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**Caring for the Community: An Exploratory Comparison of Waste  
Reduction Behaviour by British and Brazilian Consumers**

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## **Caring for the Community: An Exploratory Comparison of Waste Reduction Behaviour by British and Brazilian Consumers**

- 1 *Research paper*
- 2 *Purpose:* The symbolic and social roles of waste are explored through a small sample of UK and Brazilian consumers from urban and rural communities. These findings are relevant in highlighting the importance of considering socio-cultural differences in waste policies.
- 3 *Design/methodology/approach:* Following an ontologically realist and epistemologically interpretive perspective on waste a series of semi-structured interviews was conducted in English and Portuguese.
- 4 *Findings:* While Brazilian interviewees view waste as opportunity, their discourses reproduce the inequalities among and between their communities. UK participants view waste as burdensome, but demonstrate more awareness of their rights as citizens within their communities.
- 5 *Research limitations/implications:* The study is exploratory and future work should address a broader range of respondents within communities across different cultures, demographic and socio-economic circumstances.
- 6 *Practical implications:* Ideas generated from the study have both specific and general relevance beyond the Brazilian and UK communities. Marketing has the capacity to help advance the establishment of more effective environmentally-friendly forms of consumption and disposal.
- 7 *Originality:* The paper presents a fresh perspective on developing and developed country community waste reduction behaviours through the examination of waste meanings for individual consumers.

*Keywords*

Waste reduction - recycling - community - consumption

## **Caring for the Community: An Exploratory Comparison of Waste Reduction Behaviour by British and Brazilian Consumers**

Historically societies have consumed beyond their needs as a means to feel they are not merely existing but truly living (Baudrillard, 1998). Through the communicative dimension of consumption, waste facilitates the assertion of power, and the creation of distinction and social meanings. Baudrillard suggests that affluence has meaning and symbolic value only in wastage, since only through waste it is possible to feel abundance. Yet studies on disposal and recycling behaviour (e.g. Bagozzi and Dabholkar, 1994; Biswas *et al.*, 2000; Bloomfield 2004; Lastovicka and Fernandez, 2005) have not attempted to elicit emic waste meanings from consumers. To address this omission, this study explores consumers' waste meanings and social roles; examining the interactions between signs of the necessary and the superfluous, between waste and affluence. We have contextualised and compared general waste meanings as consumption and disposal strategies within consumer communities from two countries with distinct social realities; United Kingdom and Brazil. With 185 million people (IBGE, 2006), Brazil is marked by widespread unemployment, social inequality, and environmental degradation ([www.dieese.org.br/](http://www.dieese.org.br/); [www.ibge.gov.br/](http://www.ibge.gov.br/); [www.ipea.gov.br/](http://www.ipea.gov.br/)). Compared to Brazil, UK consumers experience relatively affluent lifestyles, although deprivation still exists (Williams and Paddock, 2003).

Baudrillard's (1998) account of consumer society has been criticised for overstating the symbolic value of products. Although imbued with symbolic meanings, products are also consumed for their functional, utilitarian values (Szmigin, 2003). It is difficult to adopt a completely semiotic stand and argue that the symbolic value of waste is entirely detached from that which is being wasted. Indeed, meanings without their product vessels (Lastovicka and Fernandez, 2005) would not be communicated. Baudrillard's (1998) work has

been further criticised for its extreme constructivist ontological perspective. Dolan (2002) highlights this issue: as the notion of environmental depletion is grounded on scientific knowledge, by using scientific discourse as a resort we are defying complete social constructivism. Dolan (2002, p.174) calls for a critical interpretive approach in which environmental issues are viewed through “an epistemologically interpretive and ontologically realist position”. We adopt this approach, allowing waste to be viewed as a societal and communal risk with socially-significant symbolic meanings.

### **Contextualising community**

Attempts to reduce waste or reutilise it positively can be viewed as caring for the community. But what constitutes community? This concept has had varied meanings throughout its history. For example, aiming to build on the work of sociologists, the field of geography’s early definitions of community posed it as a group of people and organisms who interact and live within the same geographical area. The issue with such one-dimensional community definition is that geographical boundaries can be subjective and misleading (‘community’ may refer to the village, the neighbourhood, the city, the country etc). On the other hand, the positive aspect of this geographical definition was its ability to highlight that interactions take place not only amongst humans but also with their environment and other organisms. This understanding of community through the link between humans and the natural environment should be fundamental to any group attempting to pursue environmental goals and a re-awakened interest in the production of what we consume.

The sociological literature reveals varied definitions of community, and as put by Hoffer (1931, p. 616) despite the importance of ‘place’ there remained three essential ideas to the concept “namely, first, the community is a human group; second, the people in it have common activities and experiences; and,

third, it occupies a definite territorial area". Within the field of psychology what seemed to be emphasised was 'sense of community' rather than community itself. This gave much more flexibility and dynamism to the community concept, and may be of particular relevance. For example, psychological sense of community has been defined by Newbrough and Chavis (1986, p.03 in Friedman, Abeele and De Vos, 1993) as "the personal knowing that one has about belonging to a collectivity". Fundamentally, however, the move from 'community' to 'sense of community' represented a shift from a sole focus on the importance of space as the definer of social relations, to a more flexible view that social relations may also define space (Castells, 2002/2000), and to a perspective that other factors including interests, professions, products and brands, may 'link' individuals in communal relationships.

Arguably as traditional forms of community give way to more flexible types of social links, there has been a shift in focus of moral responsibility away from the community and towards the self. The power relationships intrinsic to traditional ubiquitous communities is now fragmented, paving the way for individuals to choose to which communities they want to belong, and how much effort they desire to put into such endeavours (Colombo, Mosso and De Piccoli, 2001). This process has been accompanied by the simultaneous participation in various 'types of community', i.e. communities of practice (Goode, 1969; Greer, 1969; Wenger, 2002), communities of interest (Rose, 1996), epistemic communities (Cinquegrani, 2002), virtual communities (Jones, 1995), and hybrid communities (Etzioni and Etzioni, 1999). Bauman (2004) suggests that individuals' current desire to belong to communities (and their nostalgia for the 'idealised' traditional communities) is intrinsically linked to a longing for safety in a time of increased risks and insecurity. This is where communities of consumption play an important role. They are one 'kind' of community amongst many others, situated within a commercial context, and recognised as such (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001). It is a corollary

that consumption should form a base for postmodern communal ties given the importance developed societies currently place upon consumption and material accumulation (sometimes driven by a desire for safety and stability).

Although consumption (and anti-consumption) communities have only relatively recently been explored in the consumer behaviour literature (Arnould and Price, 1993; Bekin, Carrigan and Szmigin, 2005; Cova and Cova, 2001; Kozinets, 2002; McAlexander, Schouten and Koenig, 2002; Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001) the conceptions of community through consumption adopted by most scholars fail to acknowledge the possibility of community through 'non-consumption' or alternative consumption, which is addressed, for example, by Kozinets (2002) and Giesler and Pohlmann (2003).

As the community concept has evolved over time, across different social and economic contexts, as well as according to different philosophical thoughts, the concept has turned multi-dimensional. Above all it must be accepted that the community construct is constantly and dynamically changing and being charged with different meanings, particularly if it is to be applied to the context of (alternative) consumption. As communities become increasingly networked and interest-based, consumer resistance and a re-awakened interest in the production of what we consume have also underpinned community interest in how we dispose.

### **Waste and community**

Current UK discourses on waste address it as negative and a burden, hampered by inconsistent government recycling initiatives, and ineffectual commitment by marketers to green development strategies. Contrastingly, the Brazilian media and specialist literature acknowledge its risks while recognising it as a source of economic opportunity (CEMPRE, 2005) for communities. Brazil is the world leader in aluminium recycling (Reciclagem

de Alumínio, 2005). Several community social projects are also developed around recycling (Projeto Reciclagem, 2005), and demonstrate the creative uses of waste in Brazil. This study examines whether these burden and opportunity discourses are expressed through UK and Brazilian consumers' waste meanings and waste disposal strategies; whether such discourses help to (re)produce relations of power in the communities of both countries.

## **Methodology**

We adopt an ontologically realist and epistemologically interpretive (Dolan, 2002) perspective on waste. Interpretive research systematically explores consumer subjectivity, the process of meaning construction, individual and shared systems of meaning, and ways of representing phenomena through qualitative research (Marsden and Littler, 2000). The study uses purposive sampling criteria, namely middle-class, working mothers in their thirties and forties, with recycling experience to contain the research to a particular set of social circumstances (Thompson, 1996).

A discussion guide was developed and translated into Portuguese. In the UK, three taped, semi-structured interviews of approximately one hour were conducted face-to-face, and four Brazilian respondents were interviewed through computerised telephone calls. Interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. The interpretation followed the hermeneutic process involving reading, documenting and systemising the interview transcripts, where patterns of meaning, similarities and distinctions amongst answers and experiences were sought, and where interpretation was developed through each reading (Thompson, 1996).

## **Findings and discussion**



## The meaning of waste

Similar views on waste were expressed by UK and Brazilian participants. UK consumers associated waste most readily with excess packaging, one blaming retailers for conspicuously producing waste:

*“Packaging is particularly [problematic]... When you buy children’s toys you’ve got the plastic thing, all the tags, and cosmetics... You wouldn’t not buy them because of... all that stuff and they fill the bin” (Ruth/UK).*

Baudrillard’s (1998) notion of the superfluous preceding the necessary is echoed here, and companies are perceived as conspicuous users of natural resources (Cooper, 2005). While UK respondents invoked a narrative of excess, Brazilian respondents discursively appealed to the question of necessity and economy:

*“I think we use too much water and energy. At least here in the South we don’t tend to be very economical with energy and water” (Alicia/BR).*

This approach to waste through *economy* is corroborated by the 2005 Akatu Institute ([www.akatu.net](http://www.akatu.net)) Brazilian consumer study, where efficiency behaviours were addressed and/or adopted by the sample. All participants related their most wasteful behaviours to food, noting what and how much food they regularly disposed of. Almost three and a half billion tons of food waste is discarded in the UK (approximately 40% of all produce), and a similar situation exists in Brazil (Milmo, 2005; [www.akatu.net](http://www.akatu.net)). While some (Carrie/UK and Alicia/BR) are more disciplined in their food purchases, others perceive their wasteful behaviours as intrinsically connected to shopping styles and the *how* of consumption:

*“I buy more foods than we can consume. They end up spoiled before we can eat*

*them... It's because we have to buy everything on the same day"*  
(Rosanna/BR).

*Why have I just spent £200 online at Tesco's and I've got eight cans of beans and things in the back of the cupboard I don't know what they are... I can't get anymore in but I never usually write a list and I'm just lazy"* (Ruth/UK).

Rosanna's and Ruth's behaviours illustrate the excess shopping and considerable food wastage symptomatic of contemporary lifestyles (Cooper, 2005; Jackson, 2005); the pursuit of convenience acting against more responsible disposal behaviours. Borgmann (2000) has suggested this 21st Century malaise of paradigmatic consumption (i.e. convenient consumption involving little effort) is intrinsically part of the western consumer psyche disengaging us from production. Persuading communities to be more sustainable will involve tapping into why and how people are motivated to consume, with convenience integral to the process.

All participants were conscious of the waste they generated by evoking their consumption habits:

*"Let's face it, we are very consumerist. I mean the amount of shoes that we buy just because of new fashion...and then it's all discarded"* (Rosanna/BR).

Here fashion echoes Baudrillard's view of waste as good living; fashion is a barrier to Rosanna/BR and Suzanna/BR reducing volumes of waste. However, respondents only made the conscious connection between consumption and waste with further probing. Not only is the ecological impact of a purchase obscured (Dolan, 2002), but the consumer becomes disengaged (Borgmann, 2000), unaware of the natural resources used in the manufacture of goods, no longer connected to the environmental meaning of their consumption:

*"I can't [see any relation between the way I buy/consume and the waste I generate] because I buy what I need whether it's environment friendly or not. It's not something that I think about when I go out shopping" (Lorna/UK).*

Some did, however, consider waste more deeply:

*"I think people find it very difficult to make those sorts of linkages. I feel that my children don't always eat everything they're given. I don't like that but there's no point in beating myself up and saying about a starving child in Africa or whatever. I have to make adjustments to what I give them and how I deal with them to minimize my waste as much as I can. But I don't think we always make those sorts of things, it's not so much in our faces as it was for my mother" (Carrie/UK).*

*"I find it a terrible waste when a meal is cooked and the left overs are chucked away. For instance, you cook some rice and not all of it is eaten, so you can use it to make a rice dumpling or fried rice or whatever. But some people just can't have the same thing twice, so waste is created because of this habit. It's not spoiled, but it won't be eaten" (Alicia/BR).*

That respondents seldom consider waste issues in their consumption decision-making processes is unsurprising; consumption and waste behaviours are rarely utilitarian (Baudrillard 1998; Dolan 2002). However, participants sometimes attempt to improve their waste outputs; Suzanna, for example changed her food purchasing behaviour during an energy crisis in Brazil when she could not use her freezer.

It is important to highlight that such views comprise intricate, historically and culturally-bound perspectives on what is (not) necessary consumption. Dolan (2002) argues that defining needs is difficult, as you cannot remove them from their social and cultural contexts. Participants exhibit diverging views on the

meanings of waste (UK respondents focus on the superfluous; Brazilian's focus on the non-economical), the similar roles played by waste in the different cultures (abundance and convenience), and general awareness about the connection between consumption and waste, but most ignore waste issues in their decision-making processes.

### Waste as a holistic and sensitive issue

The impact of waste on the natural environment was understood by all respondents. Landfills, litter and excess packaging concerned the UK participants, while pollution was important for the Brazilians. Some had begun to link waste with other issues:

*"We are spoiling the planet.... Here asthma is a big issue. It is the disease which makes the most people unfit to work, and pollution has a great deal to do with it" (Suzanna/BR).*

For some, dealing with waste is a burden. Ruth, for example, complained about how inconvenient it was to visit the bottle bank. Some (Carrie/UK, Suzanna/BR, Alicia/BR and Maria/BR) feel positive about their contribution, while others acknowledged a guilt reduction driver:

*"It's not so much feeling actively good about it, but feeling that there's an element of social responsibility and people should be doing this, because if nobody did, then it's just obscene the amount we waste and the amount we throw away (Carrie/UK)."*

*"I feel less guilty (laughter)...It makes me relieved to know that this stuff is not going to be wasted" (Rosanna/BR).*

The overall impact of waste on UK participants' perceptions was less obvious

than for the Brazilian respondents. Poverty is close to home in Brazilian communities, yet part of a parallel social world. People who make a living out of the collection of recyclable waste from households and public spaces were described by Maria as “part of the urban landscape”.

Altruism and a reduction of guilt were felt by some through supporting community projects and recycling. On a critical level, if we consider power as relational (Foucault, 1991) such altruistic behaviours do beg the question whether these individuals are really helping the socially-disadvantaged in their community. Do they further reinforce the existing power relations within Brazilian society, and the existence of and a distinction between the official and the scrap economy, where no fundamental structural change is ever really achieved? Furthermore, Brazil’s discourse on waste as an opportunity may be positive in that it highlights the potential economic benefits for those companies or cooperatives willing to pursue the waste economy. However, it may also serve to normalise the country’s endemic economic and societal issues of inequality and poverty.

### Varied paths to disposition

A range of waste disposal strategies were described. The Brazilians were not familiar with food composting and although understood by the UK respondents, only one participated. All participants separate their general packaging and paper waste but in the UK location was an important factor impinging on recycling due to the variable council community services.

In Brazil no collection services and civic amenities are offered by the local governments. Some Brazilian participants lived in high-rise buildings where each floor has separate bins for recyclable materials which waste cooperatives re-process. Those living in houses face greater barriers in order to recycle as scrapmongers seldom pass by, and waste cooperatives are not locally based:

*“Carlos argues with me every time he has to go and take the recyclables to the cooperative. He does it, but he complains. He thinks that that’s what tax money is for; the government should be doing the collection” (Maria/BR).*

Suzanna/BR separates recyclables but ends up leaving the separated waste to be collected by the litter truck due to alleged lack of time. Both UK and Brazilian house-residing respondents emphasised the accumulation of waste (and thus clutter) involved in their recycling efforts, while Lorna lamented the inability of her own community’s residents to organise themselves locally to deal with waste:

*“It needs somebody to initiate it and do it I suppose and get on with things; it’s the responsibility of it. It’s like at the back of us we’ve got a shared driveway to all the gardens and we need to put some gates up to stop intruders but nobody will actually go round all the houses and collect all the money and organise the actual gates to be put up. Somebody needs to be responsible for it” (Lorna/UK).*

Biswas *et al.*’s (2000) US research indicates a significant correlation between purchasing recycled and waste recycling behaviour. In Brazil only Rosanna bought notebooks made out of recycled paper, whereas UK participants were all enthusiastic purchasers of recycled and/or second-hand goods in their local community.

*“I like old jewellery, actually I like it better, so I will buy that.. there’s quite a range of second hand things that I will buy.”(Carrie/UK)*

All respondents tried to reuse disposed clothing; UK respondents would pass unwanted items to friends or family, charity shops, or recycle bins. Ruth was surprised that regardless of the condition, clothing and shoes could be reused

by charity shops, and this had encouraged her to donate further. Repair was also an option for some, and this runs contrary to other UK research suggesting consumers do not buy second hand goods, or repair products (Cooper 2005; Spiegle 2004).

*"We repaired the washing machine. It's very expensive..it was only the lock on the door..which was like seventy five pounds."* (Lorna/UK)

Brazilian respondents also reported similar actions with regard to disposal of clothes, although items are often donated directly to social institutions. Both UK and Brazilian respondents were prepared to mend white goods if economically effective. Brazilians sometimes passed on old electronics to family members or others for scrap, while in the UK unwanted white goods are disposed of through council collections. Both Brazilian and UK respondents were happy for their electronics and white goods to last, extending their life cycle beyond the expected norm and contrary to earlier research which implied that fashion and technological obsolescence impacted on new purchases of such items (DeBell and Dardis, 1979):

*"I have a mobile phone I don't update, it's really old. I would actually quite like one of these nice new ones [but] I can't break the one I've got. I can't justify it. I don't need a new mobile phone so there's no point."*(Lorna/UK)

*"Well, today I am disposing of a toaster. I have repaired it twice, but now the little wire that lights it is broken... I have taken it to a couple of places but they say there is no way to repair it"* (Suzanna/BR).

Contrary to Cooper's (2005) study on UK consumer attitudes to product obsolescence, respondents often rejected upgrading, and contemplated buying products with extended life cycles, such as energy efficient washing machines. Ruth described her approach to replacing worn out or older goods,

a view that was reflected by all the UK respondents:

*"We've got one TV...a really old one and just you know, there, and our video broke..so I thought well there's no point in buying an expensive video..I'm not interested in whatever make it is, it's just a video for the children." (Ruth/UK)*

Overall, Brazilian participants' waste disposal strategies seem more intricate, hierarchical and geared towards non-wastefulness, and products are seldom, if ever, discarded. These middle-class Brazilian consumers believe that those within their community who have nothing will appreciate their unwanted goods. Alternatively UK respondents presented a range of reuse behaviours; purchasing of second-hand goods and recycled products, and where feasible bought from the local community:

*"Yes we use local farm shops for meat when we can actually get around to getting there. It probably only accounts for 20-25% of our meat but I try and use that. And even when I'm in the supermarket...Waitrose have an organic and locally grown section, and I will pick up the locally grown stuff" (Carrie).*

The respondents would like to buy more local produce, but found barriers to this particularly in the city, from either lack of choice and availability, or because of high prices. The UK respondents' participation in alternative consumption spaces (i.e. charity shops, eBay) reflects an agency-orientated cultural reading ascribed to affluent populations that "views the engagement in such spaces as about the search for fun, sociality, distinction, discernment" and so forth (Williams and Paddock, 2003, p.137). Brazilian participants had little knowledge of, or interest in second-hand items, and took the traditional view (Williams and Paddock, 2003, p.137) that alternative consumption spaces such as second-hand stores were "marginal spaces used out of economic necessity by disadvantaged populations." Only antiques (Rosanna) and branded clothing from the Capital's flea markets (Alicia) were acceptable



purchases. This reinforces the notion of the social role of distinction associated with waste (Baudrillard, 1998) in the case of Brazilian respondents. Buying local was an inevitable, rather than a deliberate strategy for Brazilian respondents, given that most food staples are produced locally in Brazil:

*"I buy most of my foods from supermarkets, but for vegetables I shop at the local distributor. I also buy from the supermarket's weekly farmers' market, and from Walter Cunha's allotment. It's close to my home, I like his produce and I know where it's coming from. It's a bit more expensive, but it's better, it tastes better."* (Alicia/BR).

Even if their food shopping strategies are mainly dominated by supermarket trips, all participants source their fresh produce from a range of local outlets which reduces food mileage and negative environmental impact. While this choice is socio-culturally influenced by Brazilian tradition, it is also supported by availability; such choice is diminished for UK respondents.

### Community responsibility for waste

The feeling expressed by all respondents was that individuals had to be involved in responsible waste reduction and disposal. Brazilians view this as a positive contribution to the environment and help to those poorer than themselves who effectively live off waste. Brazilians are not generally supported in their individual efforts by governmental collection services; as Alicia and Maria made clear the culture of the country is "everyone should fend for themselves". This reflects the individuated consumer culture identified in Akatu's (2003; 2005) ethical consumption studies, where collective action and the voicing of concerns is unusual at best. In the UK urban community respondents bemoaned the poor waste collection services undermining attempts at community action:

*“A friend of mine, they’ve got three children and they wanted a wheelie [rubbish]bin, and the guy from the council said you can’t have one, you need to have four children...and she just phoned up pleading for a bin and he said no, you can’t have one.(Ruth/UK)*

Assigning total responsibility to individual consumers for the responsible disposal of their waste implies an assumption that consumers are truly sovereign in the marketplace. However, this notion of consumer sovereignty assumes a view of power as something which is possessed by different market players during given periods of time. By looking at power as relational (Foucault, 1991; 1988), consumers should be able to identify the potential opportunities for empowerment and localised resistance efforts capable of bringing about change, even if reformist, to consumers’ everyday lives. While Ruth articulated the need for her neighbours to form their own community composting scheme, she also recognised the apathy of those consumers, and the lack of civic infrastructure to support them.

In Brazil those living in São Paulo were supported in their waste disposal strategies. Rosanna stated that streets and shopping malls have colour-coded recyclables collection bins. Inner state respondents, however, Alicia and Suzanna thought their contribution worthwhile, but also believed themselves a minority in their community, and felt little external motivation to improve their waste strategies:

*“I don’t know how many people recycle around here... I feel I’m doing my bit and maybe people recycle little bit...But I have a feeling people don’t do enough...as a country... I think we’ve got a long way to go” (Suzanna/BR).*

They also complained of little feedback information on what happens to the recycled waste after it is collected, and about the lack of transparency in the process:

*"I like to recycle but I don't know how I could improve what I do. I think there is a lack of information, including about what happens to the recyclable waste after it's collected. I think this feedback information would motivate people a bit more" (Alicia/BR).*

Suzanna argued that the media should do more to raise awareness about climate change and waste issues. In the UK, both Ruth and Lorna also referred to the importance of the media when they reflected on learning about waste issues from reality television programmes and articles.

### **Conclusions and implications**

Diverging perspectives on the meanings of waste have emerged from this comparison of UK and Brazilian consumers. While UK participants focus on the superfluous, Brazilians emphasise the non-economical. In both cultures waste plays similar roles, which relate to abundance and convenience. Although consumers present a general awareness about the connection between consumption and waste, they seldom include waste issues in their purchasing decision-making processes. This is reflective of two consumer cultures in which consumption is detached from both production and disposal; consumers are alienated from the true impacts of their consumption choices. Waste is perceived by UK and Brazilian consumers as generated both in the purchasing and the consumption stages, and convenience plays a pivotal role in this process.

Both UK and Brazilian respondents make the connection between waste and natural environment degradation, although in Brazil the impact of waste on the environment and society is more concretely perceived in their community. All participants will repair, and value the longevity of electronics and white goods. Brazilian participants' waste disposal strategies seem more intricate,

hierarchical and geared towards non-wastefulness than those adopted by UK participants, despite the lack of governmental collection services. Conversely, UK participants avidly reuse and purchase recycled products, strategies which are not adopted by the interviewed Brazilian consumers. Brazilian participants' narratives embrace the waste as opportunity viewpoint, discourses which reproduce the social inequalities particular to the country. While in the UK participants view waste and alternative disposal strategies as a burden, they are more aware of their rights as citizens and more demanding of support from their community and local governments. Future work should address a broader range of respondents in these and other countries, including consumers with varied demographic, geographic and socio-economic backgrounds, as the findings suggest these factors influence consumer behaviour and attitudes toward community waste management.

Some ideas can already be derived from the present study, which have both specific and general relevance to UK, Brazilian and broader populations. For example, consistent with Baudrillard's views, Connolly and Prothero (2003) argue that consumption is not just about satisfying material greed; consumption is the manipulation of symbols to construct identity and relations with others. This mirrors a common perception among consumers; that sustainability is an issue for the masses, but not one that is linked to their individual and communal behaviour. Brazilian respondents were energetic on recycling and waste, but passive on the consumption side. Any moves towards persuading society to be more sustainable in its consumption needs to address the important social and cultural functions that ordinary consumption fulfils (Connolly and Prothero 2003). These same socio-cultural needs can be fulfilled by non-consumption, reduced consumption and less wasteful consumption, but the social distinction that can create needs must filter through to mainstream consumer thinking.

Jackson (2005) argues that while there have been many moves to improve the

production side of the equation (e.g. redesigning processes) this will not persuade consumers to buy the greener options, or change their consumption patterns. However, our findings suggest differently. UK respondents were both reusing and recycling, and actively purchasing organic, green and local community alternatives whenever they were accessible and convenient, and eschewing unnecessary product upgrades and over-consumption. Jackson further highlights that a vital part of achieving sustainable development resides in the scale and pattern of consumption, the drivers of consumer expectations and behaviour, and shifting consumer attitudes, behaviours and perceptions towards cleaner, greener products. Current levels of consumption are portrayed by marketers as having few negative consequences and the source of the good life. Prothero and Fitchett (2000) argue that the sustainability movement needs to develop strategies to effectively communicate the idea that desiring fewer goods and services, regardless of their green credentials, is a valuable identity to acquire and be associated with. Environmentally concerned consumers still consume. So arguably at a macro level we need to achieve greater environmental responsibility through the manipulation of those same symbolic meanings involved in consumption and waste behaviours. Marketing not only has the capacity to help advance the establishment of more environmentally-friendlier forms of consumption and production (as agent of the possible alternative commodity discourse), but also has a duty to do so. Clearly this would have to be accompanied by community engagement, appropriate participatory processes and experiential education (Kollmuss and Agyeman, 2002), as well as coherent legislation and policies which would facilitate not only community recycling but also additional, more energy-efficient ways of disposing of waste (Bloomfield, 2004).

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**Table 1: Participants' Profiles**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Place of Residence</b>
Carrie	45	Postgraduate	Lecturer (PT)	Stroud, UK
Lorna	39	Undergraduate	Student (Previously Play Worker)	Birmingham, UK
Ruth	39	Undergraduate	Recruitment Agent	Birmingham, UK
Alicia	38	Postgraduate	Academic Programmes Administrator	Limeira, BR
Suzanna	45	Graduate	Doctor	Limeira, BR
Rosanna	45	Postgraduate	Doctor	São Paulo, BR
Maria	44	Postgraduate	Doctor	São Paulo, BR