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Enacting Green Consumers: The Case of the Scandinavian Preppies

By Christian Fuentes

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to develop and illustrate an analytic approach that brings the active making and makings of green consumer images to the fore. Efforts to “know” the green consumers have generated multiple representations. Enactments of the green consumer are not innocent but also play a role in shaping how we understand and approach sustainable consumption. Because of this it is important to examine and critically discuss how green consumers are enacted today.

This paper develops an approach that allows us to examine how green consumers are enacted and discuss the consequences these constructions might have for sustainability. Theoretically, a performativity approach drawing on theories from Science and Technology Studies (STS) and economic sociology is used to discuss the enactment of green consumers. Empirically, focus is on Boomerang – a Swedish fashion retailer, brand, and producer – and its marketing practices.

The analysis shows how the marketing work of the Boomerang Company leads to the enactment of the Green Scandinavian Preppy. This specific version of the green consumer is a combination of the knowledgeable green connoisseur – a consumer that knows quality when he/she sees it – and the green hedonist in search of the good life. The Green Scandinavian Preppy wants to enjoy nature, go sailing, and do so wearing fashionable quality clothes. This is a consumer that knows quality, appreciates design, and has the means to pay for both. While this is a version of the green consumer that might be appealing and thus have the potential to promote a version of green consumption, it is also a green consumer image that has lost much of its political power as green consumption is framed as simply another source of pleasure and identity-making.

Keywords: Green marketing, consumer images, performativity, fashion, sustainability

Introduction

The nature of the green consumer has been a topic of discussion within and outside academia. Efforts to “know” the green consumers have generated multiple representations. Green consumers have been described as alternative identity seekers (Thompson & Coskuner-Balli 2007a, 2007b; Connolly & Prothero 2003, 2008) and critical and reflexive consumers that challenge and question the capitalist society (Harrison et al. 2005; Cherrier & Murray 2007). But green consumers have also been described as rational individuals, information-processing and calculating entities that make informed choices regarding quality and price issues while considering “ethical” values as well (Shaw et al. 2000; Schröder and McEachern 2004; Harrison et al. 2005; Leonidou et al. 2010). As numerous studies have stated in the past, there are multiple and conflicting descriptions of the green consumer.

These descriptions of the green consumer are not innocent. They not only describe the green consumer, they also work to perform specific versions of the green consumer, to configure green consumers (regarding performativity see Law & Urry 2004; Licoppe 2010; Cova & Cova 2012). Enactments of the green consumer also have power in that they play a role in shaping how we understand and approach sustainable consumption. Determining who the green consumer is – as an ideal type – also involves determining how sustainability should be approached.

Because of this it is important to examine and critically discuss how green consumers are enacted today. How is the green consumer made in contemporary consumer culture? What do specific versions of the green consumer mean for the ways in which we approach sustainability?

While previous research on green consumption and sustainability often points out that there are different ways of viewing green consumers, there are few studies that explore how these images are made and what they may mean for sustainability.

Against this background, the aim of this paper is to develop and illustrate an analytic approach that brings the active making and makings of green consumer images to the fore. What I want to do is to develop an approach that allows us first to examine more closely how green consumers are enacted and second discuss the consequences these constructions might have for sustainability. By doing this I hope to contribute to the development of a more critical and reflexive approach to sustainability.

Theoretically, I take a performativity approach to the study of marketing and the enactment of consumers. The starting point for the argument made in this paper is that consumers do not simply exist out there but are made. More specifically, I use the concept of performativity as it has been used within Science and Technology Studies (STS) and, more recently, economic sociology (e.g. Barry &

Slater 2002; Law & Urry 2004; Callon et al. 2007,). Somewhat simplified, one can say that this strand of performativity studies has set out to investigate how the market (or the economy) is socio-materially performed by economics (Callon 1998; Barry & Slater 2002). Drawing on Actor-Network Theory (Callon 1991; Law 1991; Latour 2000, 2005,), the work of Callon shows that economic processes can be “treated as just another kind of socio-technical-discursive arrangement” in which economics is just one of the elements of the arrangement, shaping and being shaped in the network (Barry & Slater 2002: 180).

In the field of marketing, the ideas of Callon and colleagues have been used to analyse and discuss how marketing practices, theories, and devices work to construct markets (e.g. , Araujo 2007; Kjellberg & Helgesson 2007; Cochoy 2009). These studies have argued that marketing practices are to be understood as market-shaping practices (Araujo 2007). Marketing (potentially) contributes to the constitution of markets (Kjellberg & Helgesson 2006).

Marketing is then not only about promoting products, it socio-materially constructs them (Fuentes 2011; Fuentes 2014). Marketing not only tries to find consumers “out there”, it often plays an important role in bringing these consumers to life (Cova & Cova 2012). And marketing not only dictates how employees should conduct themselves, it shapes their subjectivities (Skålén et al. 2008; Skålén 2009). From this perspective, the mission of critically oriented marketing scholars and other social scientists is to empirically examine, to paraphrase Callon, how marketing technologies perform markets and market entities (see also Araujo et al. 2008; Cova & Cova 2012). This is precisely what I intend to do here, critically examine the construction of one type of market entity: the green consumer.

Empirically, I focus on a specific case of green consumer enactment. In what follows, I examine how the Swedish retailer, brand, and producer Boomerang, through its marketing work, constructs a specific version of the green consumer.

There are at least three reasons why the Boomerang Company and its marketing work is a suitable case for the discussion of green consumer enactment. First, private corporations and their marketing work play a crucial role in the enactment of green consumers. Although far from the only actors involved in the production of green consumers their vast financial resources and marketing knowledge and skill make them powerful players. Second, the Boomerang Company has clearly profiled products as well as well-defined brands, which makes the enactment of consumers easier to study. Third, Boomerang is also a good example because the company’s work to green itself is fairly recent, on- going, and has not yet “settled”.

The analysis below builds on material collected as part of a larger on-going ethnographic study of Swedish fashion retailers and their sustainability strategies.¹ This larger study, in which also two additional retailers are studied (Åhléns and Myrorna), aims to examine what sustainability issues are marketed, how these are marketed, and how sustainability is reframed through this marketing work. More

specifically, the analysis presented below draws on four types of materials generated by four types of research practices carried out by the author and a research assistant working on the project.

First, we collected media material using the “Retriever” database. The search focused on the retailer’s name and keywords connected to sustainability such as “ecological”, “green”, “environment”, and “fair trade”. Second, we carried out interviews. Six in-depth interviews with sustainability strategists and other staff in leading positions were carried out. Third, marketing material was collected from the stores (brochures and catalogues for examples) and from the retailers’ webpages (printed and saved digitally). Fourth, and finally, we also carried out observations of the stores. The observations focused on the cities of Lund, Helsingborg, and Göteborg. Approximately 20 observations have been carried out during 2012-2013.

The different types of materials generated are in the analysis treated symmetrically. Drawing on the performative perspective outlined above, I see these different materials as records of how Boomerang markets itself and its sustainability work. The media material allows us to read about what managers have said in interviews with journalists and how these utterances are framed in the media. They are simultaneously an example of how retailers market themselves using the media and how the media portrays the CSR strategies of companies. In the interviews we can see how managers market/describe their retail organization and CSR work when asked about it by academics. In the marketing material collected we see how Boomerang frames sustainability issues and markets itself and its products using both print and digital media. Through the observations made at the store we can see how the retail space of Boomerang is used to market sustainability issues along with the products on display.

As will be illustrated in the analysis, there is considerable similarity among these different mediums. The articles in the media, the interviews with managers, the marketing material, and the store displays all tell a similar story.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. First I present a brief presentation of Boomerang and the ways in which this company markets itself and its products. Next I take a closer look at how Boomerang markets itself as sustainable. This is followed by an analysis of the kind of green consumer enacted in and through this marketing work. The paper ends with a discussion of the importance of tracing the enactment of green consumers and discussing the possible impact that these configurations may have on sustainability issues.

Marketing the Boomerang Lifestyle

Boomerang, one can read on the webpage, was started in 1976 by the two enthusiasts Kenneth Andram and Peter Wilton. The plan was to develop a Scandinavian

brand of “premium quality clothes” and the first collection consisted of a range of piques, shirts, cords, and canvas trousers. On the webpage one can read that:

...the two colleagues bonded over a dream about something different. Freedom. Something of their own. They also shared the same fundamental ethical values and the conviction that quality is always better than quantity. (www.boomerang.com 7 March 2012)

Today the Boomerang Company has 32 privately owned stores, more than 200 retailers and operates in 6 countries. They develop and carry three collections of casual quality clothes: “Man”, “Woman” and “Junior”.

While Boomerang uses a broad range of channels and devices to market itself and its products, the stores are Boomerang’s main marketing tool. Boomerang stores are located at city centres – on shopping streets – or at shopping malls. Most stores are fairly small, well-organized and clearly thematized. At the Boomerang stores consumers can read up on products, ask store assistants’ advice, pick up brochures and other marketing material, and, of course, purchase Boomerang products. And, as I learned through my fieldwork, considerable work is also put into the window displays – which display the product lines and visualize the theme of the Boomerang brand. However, as the field note below illustrates, stores are not only thematized to communicate the Boomerang brand but also organized to make shopping practices easy to carry out, they are organized to enable shopping.

As I enter the store I am struck by how well-organized and clearly thematized this retail space is. The store has been newly renovated and the entrance is described as having a “New York style”. The store is spacious with plenty of room to move along the aisles. Sparse signage and tidy display tables and hangers give the impression of an efficient store. The clothes seem to follow a nautical theme – a lot of blue stripes. Shirts, piques, canvas trousers, jeans and dress jackets. But also t-shirts and hoodies are on display. The display tables, the shelves, and even the cashier counter are of dark wood. Behind the cashier counter there is a large poster depicting a landscape: rocky shores, a white and red lighthouse and a grouping of red wooden cabins. On some of the display tables one can find marketing material – brochures and catalogues. I pick one up and browse. It contains the same images and texts one can find on the company’s website. (Field notes, 13 February 2012)

The stores are in many ways smooth shopping spaces. The shopping trails of the Boomerang stores are easily manoeuvrable, the products easy to find, and store assistants helpful. The Boomerang stores are then marketing devices that make products available for shopping and simultaneously work to promote the Boomerang products lines and brand.

The Boomerang webpage is another important marketing device. The Boomerang webpage (boomerangstore.com) contains information about the company’s philosophy, history, its products, the stores’ locations, and business hours. Visitors can find customer service information and information regarding Boomerang’s customer club. The webpage also works to market Boomerang’s sustainability work. Here consumers can find information regarding charities that Boomer-

ang supports, the company's code of conduct, and details about Boomerang's different sustainable product lines.

The page also links to two other virtual platforms used for the marketing of Boomerang: Facebook and YouTube. Visitors following these links find commercials, virtual catalogues, information about special offers, updates regarding new collections, and much more.

Finally, the Boomerang Company markets itself and its products by participating in a number of fashion fairs and events. The participation in different fairs is documented and used as marketing material in the other channels (most notably on the Facebook page).

So the Boomerang Company markets itself and its products through a number of practices and employs various channels and devices. But what is it more exactly that Boomerang offers its customers? I would argue that Boomerang sells more than clothes; like many other companies today they also sell a style and lifestyle. Boomerang calls its style "Scandinavian Preppy".

Right from the outset, they [the founders of the company] drew up plans for a Scandinavian brand of premium quality casual clothes. The first spring collection presented a range of piqués, cotton shirts, oxford shirts, cord and canvas trousers solid or in stripes. Clothes that to this day still form the basis of the Boomerang range and style that we call Scandinavian Preppy (www.boomerang.com 7 March 2012)

Boomerang products, this retailer makes clear, are for those interested in high-end quality clothing and who wish to be associated with the "preppy style" that these products convey.

More specifically, this style is constructed by combining three different themes in the marketing of Boomerang clothing: the nautical, the Scandinavian, and the preppy. Scandinavian Preppy is here constructed as a desirable consumer identity. Being Scandinavian, this marketing material tells consumers, means being both design and nature-interested.

"Design interested" is in this context to be understood as a marker of sophisticated taste, a signifier of good taste. Being "design interested" then means having good taste. References to Scandinavian design, or simplicity connects this ethnic identity to both a specific aesthetic and a sophisticated taste. Similarly references to "quality" products or well-made products are not simply ways of saying that Boomerang products are properly manufactured and durable (although Boomerang says this too). References to "quality" signify "expensive", "high-end products". That is, products that only the affluent can afford.

Scandinavian is here also connected to nature, or "being natural". Images of young (white) models dressed in Boomerang's "preppy style" clothes standing on rocky shores, with the ocean behind them or standing in front of picturesque wooden cabins reproduces a romanticized image of Sweden and Swedes that one often sees in tourism advertisements (Gössling & Hultman 2006, Hultman &

Cederholm 2006). Being Scandinavian means having a special, even natural connection to nature. At play here are thus both ethnicity and class constructions.

Underlying this marketing work is the idea that consumers have lifestyles, consumers partake in a set of interlinked practices not only to fulfil utilitarian needs but also to express a narrative of self-identity (Giddens 1997). A lifestyle then is best expressed through the choosing and performing of a set of specific (consumption) practices. This is what Boomerang is aiming at. This company not only sells “quality products” – they market a lifestyle, a way of life, a set of interlined practices through which a specific consumer identity – the Scandinavian Preppy – can be enacted and maintained (in different versions of course).

Greening the Boomerang Lifestyle

There is a reason our logo is a boomerang. We believe that what you give is also what you get back. That is why we have created the Boomerang Effect. That means you can return your Boomerang clothes to the shop when you no longer want them. As our thanks for your contribution, you will get a 10% discount on a new garment, but above all, you will be helping to make sure the clothing is re-used. (www.boomerang.se 27 February 2012)

When marketing itself as a sustainable company, Boomerang re-writes its own history, giving its logo and name a new meaning. The text above captures the core of the sustainability strategy of Boomerang: to encourage recycling and re-use in different ways. The company collects old garments and resells them, labelling them as “vintage” and thereby inscribing them with new value (see also Fredriksson 2013):

Boomerang Vintage garments are products that, although new to you, have history. They have been worn and loved by someone that then has chosen to pass them on. By doing this the garments are given a new life and you a style that is only yours. (www.boomerang.se 16 February 2013).

Products not suitable for reselling in the vintage line are instead remade into furniture (sofas or futons for example) in their “Boomerang Home” product line. Finally, waste products (pieces of textile and so on) from the manufacturing process of their regular products are used to make a separate line of products: The Boomerang Effect Collection. Boomerang works thus to encourage recycling, upcycling, and re-use. The company reports having received over 7,000 clothing items for recycling (www.boomerang.se 27 February 2012).

Boomerang uses its website and Facebook page to promote its sustainability work. Boomerang’s Facebook page, for example, promotes both its vintage products and the Boomerang effect product line. Here one can read posts that promote “Scandinavian Blue carpet made of recycled Boomerang garments!” or that inform consumers about Boomerang’s new charity work. Similarly, on the Boomerang webpage consumers can read about the company’s work to recycle their garments. Consumers can read texts presenting the Boomerang effect concept and

“philosophy”, the Vintage collection, the Boomerang effect collection (products made from the excess material generated by the regular manufacturing process of Boomerang’s clothes), and the Boomerang Home collection (furniture and carpets made from recycled Boomerang garments). The website also includes information about Boomerang’s Code of Conduct and the company’s broader commitment to selling quality (durable) products.

Boomerang has also been skilful in getting media attention for its sustainability efforts, which are covered in numerous articles. For example, in an article in *Dagens Industri*, Boomerang’s designer Catti Lange talks about the quality of Boomerang’s products:

Boomerang garments are very high quality and can be re-used several times before they wear out. And when they cannot be used anymore, they can be recycled as rag rugs, for instance. (Catti Lange, Boomerang designer, quoted in *Dagens Industri*, page 11, 8 November 2008)

Boomerang and its reselling and recycling concept has also been written about in home interior decorating magazines such as *Allt i Hemmet* and *Sköna Hem*, as well as in the daily papers such as *Dagens Nyheter*, *Svenska Dagbladet*, *Göteborgs Posten* and in such free papers as *Metro* and *City Stockholm*. For the most part, these articles describe the Boomerang sustainability concept and work. Critical questions are seldom included in the articles. The media is here just another marketing channel for Boomerang, a platform through which the company can communicate its sustainability concept to consumers.

In addition, Boomerang does some advertisement for its sustainability line “the Boomerang effect” and it also markets its sustainability work at different events such as the Econow Fair and Stockholm Fashion Week.

Within marketing the stores are regarded as the main marketing tool for retailers (see, e.g. Turley & Milliman 2000; Kent 2007; Soars 2009). This is the interface between company and products and a meeting point between products and consumers. It is at the stores that consumers can touch, feel, and even smell the products. It is through the stores that consumers can try out products, consult store assistants, read marketing material, and educate themselves about the brand and its CSR activities.

At the Boomerang stores consumers can find information regarding the special “hand in old Boomerang garments get 10 % off on a new product” offer and, of course, also hand in old Boomerang products. Consumers can also shop the Boomerang effect collection, which is often displayed separately. Here consumers can browse through this line, pick up a brochure, and read up on the sustainability project or simply note that there is such a thing as a sustainability line at Boomerang. In some of the Boomerang stores, consumers can also find the vintage line consisting of old Boomerang garments. Although far from the messy, alternative, and informal second-hand marketplaces described in the literature (Crewe & Gregson 1998; Gregson & Crewe 1998 Gregson et al. 2000), the vintage line

gives these Boomerang stores an air of “retro retailer” (Crewe et al. 2003) and makes the sustainability theme more visible for consumers.

In sum, the Boomerang stores work to educate consumers on the company’s sustainability efforts, make it possible for them to recycle old garments, and offer them the opportunity to purchase the company’s “green” products.

So, Boomerang markets its sustainability efforts mainly through its PR relations, website, and stores. But what does this sustainability work offer the Boomerang consumers? How do the company’s marketing practices work to make sustainability meaningful to these consumers?

Drawing on the idea of the Scandinavian Preppy, Boomerang formulates a specific sustainability problem and solution. To frame its sustainability work and products Boomerang reproduces the notion that we live in a consumer society. Focusing on the environmental problems of the throwaway consumer society the company tells consumers that we purchase too many easily discarded products. The answer, however, is not to stop consuming altogether. Instead the solution to this problem, Boomerang tells consumers, is twofold. First, to purchase quality products that can stand the test of time and, second, when these products for some reason become obsolete in the eyes of their owners, to re-sell or re-cycle them:

Ever since we started Boomerang in 1976, nature has been our great source of inspiration. The sea, the rocks and the waves which never abate. The ice and snow that freezes and melts, and freezes again. A never-ending cycle. Exactly the way we want our clothes to be.

That is why we have created The Boomerang Effect. This means that you can hand in your old Boomerang garments in the shop when you no longer use them. Some of them we will mark with the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation “Good Environmental Choice” and give a second chance as Boomerang Vintage in selected shops. But even the garments which cannot be sold will be recycled in other forms.

When you come in to have a look at what’s new this spring, bring the jacket or the favourite shirt that’s been worn. To show our gratitude, we will give you a 10% discount when you buy something new and at the same time you are contributing to a more durable and better world. (www.boomerang.com 7 March 2012)

In this text we see how Boomerang and its products are connected to nature. Instead of being a part of the ever-faster “cycle of invention, acceptance, and discard” that is fashion (Fletcher 2012: 225), Boomerang, we are told, wants its products to be part of a never-ending cycle, to be part of a “natural” cycle. In a way, Boomerang is here addressing both the material and social dimensions of product obsolescence (on design and obsolescence see, e.g. Tham 2008, Fletcher 2012). When it is simply a matter of social obsolescence – previous owners might want to change style or simply want something new – the garment is resold and given new value as “vintage”. When instead the clothing item is too worn, it is used to make a new product, such as a rug or a piece of furniture (so-called up-cycle).

What we can see here is that Boomerang, just as other corporations, enacts a specific version of sustainability (Jones et al. 2008; Frostenson et al. 2010). For Boomerang sustainability is not primarily about consuming products that are labelled sustainable, but rather about buying things that last, re-using old things and re-cycling those that can no longer be reused. Thus, the specific “service” that Boomerang provides is that it enables its consumers to be sustainable while continuing to consume the (Boomerang) products they (presumably) enjoy so much. Boomerang allows consumers to construct a sustainable Scandinavian Preppy style.

Enacting the Green Scandinavian Preppy

What kind of green consumer is enacted through this marketing work and what sustainability role can this consumer play? Through the marketing work of Boomerang a version of the green consumer is enacted. Through the marketing carried out at the stores, websites, and media the Green Scandinavian Preppy is enacted. It is through this set of practices and artefacts that Boomerang’s specific model of the green consumers is brought to life.

This version of the green consumer has, as every version does, a specific set of qualities that define it. The design-interested nature-loving Boomerang consumer envisioned by this retailer and enacted by its marketing practices is a combination of the knowledgeable green connoisseur – a consumer that knows quality when he/she sees it – and the green hedonist in search of the good life (see, e.g., Soper 2007; Connolly & Prothero 2008). The Green Scandinavian Preppy is thus neither rebel nor activist. The model of the consumer enacted by this company is not political in the traditional sense. Instead he or she is a pleasure seeker with a green conscience. The green Scandinavian Preppy is someone (a white Swede) who wants to enjoy nature and go sailing. It is someone who knows quality and appreciates design and has the means to pay for both.

It is easy to see the benefits that this model of the green consumer has for the Boomerang Company. This company has much to gain commercially by enacting this version of the green consumer and hopefully (from its perspective) also configure consumers to act and feel in accordance with this model. Enacting the Green Scandinavian Preppy allows Boomerang to position itself as sustainable – receive positive press, add value to the brand, and perhaps even attract new customers – without having to make many changes to its current business practices. It can continue to manufacture and sell high-end and expensive fashion items very much in the same way it did before re-positioning itself as a sustainable fashion retailer. It can continue to sell the Scandinavian Preppy lifestyle that has worked so well in the past. The only difference is that now “green” is added to the mix.

The commercial and strategic benefits for Boomerang then seem obvious. But what does this model entail for the promotion of environmental sustainability? If

we accept that images are performative, that they have the possibility to configure consumers, to shape in some way how they act, think and feel, what then? Enacting the green consumer as a pleasure-seeking connoisseur can have important consequences for how consumers understand and approach sustainability.

On one hand, the green consumer as a pleasure-seeking connoisseur image can be a powerful agent that works to enlist consumers in green consumption. Because it resonates with central notions of contemporary consumer culture it may attract consumers that otherwise would not have been interested in sustainability issues. The Boomerang Company shows its consumers (and potential consumers) that it is possible to consume in a greener way. Through the marketing practices of this retailer consumers are assigned co-responsibility for the environment, both problem and solution (Heiskanen & Pantzar 1997; Halkier 1999), while at the same time showing these consumers that consuming green can be a pleasurable and rewarding experience. Green consumption is here not framed as difficult or complex. It does not seem to involve any sacrifice or trade-offs. This is, one can imagine, a seductive version of the green consumer.

On the other hand, there are also a number of potential drawbacks with the model of the green consumer enacted by the Boomerang Company. To begin with, as the green consumer is translated from activist/rebel and into a pleasure-seeking connoisseur, the image also loses much of its political force. For while a rebel fights against an established government or mainstream and an activist focuses on making change happen through action, a pleasure-seeking connoisseur is only concerned with choosing adequate products that reflect and develop a sophisticated taste and bring about pleasure. Here green consumption becomes something else. It becomes simply another way of enjoying ourselves and constructing our consumer identities.

Also, the message produced by the Boomerang Company (and other companies engaging in green marketing) is that environmental issues are to be approached primarily as consumer issues. More than this, it tells consumers that environmental issues are only relevant as long as they can be combined with the pleasurable consumption of desired products. In the process of marketing the Green Scandinavian Preppy this retailer is also reproducing “the idea that the individual consumer, making decisions to buy one product in preference to another, can painlessly and almost effortlessly create social and political change” (Low & Davenport 2007: 336). For the Green Scandinavian Preppy complicated environmental issues are simple. Achieving environmental sustainability is merely a matter of buying the right product. Through this marketing work the environmental critique – which often targets our whole way of life – is contained and made uncomplicated and manageable.

Discussion and Conclusions

In this paper a performativity approach is used to bring to the fore the manner in which marketing enacts specific images of green consumers and to discuss the performative capabilities of these images. More specifically, in this paper I have tried to do two things.

First I have tried to show how the green marketing work of a retailer – the Boomerang Company – leads to the reformulation of sustainability and the enactment of a specific version of the green consumer, here called the Green Scandinavian Preppy.

Second, departing from this analysis, I have discussed the potentials and limitations of this specific green consumer image. I have argued that while this is a version of the green consumer that might be appealing to consumers and thus have the potential to promote a version of green consumption, this is also a green consumer image that has lost much of its political power.

To be clear, the objective has not been to criticize Boomerang *per se*. This company and its marketing work is just an example of a broader phenomenon. Instead, my goal has been to illustrate how critical analysis of green consumer enactment can be accomplished and also demonstrate the importance of carrying out this type of analysis. That is, the ambition has been to develop an approach to the study of green consumer enactment and illustrate its importance.

Obviously the enactment of the Green Scandinavian Preppy model by the Boomerang Company does not mean that consumers will automatically adopt this model. As consumer culture studies have taught us, consumers do not simply passively receive and accept messages and products from organizations. Instead they actively translate and reconfigure them to fit into their practices and life projects (see, e.g. Miller 1995; Miller et al. 1998; Kozinets et al. 2002; Ilmonen 2004; Kozinets et al. 2004; Campbell 2005). It is thus very likely that a specific study of this retailer's customers and potential customers would reveal greater heterogeneity.

Nevertheless, as previous research has shown, the performative power of marketing is considerable (see e.g. Kjellberg & Helgesson 2006; Araujo 2007; Skålén et al. 2008; Fuentes 2011). Although no mass of Green Scandinavian Preppies will instantly emerge, the marketing work carried out by this retailer has the potential to shape how consumers understand and approach sustainability and consumption.

This is why we need to study the commercial enactment of green consumer images. By determining whom the green consumer is/should be we are also to some extent determining how sustainability is to be approached. And if retailers and other companies are through their marketing practices shaping (in some way) how we understand and approach sustainability, it is important to examine and critically discuss how this is accomplished and with what consequences.

Christian Fuentes is a senior lecturer at the Department of Service Management, Lund University and a researcher at the Centre for Consumer Science, University of Gothenburg. He undertakes research in the fields of green marketing, green consumption, critical marketing, practice theory and consumer culture. He is currently involved in a research project that examines the role of “ethical shopping apps” in the promotion of responsible consumption practices. E-mail: christian.fuentes@ism.lu.se

Notes

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