposable bags. When shopping at Pak n Save and certainly try to avoid them as much as possible. And when we do get a plastic bag it's always kept to be reused.

I: So your reasoning behind the cardboard boxes, is that because…

P: They're practical. They're good, sturdy cardboard boxes. No reason, the only reason is that we don’t like buying plastic bags every time, and can see it's detrimental so if we can kind of avoid buying them and use boxes, we may as well, there's no reason for them to be cardboard, if they're plastic boxes it would make no difference.

I: Detrimental in terms of economic or environmental sense?

P: Environmental sense.

I: So you do see plastic bags as being kinda a…

P: Terrible, terrible things. Yup.
I: But in other stores, where they are free do you...

P: Always when we're doing a shop we take the cardboard boxes. If we don't have boxes or anything to put stuff into the car, we'll use plastic bags, but fill plastic bags up as much as possible, so not to use too many.

I: So do you always make quite an effort to bring a cardboard box?

P: Um, yes, yup. And we've got reusable shopping bags in the car as a second option if we don't have boxes.

I: Oh okay, sweet. Oh sorry you were telling me what happens when you take it home?

P: So chuck it in the car [laughs], drive home, unpack stuff, it will go in the cupboard, and it'll basically be left there until the dishwasher requires rinse aid or we run out of the last bottle. And if [the dishwasher] requires rinse aid then just put it in the dishwasher, fill it up, and then return the remainder in the bottle back into the cupboard and we leave it there.

I: Are there any particular ways you might use an Ecostore product any different to a normal product?

P: Uh, um, [pause] no. [pause] uh, no I don't think so. From a rinse aid perspective, definitely not.

I: So before you were using Ecostore, what product were you using?

P: What have been, probably Finish rinse aid. Dishwashing liquid would have been, what's the one in the little green bottles, uh...Sunlight?

I: Sunlight?

P: Sunlight, probably. Uh, no I don't think it was Sunlight, but something like that. It comes in a small bottle, concentrated.
I: Sounds like you made a gradual change to Ecostore product across categories, across the time?

P: Um yes, as I’ve said as they’ve become available in the supermarkets, across the... it wasn’t if as if everything suddenly had an Ecostore alternative. I think they rolled out into Pak n Save probably relatively gradually. And obviously we don’t suddenly buy every cleaning product or product within that type of a time, it’s when the other ones run out. Yeah, replace it, so, we needed to replace it.

I: Did you keep an eye out for Ecostore products, or did you just notice it?

P: When purchasing something we definitely had a look at all the alternatives. So, you know, don’t solely go the single brand that I always buy, always check around to see what else is there. Didn’t specifically look out for Ecostore but if it was in the set that you looked at, I’d definitely notice it and check the price, certainly, specials on the tags at Pak n Save, when they are visible, that makes a huge difference towards noticing it and yeah, deciding it to buy the product.

I: So in terms of performance, you haven’t, compared to the not-chemical products, did you find the Ecostore products to be?

P: Excellent. The kitchen sprays that we’ve used have been better than the chemical products that we have used. I’ve been very, very impressed with them, with rinse aid I’ve noticed no difference. You know, certainly none of the products have performed any worse than their non-eco alternatives, yeah. So from a product performance base, extremely pleased and no reason not to buy them again from that perspective.

I: Are they quite visible in your household?

P: Nope, they’re in cupboards.

I: Have you ever had someone come in and mention it?
P: Nope they're in cupboards. I certainly don't, don't go out of my way to display my Ecostore credentials to anyone. No, it's a personal decision and not something that I have any desire to preach to other people or, to show off to other people.

I: Why's that?

P: [pause] I'm not egotistical [laughs] no. They've got their place and they're out of the way that's where stuff goes so, I'm not going to make a specific effort to not put them [not] where they goes, to show it off to other people.

I: So it's a strictly personal choice, but you feel it's not really something you would tell other people to buy?

P: No, I don't have a, yeah it's my personal choice, I wouldn't make people buy anything, I'd, I'd recommend them from a performance point of view because I think they're good, but I wouldn't go out of my way to say that you guys should buy this stuff. Like, have a look at this; it's proudly displayed on my window sill for everyone to see, or my trophy cabinet.

I: So have you ever gifted or recommended it to someone?

P: Um, no.

I: But you mentioned that your family, friends and other social groups are using it, Ecostore products?

P: Yup.

I: Is that something that have ever come up in discussion or is that something you've noticed?

P: Just something I've noticed that hasn't come up in a discussion.

I: Right. So could tell me what happens when you finish one of the Ecostore products?
Appendices

P: Rinse the bottle, for instance, dishwashing liquid, when it's empty and you can't pour any more in, you put some more water into the container, shake it around to get the residue out, put that into the sink to finish off your dishwashing, then put the packet into the recycling.

I: Yup, so you always recycle the packaging?

P: Yes, fastidious recycler.

I: Sorry?


I: So your desire to get the residue out, what's behind that?

P: Use as much of the product as possible. Get the most out of it possible. Also, I like cleaning the stuff before it goes into recycling so it doesn't have all the horribles in it that can kinda leech into places.

I: So you mentioned that you sometimes go off the Ecostore products. So each time you re-evaluate based on the current conditions?

P: Based on cost. I'd, if there were two alternatives an Ecostore and a non-Ecostore, I always buy the Ecostore product if there is a reasonable price parity. If the price is hugely over the top, I'll buy an alternative. But if you know, from one time to the next, if the cost is still the same I'll always buy the Ecostore product.

I: So what do you make of the Ecostore brand, in general?

P: Make of it, as in how do I feel about it?

I: Yup

P: Well, I really like it. I think they've got a cool little brand. I like the packaging, it's real nice and not over the top. I think the packaging reflects the brand values of being
environmentally friendly and I think the name, of the brand, the brand name, reflects that really nicely as well. And I have a really positive feeling towards them.

I: So you do believe, you feel that their products are quite, do you feel their products are quite green.

P: I feel they are relatively green. As always with these things, unless you actually go through every single product and check you know chemical by chemical what’s in them, you don’t know how hundred percent green they are. But I think from the claims made on the packaging, its pretty obvious that they are better than some of the synthetic chemical-based materials. So yeah, I’m certainly a little bit sceptical of how green any of these products can be. Rinse aid, for instance, there’s so, there has to be something in there to make the stuff clean and sparkly all the time. But I think it’s, I definitely feel it’s better than the synthetic alternatives.

I: Yup. So you said some things on the packaging made you think it was quite good?

P: Um, yes. The fact that it said it was plant-based. Definitely stuff that comes from natural, plants and stuff is, has a tick in my book, as you know, being better environmentally. Skin friendly and garden friendly also as well and the fact that it says no nasty chemicals, so…

I: So you just kinda believe what they put on it, to some degree?

P: Yes. Definitely. I’m not a, not a chemist. So if I turn around and look at all the ingredients from a lot of things, I don’t have time to do that. And I don’t have the knowledge to do that and compare this with this, I have reasonable trust in the, I guess Fair Trading Act, that people can’t claim to be something they’re not. So yeah, so I certainly think their credentials are reasonable.

I: So um, have you ever noticed much of Ecostore’s advertising or?

P: No, can’t say I have. I may have seen a magazine ad once, but I can’t really remember it

I: So are there any product categories that you do buy chemical products for?
P: Obviously, I don’t solely buy Ecostore stuff, so you mean, primarily or always?

I: Just sometimes. So if you ever moved onto something like Sunlight, or Persil?

P: Certainly [for] washing powder, yes. I would often, I would often buy washing powder in bulk, so if I’m not looking to go into the supermarket and purchase a small box, then yes I will buy a big chemical alternative from The Warehouse or the hardware, and what you buy five or ten kilograms or something to keep the cost down.

I: So that’s purely to keep the cost down?

P: Yup.

I: So do you…

P: Again, if they had Ecostore washing powder, in bulk, and there was relative price parity, I’d definitely buy that instead. But it is a matter of cost.

I: Have you ever taken a look at their store. They do sell bulk.

P: No, I haven’t. I don’t know how to find their store.

I: Or their website?

P: No, I haven’t looked at their website, either. It’s not particularly obvious that they have a physical store or a website.

I: So what do you make of eco, environmental, or green in general in products?
P: I think it is excellent and it is a trend that will only continue and grow. I personally would much prefer to use an eco product than a non-eco product. If you factor in the availability and not costing too much. I think it’s really a necessity.

I: Do you consider yourself quite green?

P: Certainly in some aspects yes. But I think in some aspects I know I should do better than I do.

I: Such as?

P: Such as use of motor vehicle, you know pretty much

I: Have you always been quite a green person or?

P: Yes, I think it has always been a part of my family’s values. And also my school’s [Steiner-based] and peers’ values as well.

I: Yup, so could you just describe how they influenced you in terms of being a green person? Or having green values?

P: I guess political, political, you know which way I point I guess, for lack of better words. Political decisions, recycling, always recycle, always compost stuff when available, try and avoid using plastic bags, wherever possible. Try and eat organics, kinda wherever possible and grow your own food when I can.

I: So how do you feel when you’re doing these green things?

P: Um good [laughs]. Certainly feel like it is the right thing to do. And a positive step towards kinda improving the environmental things. I certainly understand, that I probably could do more, and could be more proactive, but I think by virtue of doing something at all, is a good thing, every little bit helps. Recycling for instance I make sure I, although sometimes you want to be lazy, you just wanna chuck your tin of baked beans tin in the bin. I make sure that I make the effort to wash it out and put it into the recycling.
I: And that’s every time?

P: Yup

I: So you do put in quite a lot of work to...

P: Yup, absolutely. Keep an eye on rubbish output from home, so for instance I guess the, we always have more recycling than we do have rubbish and I think that’s a positive thing.

I: Yup, so you said you it made you feel good. But like good to whom? If that’s not a too tricky question.

P: I guess personally, first of all. Good to know that you’re doing the right thing from a personal perspective but also good to know that I’m not, again going back to recycling, because it’s a good example, good to know that I’m not putting plastic in a landfill that will be in there for hundreds of years and will definitely impact on society further down the track.

I: So in the future are you planning to be greener or?

P: Ah, yes definitely. I’ll use more green products as financial ability allows me to, when you’re looking at the cost, it doesn’t have so much influence on what you purchase. If ideally I could eat organic, afford to eat all organic food, use only green cleaning products I would do that.

I: So do you feel that cost is one of the primary, or one of the main constraints?

P: Cost is the primary constraint. Cost and availability. If its available but it’s too expensive, I won’t buy it. If it’s not available, I can’t buy it. If it’s available and the price is reasonable, I’ll always buy it.

I: So like what kind of, where is it not available, in your opinion?

P: Um not, well there’s not products for every category of stuff that you need.
I: Is there a specific category you've looked at, that you wish had an eco alternative?

P: Not really, I mean thinking about things maybe oven cleaner? I don't know if there's an Ecostore oven cleaner, I haven't ever seen it [laughs]. Yeah I'm trying to think what else, you use to clean stuff, yeah, no, that's pretty much all.

I: Um, so you mentioned that you don’t like imposing your green values on other people, but is your family and friends all quite green?

P: Relatively, yes.

I: And that's based on what you see or talk about?

P: Uh, what I see, my experience, of dealing with them, living with them, staying with them.

I: But you personally never try to influence, their choices?

P: No. The only influence would be if we were specifically shopping together and we were looking at a specific product and I could say, yes, I've had a good experience with this, I know it works, I reckon we should buy it. Other than that, no, I don't go out and promote, you guys should buy that and it's really good. Yeah, uh nope.
Appendices

Interview: Sylvia

I: If you could just start by walking me through your first experience with an Ecostore product?

P: Ecostore. Oh, that would have been a long time ago. Probably first noticed the store down in Freeman’s Bay, which looks quite exciting, doesn’t it? So you go along and go in there and have a look, so I can’t imagine how long, whenever it probably first open, it probably would have been years.

I: So how did you notice it?

P: Driving past. And it’s a nice little building, it was all nicely renovated so

I: And did you go in the store? At that time?

P: Yes.

I: So your first experience was with the store?

P: Yes. Yes, definitely.

I: So, what did you make of the store when you went inside?

P: I liked it. Its got quite a nice feel to it, it feels very eco I think. With nice wooden shelves and its feels very earthy, but not in a dirty way [laughs]

I: Do you think some people can think that eco is sometimes dirty?

P: Yeah, I think so. People kinda always associate that sort of thing with some kind of, you know, dodgy backyard store with you know. It doesn’t, it looks professional. It’s always looked professional.

I: So how do you make of eco yourself?
Appendices

35 P: How do I make of it?

37 I: What do you make of eco? What comes to mind?

40 P: Eco? Um, natural, healthy, not tested on animals. Chemical-free, good for the planet.

42 I: So did you buy anything when you first went to the Ecostore?

44 P: Yes

46 I: Do you remember what it was, per chance?

48 P: It would have been spray cleaner, probably, that’s what I would have started with, something simple to see if it works. Something useful, something you can use a lot around the house.

51 I: And how did you feel about using the product?

54 P: Yeah, it was good.

56 I: Did you use it the same way you would of with a normal product?

58 P: Yeah, yes, absolutely.

60 I: And are you still using it now?

62 P: No, actually I don’t use the spray cleaner any more. I use a different brand of eco product [laughs], not from the Ecostore. Yeah.

65 I: So what was the reasoning behind that?

67 P: The Ecostore spray and wipe is not one of the strongest ones available on the market. So it doesn’t get the kitchen super clean, it’s not the best for fighting oils and cleaning up. So, well, originally it was just about the only product you could buy, from the Ecostore, but since
then a lot of different brands have come along like Greenworks, and Beauty Engineered, there’s so many more in the market now so you sorta have that option to test out other brands that are in the same vein.

I: So how would you compare the different brands?

P: I really like Ecostore. Cause they are a little Kiwi company, and the B_E_E products are also really good. But I tend to go to the Ecostore so I can buy lots of different things. Whilst with B_E_E products you’re really limited as they are in supermarkets and supermarkets obviously have nowhere near the range

I: Do you always buy from the Ecostore of the supermarket?

P: Mostly from the supermarket.

I: Oh really. And the reasoning behind that is?

P: [laughs] ‘Cause I like shopping. So you get the whole experience, and you see things, you’re not going to get that much at the supermarket. You know, sometimes at the supermarket they’ve got two or three products so at Ecostore and you can see the new items and chop and change and try something new.

I: So how often would you be going to the Ecostore?

P: [laughs] Probably would be at least once a month

I: Oh okay. So do you do just one shop or?

P: Yes, yup. And I get my refills.

I: Oh okay. Would you mind just walking me through a typical time when you go the Ecostore and what you do?
P: Oh, yeah. It would usually be a Saturday afternoon. And I would take my refill bottles, and go in and have them refilled. And wander around the store and look at everything, and look for the new products.

I: And would you buy any new products?

P: Yeah, definitely.

I: So you mentioned that you get refilled, what are the products that you get refilled?

P: Laundry liquid, and the multi-purpose cleaner. And the floor cleaner.

I: I’m actually quite new to the refilling thing, how does it actually work?

P: Oh, so when you buy the product, you can just take the container and they’ll fill it up for you. They’ve got massive big tanks there full of the product and they’ll fill it up for you. It’s a little bit cheaper. But more than that, its saving having to constantly buy plastic bottles isn’t it?

I: So what’s the main reason that you like refilling it?

P: It was a bit cheaper [laughs], at the end of the day.

I: So the bottles that you actually use are like these size [pointing to 500ml bottle]?

P: No, they’re bigger. I usually buy litres.

I: So how do you find actually using it, if the bottles that big?

P: It doesn’t bother me. In fact, in the handwash I buy the massive one, its five litres I think. I go through so much soap like you wouldn’t believe it [laughs].

I: So at home, where do you put the handwash?
I refill it into bottles that sit in the sink. Or in the shower. But I keep the twenty-litre thing in the garage. And then I go down and refill them.

I: Why's it in the garage?

P: ‘Cause it's enormous. It's not very attractive; it's not designed to be up for show. I think it's probably for commercial use. It's really, really big. So I'm like, hey, can you help me put this into the car? [laughs]

I: So it must be quite expensive, to buy that much at a time.

P: Yeah, it's heaps. It's seventy or eighty dollars or something?

I: But you go through it

P: I go through so much. I if I had these little 500mls I would have to, I would be going through two a week it would be crazy, so...

I: But the bottles that you do put in it in? Did you buy them?

P: Yeah, you know, they're just pretty ones from Living and Giving, or something.

I: So what was the reasoning behind putting in into the smaller bottles?

P: ‘Cause I can't use the big one. It's just a big massive refill. Yeah, it's a big drum. Yeah, I would, you know because for bathrooms and so forth you wouldn't really have them out because it's plasticky and not so pretty.

I: So what are some of the main Ecostore products that you use, or have used in the past?

P: The spray cleaner, the floor cleaner, the hand soap, the body wash, laundry liquid and I did use laundry powder as well, but I moved off that and I recently tried the dishwasher tablets and the shampoo and conditioner and [laughs] what else? I've got the multi-purpose cleaner, very good product. And I think I've had glass cleaner as well.
I: So what’s the story behind why you use Ecostore products across so many different things?

P: Oh, because I use products that aren’t tested on animals. And so, almost everything in the supermarket is animal tested. So I have to buy everything from a place like Ecostore.

I: So what’s your belief on animal testing, testing on animals?

P: I don’t believe in it. Anti-vivisection [laughs]. So I wouldn’t buy anything that was tested on animals.

I: And that extends to everything in your life?

P: Yeah. everything.

I: So how did that come about? Have you always been like that or?

P: Yeah, pretty much so.

I: So, you were like growing up in your family.

P: Uh, no. My family was, like complete opposites. They were, like my dad would have been, use animals for whatever you want [laughs] but no, I was like about thirteen when I decided to become a vegetarian and then from there it just progressed and then moved into those sort of areas. Sort of a natural flow really, once you make those choices in your life you can end up going down the road [laughs] you try to, you know, encourage free-range and organic and not tested on animals.

I: So before you used Ecostore, what were you using?

P: I probably would have used something like from the chemical range.

I: And how did you feel about those products?
P: Fine, but when something, but when something that came along and took all that away, in the beginning there wasn't an Ecostore. Like when I was younger, no one cared. It is relatively new, the whole, the being eco.

I: So when you first went in the Ecostore, when it was relatively new, could you remember what you did in the store?

P: Uh, no. It would have been a long time ago.

I: So like uh, checking out the products or?

P: Yeah, well it's exciting 'cause it would have been; it's a store full of exciting things. Like a garden section, a beauty section and the household cleaning section. It sort of covers everything. You can go in there and buy your make up. It's great that everything's there.

I: So how did you know what it was all about? Was that through just driving past or?

P: I think would have been quite well publicised back then. So you know, when it was originally, I think maybe the couple used to sell it from home or something, or they used to sell it some other way before the Ecostore turned up down by Victoria Park markets. There would have been publicity around it, at the time.

I: So of the Ecostore products that you have used in the past. How many of them do you still use now?

P: Most of them apart from the spray cleaner, the spray and wipe. I use everything else in the house is Ecostore.

I: Um, have you tried any other ones or?

P: Other brands?

I: Other eco brands, or chemical brands?
P: Yeah yup, well I've tried the other eco brands, B_E_E and Simple Green. Not Simple Green, it's that one that Synergy [Synergy Brand Experience, experiential marketing company] were promoting, something green. Not Simple Green.

I: Greenworks?

P: Yeah, it was Greenworks.

I: So why did you try to try those ones?

P: Just to see if they were better, mmm.

I: And were they?

P: Yeah, the spray cleaner was from the Greenworks. Unfortunately, sorry Ecostore [laughs]. The spray cleaner was really good, it was just like one of the chemical ones, of course they're really good, they've been built in some great scientific factory haven't they?

I: So have you tried quite a lot of alternatives, across the Ecostore ranges? Like the floor cleaner, or the body wash or?

P: Yes.

I: But you haven't found those alternatives?

P: No, still go back to Ecostore. Ecostore is actually quite well priced as well.

I: And you always buy from the actual store?

P: Yup. If I was in the supermarket and I'd run out of laundry detergent I might buy one if it's an emergency, but generally I am going to refill.

I: So were there any occurrences where you just happened to run out of a product?

P: No, not really.
I: So you're always quite well stocked up?

P: Yeah.

I: So you mentioned that you go on a monthly basis? And you stock up on quite a few things?

P: Yup.

I: So what are the kinda things that you typically stock up on when you go there?

P: The laundry liquid and multi-purpose cleaner. They would be the two main products. Sometimes soap, if I want to buy a bar soap. Just 'cause it's nice for a change instead of liquid.

I: So how do you feel when you use the Ecostore product? So maybe we'll just take the floor cleaner or is there any time where you've used chemical products, ever?

P: Like spray and wipe or whatever?

I: Yeah. So how would compare the Ecostore product compared to the chemical ones?

P: They're just as good. Just as good, yeah.

I: And is that across everything or?

P: Yeah.

I: So you always feel that it gets the job done?

P: Yeah, absolutely.

I: And you'll definitely stick with it?

P: Yeah, definitely.
I: Cool. So, what happens when you go back home from the Ecostore? Just a typical time

P: Well, I put the stuff away.

I: Oh well was there any particular place you put them away. You mentioned you put the big one in the garage

P: Oh yeah, the giant one.

I: Is there anything else that is stored in an unusual place?

P: No, they're just in the right cupboards, you know. If it's for the kitchen it's in the kitchen cupboard. Bathroom, cleaning supplies go into the bathroom cupboard. So everything is in its right room.

I: So is there anything else, what do you put into the little bottles?

P: Hand soap, and body wash.

I: And anything else you buy in bulk?

P: Nah, just refill.

I: Do you find that you keep your bottles quite clean then?

P: Yeah.

I: ‘Cause it might get a little dirty over use.

P: What they quite often do is when you take it in for a refill, they have got some already refilled, so they tend to, they can take yours, and you don’t actually get yours back. They’ll go back and wash it for the next person so it’s kinda like getting the gas bottle at the gas station. You don’t refill yours; sometimes you get a fresh one.
I: Oh, do you get a discount when you do that?

P: Yup.

I: Oh, is it kinda like a couple, or is it much [laughs]?

P: Yeah, I think it is like ten percent or something. But then again they’ve also got the loyalty card, which is exciting.

I: And that really appeals to you?

P: Yeah. Stamp, stamp, ooh, free calico bag [laughs].

I: And you're definitely planning to continue use the Ecostore?

P: Yeah, definitely.

I: So how often would you use Ecostore products at home?

P: Every day.

I: So like, body wash and shampoo in the morning?

P: Yeah and hand wash.

I: So what were your first expectations when you used the Ecostore product?

P: Well I didn’t think it was going to be too great. Because I thought it might be hard when you take all the chemicals out. And you haven’t got the filthy great Colgate laboratory to test everything in, then maybe it wouldn’t work that well. That maybe, it wouldn’t be as good as chemical. Its changed over the years though, like the formulas have changed and they quite often say new and improved and they really are. They're obviously investing in it still as it goes along. Items are not the same ingredients or the same formulas as they were ten years ago.
I: And how did you notice that?

P: Quite often they would have changed the packaging and you would have noticed that the packaging had changed. And it would say new improved or it would have, the laundry liquid has just come out and it got like a new sticker on it that says twenty eight washes from this container, it’s more concentrated. And you really notice it, like when I went to use it I put far too much in, I put in a normal quantity and it was bubbles everywhere and I was like, uh no.

I: And that was the first time you used it?

P: Yeah, yeah that was the new concentrated one and I was like yeah, that one is definitely stronger. So yeah, it’s good that they, you know a lot has changed in the years so, it’s good that they didn’t think that they could just make what they did ten years ago and keep making it. They’ve got to keep changing the formula and keep up with the market, otherwise someone else will just come in, won’t they?

I: So you’re quite positive of the changes they’re making?

P: Yeah, definitely.

I: And you’ve taken note of them?

P: Mm, yeah.

I: Do you take much notice of the packaging, generally?

P: Yup, it’s pretty. It’s always got nice pictures on it.

I: So for new products you buy, or even the old ones, do you ever check the back of the pack?

P: Make sure it’s got a little rabbit on the back, um [laughs]?

I: Do you?
P: Probably not so much these days. I did notice with their laundry detergent because you know, it’s quite noticeable. It said new and improved so I, I wouldn’t ordinarily look at it, I would just go oh, that's what I buy.

I: Is that because you know it’s the Ecostore?

P: Yeah, yup.

I: So you quite trust them as a brand?

P: Yes, definitely.

I: And that's based on your perceptions of them?

P: Yup.

I: As you looked for the rabbit and anything else?

P: Everything.

I: Like what other things?

P: Like what other things. [Pause]. If I went to Farmers to buy beauty products, or make up, or anything like that, yeah.

I: Would that be a deal breaker if it didn’t have it?

P: Yeah, absolutely. If it hadn’t got it, I’d go and research it before I bought it.

I: Have you ever done much research on Ecostore?

P: Not really. I went on their website once and I thought maybe I should order online, but then again I’m not much of an online orderer as I quite like the shopping experience.

I: So what do you feel the shopping experience gives you?
P: Yeah I just like shopping. I like being, going somewhere and talking to someone.

I: Do you often talk about being green or sustainable at the Ecostore? Just seems like a natural thing to do.

P: No, I don’t actually. Yeah, normally I would ask about the products or, but no, I don’t talk about the green. The greenery of it [laughs].

I: I don’t know what the staff there are like.

P: Yeah, they’re really nice.

I: Are they quite green?

P: Yeah, yeah.

I: But they’re not pushy in green values?

P: No, not at all. Not at all. But they look it. They don’t look like they would work at Smith and Caugheys [laughs]. They look like earthy people.

I: So of the products you can’t refill, what happens with the packaging when you finish it?

P: Oh, I recycle it; I put it into the recycle bin.

I: Always?

P: Yeah.

I: Do you ever have any other uses for the packaging?

P: Uh, no. In the bin [laughs] but then again, it just goes to landfill, doesn’t it? [laughs]

I: So have you ever put it in the bin, or you just recycle?
P: I always recycle, my bins always full with everything else. So, I have to use the right bin.

I: Your rubbish bin?

P: Yeah [laughs].

I: So do you buy these to be sustainable or to be eco?

P: No, yeah not, I don’t think to be sustainable to be honest, I don’t think I’m doing it because I’m worried about landfill, I’m not worried about saving the planet so much as I am about not using chemicals myself, so I guess at a selfish level to try and protect myself from what potentially could be dangerous I suppose, and more to protect myself really, and the animals.

I: So if you feel that you’re using chemical products, how does that make you feel?

P: I’m just a bit worried about, you hear all the bad press about it and you go, maybe they do cause cancer, maybe it is what we’ve done wrong that we’ve, whoops, so sickly now there’s a race, so maybe that what we’ve done to ourselves living with the chemicals we bathe ourselves on a daily basis. So you go, well if it’s something you can take out of you life, then why not?

I: As a commitment, did you make that commitment like quite a while ago?

P: Yup a long time ago.

I: And was there kind of a tipping point when you did?

P: Yeah, I think so, I think you just read just a lot in the magazines and you sorta study it and then people around you get sick and you tend to research don’t you and you try to work out, what’s happening on a global scale and then you sorta go a lot of the evidence shows chemicals are really bad for us. So yeah you go that’s it, no more chemicals.

I: Yup, so that’s a commitment you’ve made to every aspect of your life?
P: Yeah.

I: Has it been quite hard?

P: Um, no not really.

I: ‘Cause there's always been options available?

P: Yeah, we're pretty lucky in New Zealand, aren't we? Lots of, there's lots of things to buy, that aren't chemically, yup.

I: Have you ever been overseas for a bit?

P: Mm-hmm

I: And you have had to use other chemical products?

P: Yeah you know. Uh, actually no. When I go on holiday, I take my stuff with me [laughs]. So, I'll be fine. I don't even use the shower and, the soap from the hotel. I'll just take my own stuff; I'll just take it from my refill bottles. Life stays the same for me.

I: So what's the reasoning behind using your own products?

P: I just don't, I don't know what they are supplying you with and it's bound to be chemically in hotels, they're about whatever's cheapest.

I: So you just leave it there?

P: Yeah, I don't touch it. I don't steal it [laughs]. You know, those people who fill up their suitcases. What am I going to do with it, its like nah, its just gotta, I always take everything with me.

I: Cool. So have you ever done any research? You mentioned that at that time you had a look around.
I: So was that on the Internet?
P: Yeah, and magazines, you just read articles.

I: ‘Cause you were worried about the whole chemicals thing?
P: Mm, yup.

I: So how do you see Ecostore as different to other eco brands?
P: Umm

I: So you mentioned that you use the Greenworks brand?
P: Yeah, but I don’t think Greenworks are a New Zealand [company].

I: No, I think it’s owned by Clorox.
P: Yeah. Though it’s not as, I kind of think of it this as being quite Kiwi.

I: And you’re quite keen to support local stuff?
P: Yeah, definitely.

I: Is there any particular reason why?
P: For New Zealand? I support everything New Zealand. It's very important, it makes everything better. It makes it better if it’s made here, it gives people jobs.

I: So you find it not too pricey?
P: Uh, no, not too bad.
I: Compared to? It's obviously a bit more expensive compared to the chemical ones.

P: Yeah definitely. The chemical stuff is really reasonable. You see it at the supermarket and you go god, that's a lot cheaper. The price doesn't even come into it, I wouldn't even, it wouldn't stop me buying it. I think it probably is a bit more expensive. That's what Kelly [colleague] said when I mentioned it to her. She goes you know, that's really expensive and I was, like really?

I: But you're happy to pay that amount?

P: Yeah definitely.

I: So even if it was like, hypothetically, like three times the price, you're happy to pay the price because?

P: It's well, because it's a small market and it's a premium product and you're paying because it is on such a smaller scale then the other brands and anything you're buying in the supermarket is being made in the zillions, isn't it? You have to pay premium for all that. So it's fine.

I: And you're happy to do so?

P: Yeah, absolutely.

I: Oh, when you do go down to the Ecostore, do you bring your own bags or?

P: No, I quite like theirs, 'cause they give you their nice brown paper bags and I really like them, it's like America.

I: Oh, what do you do with them, once you've used them to take stuff home?

P: Oh, I use it for a rubbish bin and then chuck it out.

I: So you just find that it has other values and…
P: Yeah.

I: Oh, why do you like using brown paper bags?

P: I just like it. It's really, you know it's very, its quite unusual, isn't it. You know, you go the supermarket and they're all stupid plastic bags. But I just like the brown paper bag, it feels like you know, it's a nice little, its like a gift, getting a wrapped paper bag, its like a present.

I: Is it quite plain or does it have Ecostore on it?

P: No, it's got nothing on it. It's just plain.

I: Oh really?

P: Mmm. Just absolutely plain.

I: So do you ever take much notice of their advertising?

P: Yes. I don't think they are on TV at all.

I: No, I don't think anything lately.

P: No, haven't seen them for ages. See them in the magazines and that's probably about all, that's where I've seen them mostly.

I: Do you recall any of the ads?

P: Nah, I've seen them mostly in the magazines where they put them in like giveaways. And the competitions and the send in on the back of an envelope and you can get three Ecostore products. I've seen a lot of that lately.

I: Does it ever make you do anything?

P: No, I don't want to do that [laughs].
I: So you're just happy going there, so you've gone there every month?

P: Yup.

I: So how long has that been going on for?

P: Forever, as long as they've been there.

I: Well that's quite a commitment.

P: I like it. I like it in there.

I: So you must be one of their regulars?

P: Yeah.

I: Do they recognise you?

P: Yeah sometimes they do. Sometimes they give me discount [laughs].

I: Oh really?

P: Yeah. They go oh hi, it's you. Uh, oh have ten percent.

I: Oh really?

P: But then I don't get my card stamped. I'll take the ten percent instead.

I: So what happens when you get the card stamped? Is it like a coffee card?

P: Hmm. Yeah, you get up to your third purchase and you get a free bag. You get up to your six purchase and you get a bar of soap. And I think when you get up to your tenth, or eighth purchase you get 20% off your whole next buy. Which is huge discount.
I: So have you gone through a few of those cards?

P: Yup.

I: And their loyalty programmes been on for a while?

P: Yeah, it’s a good idea. People like the loyalty cards. Well, if they go into stores. I don’t know if they do it online.

I: Um, I’m not sure. Have you ever shown the Ecostore product to anyone else? Is it in your home or?

P: Yup, I showed it to my mum, and she uses all Ecostore products now too.

I: Oh okay, so she was influenced by you?

P: Yup.

I: How did you do that?

P: I just told her, I said you should start using this and stop using the chemicals.

I: Because you said they weren’t very green growing up?

P: Yeah. Not very green at all. But mum is now, mum is very aware, she’s really careful to try and be healthy.

I: And that was all because of your influence?

P: Yeah, I’d say so. Yeah, yeah.

I: So what was the thing that you said that [cut-off]
P: I just told her that you've got to try and avoid chemicals in your life and you've got to try, but she knows that I tell her off all the time, don't buy anything that's tested on animals and so, she's really aware now.

I: So when you go to her home do you point things out and...

P: No, it's all sorted now. Because I go shopping with her so...

I: So how did she go about making the change? Was it gradual or

P: No, it was instant. She just chucked everything out.

I: Really?

P: Yeah. She just went I don't know, I don't want this in my house anymore it's all poisoned.

I: That's quite a good point.

P: Yeah, yeah she was just like nuh, I believe you and I trust you, and I was like good.

I: So she actually chucked out the product or finish it first?

P: No, she fully chucked everything out, she went right, I want everything new.

I: And then she went out there and buy it all?

P: Yeah.

I: You went to the Ecostore?

P: Yeah

I: And bought everything?
P: Yeah. She was a maniac in there. She loved it in there, so it was like yeah, you just make that immediate change I guess, for some people.

I: It was quite dramatic. But she's quite happy being; she hasn't noticed any differences at all?

P: Nah no, she just feels great.

I: Is it something that ever comes up when you talk to her?

P: Nope not anymore. Just life, it's our lives now; we don't think anything of it.

I: But at that time, you were like on her case because she was using chemicals?

P: Yeah, Yeah, yeah. I'll still be careful, like if she was going to buy makeup I say, you be careful what brand you buy.

I: Even though she's made the change?

P: Yup. Well sometimes she forgets you know. She'll be like, uh L'Oreal's okay isn't it? No!

I: Have you ever gifted an Ecostore product to someone else?

P: No, no.

I: But you have recommended it, to your mother at least.

P: Yup.

I: Anyone else?

P: No, not really. I don't know many green people to be honest.

I: So you'd only recommend it to a green person?
Appendices

796  P: Someone who I thought would be along those lines. I’d have to have some inkling that
797  they were vaguely interested in it.
798
799  I: So I guess you weren’t really for the environmental angle yourself, it was about the
800  chemicals?
801
802  P: Mmmm.
803
804  I: So were there other people kinda like that, in your life?
805
806  P: Nah, not really, no.
807
808  I: But you wouldn’t just recommend it to one of your friends? Who are just a bit more
809  typical.
810
811  P: No, it just probably would never come up in a conversation.
812
813  I: So when you go other people’s homes, do you ever use their hand washes?
814
815  P: I don’t really go, if I went to someone else’s home, I don’t go other people’s homes very
816  often. And I don’t have people around to my house very often. And I wouldn’t probably go to
817  someone else’s house where I needed to wash my hands [laughs].
818
819  I: What about your place of employment? Do they supply Ecostore hand wash?
820
821  P: No, regrettably, they do not. It’s very disappointing.
822
823  I: So do you wash your hands while…
824
825  P: Yup. With the bad stuff in the toilet.
826
827  I: Oh, and how does that make you feel?
828
829  P: It’s yuck, isn’t it? It makes your skin feel dry and horrible as well, yeah.
I: But you wouldn’t, you’re happy to put up with it?

P: Well, we don’t actually pay for it; the landlord does, so we don’t actually have any choice. But when I was in charge of the ordering of the company, I did buy the Ecostore dishwashing powder and the spray and wipe stuff but I don’t do that anymore.

I: Oh really? So what was behind your decision to choose those products?

P: Because I wanted to buy eco stuff. Because I wanted to buy natural products to try and help my work friends.

I: Do you know if your work friends took much notice of it?

P: No, don’t think so.

I: Oh okay. Is it a bit weird using chemical products here and then going home and only using eco?

P: Um yeah. I’m not really happy about it but then again I can’t bring in my own container of hand wash. It’s kinda like if you’re around in the weekend and you have to go to a public toilet what can you do, you can’t, its not transportable so

I: So you felt that the chemical one, physically made your hands a little drier?

P: Yeah, nasty.

I: Yeah, and in terms of how you feel about using the chemical ones, it doesn’t, do you feel that it’s not as good?

P: No, I don’t think it’s not as good, it’s probably fine. It’s just; it’s not natural is it. I don’t think about it anymore for too long, and you’ve got enough worries in your life.

I: Are there any other situations where you’re forced to use something with chemicals in it?
P: Well probably only if you're out and about.

I: But you wouldn't avoid not being out and about just so you could...

P: No, no.

I: So just thinking, like restaurants, cafes...

P: Yeah, so if I'm at a restaurant or café I just use whatever's there. There's not much you can really do about it. It's only occasional.

I: Um, so of the list of the Ecostore products you told me you were using, you use some of them regularly and some of them not?

P: All regularly I'd say.

I: But you've sometimes switched off it?

P: Yup.

I: But you've always gone back to some of them?

P: I'll try some other brands, and if they're better, I'll swap. So say for example, spray cleaner, I don't use the Ecostore one any more because the other one was really good so, you still have to use what's best for the job.

I: So your thinking behind trying it out first was to see if it was better?

P: Uh no, I only tried it out because, the Greenworks one, because it was a free sample.

I: So you wouldn't have tried it otherwise?

P: No, don't think so. No, then I tried it, it was really good.

I: And you also felt that because it was eco, it still had the no chemicals thing?
P: Yeah yup.

I: But you wouldn't normally go out of your way to try another product?

P: No.

I: Because you're happy with the way all your Ecostore ones are working?

P: Yeah, yup. I wouldn't bother shopping around.

I: So what do you make of, in general, of the eco or green in products these days?

P: What do I make of them. They, I don't know, think a lot of people have got on the bandwagon of it for sure, a lot of people are you know, throw around the word eco around willy nilly, and you can actually see things that sorta claim to be eco, you know just like how they throw organic around, lots of products you see these days say they're organic and natural and they're healthy and then you actually read the ingredients and they're not at all. Which is really disappointing that it's been able to be used so freely, so I guess that's another reason not to shop around because, in Ecostore we trust [laughs].

I: So have you ever checked the ingredients or

P: Mmm. Yup

I: All the time, or?

P: On Ecostore?

I: Yeah.

P: Probably not so much on Ecostore because I think they're at that point where they're not going to slip some chemicals in there because it would be so detrimental for the business it wouldn't be worth it. But for any other product I buy, I read everything, I read all the
ingredients. It's when you realise that something that says organic doesn't mean anything
[laughs].

I: So when you read the ingredients, these things can be quite scientific, are there things that
are, not looking for?

P: Yeah, I'm looking more for the parabens and the sodium laureth sulphates. And so, I'm
looking for certain chemicals that shouldn't be in there, rather than what's in there, what I
don't want to be in there.

I: So how do you know about parabens and sodium laureth sulphates?

P: Uh I don't know, from just probably research [laughs] yeah, so.

I: So if it had just like one of those, absolutely no deal?

P: Yup. Absolutely. But they wouldn't put those in Ecostore would they? They should know
better.

I: So as a brand you quite trust, is there any other eco brands that you feel that way?

P: Um in the cleaning products sorta vein?

I: Umm, in the cleaning products, like is that the same with Greenworks?

P: Yup Greenworks they've got a really small range. So and that's yeah with, they're owned
by a supermarket so there's probably three products I think.

I: 'Cause like Clorox owns Greenworks.

P: Yeah.

I: Which is the same company, which makes some of the other ones.
P: Um, but Clorox are no animal testing. Yeah, they do make chemical products, yeah. I think they make Sunlight soap and all those things, don’t they? So yeah, so yup.

I: So but you still trust Greenworks as much as you do Ecostore?

P: Well, yeah, they still, well probably not as much as Ecostore because of the holding company, but it still, I guess it’s good that they are trying to dip their toes in the water to see if the market’s there, it’s never going to be a huge market, not in my lifetime so...

I: So are you quite on the green bandwagon? You said some people are, are you one of them?

P: No, I don’t think so. No.

I: And why’s that?

P: I just don’t have time for that.

I: Do you feel that some of the green options these days are too time consuming?

P: Um no, it’s probably just not really my scene. It’s probably not really my whole bag, that scene, probably for people who have got different future plans, I’d say.

I: What kind of future plans were you meaning?

P: Well I guess people, who have got big families, and they’ve got kids and they’re trying to save the planet for future generations and so forth, and I don’t have time for that.

I: So you’re not trying to save it for anyone?

P: Uh no, who would I be saving it for? [laughs]

I: So do you feel a bit selfish in trying to save it for yourself or?

P: Yeah, well probably the whole purpose of using it is a little selfish. Yeah, isn’t it really? It is to try to hopefully, I won’t be exposed to chemicals so I don’t get some hideous cancer and
die. So it's probably totally selfish as opposed to people who are doing, you know, trying to
dump less plastic, have less landfill, less pollution.

I: But I guess you do recycle, but not some of the other things?
P: Nah. But it's good that they're not putting all their chemicals into the sea. But on the other
hand you know what percentage of the population you are and you know you're not ever
going to make a difference, that's the other thing isn't it?

I: So at home, you live with your partner?
P: Mmm-hmm.

I: So he's quite similar, is he quite on the same views as Ecostore?
P: Yeah exactly. The same, yup.

I: Oh that's great. So is that something you influenced him on or?
P: No we probably had the same ideals from the beginning.

I: Oh okay, [I'm] not sure, which came first, Ecostore or your partner?
P: The partner. The partner, but I guess we just developed along the way, and you know,
some, or something when you're with a person you have to have those similar values or it
probably won't work [laughs] so it kind of just, is just became the same values, same ideals

I: So he just absolutely followed your lead and agreed to everything?
P: Yup.

I: Does he ever go with you to the store?
P: Yeah, he goes there all the time.
I: And he's quite interested in the products too?

P: Yeah, he likes it.

I: Is he quite green or eco in other aspects of his life?

P: Yeah, definitely.

I: Even compared to you?

P: Yeah, he's pretty, he's really good. He was gutted the other day when he bought some Dove deodorant and then found out it was animal testing and Dove and he was like "I'm sorry", he was so upset about it.

I: Did he use it?

P: No, he won't use it. I'm like well; you've bought it now so you might as well use it up. It's difficult, you don't realise how bad everything is, but deodorants are a big pile of chemicals anyway. Not Ecostore.

I: So just had a slip up at the supermarket?

P: Didn't realise. Dove, it sounds very reminiscent.

I: Oh but if it was you, you would check all the packaging?

P: Uh, no, but I know all the brands.

I: How do you which brands are good?

P: Well, there are not many that are good. So your list of safe ones would be really minimal.

I: So like what other brands are good just for our own knowledge?
Appendices

1073 P: Well at the supermarket, at the supermarket almost nothing would be. I wouldn’t buy
1074 Johnson and Johnson, anything made by Unilever, all of those ones, so there wouldn’t be
1075 much that I would buy at the supermarket. I guess, I um, what’s left. I’m thinking all the
1076 Colgate Palmolive, they’re all bad. The only good ones are Beiersdorf, who make Nivea.
1077
1078 I: Oh yeah?
1079
1080 P: Yeah, they’re good. They’re a massive one.
1081
1082 I: I thought they were pretty big.
1083
1084 P: Yeah, European company.
1085
1086 I: So they way you shop at supermarkets, have you ever brought Ecostore products there?
1087
1088 P: Yeah, I think I bought the laundry liquid, when I ran out once.
1089
1090 I: Is it, like if you’re buying the small products, is it cheaper to buy at the supermarket?
1091
1092 P: No, it’s about the same.
1093
1094 I: Oh, okay. But when you go to the supermarket, you don’t buy your dishwashing or
1095 toiletries or household cleaners there?
1096
1097 P: Nah.
1098
1099 I: So I guess your shopping at the supermarket is quite different to the shopping at the
1100 Ecostore?
1101
1102 P: Yeah, ‘cause I go the Ecostore, it’s specifically to buy probably cleaning products.
1103
1104 I: That’s pretty interesting that you go on a monthly basis too.
1105
1106 P: Yeah.
I: Has there ever been a chance time when you've missed one out?

P: Nope, don't think I've ever run out.

I: I dunno, maybe like in a December?

P: Nope, nope. Go there a lot. They've always got lots of new products, so it's good to call in there as well.

I: Do you try their new products?

P: Mmm-hmm

I: So, what's like a new one they have?

P: They have dishwashing tablets that are new.

I: Are you still using those?

P: Yeah, they're fine, yup.

I: So what were you using before that?

P: Oh, Finish or something. Because I don't think Ecostore, they didn't have dishwashing tablets until recently, they had the powder, which was kinda messy, and then everyone sorta moved into tablets, 'cause you know, its nice and neat and tidy to use in a dishwasher. So they only just have started the dishwasher tablets.

I: Oh okay, so when you saw that they had it, did you throw the Finish out?

P: No, I finished the Finish.

I: Finish the Finish?
Appendices

P: I finished the Finish [laughs] and I then bought the Ecostore tablets, which are made somewhere exciting. They're not made here. They're made somewhere strange. In Sweden or something, kinda weird.

I: So how did you feel using the Finish one? Did you have any apprehension about that?

P: No.

I: Because isn't that quite chemically?

P: Oh yeah, but then there was no option for dishwashing, dishwasher machines. No one else makes anything. There is no Greenworks or B_E_E or any of those make any dishwasher tablets so...

I: But you didn't feel bad for using the dishwasher tablets or?

P: Uh, no.

I: Uh, but after the Ecostore one, you were like; I have to use the Ecostore one now?

P: Well, yeah, no, I tested it. You know to see if it worked, put it in, yup, it's all good, it's inside well there you go, there's an easy change.

I: and you find that you use it the same, as the Finish?

P: Yeah.

I: And gives the same results?

P: Yeah, good.

I: So just lastly, so you don't consider yourself a very green person, you are more of the less chemicals and no animal testing?

P: Yeah, yeah I suppose. What's a green person, is that a person who does tree planting or?
I: Well, that’s quite a cloudy question.

P: Yeah, I know, ‘cause that's why I’m going I don't know if I'm green or not. How green are I’m more green than a lot of people at work [laughs], but I guess there are different levels of green.

I: Yeah, and by level you mean?

P: Just in the middle level, yeah.
Interview: Tanya

I: So if you’d just like to start by walking me through a typical time when you buy an Ecostore product?

P: Okay, generally it mostly appears in my house because I live in a shared flat situation and we are very focused on buying products, which are good for the environment. I can talk about the last time I purchased Ecostore products and I went into the shop in a hurry because I didn’t have any shampoo and conditioner and it was on special, for six ninety nine and I thought I would try it, yeah.

I: So why did you pick that one over the other brands?

P: I picked it because I believe in the values that I think the Ecostore has. I think they have similar values to my own personal ones. And also I quite like the design and the packaging. I think it’s really simplistic and then I guess the third thing that got me was the price. So the first thing was that it was ethical values, the second thing would be its design and the third thing was its price.

I: Great. So in terms of ethical values, how do you see the Ecostore as being ethical?

P: I believe that they are ethical in that they don’t do animal testing. Their products are derived from plants. And they don’t use chemicals, so they believe in putting natural goodness into your body, and not exposing your body to harmful substances or chemicals. I also think they, it seems like they care about the environment.

I: is that stuff that you picked up after buying it or before?

P: That’s generally before. And where that came from was, I actually haven’t seen any advertising so where that idea obviously comes from, my mum’s really into organic things, and she’s really into, just looking after the body and looking after the surroundings. And I think because she used those products I believed that they were reputable in that way.

I: So she introduced the Ecostore products to you?
P: Yes. Through my mum, she uses the toilet cleaner and the dishwashing detergents; it’s mostly their cleaning products. Just from using the cleaning products they seem like, I think some people when they use a cream cleanser like if, can’t find something that compares. I believe that it does, oh; we use the spray on as well. I believe that they are just as good.

I: So what was your first experience of an Ecostore product?

P: First experience was probably the cleaning products at my mum’s house. So we would use, probably the first one would be the spray bottle, I think that might’ve even come out first I’m not sure. It’s like the spray and wipe, and I’ve noticed lately that they’ve been putting higher levels of vinegar in it, which is interesting.

I: Oh, how did you notice that?

P: ‘Cause I can really smell it. Unless my sense of smell is miraculously improved, but, yeah, it was the spray bottle.

I: So when you used it as your mum’s house, did she tell you about it. Do you know if a conversation occurred?

P: We generally have discussions about that sort of thing with our family, I don’t remember it exactly but what I do remember is the branding. I think simply from the name, Ecostore, and I’m pretty sure on the front of the spray bottle it actually has like block writing about what it doesn’t contain. So it would have been a visual thing but also a conversation.

I: And that point, what convinced you to try it?

P: To try it? Just having the belief that my mother’s right in everything. So it was sort of unquestionable, that I would use it.

I: So you definitely felt you take her advice on anything?

P: Yeah, yes. Absolutely, because I see her as a person of integrity, and with good morals, and also, yeah I just think if she told me to jump off a bridge I probably would [laughs].
I: But you know she wouldn’t do that?  
P: No, she wouldn’t do that. Exactly, so yeah, I just, I really, our family, our whole family, has those same values in terms of the environment and caring for the Earth and caring for other people.

I: Have you ever known how that came about. Have they always been like that?

P: Um, yup I think so. My mother came from a really traditional family who probably didn’t care that much about the environment. So when she grew up, she, her husband, who she met, they were together when they were fourteen, his family was very eccentric and quite really into different things. I think she was introduced to eating well through his family. And also living a life that is kind to things around you, so that’s how she was introduced to it and I think she just wanted to be different from her parents. Yeah, and I guess both my parents were, I mean I know it’s not a very good word now but, hippies. It sounds a little judgemental but that is kind of the best word that I can describe them.

I: So would you describe yourself as a hippie?

P: Um, you know what, I probably wouldn’t. I feel like that term is really dated. I feel like a hippie, the definition of that is something that was in the seventies, in the sexual revolution and the whole world was changing. I don’t feel that it really applies to now, but I definitely think I have a green focus. And I really care about nature and I care about keeping, having respect for the place that we live and keeping it beautiful.

I: Is that something that you encourage others to do?

P: Yeah. I really, I think that most people who meet me, well it’s interesting it goes two ways. Most people who meet me in my ordinary world would say, yeah Tanya that’s what she’s like. But then, for the people who are really passionate about it, they would see me as not that involved. So in the continuum, I would probably sit just a little more above the average.

I: So you’re thinking of some really radical people who…
P: Yeah, for example my sisters a bit more radical then I am. She's a vegetarian and I'm not.

But I would say, she would definitely look at me and say I'm don't really see her as that much of a hippie

I: So it's interesting that your parents tried to revoke against their parents and...

P: I know.

I: But you carried on the same...

P: Values as them. I find that really interesting as well. I think it's quite strange that we haven't gone the opposite, but I think my parents have always been very incredibly open and they've just brought us up to be independent whereas I guess for my mum's experience I think that she felt the environment that she grew up in was quite closed, and quite narrow minded. So changed to be open minded and therefore us kids have made our own choices.

I: Would you also say that most of your other siblings are quite green?

P: Green. Definitely, my sister who I live with. She’s the most radical and probably more of a, like proactive in speaking it. She like passes on the word, like advocate.

I: So, have you ever had a conversation with Ecostore products with her? So you shop with her?

P: One of us does the shop. We have a turn. Like we have a roster, like one person does the shop each week. But we buy our own products separately. I probably would have had a conversation, we definitely had a conversation about the cream cleanser, we actually had that conversation about two weeks ago. And so she was saying, I was saying, lets get some cream cleanser for the bath and I was like maybe we should get some Chemico they were like uh, you know we'd rather not get something with chemicals. We could get the [Ecostore] cream cleanser, we think it's just as good.

I: So you didn’t think Ecostore immediately?
P: Uh, no I didn’t ‘cause I didn’t actually know that they did one. But the reason why I said Chemico is because my mother uses Chemico as well so I was immediately going back to that.

I: So if you knew they had a cream cleanser, would you have just bought that one?

P: Yup.

I: Because you know your sister’s a bit?

P: Well you know, when I buy products I generally like to buy products from the same brand. Like for my skincare brand I only buy Trilogy. And I want to buy the same, so I like to keep it kind of similar and like to use the same.

I: Any particular reason why?

P: No. Just a little bit OCD [laughs]. No, just yeah and I like to commit to one brand, it feels like a commitment, you know, yeah.

I: So have you ever gone off the Ecostore. Or once you made the decision have you always purchased it?

P: Well, I’ve definitely gone off their shampoo and conditioner. And I would never buy it again.

I: Oh okay. Well, tell me about that.

P: Well I used the shampoo; that was well, okay. It made my hair feel like a clump of a dead bird’s nest. And then, but shampoos always like that. And then I used the conditioner and it just didn’t condition my hair at all. I think it had aloe vera extract and it actually felt like I had all aloe vera throughout my hair. And it just, it really didn’t condition it. And I’m not sure if the reason why it was so cheap was because it was passed its used by date, I didn’t check. Yeah, so no, it wasn’t a good experience. I felt like you know what, with something like hair, I would really like to pay more and have my hair be really well looked after.
I: Is that because it’s more [about] appearance? Um, you know like everyone sees your hair?

P: Yeah sure, my hair is something that I; I’m lucky to have nice hair. And I want it to kind of stay that way. And um, I do want to treat it as; I’ve never treated my hair well, as of the last, except for the last year and a half. And I want to give it love whereas normally I wouldn’t care and I would just buy the cheapest one.

I: So you don’t feel anything about using chemical products in your hair?

P: I’m more, I lean more towards, like the products that I use, Akin, which is an organic hair product, so of course I lean towards more organic but if the quality is not good, then there’s no point. I suppose that there’s kind of an argument to that, so I do use an organic one at the moment but I also use a normal, like a hair salon leave-in mask, so I’m quite, as I said, I’m not radical, I’m just...

I: But you looked for an organic option?

P: Yup, yup. Absolutely, and I use one at the moment and it’s doing fine.

I: So when you used the Ecostore one, you were like, what did you do at the shelves?

P: I went to the pharmacy and like price does factor into it too, but like quality does come first. And I saw, I looked at all their organic ranges and I thought, I think I will use Akin, I think it’s the next best, it’s the best without having to go like Trilogy, but maybe next time I get Trilogy [inaudible] but yeah it is really important to me.

I: So what did you end up doing with the product?

P: It’s in the bathroom. And I’m going to use it as a backup whenever I run out, ‘cause I was thinking like a student, well okay, when Akin runs out I’ll just use this one if I don’t have, like as a backup always. But I obviously don’t have anything to worry about [inaudible].

I: But you’re not going to chuck it out?
P: No, I don’t believe in wastage. I can’t do that with anything.

I: So you would rather use up a bad product?

P: Yup, yeah.

I: Good.

P: Fun [laughs].

I: So you mentioned that the people you flat with also choose to buy Ecostore?

P: Yes.

I: So, other than your sister is there anyone else?

P: Yes, Amber is the other flatmate. And we’re soon to have a new person called Rachel and she kind of has to fit in with the household, I guess, values as well.

I: Is that something you looked at when she applied?

P: Yes. Yup, not as, it wasn’t as, well no, it was kind of important for me but not as important, so it was important for my sister that she was like, we live in a semi-vegetarian house which means we only cook fish, there’s no red meat to be cooked in the house. Or white meat really either, except for fish.

I: How does that affect you?

P: At first it was cool. Then I started getting really, really weak [laughs]. So I brought it up and said can we please get more meat and they agreed, but there was, if I want to eat red meat I have to eat it out.

I: Any other flat values?
Appendices

P: To be considerable and to be like, independent and also to have a sense of humour.

Laughter is really important to us, music is really important to us, foods really important. So its like laughter, music, food. They're the three main things in our house and we all work really hard so it's someone who's really respectful with that.

I: So when you buy Ecostore is that for the flat, or your own?

P: For the flat. Yup, but I've bought it personally for me as well because of... really hard so it's someone who's really respectful with that.

I: So how do you come to an agreement to buy it for the flat?

P: It just goes without saying.

I: Really?

P: Yup.

I: It is a bit more pricier in some categories.

P: Yeah it is, if someone bought home something that wasn't, what would probably happen would be when we sat down to say to add our things to the, because we sit down and have a chat about what each person wants to add to the shopping list we would probably say, someone would bring up the fact that it wasn't an organic product that had been [added], that had not been naturally derived and could we please get something different next time. So it wouldn't start an argument or it wouldn't lead to a confrontation it would just be like hey, next time can we get [something else?] I: Has that ever happened to your knowledge? P: No, no, it's just one of the things. That people just, it's like the unspoken rule.

I: So if someone came back with Greenworks, or what's another, or just a different green brand, would there be any [incident]
P: No, but I think there would be a recognition of the fact that it was different. That it wasn’t the brand that we had normally bought but no one would vocalise it, I don’t think it would be an issue.

I: But that hasn’t happened before?

P: I do remember seeing a Greenworks detergent I think, but that was like, that’s where those urges came from because I recognised it but I didn’t feel the need to say anything. I do prefer Ecostore, I think it’s probably just because of the branding

I: So who was the first person that said oh, we have to get Ecostore?

P: I don’t know, because I didn’t, I moved into the flat.

I: Okay, and that’s something you noticed when you came in?

P: Yeah. Just was made aware of and when you move into, well when I move into a new space whether it be work, whether it be at home, whether it be in a social environment, I observe to see what is the norm behaviour in that environment and then adapt to it.

I: You don’t ever challenge it?

P: Well in this situation I challenged the food. I mentioned that this was something I needed but my sister stuck by her value of being vegetarian, which is really cool. I felt pleased that I had challenged that but generally I really just like to go with the flow. I don’t, I like to look at things on the big picture and the scale of things and how important is this to me, and how like it is taking anything away from myself.

I: So what happens when you go home from the supermarket? Or what happens at the supermarket when you buy it, do you use plastic bags, do you pick it straight up off the shelf, do you wait for a discount, those kinds of things?

P: What would happen is I would look to see what products are on special and if none, I would obviously still buy whatever it is that I ran out of.
313 I: I guess this would be specifically for Ecostore?
314
315 P: Yeah, yeah sure. So I would check to see which one had a discount and then I would just,
but then I would only be looking at that type of brand. Yeah and then I would put it straight
in and then, we would have our own carrier bags from home that we use but I actually
forgot them the last time we shopped.
319
320 I: So what happens before the shop, do you guys get together, do you do something?
321
322 P: So before the shop, it usually happens at dinnertime, we'd be sitting around and we'll say
oh, we'll just talk about whose doing the food shop this is just a reminder. You know, just
naturally comes up in the conversation. And then we'll talk about what is important for us to
be on that shop for the week and so well obviously proteins very important in our house. So
that we come up and people will talk about what is necessary for them and we'll almost like
have a mutual discussion. Like last week we were driving back from a road trip and we were
all in the car, I was doing the shop and everyone was throwing out ideas about what they
wanted and I was writing it down.
329
330 I: So like cleaning products, is that something discussed?
332
333 P: Cleaning products have come up very recently because I underspent so we have an extra
thirty dollars and we're getting low on cleaning products and my sister was like, we really,
we just need to stock up on cleaning products, we want to get some really good ones and I
was like yeah, a hundred percent, I'm there with you. So this conversation happened
yesterday.
338
339 I: Oh okay, that's interesting. So she was like definitely, did she say something about which
ones you should get?
341
342 P: We didn't speak; we've never spoken about the brand. It's just one of those things that
will be okay, you know.
344
345 I: So when you get home from the shop do you have to unpack and like
Appendices

347 P: Yeah, get home, the shops done in the weekend, whoever is on the shop is also on cleaning
348 as well in the house that week. Just once on the weekend. So it just depends on what order
349 you want to do it in but generally it’s done later in the day.
350
351 I: So do you have to unpack things in front of other people or
352
353 P: Generally you’re only there by yourself. ’Cause other people will just get out of your way,
354 while you’re doing the cleaning and that. But I suppose you just have to unpack it by
355 yourself.
356
357 I: So where do you store your Ecostore products?
358
359 P: So the detergent lives on the windowsill. Or in the cupboard below the sink, pretty much
360 the same place. The toilet cleaner lives in the bathroom, in the toilet sorry. And the shampoo
361 and conditioner are on a ledge in the shower.
362
363 I: Is there any particular reason why you put it on the windowsill?
364
365 P: Well actually, the others put it on the windowsill and I put it in the cupboard because I
366 like things to be simplistic and I just don’t like looking at things, but I don’t know. Because
367 for my sister, she’s quite well known in the community and a lot of her friends are very like
368 staunch and maybe for her she would make a statement by having it on the windowsill to
369 say, it would just reiterate or reaffirm this is who I am, I associate myself with Ecostore.
370
371 I: Do you think that?
372
373 P: I don’t know. I have no idea.
374
375 I: What about anything else in the house. That might be a bit
376
377 P: Our house is very, it’s a cottage and we have jars of lentils and rice and everything, that’s
378 exposed but it’s simply a storage thing. But when you walk into our house it definitely
379 speaks to people as to who we are. Like we have a piano. We have two bowls of fresh, we get
380 an organic vege box every week delivered to our door and we’ve got two massive bowls, one
of vegetables, like root vegetables and one of fruit. So you can walk in and instantly [clicks fingers] get a feel of who we are, it’s like the whole package.

I: Do you think that represents you?

P: I think it represents a part of me. It doesn’t represent all of me.

I: Or do you think it represents a collective?

P: Yeah definitely, it represents a collective. That’s exactly right and that’s exactly what our flat is. We’re totally collective, we’re a mini collective society and that’s the way we treat it. You know, democratic kind of thing.

I: Do you think your sister...

P: She’s the, not the leader, but, she is the leaseholder and she is the person who found the house and moved in initially by herself first. And that’s the, she came from a really bad environment last year and she got really sad because of it, so she was adamant when she moved into this house that it was only going to be filled with love and it was going to be respectful and everyone’s voices were going to be heard. So that’s the way that she’s made it.

I: So when you do have people coming in do they ever remark on, your house is quite

P: Yeah, we’ve had people, my friends came on Sunday just for a walk and Jacinta. my friend, just were, they were both like, this house is amazing. I love it, I love it. She sat, we’ve got about, we don’t have a couch but we’ve got a table with four chairs, we’ve got two more chairs, and we’ve just got armchairs everyone and she just sat in every single chair. She said oh, I just have to sit in every single chair, sitting on the floor and she was just almost kind of absorbing it, it was quite strange. But people are just like, a couple of people come over and oh, Tanya* this house is so you. I’m like oh that’s interesting.

I: So like what parts of you do you think are reflected in it?

P: Yeah, yeah.
I: Do they get a green [vibe] or...

P: I would say they get a real sense of just, natural feel, it's just natural, I feel like it's a warm space and it's a happy space.

I: So I guess when you said your sister’s got quite radical friends, do they ever remark on things like that when they're over?

P: No, wouldn't even, it would just be the norm to them.

I: Would they?

P: They're not even that radical but I mean someone from, I don't know, this world [referring to office workplace] would think they would be radical.

I: So on the way you use the products. So just off the top off your head would you use them any differently to a normal product? So like before you moved into this home, did you just the normal ones?

P: Like normal spray and wipe?

I: Like normal spray and wipe, Sunlight?

P: I'd just use like, it's kinda rare that I would make a shopping decision on my own. Because I've always lived in a shared, public situation. And so I've always moved into flats, and I moved a lot and the products have already been there.

I: So I guess in your last flat, did they use Ecostore?

P: I don’t even remember where I used to live. So I have honestly moved, ridiculous amounts of time. Yeah hand washes, yup. But like I would buy those myself. And soap.

I: Do you think you would use them, the spray?
I just tend to use whatever is in that house but if it comes time to buy another one and it was my turn that's the one I would go for. But I'm not averse to picking up a spray and wipe bottle and spraying a counter and everything.

I: So you would use Ecostore in exactly the same way, do you think?

P: Yeah, I think so. Oh, you know what, this is going to be interesting. The toilet cleaner I think I use more, yeah. Really like. Its actually really clear and it's hard to see so when you're using a normal toilet cleaner it's usually a purple colour or it's a bright thick creamy white, but this one is actually really clear and you can't actually see it on the bowl. So when I'm doing it, I do it probably about four times around. So I probably end up using more than what's necessary.

I: So why's that, is it because it's just clear?

P: Clear, yeah.

I: Do you feel that it does the same job?

P: Yeah I do, but because it's clear you think the amount that is not enough to be cleaning it. So I will put more in and will be like oh, oh, that's thick now, yeah. Not with the [Ecostore] spray and wipe I don't think I would spray more. The conditioner, I definitely would use like three times to try condition my hair.

I: I guess, tell me about the first time you used the shampoo and conditioner. Do you just treat it like a normal shampoo and conditioner?

P: Yeah. I did nothing more.

I: But then you found...

P: When I rinsed out my hair with the conditioner I was like, my hair feels like straw. I'm going to have to use that again.

I: And would you use it differently if you had to use it another time?
P: I’d just use way more conditioner. And maybe mix it with another conditioner I’d have to

I: So overall how do you rate the performance of the products?

P: Does that encompass [all product categories]?

I: I guess.

P: Because I’m really not impressed with the cosmetic products but I don’t feel like that’s their forte, I feel like that’s not really their market, but I might be wrong. I feel like their cleaning products are what they initially started with, and then their beauty products grew from that. So their cleaning products I would rate them as, should I rate it out of ten?

I: Um, or just compare it to a normal brand? If that’s possible.

P: Oh okay. I think it beats normal brands in its appearance, I think it beats normal brands in its values, I think it beats normal brands in the job that it does, simply because it does the job and it’s good at caring for our environment as well. It doesn’t beat normal brands in price.

I: But price isn’t a huge factor?

P: Mmm [agrees]. ‘Cause if you live that way its not even negotiable, you don’t even really think about it.

I: Do you live that way?

P: Yes.

I: Have you ever used their laundry products?

P: Yes, I use their washing powder, yup. And their soap and their hand wash.

I: I think everyone uses quite a few.
P: I just forget.

I: Any reason why you've bought so many across the range, is that because of the flat?

P: It is, it's just been over a real period of time. In the flat, like the three I've talked about are the ones in there at the moment but in the past I've used their soap 'cause I just wanted to try it out as well, and their hand wash is dinky, it [has] got a cute little packaging.

I: You like it?

P: Yeah I like it, it's got a little round, the top of it is more round than a normal squigee.

I: So you've said you wanted to try them. So what convinced you to want to try them?

P: Probably, just wanting to do the right thing.

I: So you felt you were doing...

P: A good thing. By buying this product.

I: You haven't bought them on a regular basis since?

P: Well, the only reason why is because I've moved into flats where it's already been, everywhere I've lived in, the products are already there. So I guess that's what I mean, I'm not like passionate enough to be "they do not have Ecostore, I'm going to go out and buy it" because financially that hasn't really been [the case], yeah.

I: That's something you think your sister would do?

P: Um no, I don't think so.

I: You don't think she would?
P: Oh, I’m just thinking of our mum’s house, but um no, probably if she lived in a flat and
they weren’t buying Ecostore she would probably say, guys, I feel like we need to buy
Ecostore, how do you feel about spending a little bit more money. So she would bring it up.
Whereas I’m like, I’ll just make everyone happy, go with the flow don’t want to rock any
boats. That’s my, it actually sums up both of us really well.

I: Um, why do think she’s like that?

P: I’d have to check about that. From day one, its important to speak out, um because I think
it’s integral to who she is, I think she was also born that way [laughs]

I: Like when did she decide to become a vegetarian, for example?

P: I don’t actually really know. She was always very free spirited from the age of, god, just
[laughs] from day one.

I: So it wasn’t some specific [time]?

P: No, we’ve all been brought up quite similar but she’s just a bit more outspoken like in
terms of that, what’s that, I don’t want to say advocate again, it’s someone who is, almost like
a pioneer, you know, like I’m going to be the pioneer and I’m going to be, just quite, not
argumentative, but she’s a critical thinker, yeah.

I: Would you say she’s more about green, or sustainable, or organic? I guess there’s a lot of
different words, which ones do you think describe her?

P: She is, it’s like labelling people, it’s hard.

I: People do it for lots of different reasons.

P: She’s doing it because she believes I guess that on the scale of things, this is part of my
belief as well, it’s a privilege for us to be on this earth, we believe, there’s a common belief
that people own it, but like we don’t. We’re kind of like just visiting here [laughs] in a way, so
I think, yeah. I don’t know she, what is she, like we believe in nature, yeah, and mother earth.
And I think that that’s, yeah.
I: Is that something you try to get your friends to do?

P: I don’t like to make anyone do anything [laughs] that they don’t want to do and I think that people will have their own set of, I don’t believe that my way is the right way, it’s the right way for me, it’s not the right way for somebody else. Yeah, that’s what I mean, I’m not, like as staunch. But yeah, I think that I would try to influence people but not in the [purchase of cleaning products].

I: So I guess in your old flats you just went with the products?

P: Yeah, it didn’t feel like it was that crucial to me that really, I don’t feel that we had to make a big movement for us to all change. Like it really didn’t. But then I’ve changed a lot in the last year from what I used to be like, so…

I: How so?

P: I’ve just become more, I care more about different things, I’ve realised that other things don’t actually mean so much to me anymore. And just try to be really true to myself. So whereas before, I think, it comes with age, with before I didn’t really know who I was. And I’m a lot more, I know more about, yeah I’m more comfortable with who I am.

I: Was there like a specific moment where you just [realised]?

P: Yeah kind of, yeah when I was in France. And I was on my own, I spent a lot of time by myself last year, so that was over a year ago and I just had a lot, a lot of time alone writing so I received a, I didn’t have technology or, and I was living with not much electricity or anything so I didn’t have any in, it’s amazing what happens when you don’t have any influences surrounding you like media, friends, parents, you just discover who you are, simply on your own. And that was a defining moment for me and then it’s really been nurtured throughout my counselling degree because they teach you a lot about who [you are], you have to discover who you are and yeah, it’s an amazing process, but it’s the hardest thing that has ever had happened to me in my life, ‘cause it’s really, you have to challenge yourself. And it’s really, really hard. Yeah, and change the things about yourself that you don’t like and admit them as well.
I: It's really interesting.

P: Mm, it is, I love it.

I: So what happens when you run out of an Ecostore product?

P: Buy some more.

I: So it's just the default thing to do?

P: Yeah.

I: So when you go through your list, do you just say Ecostore product or do you say kitchen wipe?

P: I would say we would put, write down detergent and then we would have a discussion and it would be made clear that it's to buy.

I: Oh really, so something detergent it would be?

P: It would be written detergent and then we'll all talk about it. And then, I don't know for sure if someone would say Ecostore, it would just simply be that the notion to buy an organic brand, but wouldn't need to be written down as well. It's the given, and if it was me I would buy Ecostore.

I: And why's that?

P: Because I believe that that brand is the best out of all the brands.

I: So do you see any other, you can think of any others off the top of your head, of brands that fit in that category?

P: Um, well there's Greenworks isn't there. And [pauses] I really can't, that's why their branding's really good.
Appendices

659
660 I: No that’s fine.
661
662 P: No I can’t. So yeah, that’s pretty good, market leader.
663
664 I: In your eyes?
665
666 P: Yeah, I think.
667
668 I: Does your flat, or sister think that Ecostore is also the leader in terms of...
669
670 P: You would have to ask her, yeah, but I’d say so. That would be my assumption.
671
672 I: Yeah, I guess if you went home with Greenworks instead of Ecostore no one would say anything?
673
674 P: Don’t think so.
675
676 I: So what happens with the packaging when you finish with it?
677
678 P: Um, we recycle.
679
680 I: Everything?
681
682 P: Yup.
683
684 I: Is that something you always do?
685
686 P: Yup. Always, we’ve got three separate bins in three separate places, we have a recycle bin outside our front door, outside the, there’s a door by the kitchen; French doors and then we have a compost. We’ve got a compost [bin], we’ve got a vegetable garden. And then we have a normal bin, which is, I then we have a fire, which is for paper.
687
688 I: Yup, that’s quite a lot of work.
689
690
691
692
693

260
I: So would you put a lot of effort into being green or sustainable or...

P: I think in our house we do. Well I generally, I just try and do what I believe is right. And I could definitely be greener, I think I use too much paper, I think I throw too many things away.

I: Is that something you're looking to change?

P: Yeah it’s something that I’m aware of and I’ll think I’ll definitely become more with each day as I get older, I'll become more, I'll become more passionate. Because I’m still on this journey of figuring out things about myself, yeah.

I: So how did you know of the Ecostore brand?

P: Through my mum.

I: Through your mum, yea. So what were the kinds of things she said about the brand when you first looked at [it]?

P: I honestly can’t remember the discussion because it’s been in our house for as long as I can remember.

I: Was that growing up or even...

P: Yeah.

I: So I guess even when it was first launched?

P: When it was launched, that’s when I’m pretty sure I remember we got the spray, and then the laundry powder that’s what I can remember. Definitely the spray first, yeah.

I: Could you possible recall what your mother thought when she first bought them?
P: I’d say she, when she bought them, she would have thought it was good. But…

I: Can’t recall? No worries, all good.

P: Yeah, it’s unfortunate that I’m not older and the decision maker in the house.

I: Have you ever gifted or, [been] gifted an Ecostore product to or from anyone else?

P: No.

I: Or shared? Or recommended? Even just to friends?

P: I probably recommended the body wash, coconut and vanilla. It smells really beautiful. And uh, what is that? Vanilla bean, one of things, oh it has got to be the hand wash [laughs], yeah, probably that, I probably recommended the body wash, coconut and vanilla. It smells really beautiful.

I: So when your friends visit you at home, do they ever notice, oh wow there’s Ecostore products everywhere?

P: No, it wouldn’t be, it’s not like that. It’s not that in your face.

I: So I guess it’s never been mentioned or So I guess I’ll just finish with, what do you make of eco or green? Do you, ’cause obviously there are a lot of words that people can use, how do you see them in terms of Ecostore?

P: Um, what they stand for?

I: Um, yeah.

P: Is that what you mean?

I: Yeah.

P: So what’s Ecostore values, are they eco or green?
I: Yup, I believe that they are ethical, I believe that they have integrity as a brand, I believe that they care about the environment and animals and people and the wellbeing of all of those three things. I believe that they're holding themselves accountable to their personal values. Because when they did this, when they brought this stuff out, this whole green movement wasn't in fashion. It was a long time ago, like I don't believe they've done it commercially to make money. I think they've done it because they had a vision.

P: Have you ever looked them up or done any research?

I: No I haven't, but I'm actually going to now.

I: Why?

P: 'Cause I'm interested. I'm talking, because I'm saying all these things that I think they are, but where does that come from? Like it's my own thing.

I: Something you got from their packaging and

P: Yeah. My mum, probably my mum.

I: But you trust your mum?

P: Well that's the sort of things I think about from my mum so I'll just be projecting it from her to that.

I: Even though, we're not sure if your mum did any research or

P: Yeah, she probably just picked it up off the shelf [laughs].

I: So do you consider yourself a very green person? I guess you said you were sort of in the middle.
P: Um. Well there’s the continuum from here to here, from there up to there, I can’t do hand movements, I’m slightly above average. Would you agree, am I allowed to ask you a question?

I: It’s hard because I don’t know your life.

P: But I just told you about my life.

I: I guess it’s how you define green. To you, is Ecostore green, is it sustainable, or it natural, how do you see all those concepts working together?

P: Yeah, I believe it’s all of those things. You can, everyone’s perception of those words is different. I think it’s all of those, someone said do you think Ecostore’s green? I would say yes. In terms of like, green I just think of planet. You think it’s natural, yes. What is the other word you said?

I: Sustainable.

P: Sustainable. I’d be like, well, that’s a hard one ‘cause they’re using plants but, yeah, instead of using chemicals.

I: So even if your sister had to give one justification for liking Ecostore, which one would it be?

P: Probably be about the environment. Yeah, like not having harsh chemicals, basically.

I: So do you see it as organic as well?

P: Yes.

I: That’s because

P: Because we care about our bodies, yeah.

I: So you definitely feel that avoiding chemicals as much as possible
P: Yeah, my health is incredibly important to me and it’s pretty amazing to think of what your body can absorb from food, yeah. I’m having this real epiphany while we’re talking.

I: That’s good. So you’re really committed to not using chemicals?

P: Yup.

I: Were you like that before?

P: Not as such. Not as much, not as such. My sister has, I adapt to whatever environment I’m in, as I said before, whether I’m at work, I observe to see what is appropriate behaviour and I’d say that my environment that surrounds me at the moment is very much natural, I live in the bush, I live by the sea, I live with a reasonably passionate person about the environment so it’s; and she is the person that I respect and who I’m closest to most in the world.

I: So if you hypothetically had to move, do you think you would carry any of those values or behaviours?

P: Absolutely. Yeah, yeah, yeah. I felt it is integral to who I am. It’s always been there.

I: So how you’ve always gone with the flow, so now you would be a bit more

P: It’s just an age thing, I’ve never, I’ve [always] lived in flats, with like randoms, as they get older or not we’re not going to do that any more. The next step will be buying my own home, so I will be the decision maker. And it just comes with age, you discover, well I have discovered what is important to me, yeah and that is crucial, to who I am now.

I: So you definitely, for Ecostore you would definitely buy Ecostore?

P: Absolutely. All their cleaning products, yup. I feel like, yeah I am an adult now.
Interview: Jennifer

I: So if you’d just to like to start by walking me through your first experience of an Ecostore product?

P: It’s funny, I was actually trying to think today but I couldn’t remember. I, when that was, I’ve been sort of using them now for several years, three or four years. I don’t know if I may have read about it or if I may have read about it or just have seen it in the supermarket.

I: So do you recall the first time you purchase it?

P: Honestly, I don’t know.

I: How about you talk me through a typical time you buy an Ecostore product?

P: Like I said, we’ve been going there for a few years, and we normally go the shop because they do refill stuff for you, like laundry detergent and dishwashing liquid and stuff so I would say we make most of our purchases at their store when we go and get our things refilled.

I: Have you always been refilling?

P: Pretty much. As soon as we found out they did that, it was like, good. Good deal.

I: So what’s your thinking about buying it in the store instead of the supermarket?

P: I kinda think I’d rather cut out the middleman and not give Foodtown my money. I’d rather give it straight to those guys.

I: So what do you do typically when you visit the Ecostore?

P: Well we just get our bottles refilled. Have a browse around and buy other bits and pieces that we might need.

I: Are there things you look out for?
P: Um, no. I just like to have a browse and see what’s in there, so shopping’s good [laughs].

I: So how often do you go?

P: I guess it would only be every two or three months, that’s when things tend to run out. We need to get our top up, yeah.

I: So do you purchase quite a lot each time?

P: Well we had some of our bags quite full the other day when you were there.

I: Are there things that you typically get each time?

P: We always get laundry detergent, dishwashing liquid, soap, we buy sort of their cleaning products as well, like there’s sort of a spray-on cleaner. And like a cream cleansing product. What else? Shampoo, I don’t use the shampoo, Geoffrey [husband] uses the shampoo. We get it from there as well.

I: Any particular reason why you don’t use it?

P: I don’t think it’s actually quite as good as the stuff I buy from the hair place. I haven’t really tried it properly to be honest. I might find myself using it one day.

I: What about the rest of the products, how do you think they compare?

P: Yeah, they’re great. I mean there’s sort of like, I like the fact that, they’re obviously like non-toxic and you know, as far as cleaning products and stuff like that goes. I actually suffer from allergies so something like that is really good. That is sort of one of the main reasons why we use their stuff.

I: Do you think that was one of the things that attracted you to it most?

P: Yeah, definitely.
I: So before that, were you using just the standard?

P: I think so, I think we may, I have a feeling we probably use other eco brands as well. The odd one here and there.

I: So the reason you use so many Ecostore ones?

P: Just basically it's the habit we've got into. I like their refill systems and stuff. I like their products. And it's good value for money to just go and get that stuff refilled. Do it all in one hit then it's all done for a few months, you don't have to think about it again for a while.

I: I guess there are only a couple products that they refill?

P: Yeah, as far as I'm concerned.

I: So what happens when you get home with all your products?

P: Put them all away and use them.

I: Is there any particular places you put them away?

P: [laughs] no.

I: Or any big containers?

P: No, just...

I: Just the regular places?

P: Mm-hmm

I: So the way you use them. Do you see any particular differences to the way you would use normal ones?
Appendices

105  P: I think as far as the laundry liquid and dishwashing stuff, I would. It’s quite concentrated.
106  You don’t need to use too much of it. So it goes a long way.
107
108  I: Is that something you found out after using it?
109
110  P: Yeah, yeah.
111
112  I: With any new product, do you have a look at the instructions and packaging?
113
114  P: Yeah, I like their packaging as well. I’m someone who always looks at packaging. And
115  yeah, it’s cool. I like their branding, their packaging.
116
117  I: So what kind of message do you think they want to say to their customers?
118
119  P: It’s quite, it’s kinda clean and down to earth. Very down to earth, it always got pictures of
120  people and kids and stuff on their packaging. It’s quite, it’s well designed; I like the design of
121  their brand.
122
123  I: Do you think there are quite truthful behind what they say as well?
124
125  P: I’m sure they appear to be, I’ve looked at their website and things in the past. They do
126  definitely seem quite genuine. There’s something, there was something about them in the
127  news a few months ago, you probably know better than me.
128
129  I: It was about the pH levels.
130
131  P: Yeah. But she sorta seemed to defend herself quite well. And state her case, I can’t
132  remember exactly what she said.
133
134  I: Who was she sorry?
135
136  P: I don’t know. The owner, there you go.
137
138  I: So you’ve said you’ve been to their website? So what was your thinking behind that. Were
139  you looking for something?
P: I think I might have been. I think that’s actually what alerted me to the fact that there’s a shop where we go get stuff refilled. I think that’s where I found out about it, on the website.

I: Did you buy it from somewhere else before that?

P: Yeah, probably. Probably I would say the supermarket.

I: So what attracted you to the store the first time?

P: Like I said it was just handy, I like the idea of just refilling things. Not having to throw your bottles away and get another one. Sorta had ours for years now [laughs].

I: So you've always refilled the products?

P: Yeah. Not always, there will be a time when we just run out and have to buy another one from the supermarket. But most of the time we refill them.

I: So what do you do with the packaging of stuff that you don’t refill?

P: You mean just general stuff?

I: Yeah, just general stuff.

P: It goes in the recycling if it can.

I: So you always recycle everything?

P: Try to. Yeah, yup.

I: So what did you think of the products before you buy them?

P: Before I bought them?

I: Like maybe the new products? Do you take a look and say I’m going to try this?
P: Yeah I do, or I might read about them somewhere, they seem to get a little bit of press. For example I use the hand wash, and a few years ago I remember reading about it in quite a few places but tried it anyway.

I: So how do you see them as being different from other products, whether regular or other ones or other green brands as well?

P: That’s a good question. I mean obviously, the green things the main point of difference between them and other things. As far as other green brands go, there’s not many I can think of that encompass such a big range of items in this country.

I: Anything encompassing a large range is a good thing?

P: Yeah of course it is. I mean, I don’t know. I guess there’s a bit of brand loyalty coming out there without me even realising now that I’m sitting here talking to you.

I: Yeah, there seems to be quite a bit of brand loyalty. Any idea what makes you so loyal to that brand?

P: I don’t know, just been using them for such a long time. They seem to be good value for money and their products are just really nice. I mean their soap are really nice and their hand cleansers and that sort of stuff actually smelt really nice and they’re nice products.

I: Have you ever gone off them?

P: No.

I: You mentioned you tried some other green brands?

P: Yeah I have, honestly, I don’t know. We just always come back to using those ones again. But there will be the odd time in the supermarket when I’ll try other ones. But we end up just using them [Ecostore].
I: Has there ever been an occasion where you haven’t had an Ecostore product and just end up going for another one?

P: Yeah, yeah. Occasionally. Not very often.

I: But that’s something you try and avoid?

P: Yeah I guess so. If it’s there and on special I’ll buy it.

I: So what do you think the Ecostore products stand for?

P: I guess sustainability, sort of eco friendly, green. Non-toxic so you know not so harmful. I guess especially now being pregnant and stuff, I’m just conscious of what’s going into my body, I always have been [like that] but that’s quite important to me right now. I’m pretty sure they don’t test on animals, and things like that as well.

I: Do you think getting pregnant changed your outlook on life?

P: Um, of course it does, yeah. But as far as like the way we eat and the products we use and have, and sort of our lifestyle, it really hasn’t changed a lot because I’m conscious of those sorts of things anyways.

I: So for the next generation, you would like to keep a green lifestyle?

P: Yeah, definitely.

I: So what motivates you to be a green person?

P: I guess you sort of read things and look at things on TV and it’s just horrifying and you sort of think if you can do some small things and help what’s going on, you can do your little bit and your part, and if everyone did that then hopefully it might make a difference, because yup.

I: Do you think using Ecostore products makes much of a difference?
P: Oh, I’d like to think so, yeah.

I: But you don’t?

P: I guess in some small way, I’m sure it does, yeah. I’m sure their manufacturing processes and stuff like that are not as bad as what other companies who produce similar items would be. I would like to think so, yeah.

I: Have you ever gifted an Ecostore product to anyone?

P: Yes. When Geoffrey’s brother had a baby last year we gave him a gift package of baby stuff.

I: So what was your thinking behind that gift?

P: His baby’s mother is also very eco-conscious and stuff. And I definitely thought that would be something that she would like for her child as well.

I: How did you know she was eco-conscious?

P: She lives in the UK, but whenever she’s visited, the foods all organic and everything’s natural and yup.

I: I’m guessing she liked the gift?

P: Yeah, apparently it was good, yup.

I: Oh yeah, I guess they’re based in the U.K. I wonder what kind of green options they have over there?

P: Well, oh yeah. Just, I don’t know. I’m sure it would cost a fortune to buy over there.

I: And any other person you’ve gifted it to?
Appendices

P: I don’t think so, no. Oh, actually no. We also brought a gardening set for Geoffrey's [husband] mum. She loved it. It was great, yeah.

I: Is his mum quite green?

P: She’s green fingered. So it was actually sort of like a little thing for weeding. It was like some I think some soap and hand cream sort of thing.

I: Would you say Geoffrey is quite green?

P: Oh yeah [laughs].

I: Would that be from your influence?

P: I don’t know, you would have to ask him [laughs]

I: No worries; will move to a question you can answer. Have you ever recommended it to your friends and family?

P: Um, no, can’t say I have really. I suppose gifting it is recommending it in a way. It is, it’s sort of introducing it to people.

I: Are they quite noticeable in your house? I’m just wondering if anyone has ever brought it up in a conversation.

P: I do actually remember that Geoffrey’s sister came to stay and wow, that soaps really nice, what is it.

I: Oh it wasn’t because it was Ecostore; it was because she liked this?

P: Because she liked the soap.

I: So what do you make of just the green or eco in products?
P: It's sorta a minefield. You sort of read things and you think that people are just putting a
label on something to sell it but is it really green? To know what is green and what isn’t. I
have a feeling that these guys are quite genuine about what they do, though.

I: Is there any particular reason why you think they are more genuine then?

P: Uh, I don’t know. I don’t know, I’m pretty sure they’ve got a little lamb labels and stamps
on the back of their packaging, which says they are. I haven’t really thought a lot about them.

I: But you just trust them?

P: Yeah.

I: So what are the other green things that you do at home? Do you consider yourself a very
green person?

P: [pauses][laughs] Um, look averagely I suppose. I’m conscious of it but not overtly green.
We are guilty of conspicuous consumption as well so [laughs]

I: Well I’d say using all Ecostore products is quite a green thing to do.

P: Oh yeah I guess it is.

I: You don’t see yourself as someone like Geoffrey's sister?

P: Um, in a way, sister-in-law. I mean, I’m conscious of these things. I guess we can afford to
be now, with these things cost a bit of money, take a bit more time and effort so I’d be
interested to know how that changes once we have a child and that sort of thing goes.

I: Do you expect it to?

P: I hope not. I mean that is the good thing about Ecostore stuff, it isn’t pricey, a lot of natural
skin products can be quite expensive.

I: Would you be quite disappointed if you couldn't use them any more?
P: Yeah I would, yup.

I: How would that make you feel?

P: Uh, I don’t know. I hope that situation wouldn’t arise yeah.